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PICTURING THE MUSEUM: PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE WORK OF MEDIATION IN THE THIRD PORTUGUESE EMPIRE

Nuno Porto



Photography and museum studies have recently entered into dialogue, as historians and anthropologists begin to deal with that peculiar class of museum artefacts: the photographic archives. Roughly three types of approach can be distinguished. First there is the approach that sees photographic collections as the basis for historical discourse on a specific social group at a specific point in time, such as Geary's (1988) work on Bamum. Then there is the line that sets out from the transformation of views about a specific group, constructed through time by several different authors, who may or may not have known about each other's work. Faris's (1996) work on the Navajo, for example, relies on different, dispersed collections, achieving unity through its central theme. Thirdly, studies focusing on the disciplinary production of images: from what the camera has registered to the knowledge that sustained photographic practice. Edwards's (1990, 1992) works on 'types', Gordon's work on the Bushmen as constructed by the Colorado Expedition (1997), or Ryan's (1997) work on the visual construction of the British Empire, share this approach.

Photography and museum studies

These approaches, roughly grouped as they are here, raise parallel issues to those brought to bear in museum studies. For instance, in the art/artefact debate (Mirzoeff 1998 on Schildkrout; Keim 1998 on Mirzoeff); in criticism about the

politics of Western representation of others (Coombes 1994, Faris 1996, Gordon 1997, articulating photography, collecting and exhibiting); the role of representation as constitutive of cultural categories it is supposed to mediate (Edwards 1990, Ryan 1997).

Common to all these approaches is the attempt, pioneered by Tagg (1988), to surpass an essentialist view of photography, which may parallel a broader critique of modern knowledge. The distinction might be framed under Latour's opposition, between what he calls an intermediary, an object void-in-itself, and a mediator, which is "... an original event and creates what it translates as well as the entities between which it plays the mediating role" (Latour 1993a: 78).

I take these debates as the background for this paper, which aims to deal with relationships between museum work and photography, through the issue of mediation. My suggestion, however, is to take a step back: instead of only looking at pictures as they are published in books, in exhibition catalogues or hanging on exhibition walls, I suggest that one should pay attention to the process of their production. The purpose of this endeavour is to articulate the production of visual mediators with backstage museum culture, assuming that photography is one of the most laborious museum artefacts, both in past and present times. The fact that photographs have been, and are being dislodged from the boxes where they rested, seems to testify to their material condition. This fact alone relates to the ethnography on which this text is based: work in progress related to the Dundo Museum materials of the cultural patrimony of the ex-Diamang.

The Dundo Museum was a colonial museum owned, from 1936 to 1975, by the Diamang, The Diamonds Company of Angola, which operated in a concessioned area covering the northeast Lunda district of Angola. After Angolan independence in November 1975, the Company was nationalised and its former Portuguese headquarters closed. In the late 1980s, the Archives from the Cultural Services, which ran the museum from Lisbon, were purchased by the Anthropology Museum of Coimbra University. Part of this material includes some 4,000 photographs which comprise the Photographic Archive. There are also photographs, probably even more numerous, illustrating the museum section's monthly and annual reports for the period between 1936 and 1975. Finally, there are a few other photographs that became scientific evidence through publication in the *Dundo Museum Cultural Publications* (in the fields of ethnography, archaeology, botany and biology), as well as in books and articles related to work undertaken at the museum and published elsewhere.

The photograph as an archive item, as a work report illustration, and as scientific evidence, could have been made from the same negative. In each of these settings it becomes an entirely different object in terms of its production, circulation and consumption. This implies that choices were made along the way, and goals were pursued and negotiated in the face of predictable and less predictable constraints. The kind of choices, objectives and negotiations that underlie the production of photographs as mediators has been thoroughly neglected. The

replicable, non-autonomous nature of the photographic image, the non-existence of an original, obscured the way each image can find its way into quite different contexts. Yet, museum photographs, regardless of their theme as image, cannot but be about the museum itself, its historical contingencies, its internal organisation and its relationships with external parties. Perhaps more than any other object, museum photographs show how the museum sees itself. I therefore propose looking at the Dundo Museum, through its photographs.

