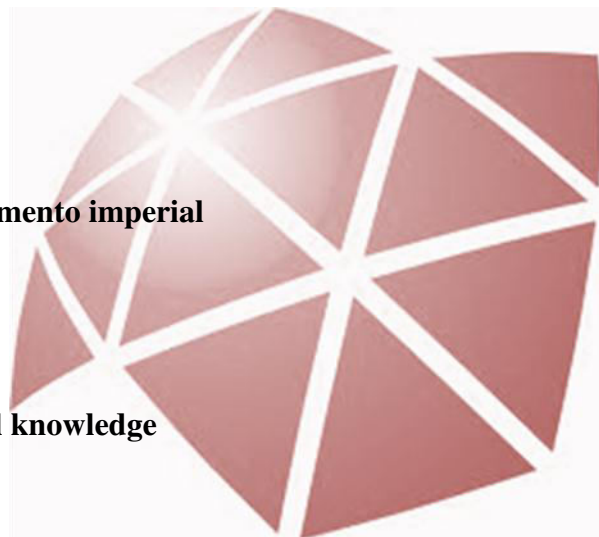


**Uma tipologia compósita do conhecimento imperial**

**A composite typology of imperial knowledge**



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**Resumo:** De que maneira os impérios europeus utilizaram as diferentes formas de conhecimento que produziram para impor o próprio poder e a própria autoridade no ultramar? O presente artigo não pretende responder a questão de tamanha amplitude, mas tão somente promover um breve inventário dos modos de conhecimento, associados à dinâmica de disciplinas intelectuais na Europa, ao longo do século XVII, que tiveram um impacto mais direto na organização de impérios coloniais.

**Palavras-chave:** impérios coloniais; tecnologias de poder; produção de saberes.

**Abstract:** How did the European empires use the different forms of knowledge they produced to impose their own power and authority overseas? This article does not attempt to answer a question of such magnitude, but aims only to give a brief inventory of the modes of knowledge, associated with the dynamic of intellectual disciplines in Europe throughout the seventeenth century, which had a more direct impact on the organization of colonial empires.

**Keywords:** colonial empires; technologies of power; production of knowledge.

In June, 1625, in Goa, the friar Domingos do Espírito Santo wrote a treatise regulating the missionary work of the mendicants in the large area covered by the Portuguese Patronage. The author was responding to a request submitted by the Congregação da Ordem dos Eremitas da Índia Oriental [Congregation of the Order of the Hermits of East India], the Augustinian Order to which he belonged. The Carmelites, the Dominicans, and the Franciscans also were mendicants. In the treatise, papal bulls and briefs created a

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comprehensive framework of legal privileges that authorized the missionary work of the mendicant friars. This was followed by the transfer of the customs and laws of Spanish America to Portuguese East India, requirements on the rights of the Patronage demanded by the Portuguese monarchy, decisions made by local ecclesiastical councils, models of the rights and privileges granted to the Jesuits considered valid for the mendicants, and a defense of the jurisdiction assigned to the mendicant friars against the alleged abuses of the Archbishop of Goa and his vicar. This latter conflict was, without doubt, the main incentive for all the systematic legal justifications presented by the author. In addition to the complexity of privileges, legal powers, and jurisdictions, the treatise focused on the work of mendicant friars who performed the role of priests in their parishes. Consequently, the organization of daily religious work performed by the priests was based on the administration of the sacraments. These were the clearest ritualistic elements of God's mercy, which was compatible with the individual faith of the converts to Catholicism. Three main sacraments were discussed in depth in terms of ritual formalities, questions of content, and more specifically, ways of dealing with exceptional situations imposed by the customs of India or Ceylon (Sri Lanka). One of the questions raised was the legitimacy of imposing baptism by force or against the will of the person being baptized. The right to celebrate mass and administer the sacrament of the Eucharist was claimed by the mendicants, which presupposes a power struggle with the members of the secular clergy. The sacrament of marriage gave rise to a wider discussion of exceptional cases, especially those involving polygamy and incest (including permission for a widow to marry her brother-in-law). These and four other sacraments were also included in a broader declaration relating to the duties of the priests in their parishes, which stated that all the ecclesiastics authorized to perform the sacred rites were required to know each member of their flock individually, in the image of a good shepherd: celebrate mass, preach sermons, administer penance following confession, attend to the poor, bury the dead, and convey the principles of faith. In addition to discussing all these ritualized sacraments, the treatise ends with instructions for the more personal life of a Catholic: confession, especially in sinful situations created through a pact with the devil and witchcraft, examples of specific prayers, and an example of how to write a simple will.<sup>1</sup>

