

# *Sports in Portuguese-language african countries: a field to discover*

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to highlight the potential of research about the sport in African Portuguese-speaking countries, adding consideration on previous studies. In a brief review, we present issues that may be useful for further studies on those countries, not only in the limited scope of the history of sports.

**Keywords:** sport; Africa; Portuguese language.

## *O esporte nos países africanos de língua portuguesa: um campo a desbravar*

### **Resumo**

O objetivo deste artigo é evidenciar o potencial da investigação acerca do esporte em países africanos que têm o português como idioma oficial, tecendo considerações sobre estudos previamente realizados. A par de breves resenhas, apresentaremos questões que poderão ser úteis para a dinamização dos estudos a respeito de tais países, e não apenas no âmbito restrito da história do esporte.

**Palavras-chave:** esporte; África; língua portuguesa.

## *El deporte en los países africanos de lengua portuguesa: un campo a conquistar*

### **Resumen**

El objetivo de este artículo es evidenciar el potencial de la investigación acerca del deporte en países africanos que tienen el portugués como idioma oficial, tejiendo consideraciones sobre estudios previamente realizados. Al par de breves reseñas, presentaremos cuestiones que podrán ser útiles para la dinamización de los estudios respecto a tales países, y no apenas en el ámbito restringido de la historia del deporte.

**Palabras clave:** esporte; África; lengua portuguesa

## *Le sport dans les pays africains: beaucoup à découvrir*

### **Résumé**

Le but de cet article est de mettre en évidence le potentiel de la recherche sur le sport dans les pays africains de langue portugaise, en ajoutant l'examen des études déjà accomplies. En bref examen, nous présenterons les questions qui peuvent être utiles pour des études ultérieures sur ces pays et non seulement dans le domaine de l'histoire du sport.

**Mots-clés:** sport; Afrique; langue portugaise.

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The aim of this article is to highlight the potential for investigation on sports in Portuguese-speaking African countries by offering considerations on previous studies. The main question to be approached is: in what way can the study of sporting practices be useful in the understanding of the past and present of these countries?

Few historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have dedicated themselves to the analysis of sports in the continent as a whole, which is explained, in part, by the idea that such studies cannot contribute to the solution of Africa's severe problems.<sup>1</sup> Upon evaluation of specific contributions about sports in Portuguese-speaking African countries, the scarcity became even more evident. Even in Portugal, where its atmosphere of old metropolis is responsible for a higher volume of research on ex-colonies, only recently have sporting practices become the target of systematic investigations.<sup>2</sup>

As a synthesis exercise, Nuno Domingos' work is worthy of mention; it presents a panorama of sports in the Portuguese dominions in Africa and Asia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Domingos points the existence of differentiated processes of affirmation of sports, not only through legislation and "colonial institutions" — the army, schools, religious missions, and companies — but also through private associations. These performed a prominent role in face of the Portuguese State's difficulty in intensifying its presence in all parts of the territories overseas, especially in regards to sports, a field considered unworthy of high-priority intervention for decades. In addition to offering important information about the presence of soccer among the elites, the author is interested in its practice in the suburbs of cities and villages, which are frequently excluded from federate organization and hardly mentioned by the press.

According to Domingos, in the places where a higher level of industrialization, urbanization, and the presence of settlers were verified, such as Angola and Mozambique, the expansion of sports was facilitated, contrary to what happened, for instance, in São Tomé and Príncipe, and Guinea-Bissau. The author affirms that the history of sporting activities, marked by the different rhythms and characteristics of each colony, may be an instrument of discussion about the Portuguese Empire's designation limits,<sup>4</sup> especially in regards to the domination exercised upon the populations.

Following in the steps of other authors, Domingos also defends that sports can be a field of observation of the gestation of perceptions about colonialism; of the differences between whites' and blacks' statutes, and of the collision between juridical facets that segment the population and the new social relations arising from the emergence and subsequent dissemination of sports. After all, from the point of view of the porosity and of the induction of social changes, this manifestation of modernity had equivalent potential,

<sup>1</sup>Bea Vidacs, "Through the prism of sports: why should Africanists study sports?", *Afrika Spectrum*, n. 41/3, 2006, p. 344. In spite of this, two relatively recent initiatives attest the growing interest on the topic. In 2006 and 2007, two important periodicals in Germany and in the United States published issues that had soccer as their central theme: the *Afrika Spectrum*, edited by the *Institut für Afrika-Kunde/German Institute of Global and Area Studies*, and the magazine *Ufamahu: a Journal of African Studies*, edited by the University of California.

<sup>2</sup>Nina Clara Tiesler, João Nuno Coelho, "O futebol globalizado: uma perspectiva lusocêntrica", *Análise Social*, vol. 41, n. 179, 2006, p. 315.

<sup>3</sup>Nuno Domingos, "O desporto e o Império Português", In: José Neves, Nuno Domingos, *Uma história do desporto em Portugal*, Matosinhos, Quidnovi, vol. 2, 2011, p. 51-107.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 55.

if not larger, to that of the press — which also made its living through sports, amplifying its social and political importance — and of political associativity. Moreover, considering the dictatorial facet of the Portuguese New State (1933–1974) and of colonial administration, the press and political associativity were replaced by sporting associativity, still playing a role in the social and political changes.

