

# Foreword

There has been a clear expansion of the field of African studies in Brazil in the last decade. More and more often, events dedicated to the theme are held in different places in the country, agencies invest in the development of projects associated with this field, translations and publication of books by Brazilian researchers have also expanded significantly in the last few years. The international dialogue, already on course, is another goal to be pursued and consolidated in the years to come.

This dossier is another step in this direction, as it has been conceived to bring new reflections or new approaches to themes related to the history of labour in the African Continent. This is all about a theme that is important and essential to the understanding of the historical developments of the socio-political formation of Africa, which is due mainly to the theme's central position in the very historiographical tradition. Studies of slavery, the slave trade across the Atlantic and the types of forced labour have yielded classic works whose influence have gone beyond the areas of study related only to the history of labour.

If, on the one hand, the historiographical developments of the last decades have gone beyond the old dichotomies at the basis of research into the African history in a good part of the second half of the 20th century, showing the complexities of the social aspects far beyond the binomials free-slave, colonized-colonizer, victim-torturer, colonial-post-colonial, among others, on the other hand, we cannot overlook the violent relationships in the different regions of the African Continent from its first contact with Europe at the beginning of its capitalist expansion. How to think about the changes in the types of slavery in the heart of the continent without taking into account the Atlantic dynamics of the modern and contemporary times? How to think about the extreme condition of exclusion and oppression without considering the colonial logics resulting from the European imperial expansion in the mid 19th century? Most of these questions are directly or indirectly addressed in the texts of the dossier, written by Brazilian, African, and European historians, in an effort to expand the debate in this field that is expanding in Brazilian scene and give stimulus to a fruitful international dialogue.

Before that though we want to show a paper by José da Silva Horta, which was sent to us on the occasion of his election to the PROGRAMA CÁTEDRAS (*Chairs Program*) of the Institute of Advanced Transdisciplinary Studies of UFMG (IEAT) and sponsored by Fundação de Desenvolvimento da Pesquisa – FUNDEP. “Nations”, *identity markers and complexities of ethnic representation in portuguese travel writing: Guinea of Cape Verde (16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries)* was the original passage presented in the Great Conference, the first activity developed in the UFMG’s *Distinguished Research Chair*, which had transdisciplinary partnerships with several research groups, centers and laboratories of UFMG and PUC-Minas.<sup>1</sup>

The text by José da Silva Horta presents a unique analysis as it defends the use of ethnonyms to explain “nations” from the point of view of the ethnic identities of the societies of the sub Saharan African Northwest, based on clues provided by three of the most important treaties of the documental corpus for the region, issued between 16th and 17th centuries, by André Álvares de Almada, André Donelha and Francisco de Lemos Coelho. Besides being faced with the conceptual challenges posed by historiography, the author gives a long step ahead as he presents reading methodologies for a better understanding of thought of the western Africans in relation to their identity markers, which vary from society to society. The Western African identity views have, sometimes, been noticed in the anthropological discourses of travelling sellers, and some other times they were reconstructed by their occidental way of thinking. This was the scope of the analysis by Horta – to show that the societies identified themselves by the feeling of belonging not limited to a territory or language.

Going back to the original theme of the dossier, the other articles were organized following a time and a thematic sequence. In the article *Biography as social history*, Roquinaldo Ferreira presents the incredible history of two generations of the family Ferreira Gomes in order to explain the workings of the transatlantic networks that gave support to the illegal slave trade between Angola and Brasil. In the same way as with the strategies used by the dealers

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CENTRES AND LABORATORIES: *Centro de Estudos sobre a Presença Africana no Mundo Moderno-CEPAMM-UFMG*, coordinator: Eduardo França Paiva (Department of History – FAFICH/UFMG); *Centro de Estudos Africanos – CEA-UFMG*, coordinator: Luiz Alberto O. Gonçalves (Presidente do Conselho do CEA-UFMG); *Laboratório de Estudos Africanos e História do Atlântico Negro* (CNPq/UFMG), coordinator: Vaniléia Silva Santos (Department of History – FAFICH/UFMG); *Laboratório de Estudos e Pesquisas em Ensino de História - LABEPEH*, coordinators: Júnia Sales, Pablo Lima and Soraia Dutra (Departamento de Métodos e Técnicas de Ensino, DMTE – FAE/UFMG).