The manuscript of *Domingos do Espírito Santo* assumes a system of central values imposed by Catholicism, in general, and by the mendicant friars, in particular. The authority of the Pope at the top and the administration of ritualized sacraments by priests or friars on a day-to-day level were the two main dimensions of a type of knowledge that tended to operate

on a global scale. However, the power attributed to hierarchical points of view, in regard to rituals and ceremonies, by political entities was not limited to the ecclesiastical sphere. The performance of rituals and the special attention given to the top levels of political hierarchies also existed at the level of sovereignties organized around monarchies, kingdoms, and courts. The symbolic power associated with each of the sovereign entities was particularly evident in three distinct forms: in the countless descriptions and visual representations of kings and their courts, in the more specific attention given to the performance of rituals and ceremonies, and in the care accorded to the diplomatic relations established principally with neighboring kingdoms. We see examples of these forms of identification with the symbolic power of kings and their courts in numerous colonial situations. For example, a treaty concerning the trade of pepper, written by the secretary of the Portuguese overseer in Cochin at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was divided into three distinct, but closely related, sections: the organization of the pepper trade with reference to local circuits of change, the agricultural production of pepper, including botanical themes to satisfy “European curiosity”, and, finally, a description of the rites that should be conducted for the burial of the king of Cochin and the organization of his succession. It was in the latter section that the secretary of the overseer, Francisco da Costa, marshaled the opinions of antiquarians and ceremonialists to claim that it was through his influence that the ancient parity between the kings of Portugal and those of Cochin had been transformed into a relationship of vassalage of the latter to the former. In West Africa, particularly in the Congo and in Angola, the strength of opinions centered on kings, courts, and vassalages to which the supposed tribal chiefs were submitted was evident. Jesuit authors told the story of the conquest of Angola as a political process of submission of local chiefs to the Portuguese governors, in exchange for protection and conversion to Catholicism. The same narrative, with many variations, was also used by other very experienced captains with great experience in the same region. An extremely formalized political order, represented by rituals and ceremonies, characterized diplomatic relations, especially between embassies and in the exchange of correspondence between kings.<sup>ii</sup> Within the limitations of a simple inventory, another productive area of research relates to the visual representations of religious and political rites and ceremonies. They acted as a central mirror in relation to which the idols and alleged diabolical scenes occupied an inverted position.

What other areas comprised Portuguese imperial knowledge, based on specific forms of information gathering, creating its own networks of communication, and mobilizing

specific languages? The most important of all these areas was related to mechanisms of extensive extraction, combined with the organization of military powers. In effect, the dynamics of European military revolutions abroad, or the requirements for armed commerce imposed by colonial situations, from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, gave rise to the demand for a different type of imperial knowledge. In the case of the Portuguese State of India, it is mainly the fiscal dimension of this type of knowledge that it is possible to identify in terms of the key primary sources. Taxation geared towards military spending took on different forms. Property taxes were organized by the communities in Goa, in the *tombos* [sales of estates] in Daman, or in the area generally referred to as the North province, and also in Ceylon, and, finally, in the most studied *prazos* [leasehold estates] of Mozambique. The forms of colonial expropriation demonstrated by each of these cases are directly related to the information provided by local collaborators and intermediaries, only up to a point where it is difficult to evaluate in which direction the transmission of knowledge occurred. From a European or Lusocentric perspective, the tax systems were arranged in a top down direction and adapted locally. Historical emphasis on the capacity to develop institutions overseas, such as the councils of representatives, in which the local elite could represent their political views, was followed by a series of legal and written practices (charters, notarial registration of different forms of transmission of inherited property, *tombos* and *prazos*). However, there is sufficient evidence to show that, more than an orientalist projection of Portuguese tax systems, it was the information available locally that made the system work. In this case, the Portuguese imperial institutions benefited from the continuation of earlier tax systems.