In a scenario of scarcity of studies on the topic, we highlight a team of researchers of different nationalities that has been formulating joint projects whose partial results have been published.<sup>5</sup> Outside of academia, studies conducted by journalists and memoir writers take on a great importance by filling in gaps and providing subsidies to monographic studies.<sup>6</sup> The possibility of gathering testimonials and accounts offered by former sportspeople is still considered, in which suggestions for future investigations will certainly be found.

This article is organized by country, and the exposition follows chronological order whenever possible. The main purpose is not the development of a systematic analysis about sports in these countries, but only the presentation, by means of brief reviews, of some of the questions discussed by the authors that dedicated themselves to the topic.

## Angola

Research on the practice of sports may make daily conflicts evident and prompt an analysis of European domination that pretends to be localized and manifested in apparently unimportant actions. Through the investigation of Luanda's society between 1870 and 1930 — the time of the consolidation of Portuguese domination — Andrea Marzano recognizes that sporting practices were symbols of European presence and modernity, and that the sport clubs were the settlers' typical spaces for social gatherings.<sup>7</sup> However, she suggests that the Creole Elite — who enjoyed, at least since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a privileged position in colonial society — sought to approach the settlers' universe by means of participating in clubs and sports competitions, marking their differences in relation to the *indigenous* people, who were not considered civilized for not mastering European cultural codes; these were submitted, in

<sup>5</sup>Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2010.

<sup>6</sup>Antero Barros, *Subsídios para a história do cricket em Cabo Verde*, Praia, COC/CPV, 1998; *Idem*, *Subsídios para a história do golfe em Cabo Verde*, São Vicente, Clube de Golfe de São Vicente, 1981; Henrique Mota, *História do Club Atlético de Luanda. Primeiro volume - 1924-1953. Subsídios para a história do desporto angolano*, Luanda, Edição do Club Atlético de Luanda e Saudade, 2008; Mateus Gonçalves, Carlos Pacavira, *Trumunu. Trinta anos de futebol em Angola*. (v. 1: Seleções), Luanda, Edições Trumunu / São Paulo, Kromo Editora, s/d.

<sup>7</sup>Andrea Marzano, "Práticas esportivas e expansão colonial em Luanda", *In*: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *op. cit.*, p. 71-99.

Marzano draws on the existence of three social categories: "the settlers", the "Angolenses" or "filhos da terra" or "Creole Elite", and, finally, "indigenous people". Among the settlers are the Portuguese who arrived recently and their descendants. "Angolenses" and "filhos da terra" were the self-designation chosen by blacks and mulattos (mixed race) born in Angola who knew and mastered European cultural codes and formed the so-called "Creole Elite". "Indigenous people" was the expression used by the Portuguese and Angolans to name the Africans that did not master European cultural codes. Identical or similar designations were present in other Portuguese colonies. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, colonial legislation would eventually incorporate such designations, which roughly correspond to the categories "citizens" (all the Portuguese people and their direct descendants, as long as they were white), "assimilated" (blacks and mulattos who proved mastery of the European cultural codes), and "indigenous", who were subjected to compulsory labor.

their rising numbers, to different forms of forced labor, especially through the stressing of the non-liberal stance of colonial politics, progressively engulfed by the racism emerging since late 1800s that justified the exclusion measures against Africans, and, especially, against the so-called *indigenous*.<sup>8</sup>

The author demonstrates that, up to the 1920s, sports clubs were marked by the coexistence of settlers and sons of the earth. However, with an increase in the presence of Portuguese people, Angolans suffered a process of subordination, evidenced by the progressive withdrawing from the central areas of the city, by the difficulties in finding occupation in public offices, and by the gradual exclusion from leisure areas frequented by the settlers. Once removed from these spaces, the Angolan elites created clubs and formed teams, transforming sports competitions into stages for conflicts that were characteristic of the colonial situation. This movement would eventually explain the foundation of the Club Atlético de Luanda in 1924, which assembled the most important families of the Creole Elite, unhappy with the growing exclusion from the Naval Club, which would become a space even more restricted to the settlers.<sup>9</sup>

In soccer, this process became evident with the creation of the *Associação de Football de Luanda (Luanda Soccer Association)* in 1925, a dissidence from the *Liga de Football de Luanda (Luanda Soccer League)*, originated in 1914. From then on, the city's clubs were divided into two organizations: the Association, assembling teams formed by Africans in their majority, and the League, with teams of settlers.<sup>10</sup>

Crucial for a more detailed and realistic view of social bonds in contexts of domination and, in this case, in the former Portuguese colonies, studies on sports may contribute to the questioning of the binary opposition between settlers and colonized, so in vogue in analyses of the colonial situation. For Marzano, sports practices evidenced conflicts between settlers and natives, but also prejudice and divisions among the latter. The Athletic Club tended to gather Angolan families that were better situated socially and economically, while the *Operário Football Club* was marked by the presence of Africans from less favored social strata.<sup>11</sup>

The analysis of the sporting phenomenon allows the surpassing of institutionalized spaces of political acting, as well as of the exclusive emphasis placed either on deliberately anticolonial movements or on armed confrontations; such is the renewing perspective that has marked recent production on the political history of contemporary Angola. It is in this sense that Marcelo Bittencourt proposes to investigate the political struggle in relation to the legality implemented by Angolans, especially in urban centers.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup>This analysis could be applied to the case of Lourenço Marques and other African cities in this period, with the exception of the specificities of the institutional and cultural matrices of colonial metropolises and, hence, of local particularities.