from Benguela, as the entrepreneur Gomes Júnior, son to the 'carioca' Ferreira Gomes and to an African woman (Benguela) to circumvent the control of the illegal slave trade. The family histories show how the Brazilian and Angolan dealers based in south Luanda tried to deceive the British and Portuguese authorities on the Angolan coast within the context of the ban to slave trade and the commerce of *orchella*. The decadence of the Brazilian-Angolan families in Benguela, which occurred to the Ferreira Gomes clan, coincided with the Independence of Brazil, the extinction of the slave trade and the Portuguese colonial efforts to diminish the role of the landowners drastically. The racial issues that did not use to be taken into consideration due to the reduced number of whites started to receive another connotation in the mid 1800 in Angola.

The article by Elaine Ribeiro deals with African workers in the period before the one dealt with by Ferreira. Her text addresses a group contracted in Luanda to follow the Henrique de Carvalho's expedition to Mussumba of Muatiânvua, in the decade of 1880, after the abolition of slavery in the Portuguese possessions. With an instigating analysis based mainly on the very record by Henrique de Carvalho – including part of the iconographic documentation available – Elaine sets out to present the conditions under which these Africans worked, their activities and remunerations, the hierarchies established between them and their participation strategies within the context of the expedition. In this way, on the one hand, her research reveals a very rich image of the daily life of these workers, always in dialogue with the Africanist historiography, addressing the regions visited, and, on the other hand, the forms of identity reconstruction of this group that took possession of distinct cultural elements and built their routes and experiences along the expedition.

The Portuguese historian Augusto Nascimento, specialist in the history of São Tomé and Príncipe, analyzed the issues related to the forced work of those people who worked in the plantation fields (*roças*) in São Tomé and Príncipe, imported from the continent, mainly from Angola and to the power of these "roceiros" on the occasion of the friction over the cocoa in the archipelago. The aims of the author consist of an analysis, based on the discourses in the São Tomé press, and on how the São Tomé people tried to interfere in the debate around the forced work of Africans and on the reflection on the limit-line between nation and race, considered in distinct ways by the islanders and the colonizing authorities in a period in which colonization relied on racial hierarchization and the republican notions of citizenship did not apply to most of the individuals of the so-called colonial territories. In his essay, Jean Michel Tali offers an instigating reflection on forced labour in the case of the French colonial regimens in the African continent as he retrieves one of the classical themes of historiography about the period, putting it in perspective and striking a dialogue with authors of different matrixes. This reflection results in an interesting synthesis of the present state of the studies on the theme.

As he makes an analysis at the same time accurate and broad, the author brings to the surface the important issue of the relationship between the types of compulsory labour and the capitalist imperative of the colonial regimens. With his main focus on the production relationships in the French Colonial Africa, Jean-Michel expands the scope of the analysis by means of frequent comparisons with regions colonized by other European countries, showing with clarity that, despite apparently different colonial projects, the forced expropriation of labour was, along with territorial expropriation, the fundamental element at the basis of the colonialist practices throughout the African territory as part of the process of the formation of the capitalist world system, and how it encroaches all levels of the social hierarchy along the times.

This very global perspective serves as a guideline for the research by the history researcher Adoyi Onoja, although his case study addresses specifically a regional account, which is the work of the Police in the city of Jos, Plateau, in the central Nigeria. The route designed by Adoyi to analyze the interviews carried out with members of the Police in Jos, goes from the relationships between the formation of the Nigerian National State after its independence and their international political relationships immerse in the cold war, passing by reflections on the impact of the long years under a military government in their country and the disastrous outcome of the centralized economic policies, organized around oil export, especially starting in the 1980s, which dismantled the agricultural and industrial sectors of the Nigerian economy.

The investment of the income from the oil in national security, justified by the social instability resulting from the destruction of the other sectors of the economy, might explain the predominance of the army as the national security force, taking over most of the activities that were originally an attribution of their non-military police. Finally, a vivid picture is revealed of the material work conditions of the policemen and officers in a region marked by social tension in central Nigeria.

We hope that the reading of these passages can contribute to attract new researchers and research on this theme, always expanding debate and contributing to maturing a field already under fast development in Brazil and strengthening and consolidating the internationalization process in progress.

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