Photography considered as material culture

Photographs as things

The very possibility of entering Coimbra University's Anthropology Museum depot, opening boxes and scrutinising photographs produced at the Dundo Museum until 1975, rests upon an elementary fact: that photographs are things. They are made, used, kept and stored for specific reasons which do not necessarily coincide. They are things, in the sense that they can be transported, relocated or dispersed; or damaged, torn and cropped; and because viewing implies one or several physical interactions. When considered merely as image, as imprinted representation, photographs turn into photography, and tend to be analysed as a semantic problem. In fact, representational imprint would be a much better term than imprinted representation. The print is an object, while representation rarely is.

My proposal is that photographs might be considered, following the by now classical approach devised by Reynolds (1986), through their material constitution. The material system of photographs includes other artefacts, conceptions governing their use, and the organisation of procedures, knowledge, materials, and agents engaged in their production, circulation and consumption. Hence, the same photographic image in the same social setting at a given moment, may disclose different material systems, according to variations in one or more of the elements sketched above.

I now turn to some of the variations in the material system of photographs at the Dundo Museum during the 1950s. I hope to demonstrate that this approach facilitates the articulation of inner, backstage aspects of museum work with more public, visible domains. Printed materials form an integral part of this articulation and are, therefore, central to this approach. One of the main characteristics of the Portuguese Third Empire (compared with Portugal's Far Eastern and Brazilian Empires) is the way printed materials worked in mutually constructing metropolis and colonies, and indeed the colonial process. I suggest that photographic images, in particular, played an indispensable role in what could be termed, after Anderson (1983), 'print-colonialism'. The organisational structure of the Diamang provides an arena for studying this articulation, which I approach from the perspective of one of its photographers.

The office of photographer (Agostiniano de Oliveira)¹

Taking the photographer as an agent of one of many organisational offices (rather than, for instance, as an author) underlines photography as part of the complex bureaucratic work structure of the company which had, by the mid-1950s, over 20,000 employees. This was the bureaucratic environment in which the material system of photography evolved at the Dundo, and upon which it depended both for its raw materials and other means of production. These were not stable procedures since they had to take into account technical changes going on elsewhere, as well as internal requirements that were modified through time.

Agostiniano de Oliveira held the office of company photographer between 1948 and 1964. Oliveira had arrived in the colonial government capital of Luanda in 1946, and it was there that he first worked as a photographer – the profession he had learned in Portugal. Since he was already in Angola, Diamang hired him on a salary basis, as opposed to a contract basis – a major distinction (among the company's white employees), both in terms of wage and fringe benefits.²

Company employees, apart from those at the top of the organisation – and the company photographer – were strictly forbidden to possess or use a camera. Photography was therefore denied, both as practice and product, to most of the population. However, photography was crucial to the work process from the company administration's perspective, and was extensively used to provide visual information for the work reports that provided the basis for taking new decisions. The photographer had four main tasks: photographing company activities; developing and printing film in the laboratory; classification and choice of prints, according to their technical quality, and archiving in different departments; and, more generally, the maintenance of equipment and laboratory premises.

Daily or weekly agendas were set by the organisational structure of the company and replicated in the hierarchies of the different departments. Commissioning photographs followed standard procedures: the department responsible would issue a service request to the local administration, which would then be registered by the secretarial services, which would in turn send a service order to the photographer's desk. However, requests issued by the Prospecting and Mines Services, as well as those from the Services for the Furtherance and Assistance to Indigenous Handwork (SPAMOI), Urbanisation Services and, finally Representation Services, took priority over everything else, including the museum, regardless of when they actually entered the administrative system. This did not mean that other requests were left unattended, only that they sometimes had to be postponed.