<sup>9</sup>Andrea Marzano, "Práticas esportivas e expansão colonial em Luanda", In: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2010, p. 71-99.

<sup>10</sup>In spite of the social cleavage being attached to colonialism and its racial barriers in this circumstance, the coexistence of several club associations that denoted dissensions of various natures was relatively common in the initial stages of soccer in many parts of the world.

<sup>11</sup>Andrea Marzano, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup>Marcelo Bittencourt, "Jogando no campo do inimigo: futebol e luta política em Angola", In: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *op. cit.*, p. 129-130.

Bittencourt demonstrates that some sports directors in the 1950s acted in the press and in cultural associations simultaneously, vindicating from the government a higher investment in schools and medical assistance, support to sports activities, and equality of rights for settlers as well as black and mulatto (mixed race) Angolans. In this way, they sought to be recognized as representatives of the Angolan people and they used, in their favor, elements from the colonial discourse, which, in that context, postulated the absence of racial discrimination in the Portuguese colonies. Through the idea that the people born in Angola were Portuguese, these directors fought, in the space of legality, for equality of rights.

For the same author, the absence of formal spaces of political acting, such as political parties, contributed for the sports clubs to become places for political discussions, although not necessarily anticolonial. The case of Botafogo is exemplary, given that the club was shut down by the Pide, the Portuguese political police, in 1961, under the argument that its directors acted in clandestine organizations.<sup>13</sup>

Analyzing the sports directors' profiles, Bittencourt demonstrates the fragility of the idea of borders between those who opted for the legal sphere of political action, and the ones who chose underground activity or armed struggle. It was common for sports directors, who necessarily counted on the colonial government's approval for the exercise of their activities, to vindicate improvements in the colonization in the press, to elaborate pamphlets in fa-

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vor of the independence cause, and to help establish contact between young people in the colony and the guerrilla.<sup>14</sup>

Drawing on interviews, the author demonstrates, still, that the informal designations of the clubs evidenced not only racial discriminations — “the whites' club”, “the blacks' club”, “the mulattos' club” — but also the social position of their members or their political activity. The Ferroviário (Railroader), regarded as “the blacks' team”, was designated as “the club of the contracted people”,<sup>15</sup> while the Athletic, known as “the mulattos' club” started being referred to as “the terrorists' club” in the 1960s.

In his study on the final phase of colonialism and the post-independence period, Jonuel Gonçalves affirms that investigations related to the sport, a

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<sup>13</sup>Marcelo Bittencourt, “Jogando no campo do inimigo: futebol e luta política em Angola”, In: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2010, p. 114-115.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 113-114.

<sup>15</sup>“Contracted labor” was the mechanism through which the indigenous person could acquire currency to pay for colonial taxes. The indigenous people who were not employed in this manner and, therefore, incapable of paying for the taxes, could be detained and subjected to mandatory service by the colonial authorities (*ibidem*, p. 105).



practice that nourishes multiple identities related to clubs, cheering crowds, and modalities, contribute to less schematic reflections — as opposed to those derived exclusively from the ideas of nation and nationalism through opposition to colonialism — about identity constructions.<sup>16</sup> Such studies allow, moreover, the reflection on the use of sports by political regimes, by means of propaganda or divulgence of specific nationality standards, as well as of social sensitization, procedures of which we have constant examples nowadays, even in societies where the sport is less prominent, such as in São Tomé and Príncipe.

Gonçalves establishes close relations between the sports scenario and the political and economic junctures by revealing the presence of military people in the teams during the liberation war. One of the effects was the winning of championship titles by teams that were modest until then, such as the Futebol Clube do Moxico (Moxico Soccer Club). Since the majority of guerrilla operations was located in that region, a large part of the Portuguese soldiers made their way to that area, from where they left as prominent athletes. The end of the war and the consequential displacement of military athletes would make the club return to obscurity.<sup>17</sup>

Gonçalves also mentions the scarcity of competitions in the period that immediately followed the independence, as well as of sponsorship of sports activities by companies in the beginning of the 1980s, when the country suffered an economical disruption consequential of the flight of Portuguese people and the effects of the Civil War (1975–2002).<sup>18</sup> In a situation of great shortage, companies facilitated the attainment of first-necessity goods to “their” athletes in addition to offering jobs and, sometimes, low salaries.