A reevaluation of the different types of property taxes within the Portuguese empire should also include many other situations. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuits, who worked in the State of India, earned a reputation as excellent administrators of their property taxes. In this case, the work hypotheses that were waiting to be demonstrated relate to the ability of the members of the Society of Jesus to appropriate local practices of land administration – a subject, perhaps, far more important than many other forms of intellectual and ritual interaction promoted by the Jesuits that caught the attention of historians as examples of the acculturation processes. A totally different situation, already mentioned, is related to the attempts to create a kind of feudal system in Angola. Apparently, submission to the local chiefs was given in exchange for protection and conversion, and a tribute had to be paid by the vassal chief to the Portuguese authorities, especially to the captains formally appointed by the crown to control a specific territorial jurisdiction. However, it seems that this invented

form of feudalism was much more an idealistic projection of the Portuguese desire to conquer a territorial empire in Angola. The reasons behind its failure were not clear. In a context of idealistic projects of conquest, the main justification for the Portuguese presence in Angola was directly linked to the key dynamics of the Atlantic slave trade. Another explanation, perhaps more pertinent to understanding the failure of a would-be feudalism in Angola, is the absence of a local tradition, which made the system imposed from above artificial.

There was another situation which clearly involves a relationship between property taxes and a militarized empire. What happened in Maranhão, during the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, is a good example of this type of relationship. Colonists searching for cocoa in the jungles were not concerned with their own plantations. In fact, the exploitation of forced Amerindian labor used in these cocoa harvesting missions was an important source of income. However, without agriculture, there was no property that could sustain a system of credit and, as a result, there was no financial base for the provisioning of African slaves. During the 1680s, a representative of the colonies drew attention to all these issues related to property, credit, cocoa, and the slave trade. All these issues were addressed in the first section of his treatise, related to Portuguese colonization of the vast Amazon region in the north of Brazil. It was no coincidence that the second and third parts of the same text were dedicated to a botanical inventory of the various species adapted to the same region and to military type fortifications, respectively. In short, trade, land administration, and the production of spices and cereals, were considered to be the three key areas of knowledge for the colonization of Maranhão, followed by scientific technologies of defense. A final example taken from the Brazilian experiences of expansion and imperial colonization might be formulated in terms of a much more general process. In this context, it would be possible to associate the colonists' appropriation of local knowledge relative to the territory in general, and to the transportation routes in particular, with the exploitation of natural and human resources, especially of forced Amerindian labor, and with the development of an imperial culture based on military values.<sup>iii</sup>

The case of Brazil – the overlapping of European military values of conquest and strategic organization with the Amerindian and African war experience and knowledge – contrasted with the general trend suggested by the State of India as a Portuguese maritime empire. From the Indian Ocean to the China Sea, cities and fortresses, with their control of customs, supported a navy and the so-called *sistema cartaz* [a system of free trading charters]. Following a Mediterranean or Greco-Roman military tradition, the Portuguese brought about

different types of arms trade in the Orient, represented by the warship. This was done independently of the advanced trade networks already created by communities of merchants prior to the arrival of Vasco da Gama. The ambiguous figure of the warrior-merchant created by this situation did not necessarily correspond to a Lusitanian adaptation of mercantile cultures already developed in the region. On the contrary, these continued to have an impact to a point where the Europeans had to collaborate with local merchants and entrepreneurs in order to gain more than a marginal position, which was limited to a few renowned groups. This type of collaboration was evident not only in the main spice trade routes, but also in terms of commercial banking and credit. The national differences between the European States and institutions in relation to the Orient emerged, primarily, as a byproduct of lectures and descriptions of voyages published in Europe. It was in this discursive context that the Portuguese State of India first emerged as a model of corruption, misguided miscegenation, conspicuous consumption born of core aristocratic values, orthodoxy and religious intolerance, and a lack of business rationale. A repetitive list of all these characteristics can be seen in a series of travel accounts, including descriptions of Goa published in Europe, outside Portugal, with a special intensity from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The *Itinerário* (1596), by Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, and the *Relation de L'Inquisition de Goa* [Account of the Inquisition at Goa] (Leyden, 1687; Paris, 1688), by Gabriel Dellon, distilled the key ideas on the Portuguese “Black Legend”. There were reactions in favor of the Portuguese – some insisting on the celebration of warrior and Catholic values, others trying to demonstrate the advantages of Portuguese miscegenation.