After reports had been written by their respective service director, they were delivered to the company's general director in the Lunda district. Once accepted and commented on by him, they were forwarded to the director general in Angola at Luanda who, in turn, repeated the whole procedure and sent them to the company headquarters in Lisbon. Here they received further comments and were used to take decisions concerning future company steps, which would then be

transmitted all the way back through this network to the Lunda. Photography was taken seriously because of its crucial role in splicing centralised bureaucratic control over the company.

The photographer was permitted to travel virtually anywhere and to see all the different parts of the company's intricate fields of activity. The office was associated with a degree of knowledge that was denied to his equals in the bureaucratic structure, akin to the view over the company's activities held by the administration. The photographer was, in this respect, the company's remote(ly controlled) vision.

Bureaucratic environment

It is thus not surprising that the photographer was directly answerable to the director general in Lunda, who was responsible for securing every component of the photographic process. Hence, even if cameras, lenses, tripods, lighting, magnifiers, timers, film, paper, chemicals and all the remaining panoply of instruments, components or materials involved in the production of prints were not available in Lunda, they could be obtained through Company networks. Any item made in the United States or England, and later in Germany, could be obtained through the local general director's desk.

Since the photographer was accountable for his work, and since his work was embedded in the functioning of the company at its various departmental levels, he had a reasonable bargaining position. Such negotiations were one-to-one and mainly concerned with so-called technical issues, although they might also be about more social questions. Negotiations of both sorts, about a whole range of events, were crucial to Oliveira's career with Diamang.

Bureaucracy and agency

When Oliveira joined the company in 1948, to replace their retiring photographer, he faced very unprofessional working conditions, especially regarding the laboratory. After some months' work, he reached the conclusion that it would be impossible to discharge his duties without proper, mainly technical, working conditions. An excellent laboratory was installed in the local administration headquarters by 1951, with the full support of the then director general of the Lunda district. It included a large darkroom, a studio, a room for classifying and storing prints, and a storeroom for paper, film, chemicals and equipment. New 35mm and 6x6 cameras were also acquired, as well as accessories for the existing 9x12 Linhoff camera. The company never, in fact, denied him equipment, paper, film or chemicals, or even training in new techniques with specialists in Portugal or other European countries.

It was an altogether different story, however, when it came to what were seen as claims about social conditions. The big issue here was Oliveira's salaried con-

tract. After a couple of years of hard work he came to regard this situation as unfair, and asked his superior about having it reviewed. Instead of the usual prompt response that he got when requesting technical devices or work conditions, he had to wait six months for an answer to arrive from Lisbon. Although his request was approved, he nevertheless felt that the administration was not being as cooperative as usual, which he explained in terms of (not) having the personal links needed inside the company in order to progress. Since promotion (in career, salary or benefits) depended more on personal relationships with superiors than on the quality and amount of work produced, it seems clear that several sorts of interests permeated administrative links.

Negotiations with superiors, whether for so-called technical or social reasons were, from the photographer's point of view, strengthened by the fact that his work was needed to keep the bureaucratic wheels turning. However, this strength could easily turn into weakness since the slightest misunderstanding with any departmental chief with whom he had to cooperate could put him at a disadvantage. So, in the end, a good relationship with his immediate superior was his best defence.

Routine and exception

Besides the usual tasks he had been specifically hired to perform, the photographer also had to respond to the less specified events and unpredictable episodes of colonial community life. Whenever there were any private celebrations, such as baptisms or marriages, he was called on unofficial duty. This was also the case with collective celebrations not directly sponsored by the administration, such as those organised by the colonial community in the Personnel House for such annual highpoints as Carnival, Easter, Portugal Day and New Year's Eve.

Besides these publicly acknowledged events, he also went on duty if there were major thefts of diamonds, when the camera was used to collect evidence. On these rare occasions, the Diamang Investigation and Prosecutions' Service acted in complete secrecy. No service requests or orders were issued to the director general's secretary. Instead, the director general himself would conduct the investigations, set out the tasks to be undertaken, which were neither acknowledged nor commented upon outside the investigation team. The photographer's task basically involved taking photographs that showed the modus operandi of the theft and, on one particular occasion, the technically demanding but ultimately successful attempt to produce photographs of the perpetrators' fingerprints.