In summary, it is worth highlighting the potential of sports activities as revealers of social tensions in colonial society. Put roughly, there was room for the coexistence of settlers and sons of the earth in the clubs and teams up to the 1920s. On the second half of the 1920s and in the 1930s, added to the crystallization of racism since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the intensification of Portuguese presence generated a separating tendency among blacks’ and whites’ clubs. This tendency would linger until the 1950s, when the liberation movements led the ideologues of Salazar’s regime to defend that Portugal had not colonies but “ultramarine provinces” in Africa, and that there was no form of discrimination, namely racial, in Portuguese territories. Such situation generated the inhibition of references to color in the press and official documents, favoring the valorization of multiracial sports teams and the emphasis on the participation of Africans in the metropolis’ teams and competitions.

<sup>16</sup>Jonuel Gonçalves, “Esporte em Angola: do ultra colonialismo à independência”, In: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2010, p. 137.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 143.

In comparative terms, the presence of the military men of the Independent Territorial Command impacted the spreading of sport activities in São Tomé and Príncipe as well. According to testimonials, including by inhabitants of São Tomé who became nationalist figures, the role of some military men who trained teams of the earth was notorious, especially the emblematic natives’ team, the São Tomé Sporting Club. Simultaneously, the conflicts on the field intensified and, certainly, the rivalry off it, composing a mixed reality of interaction and collaboration, competition and rivalry typical of ‘sportization’ processes.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 147.

Ultimately, investigations on sports allow the visualization of the daily and overwhelming presence of racism in a society that tended to hide it from its official pronouncements.

The timeline summarized here registers the variations of the facets of colonial politics and their respective influence on the relations between settlers and colonized in Africa's Portuguese domains. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the heterogeneity of each colony and, evidently, among all of them, a fact that led to different histories of sports activities.

## Cape Verde

Indeed, investigations on sports activities allow the reflection about each colonial society drawing on the multiple influences — beyond the metropolitan ones — upon its formation. This is evident in the case of Cape Verde. One can oppose, for instance, the cosmopolitan experience in Saint Vincent and the English influence which the people of this island were so proud of to the stereotype of the greater cultural proximity with the colonizer. Victor Melo demonstrates the role of the English people in the introduction of golf, cricket, gymnas-

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tics, and soccer in Saint Vincent from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which would have contributed to the construction of an identity in Cape Verde associated with the ideas of modernity, instruction, chivalry, and cosmopolitanism.<sup>19</sup>

Describing a situation partially similar to Angola's, the author affirms that, in Cape Verde, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a local elite that became increasingly stronger was formed as the white settlers left a land that was inhospitable for exportation agriculture.<sup>20</sup> After a long period at the top of the social pyramid, this elite would eventually have its privileges threatened by the renewal of colonial presence, starting in the 1800s. Seeking to react to a process of subordination, it would construct a notion of Cape Verde's identity that rested on the differentiation between the populations of the archipelago and those in other Portuguese colonies in Africa. The main fundament of this identity construction would be the self-attribution of the figures of modernity and civilization, to which sports activities contributed decisively.<sup>21</sup>

The self-image of the elites of Cape Verde, which also sought to be placed on equal footing with the Europeans, was part of a political strategy for the

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<sup>19</sup>Victor Melo, "Jogando no meio do Atlântico: primeiros momentos do esporte em Cabo Verde", In: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2010, p. 159-184. Ver também Victor Melo, *Jogos de identidade: o esporte em Cabo Verde*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2011.

<sup>20</sup>Victor Melo, "Jogando no meio do Atlântico: primeiros momentos do esporte em Cabo Verde", In: *op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 162.

denial of subordination. However, this strategy involved the exaltation of loyalty to the Portuguese nation and availability to occupy administrative and leadership positions in other colonies.

The investigation on the formation of clubs and teams in Cape Verde allows, as in Angola's case, the perception of shared experiences and daily tensions of the colonial situation. Victor Melo dedicates himself to this enterprise by analyzing the introduction of cricket and golf in Saint Vincent.

The first cricket teams were organized by workers of English companies in the 1870s. In the beginning of the 1910s, two clubs founded and frequented by the English already existed in Mindelo, the island's capital. Although the first teams were composed of Europeans, Mindelans were invited to play at times.

Mindelans would not take long to organize their own games, taking advantage of the times when the English fields were not being used. As time went by, the oldest field began to be utilized by Mindelans, while the newest one was used by the English. Predictably, the natives created their own teams between the 1910s and the 1920s, increasing the rivalry with the foreigners and, consequently, the feeling of identification resulting from sports competitions.

Golf was introduced in Saint Vincent at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The fusion of different teams founded in the 1920s originated, in 1933, the *Saint Vincent Club*, restricted to the English people and a few guests. Excluded from that space, Mindelans founded their own club in 1938. At that time, golf was practiced by the English, the Portuguese settlers, and Mindelans.

Reflecting the cleavages in society, there were three golf fields frequented, with a sense of exclusiveness, by Englishmen, Portuguese people, and Mindelans. However, according to Melo, the latter would be invited to integrate the settlers' club. Would this invitation be a direct result of the change in the Portuguese colonial discourse in the 1950s, with the denial of racial discrimination and the affirmation of lusotropicalism? Hypothetically, we may suggest that the causes were many, from a more favorable environment due to the (unconfessed) ideological inflection among the leaders of the colonial regime to the sociodemographic reality of Saint Vincent, surpassing the induction of sports activities in this change, even if of little political significance, of habits in an environment where the settlers were relatively few and not necessarily with more world experience than part of the population of the city of Mindelo. Several circumstances might have weighed on the fading of this social cleavage cut out in accordance with the notion of race.