However, the most important reactions to the so-called Portuguese imperial decline corresponded to a culture of policy advisement. This was comprised of many other configurations oriented towards various themes and caused by different institutions of the Crown. Its discursive impact was seen, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century on, from the time of the Enlightenment and especially during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a contribution to a more rational administration of the Portuguese empire. The emergence of political economics as a discipline in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in which the mechanics of the market were socially and politically established, was preceded for centuries by many other attempts at economic analysis. In Iberia, the increased number of projects and consultancies for the evaluation of costs and benefits covered a great variety of themes: finance, nautical technology, and strategies for military conquest and the organization of armies. The first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was particularly intense in terms of projects and advisories focused on better administration of

royal finances and imperial initiatives. It was not by chance that, due to this proliferation, Cervantes, in *El Quijote* (1605), parodied the character of the self-proclaimed political advisor, the arbitrator. He was an author of fiscal projects who favored profits for the Crown in exchange for a small share of the new income, or a personal reward in the form of a title or position bestowed by the king. Any inventory of different discourses attributed to a culture of policy advisement runs the risk of remaining incomplete. However, there are at least three main areas of interest that are directly related to imperial dimensions and colonial projects.

First, prior to the British creation of a commercial language, Spanish and Portuguese merchants discussed their own models of administration, emphasizing the advantages in defense of the interests of the Crown. Projects to create commercial companies and requirements for their management based on contracts with merchants were established under the so-called rights of business monopoly. Apparently, the royal bureaucrats did not trust management models governed by contracts and large merchants. In practice, however, the apparent contradiction between merchants and bureaucrats did not last, because the increased level of mercantile interests pervading the institutions of the Crown corresponded closely to the direct involvement of royal officials in defense of bankers and powerful groups of merchants. A second type of discourse covered technological matters like navigation, plantations, and mining. Perhaps the greatest variety of projects and councils were created around nautical issues, including ways of stowing goods to avoid shipwrecks. This was also a way of reducing transportation risks – a subject that was generally established in parallel with judicial investigations of captains and commanders responsible for these same shipwrecks. The third and final area, in order of importance, relates to projects of territorial conquest. Such projects are illustrated by concrete examples in China, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Angola, and Brazil, particularly intense during the transition from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. From the perspective of the Portuguese Crown, based on much more imperial maritime experience, land projects emerged with a Spanish influence. All these projects, belonging to a culture of policy advisement, gave rise to an alternative – certainly, a more rational one – to the Augustinian forms of self-condemnation and an intense spiritual consciousness of collective guilt for Portuguese misconduct, punished by military defeats during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Following rituals and ceremonies, the creation of a new state based on taxation and oriented towards the formation of an army and the modernization of projects for the colonies,

in a typology composed of imperial knowledge, must also make room for people. Despite the norms and models of personal action that correspond to specific configurations of time and space, it is possible to identify various types of discourse related to the role of individuals as imperial agents. The Portuguese chronicles from the 15<sup>th</sup> century on were full of lists of names associated with the noble deeds of captains and soldiers ready to die defending the Catholic faith and their king. Disputes over appointments and respective deeds, especially in situations of war or violence, were always present in these lists. At the same time, the creation of individual careers, from the Atlantic to the Orient, led to the writing of life stories and autobiographies, highlighting noble and warrior deeds and services to the Crown. A more general administrative system for evaluating individual deeds contributed to the production of life histories, contextualized in a language of political virtues. In reality, Iberian public archives and some collections of printed books and pamphlets are full of examples of personal narratives written intentionally to justify an attempt at promotion, or to obtain a new title<sup>iv</sup>. Families with their own pantheons, especially their chapels, had found another way to write about individual accomplishments in their genealogies. This relationship between families and their lineages, genealogies, and individual life stories – a characteristic of noble European life of the period – was adapted for specific colonial situations. In Goa, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, caste disputes corresponded to a context in which the role of an individual was assessed in terms of their sense of belonging to several lineages. This was followed by other similar cases in many different colonial situations, such as in São Paulo, Pernambuco, and Bahia.