Photographs not-as-images

This outline of the Diamang photographer's experience shows that photographs are something significantly more than images. In an industrial setting, such as the

Diamang, the production, circulation and consumption of photographs relates to and reveals the threads of a complex bureaucratic structure. This is not, of course, specific to photographs, since any object could lead to diverse aspects of the company. However, because of the way photography articulated with nearly all the Diamang departments, and because of the special status associated with the office of photographer – combining specific empirical knowledge of the territory and the company's activities – these threads are different and richer than those emanating from, say, the clerk's typewriter.

The constitution of archives was a by-product of the main purpose of company photography. Every month there were hundreds of negatives to be stored and no centralised archive for doing so, since each department filed its own negatives and prints. It was thus as a company department that the museum, its exhibits, performances and visitors came to be photographed systematically, especially after 1950, when the new museum building was finished. This work was carried out during a period of growing international pressure over the Third Portuguese Empire. Picturing the museum became a means of propaganda, publicising the company's self-acclaimed cultural achievements.

Museum photographs consisted in the construction of a photographic register of each museum item, extensive use of photographs in exhibition rooms, as well as in the *Dundo Museum Cultural Publications (Publicações Culturais do Museu do Dundo)*.

The museum and its photographs

The museum as a company department

The completion of the museum building in 1950 ushered in the second phase of its development, which was to be more international in character (cf. Dundo Museum Annual Report [hereafter DMAR] 1951).³ The museum had been set up in 1936, after the recovery of full production capacity by Diamang following the 1930–1931 international stock market crash. The Portuguese Colonial Exhibition, held in Oporto in 1934, was another important domestic benchmark for the Diamang museum. The Diamang employee responsible for making ethnographic collections from the Lunda and Cokwe peoples who lived in the immediate vicinity of Dundo, was nominated director of the museum in 1942. The museum was provisionally installed in one of the Dundo accommodation houses. Four years later, biology, botany, archaeology and history sections had been added to ethnography, becoming the main sections of the museum. Scientists specialising in these subjects were either hired in Portugal, or transferred to the museum from other company services to which they had been formerly attached.⁴ The delegate administrator of the company sketched the museum programme in Lisbon. Having realised the need for international cooperation in order to produce first rate work,

he sponsored partnerships between the museum and European and American museums and universities in the different areas. The result was that the Dundo Museum became a sort of frontline laboratory for the international partners. These were, in return, committed to publishing their work related to the museum collections in the *Cultural Publications*, which came out in English, French or Portuguese, and were distributed free to selected libraries worldwide.⁵

The museum had its own photographic equipment, mainly used during ethnographic campaigns, which was also available at the museum premises whenever the photographer was not there. Developing and printing film was however carried out by the photographer, who delivered the negatives and prints to museum staff. The photographer's work at the museum, although following the same procedures as any other department, could be dubbed as technically specific.

Photographing objects

The museum collections grew and diversified from its inception until the 1950s. The ethnographic part alone, the museum's main section, comprised two important collections in addition to the objects collected locally by museum staff. The Baumann Collection was named after the Berlin Volkerkünde Museum ethnographer, who had produced the most consistent work on the Lunda, and who returned as a Dundo Museum associate in 1954. He travelled mainly to the south, making a collection of some 1,200 objects which were placed in a special room at the museum. The other was the African Art collection, assembled among European and North-American antiquarians, museums and auctions, by Diamang delegates acting on the instructions of the delegate administrator. This room was to provide the African art context for the Cokwe and Lunda artefacts.