As with the rest of the ex-colonies, Cape Verde's independence would bring discussions of an ideological orientation about the function and nature of sports which did not intend to be culturally alienated. The antagonism among the islands, which dated back to colonial times, pervaded the directors' ideological enterprises. Democratization would blend in the ideological tones of the discourse about the sport, which would keep on representing the country.

## Guinea-Bissau

Subjected to the political and military vicissitudes that the country has experienced — after the proclamation of the State of Guinea-Bissau's independence



on September 24, 1973 and the end of the liberation war, the 1980 “Readjusting Movement of November 14” and the outbreak of the military conflict on June 07, 1998 would follow — studies on sports in Guinea-Bissau are becoming scarce.<sup>22</sup>

We can say that everything is still to be done. Studies on the process of national liberation analyze the political-military component, and the armed struggle seen through by the African Party for Guinea’s and Cape Verde’s Independence – PAIGC, neglecting other ways and spaces of spreading and sedimentation of forms of conscience linked to the homeland and the anti-colonialism.

The agrarian foundation and the rarefied modernity in Guinea-Bissau in the colonial period did not seem conducive to the dissemination of sports activities. After the Second World War, the colonial government attempted to promote sports, especially soccer, which resulted in an additional expression of rivalry among natives, Cape Verde’s people, and settlers through sports clubs. Nevertheless, this would also result in the possibility of formation of a political conscience.<sup>23</sup>

In 1945, Lieutenant Commander Sarmento Rodrigues became Guinea’s general governor.<sup>24</sup> While in his post, he sought to stimulate sports activities along with First Lieutenant Peixoto Corrêa, president of the Sports Council. This was part of a set of measures that aimed at improving the life quality of

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Guinea’s inhabitants, transmitting the civilizing role of colonization, and the idea that all the Portuguese domains, either in Europe or overseas, were part of the same nation.<sup>25</sup> Despite the boost to sports activities involving soccer, hockey, basketball, volleyball, tennis, cycling, motorcycling, and motoring, several clubs remained inaccessible to the natives, being destined to the settlers, the people of Cape Verde, and a few “assimilated” (designation that ceased to exist in 1946).<sup>26</sup> Thus, before the independence, sports in Guinea-Bissau were limited to whomever frequented the lyceum in Bissau, to the tournaments organized by the Portuguese Youth, and to sports activities that took place in the

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<sup>22</sup>One of the few works is Paulo Fonseca Mendes’ Master’s thesis *O desporto na República da Guiné Bissau. Análise evolutiva da legislação e do nível de prática desportiva (1974-1999)* – Master’s Dissertation in Sports Sciences, Porto, University of Porto, 2000. This dissertation revisits the legislative production and the institutional design related to sports activities on the course of a quarter of a century (1974-1999) of Guinea-Bissau’s independence.

<sup>23</sup>See Victor Melo, *Jogos de identidade: o esporte em Cabo Verde*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2011, p. 187-195.

<sup>24</sup>Between 1950 and 1955, Sarmento Rodrigues was minister of the colonies, standing out as one of the responsible for the revocation of the Colonial Act. From 1951 onwards, the ministry of colonies was called overseas ministry.

<sup>25</sup>Victor Melo, “(Des)mobilização para a luta: o esporte como estratégia nos conflitos da Guiné portuguesa (décadas de 50 e 60 do séc. XX)”, *Métis: história & cultura*, Caxias do Sul, EDUCS, vol. 10, n. 19, jan./jun. 2011, p. 215-236.

<sup>26</sup>Victor Melo, “(Des)mobilização para a luta: o esporte como estratégia nos conflitos da Guiné portuguesa (décadas de 50 e 60 do séc. XX)”, *Métis: história & cultura*, Caxias do Sul, EDUCS, vol. 10, n. 19, jan./jun. 2011, p. 221-222.

army or in clubs. The remainder of the people practiced sports occasionally in improvised teams in the neighborhoods or in *tabancas*.<sup>27</sup>

This did not prevent sports events from being regarded by the first defenders of the anticolonial struggle as propitious moments for political organization and diffusion of ideas in favor of independence. In 1954, Amílcar Cabral, future founder of the PAIGC tried to create an association named Clube Desportivo e Recreativo de Bissau (Bissau Sports and Recreation Club), but he was not authorized by the colonial authorities. On that occasion, both the nationalist leaders and their opposition noticed the political potential of a sports association composed of natives. Besides Cabral, other leaders who sought independence stood out in sports, namely soccer, and highlighted the importance of experiencing sports to the making of a nationalist conscience.<sup>28</sup>

Guinea-Bissau's first constitution, approved by the People's National Assembly in Boé on September 24, 1973, did not contain any articles about the practice and diffusion of sports.<sup>29</sup> After the independence, besides the needs that turned the government's attention to vital areas such as health, education, and agriculture, many factors caused the sports issue to fall into a state of paralysis, among them the lack of experience of organizers, administrators, and resource managers, the scarcity of qualified personnel, and the nonexistence of infrastructure and materials.<sup>30</sup> Above all, what weighed heavily was the lack of definition of sports policies, which had to be forcibly distinct from the ideological proclamations that flooded the enunciations about social transformations then.