How did the European empires use different forms of knowledge to impose their own power and their own authority? An answer to this question should distinguish between the forms of knowledge associated with the dynamics of intellectual disciplines in Europe and those that impact the organization of empires more directly. An inventory of the former ought to begin with political theology and legal discourse, followed by the different types of history (religious, political, and natural), by disciplines that deal with spatial themes (from astrology to cartography), and by the physical body. However, the other wide range of discourses that might influence the creation of imperial processes in a more practical way suggests a different composite typology. This was consolidated in descriptions of ceremonies, modeled in an ancient style (sometimes connected with genealogy), used in diplomatic relationships with princely courts and also in the comparison of religions. Another kind of knowledge was the result of concrete technologies of power in areas like the organization of justice, military



affairs, and the institution of tax mechanisms of excessive extraction. In these concrete domains, the colonial states depended to a considerable degree on the collection of local information by collaborators, and also demonstrated an ability to transfer technologies. A culture of policy advisement, political arithmetic, and later, a political economy, were related to the same type of technological powers. A final aspect of this same composite typology was the creation of individual careers granted by imperial and colonial initiatives. In this case, individual accomplishments were associated with the ability to tell life stories, giving rise to one of the most widespread forms of autobiography. This, I believe, is a composite typology of imperial knowledge that is more appropriate for an understanding of the formation of the Iberian empires (1450-1700) and the organization of future analytical investigations, than others that emphasize ethnographic and supposedly scientific discourses.

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<sup>i</sup> National Archive of Torre do Tombo [ANTT], **Livraria**, Ms. 833 – Fr. Domingos do Espírito Santo, “Manual dos ministros eclesiásticos, principalmente religiosos que se ocupam nas christandades Orientais”. For other works by the same author, in the same archive, Ms. 1678 – “Tratado do estado, e exepção das Pessoas Religiosas, a que na Ordem dos Eremitas de N. P. Stº Augº chamão Mantellatas”; Ms. 2136 – “Em que se trata de N. P. Stº Augº, N. Madre S. Monica, e da Religião Eremitica e seus loures”.

<sup>ii</sup> Embassy of the King of the Congo; LEYUA, Buxeda, **Historia del reyno de Iapon y descripcion de aquella tierra, y de algunas costumbres, cerimonias, y regimiento de aquel reyno: com la relacion de la venida de los embaxadores del Iapon a Roma, para dar la obediencia al Summo Pontifice** (Çaragoça, P. Puig, 1591); AMATI, Scipione, **Historia del Regno di Voxù del Giapon** (Rome: Giacomo Mascardi, 1615). An example of formalism in the practical conception of local power is found in ANTT, **Livraria**, Ms. 2611 – Alexandre Metelo de Sousa Meneses, “Livro que ha de servir p.<sup>a</sup> a Vedoria de Pernambuco que vai numerado, e rubricado, e leva no fim seu encerramento feito por mim”, 24 fls.

<sup>iii</sup> ANTT, **Livraria**, Ms. 1797, fls. 158v-159: “Carta do S.or G.or Francisco de Abreu Pereira p<sup>a</sup> S. Mag.e em que se dá rellação da guerra do Tapuia”, 1702, illustrates the process of military alliance, the idealized submission of the Amerindian groups to vassalage, and their settlement on reservations.

<sup>iv</sup> Among the numerous examples: ANTT, **Livraria**, Ms. 2264 [Petitions and services rendered to the Crown during the 16th and 17th centuries, primarily in the State of India, by João de Barros and his family] part of this rich collection by António Baião, Documentos inéditos sôbre João de Barros. Sôbre o escritor seu homónimo contemporâneo, sôbre a família do historiador e sôbre os continuadores das *suas* “*Decadas*”, reprinted from the Boletim da Segunda Classe da Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, vol XI (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1917), pp. 88-155]; ANTT, **Livraria**, Ms 1777 – “Relassão de papeis autenticos iurados, & passados polla Chansellaria Real, & os decretos, que dos ditos papeis, emanarão em defensão da hõrra do padre fr. Simão de Nazareth ora diffinidor actual da Prouincia do Apostolo S. Thome da India Oriental, contra as fallsas informações que à S. Magestade se mandarão de uinte anos continuos, que fes o Officio de pai dos Xpãos das terras de Bardes, e estão as certidoins de como foi liure pollas deuassas que tirou o R.do p. fr. Luis de Concepção Ministro Prouincial, & o Sñor dõ fr. Christouão de Lisboa Arcebispo Primas de todo o tempo que foi pai dos Christãos [...]”.

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