As the notion of organising an operational archive for the museum developed, it became associated with using photography to identify each object. Hence the photographer was called in, each time new acquisitions were classified, to produce a picture that would later be stamped on the reverse side of the object's file card. These photographs were context free, in the sense that they had no other purpose than depicting the formal characteristics of each artefact. These were studio photographs of artefacts, with a neutral second plan and uniform lighting. Tripod and artificial lighting were usually used with the 6x6 format Rollei camera. These photographs were not intended to do anything more than identify each object, whose card was commonly referred to as its ID card – a telling metaphor about the purpose of the picture as well as the capacities attributed to the medium.

Some specific objects, usually the most valued, were subjected to several different photographs, conveying every detail. The technique was mainly developed with an art historian from the Tervuren Museum, who came to the Dundo in the late 1950s to study Cokwe art.⁶ By trying to respond to her requests about minor details, and by studying published Negro art catalogues at the museum library,

the photographer developed his own procedures to attain the intended formal results: perfect visibility of the object, evenly distributed lighting and, at the same time, a soft picture.

Photographing the museum

Another area of his work were the pictures of displays in the museum rooms. These photographs were not only intended for museum work reports, but also for eventual publication, which occurred in three different instances.⁷ There were no constraints imposed on this sort of image, since they were mainly intended to show how things were at a specific moment. This gave the photographer a certain liberty to take time and pleasure in his work. The Linhoff camera was used for this kind of photograph, with the photographer in full control of the image. The Linhoff is a large, heavy, impractical camera, built with a bellows objective that allows for perspective correction before exposure of the 9×12 negative, which has to be set in place for each photograph. (Perspective correction could also be made, although to a more limited degree, during the printing process). These charac-



Figure 3.1 ‘Native Chiefs Gallery at the History Room of the Dundo Museum’ Negative number 8.439/958; *Arquivo Fotográfico dos Serviços Culturais da Ex-Diamang*, Museu Antropológico da Universidade de Coimbra.

teristics made the camera useless for action pictures, but perfect for still objects. The photographs of the museum rooms, even some of those taken for work reports, were made using this camera. These photographs were supposed to show the environment, as the photographer put it, rather than the tiny details of objects. They were intended to bring alive the scene for the viewer.

Photographing performances

Other photographs, considered important by the photographer, were also taken using this camera, even in outdoor situations. One of his regular consignments for the museum was to make photographic reports of important visits to Diamang, which usually ended at the museum anyway. When, in 1954, the president of the Republic visited Diamang, and the museum, the Linhoff was chosen for the job. The president was photographed in the scenario prepared for him, completing a composition in which the photographer had invested considerable time and energy. The much more manageable 6x6 Rollei camera, together with a 35mm camera, were usually used for this kind of work, as for most reporting. However, when the results were intended for publication, the Linhoff could be considered for use.



Figure 3.2 'Prof. Paulo Cunha visiting the Dundo Museum Native Village'. Negative number 19.738/961 *Arquivo Fotográfico dos Serviços Culturais da Ex-Diamang*, Museu Antropológico da Universidade de Coimbra.

Visitors, especially those regarded as distinguished guests, were usually treated to folkloric performances by the museum dancers and musicians, on the folklore ground of the museum native village. Music, dances and all sorts of performances called for the apprehension of the instant: the flow of composition, meaningful action, body or facial expression. This required the photographer's full engagement which, as he recalls, made this kind of photographic session exhausting. The sometimes diminished quality of prints obtained with these cameras was compensated by the spontaneity of the frame. These spontaneous pictures could be distinguished from those composed for the camera: the photographer could do both.

Portraits

These principles did not apply to portraits, which were his favourite theme, since portraiture implies understanding the person and bringing that understanding to the image. A portrait is one thing, a photograph of a person quite another. The photographer did both when working for the museum. Several photographs concerning ethnographic characteristics of Lunda, Cokwe or other natives, such as hairstyles, tattoos or physical types, belong to this last category. A commission from the museum, on instructions from Lisbon, to make a photographic gallery of native chiefs and elderly company workers worthy of being remembered, was his major exercise in portraiture.