In Guinea-Bissau, in sports, as in all other sectors of social life, the difficulty in passing from ideological proclamations to sectorial policies was visible. Notwithstanding, the State's dependence increased; committees responsible for the implementation of Federations were created and had to found new clubs and outline competitions. By a government decision, the federations of athletics, basketball and handball were risen in 1988 (the soccer federation existed since 1974), supposedly to facilitate international participation, and enable the diversification and massification of formal sports practices on three fronts, that is, leisure, popular, and federated. Attentive to the political circumstances and, notwithstanding, to informal sports practices, the goals were not achieved as the institutions had foreseen. In 1999, there was a Direção Geral dos Desportos (Sports General Board) — created in 1981 — an Olympics Committee, and seven Federations, founded with the purpose of allowing participation in international competitions, but which made the “internal organization of sports” difficult.<sup>31</sup>

Besides the necessity of exploring the eventual political dimensions within sports associativity during colonial times — especially in regards to the awareness of the colonized condition — it is necessary to approach the way sports were, or not, idealized as an instrument in the construction of the

<sup>27</sup>Paulo Fonseca Mendes, *O desporto na República da Guiné Bissau. Análise evolutiva da legislação e do nível de prática desportiva (1974-1999)* - Dissertação de Mestrado em Ciências do Desporto, Porto, Universidade do Porto, 2000, p. 47-48. Settlements in rural areas, the “tabancas” might shelter a social organization convergent with the cultural practices that are prevalent in the areas where they are implanted.

<sup>28</sup>Victor Melo, *op. cit.*, p. 222-231.

<sup>29</sup>Paulo Fonseca Mendes, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 48-49.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 50.

nation in the post-independence period, and, in some measure, of the taming of bodies and minds, with attention to the imperative of constructing a *new man*. In fact, the desired sport for the masses had designs of an imposition of modernity to which Guinea's social fabric was less prone. From this point of view, legislative measures revealed themselves less effective.

## Mozambique

Sports may be investigated drawing on their relations with colonial power. As Nuno Domingos affirms, the colonial State sought to control sports and cultural associations.<sup>32</sup> Sports reflected the social categorizations that separated Europeans, assimilated, and indigenous people; the latter were legally forbidden to create associations but were allowed, however, to participate in their activities.<sup>33</sup> It was only at the end of the 1950s, when natives played in the main teams of Lourenço Marques, that the colonial State decided to put an end to the discrimination in soccer. However, for Domingos, the sport in question must not be considered a statistic reflex of the actions of the colonial State. Imbued with a certain autonomy, the domain of sports must be studied in its own dynamics. The author proposes to reflect about the role of sports in the formation of an urban popular culture in Lourenço Marques, where the "world of the dominated" appropriated itself of sports and created its own ways of practicing them, constructing performances that were not confounded with those of the sporting universe organized by the Europeans.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the analysis of sports in Lourenço Marques allows, as in the case of Mindelo, the evaluation of "external" influences that surpass those exercised by the metropolis in colonial daily life. Occupied by dwellings made of *caniço*<sup>35</sup> which sheltered the majority of the African population, the suburb of Lourenço Marques was the outskirts of the center of Portuguese power, but also of South Africa's blossoming industry, whose border was continuously crossed by Mozambican workers headed for the mines.<sup>36</sup> The South African influence in the suburbs would affect soccer's history in Mozambique's capital.

In Lourenço Marques, as in Mindelo, the extensive English community would be responsible, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for the institutionalization of sports that reflected the lifestyle of the ruling classes, shared by some members of the Portuguese elite. Thus, in the first decade of that century, exclusive clubs were created, with English names and amateur activities in tennis, golf, sailing, rugby, cricket, and soccer.

<sup>32</sup>Nuno Domingos, "Desporto moderno em situações coloniais: o caso do futebol em Lourenço Marques", *In*: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2010, p. 211.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 232.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 212-213. See also Nuno Domingos, *Futebol e colonialismo. Corpo e cultura popular em Moçambique*, Lisboa, ICS, 2012.

<sup>35</sup>Dwellings originally built with cane bundles and straw. Nowadays, housing in the "neighborhoods of caniço" makes use of the most diverse materials, such as blocks of cement and zinc, but still maintains a fragile and improvised appearance. The "neighborhoods of caniço" are characterized, above all, by the lack of basic sanitation and by the needs of its inhabitants, a reality more accentuated on the outskirts of larger cities, especially Maputo.

<sup>36</sup>Nuno Domingos, "Desporto moderno em situações coloniais: o caso do futebol em Lourenço Marques", *In*: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2010, p. 224.