The photographer's personal involvement in this work was entirely different from the motivations of either the company delegate-administrator or the museum director. For the company administrator this gallery, installed in the History Room, had clear political motivations. Photography was used here to reify the desired model of native cooperation with the company, engaging the museum effect of distinguishing specific subjects, either native chiefs or native employees, which follows a well known use of the medium (cf. Sekula 1986). Devised as a memorial, it implied not only the existence of native culture and representatives under Portuguese local history (the guideline for the room being the Lunda area under Portuguese exploration and occupation), but also placed them in the past or identified them as company/Portuguese subjects. As such, it provided visitors with a model of their place in the endeavour. The gallery worked as a local racial chart for the museum director, on the other hand, since it was thought that chiefs represented the purest specimens of each native race (*see figure 1*).⁸

None of these considerations were of any importance for the portraits made by Mr. Oliveira. He knew most of his photographic subjects since he was always wandering around the concession area. The process of portrait making involved conversation, conviviality and negotiation of how the portrait would be made with each of his subjects: whether standing or seated, with or without European clothes or any other 'alien' implement; whether staring at the camera or posing in three-quarters, and so on. Technical details regarding composition, pose or illu-

mination, and interaction conducive to the subject's good humour, overruled other considerations.

Photographic murals

Finally, part of his work involved taking photos depicting the ethnographic context related to museum artefacts. These photographs could either have been originally intended for exhibition (and produced in a similar fashion to the Portrait Gallery), or selected from the museum archive, in which case they were involved in a different material process. What distinguished these from other photographs, from the photographer's point of view, were again technical features in this case related to the scale of the prints. The museum director had, in fact, devised what he called photographic murals for this purpose. Photographic murals were supposed to act metonymically as visual emblems of the museum rooms, to attract the visitor's attention. The intention was to reinstate inert objects with the lived dimension and environment of their use.



Figure 3.3 Mural Photograph in the Folklore Room of the Dundo Museum, in: *Dundo Museum Annual Report 1973* (without negative). The caption reads 'Repairs inside and outside the museum'.

The major problem for the photographer, however, was to create a technical routine that he could follow each time a mural photograph was commissioned, given the dimension of the print, which could be as large as 6×2.8 m. (DMAR 1950: 17–18).⁹ Since the printing paper was only 1.20m, he had to join several sheets together, pinning them side by side on the studio wall. Then, after magnified exposures that were so long that they had to be interrupted to prevent the negative from frying, he would spray developer and fixer using agricultural insecticide pumps – his own imaginative and effective solution. Next, each sheet was unpinned from the wall and washed outside the studio using a hose. Finally, the studio had to be cleaned up from top to bottom after the ordeal, since both developer and fixer were highly toxic.

Photography as technical problem solving

The Diamang photographer's experience indicates that there was little difference between his work at the museum and that in any other company department, except for themes which he personally preferred, such as portraiture. Even then, however, the photographer tended to look at his work, not so much in terms of the visual product commissioned, but rather as the best, or possible technical solution, for the pictures he had been asked to make. Problems arising from his work were dealt with under the notion of 'working conditions', which could refer either to technical needs or to his rank and salary position within the company's structure.

The 1950s proved, in this respect, favourable. From a salaried situation, unprofessional means of production and complete isolation in doing his work, the photographer was given a contract, an excellent laboratory and three native assistants to accommodate the production requirements for photographs. These assistants were assigned some of the photographer's non-official tasks, such as photographing private celebrations, darkroom work and classifying the Diamang archives once this programme had been set up at the museum. The Cultural Publications Series, which began in 1946, and the new museum building, which opened in 1951, brought more work with them to which the photographer had to respond. This activity was directed, moreover, beyond the local picture, relating to international pressure on Portuguese colonial practices in Africa, particularly those concerning native working laws.¹⁰ The museum, as the public image of the company's social concerns, was subject to intense development during these years.