As in other colonies, Portuguese associativity would soon reinforce the presence of sports, promoting the practice of sailing, athletics, motoring, gymnastics, and soccer. Due to their localization, the settlers' clubs were known as "downtown clubs".

In 1923, the Associação de Football da Província de Moçambique (Mozambique Province Soccer Association), future Associação de Futebol de Lourenço Marques (Lourenço Marques Soccer Association), was created. Portuguese associativity superseded the initial British influence, causing several sports clubs in the city and in the entire colony to be subsidiaries of the metropolitan sports clubs. For Domingos, the sporting performances of these clubs generated a "metropolitan sporting narrative", which, through means of communication, had crucial weight on the urban culture of Lourenço Marques, surpassing the "settlers' world".<sup>37</sup>

While soccer competitions were becoming institutionalized, with games that involved white athletes and some mulattos, members of the Creole elite, other modalities were developed in the settlers' world, such as hockey and basketball. All these activities reached the suburbs in the 1920s.<sup>38</sup>

Some suburban clubs sprang from churches while others were linked to the Grêmio Africano (African Guild), an association for the defense of Creole elites, which were fundamental for the institutionalization of soccer in suburbs with the creation of the Associação de Football Africana (African Soccer Association) in 1924.<sup>39</sup> The elites linked to the Grêmio Africano (African Guild) — as well as their counterparts in Luanda — evaluated the sport as an instrument for the education and civilization of the African youth, seeing in sporting associativity a tool for political reorganization and resistance to subordination. Their hopes would soon be weakened by the growing control over these associations, exercised by the colonial authorities that explored the fissures in Creole elites, especially between blacks and mulattos.<sup>40</sup>

The "downtown" championships did not allow the participation of clubs from the African Soccer Association. Even individually, indigenous and even assimilated people were generally barred. For Domingos, only the relative autonomy of sports explains the exceptional careers of players like Matateu, Coluna, Hilário and Eusébio, who stood out in metropolitan clubs in the 1950s and the 1960s. By forcing racial barriers, the professionalization process in course would have generated the search for talented players, allowing these assimilated athletes, almost all mulattos, to be able to go from the African Soccer Association to the Lourenço Marques Soccer Association.<sup>41</sup> Amplified by the media, these players' success was reflected on the suburbs, where the "downtown clubs" started searching for talented athletes.

From that point on, soccer nourished luso-tropicalist propaganda. A part of the suburban population felt represented by those athletes and integrated into "modernity" at the same time. Such process would lead, according Nuno

<sup>37</sup>Nuno Domingos, "Desporto moderno em situações coloniais: o caso do futebol em Lourenço Marques", In: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2010, p. 220.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 220-221.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 226-227.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 228.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 237.

Domingos, to the hegemony of the narratives of downtown and those of the metropolis in popular culture, suffocating the alternative narratives of suburban performances.<sup>42</sup> This hegemony would not cease to exist with the end of Portuguese dominance in 1975. The “downtown clubs” were nationalized and received new names, but they kept on reproducing, according to the author, the old metropolitan narrative.

Sports experienced severe difficulties due to the Civil War (1976-1992) and economic disarticulation, a tendency that made world and olympic champion Maria de Lurdes Mutola’s performance in athletics notorious. Among clashing suggestions about the possible permanent aspects of colonial times, the growth of sports in Mozambique is discussed. But, as it happens in other countries, sporting accomplishments are not left unrecognized; among them, the fourth place in the 2011 roller hockey world championship, a modality in which Mozambique offered its champions to its colonizer and which later became a reason for national pride.

### São Tomé and Príncipe

Exactly because of the prodigious gains brought by cocoa monoculture, the conditions for a culture of modernity and for the sedimentation of institution-

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alized and regular sporting practices were lacking in São Tomé and Príncipe. These facts are explained by its microinsularity, the lack of a strong urban center, and, moreover, by the hegemony of plantations based on the intensive use of African labor and economic extroversion.

The attempts at taking progress and civilization to the archipelago, at the moment of the arrival of the first Europeans, would end up languishing due to adverse conditions, namely the thin native demographic fabric, a city of meager dimension, and political orientation aimed at turning the archipelago into a plantation-colony, that is, a territory dominated by economic extroversion and the use of imported labor. There was no room for social diversification or the diffusion of a civilization of progress. For the Africans, civilization would be attained through extenuating labor in plantations.

As in other colonies, colonialism’s new orientation implied the islanders’ subordination, to which they tried to react, mobilizing themselves politically from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the New State, when the

<sup>42</sup>Nuno Domingos, “Desporto moderno em situações coloniais: o caso do futebol em Lourenço Marques”, In: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2010, p. 238.



dictator facet prevented the continuation of acts of vindication and protest with repression. Curiously, the same governor that commanded the repression inspired, at the end of the 1930s, the institutionalization of soccer and its respective clubs, subsidiary or replicas of those of the metropolis, headed by islanders and Europeans.

Even so, either because of the carrying forward of the effects of the 1930s crisis and the Second World War, which were added to an impoverishment derived from economic extroversion, or because of its microinsularity, São Tomé and Príncipe remained a hardly cosmopolitan land. The settlers, part of them from low social and cultural strata, were dispersed throughout cocoa plantations, and the ones who lived in the city reproduced, up until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, conduct and relationship patterns inspired by a contained racism that was operative enough to derail the necessary cooperation of an initiative for shared leisure such as sports. Life in the city was meager and poor, given more to small intrigues than to the appropriation of the world's novelties.

This panorama of social life in São Tomé was altered only in the 1960s, when the colonial authorities tried to change the policies, diluting the heaviness of the relation settler/colonized, and attempting to conquer the islanders' hearts.<sup>43</sup> Keeping track with the improvement of social conditions, the authorities tried to promote sports, especially soccer, encouraging the creation of teams in the villages and inducing corporative championships among plantation teams. As long as the difference between federated soccer — in which the Sporting Clube de São Tomé and the Sport São Tomé e Benfica took part, among others — and corporate sport was maintained, this situation was equivalent to a revolution in habits and routines in the plantations, which the planters accepted pragmatically well.

In the city of São Tomé and in the villages, soccer aroused interest at the same time that racial rivalry insinuated itself, given the identification of the Sporting as the natives' club. Despite the frequent mention of Sporting as a scapegoat of nationalist conscience, such representation deserves to be scrutinized. In either case, the affective bond with the metropolis must have been reaffirmed as figures of the local elite were part of this club, some of them prone to receiving messages in favor of independence more than the other segments of the population, especially workers imported from other colonies.

In any case, this did not erase the attachment to the soccer played in Portugal and to its respective teams. It was exactly this affection that the leaders wanted to remove from São Tomé's public sphere in the post-independence period. This political goal could reach farther, and it stuck to the creation of the *new man*, free from the vestiges of colonialism, among which was this affection towards Portugal's clubs.

In exchange, the Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe (MLSTP) proposed to create sports activities for the masses and, although not economically differentiated and sufficient, a popular soccer championship. Popular designation would cease to be used, but these tournaments continued

<sup>43</sup>Augusto Nascimento, "Esporte em vez de política no ocaso do colonialismo em São Tomé", In: Victor Andrade de Melo, Marcelo Bittencourt, Augusto Nascimento (orgs.), *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano*, Rio de Janeiro, Apicuri, 2010, p. 243-278.

to take place, without the aforementioned clubs but with some survivors from the colonial era and others promoted, as it were, by the independence.

Mass sports failed because it rested on the equivocated assumption of a universal taste for the practice of sports, which, allegedly, colonialism had discreetly barred from the islanders. When the euphoria caused by the independence subsided, a portion of São Tomé's inhabitants must have felt that the practice of mass sports was less ludic than compulsory. In addition, economic difficulties demanded time and weighed on daily life once again, harming collective life, encircled, once more, by the customary ways of coexisting.

Also due to economic difficulties, the national athletes' capacity for international competition decreased steadily. Not only the means of transportation to stadiums and competitions were running low but the athletes' living conditions deteriorated.

The passage from a single-party regime to representative democracy promised a renewal in the country. However, in spite of a political environ-

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---

ment more favorable to horizontal solidarity and to the autonomy of sports, the impoverishment in the 1990s had devastating effects, a fact to which was added the uselessness of sporting institutions, especially those of soccer. For instance, the senior national soccer team spent eight years without competing, and in four years of the first decade of this century there were no soccer championships.

Sports incite interest, but not necessarily in the terms idealized by politicians. The affection towards the teams of the old metropolis remains, mingled, now, with the attention given to other emblems of other countries, an indication of the relationship of São Tomé's inhabitants with the world, very different from that of the colonial and post-colonial time. Therefore, it does not suffice for politicians to hint intentions relative to sports in order to promote cohesion among São Tomé's people and, at the same time, increase their support base. The people of São Tomé are more connected to the world, and the attachment to sports is only one of the facets that compose their plural identity.

### **Final considerations**

The reflection on sports in Portuguese-speaking African countries is a field to be discovered. Although they are few, studies conducted on the topic demonstrate that, despite common aspects, consequential of the Portuguese colonial State's general guidelines, the trajectories of sports took on peculiar features in each colony, due to the existing resources, the relations built daily between settlers and Africans, and the latter's

preferences and strategies. This reinforces a common aspect in recent historiography about colonial Africa, which consists, precisely, of the analysis of colonialism beyond metropolitan projects, discourses, juridical instruments, and actions.

As the works analyzed here show, sports were neither simple instruments of the colonial State for the disciplining of the masses, nor simply a weapon in favor of nationalisms and the anticolonial struggle. With the possibility of being all this, sporting practices were also opportunities for entertainment, sharing, and conflicts. They allowed the affirmation of dignities and the construction of diverse identities.

Beyond colonialism, the purpose of a critical analysis will have to be applied equally to the social and political dimensions of sports in the aforementioned countries, as well as in the African continent in general. These political and social veins might be less evident, but certainly not less operative in the constitution of political and social units.

The interpenetrations among political evolution, economic trajectory, social life, and sporting practices are varied but also definitive. The study of sports speaks volumes about the characteristics of African countries.