From the perspective outlined so far, photographs are much less an intentional, authored subjective visual statement, than the product of a network of interests. They may be seen as the material result of negotiation between personal skills and exogenous conceptions, pursued under the specific constraints of the bureaucratic structure of an enterprise to which the museum belonged, despite its internal autonomy. Variations in the material systems of photographs indicates, in this sense, their museological construction. The relevance or indifference of photographs to the museum was a function of how it cultivated an image for the outside world.

Variations in the material system of photographs

There is a major distinction to be drawn between photographs that portrayed the museum like any other company department, and those which mediated museum work through exhibits or publications. The main distinction, as I shall try to show, was about the ways in which photographs were circulated and used, and how they were valued accordingly.

The museum as a company department. Photographs for internal circulation and use; the index

Photographs produced to illustrate museum work reports are generally indexical images in that they are singular, bringing testimony to what they show, and designating their object visually (cf. Dubois 1983: 65–77). Their main theme is the museum building (inside and outside) and its visitors. They rarely include isolated artefacts as evidence of the completion of some commission. The main characteristic of such photographs is their short validity, the way they arrest time, which articulates with their serial, periodic production. Since they are about physical, visible transformations, they work in sequences. The flow of time being continuous, they have to be kept in production, punctuating and reconstructing this flow. Hence they are narrative in the sense that they describe events in time, allowing the viewer to go back and forth without ever leaving the structure with which they are endowed.

A significant part of the process that leads these photographs to play this role, springs from the fact that their audience – typically the company delegate-administrator himself – was familiar with the objects, actions, places or persons depicted.¹¹ For such an audience, the photographs were representations of an already familiar object, accessible through personal experience, to which the photographs brought further information. They did not constitute that experience, they were merely added to it. It could be said that viewers had the off-frame picture of the photographs they were looking at. Hence the referent was made present by the photographs through their sequence and accumulation in time.

Photographs were important for museum work reports whenever changes (in relation to previous images) took place: the new building, essays for displays, the reorganisation of rooms. Photographic relevance was reduced whenever things stayed the same. Photographs are a token of museum developments, as well as a sign of the bureaucratic instances accomplishing their proper work. Since the museum's general shape was directed from Lisbon, the photographs worked as a surveillance device, confirming (or not) that orders had been carried out, and work accomplished.

Photographs as museum artefacts: mediating science and culture

Three different material systems seem to have been operative in museum work regarding photography. All of them supposed some kind of public circulation and consumption: photographs exhibited in museum rooms were available to the general museum public. Photographs printed in *Cultural Publications (Publicações Culturais do Museu do Dundo)* circulated worldwide. Those belonging to the museum archive, of diverse origin, and could be channelled into both the former uses.

Exhibiting photographs

Photographs were intended to prevent the museum from becoming a mausoleum, bringing the artefacts to life for the visitors. Since they were intended for collective viewing, size mattered. They were supposed to explain the use of artefacts and so they were mainly chosen for their expressive content. The combination of physical dimension and appealing content, produced a sort of dialogic viewing process, which involved objects also in the room.

As exhibited objects, photographs become a concentrate of the work of transformation that all objects undergo when turned into ethnographic objects (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991). The process of amplifying the photograph, which is the last intervention before it is exhibited, recapitulates the preceding processes of selection, recollection and classification.

Hanging on the walls, photographs worked by analogy or by metonymy. In both cases, they abruptly reduced the meaning of the artefact to which they referred by objectifying its use. The object in the photograph is entangled in a specific context, captured (as the metaphor goes) at a specific point in time and space. The question is whether indeed it ever leaves it; and whether it makes for a permanent association, especially for the viewer, who has seen neither object nor object-photographed-in-context. Mediation in this instance constitutes the representation, which is what the viewer will carry away with him. (See Figure 3.3: the detail of the mural photograph shows objects displayed in the room, such as the drums and the marimba, in use).

Published photographs

Photographs used as discursive elements in scientific texts effect the visualisation of concepts. The time and place of a photograph's production becomes irrelevant. The photograph becomes set as a mediator, in which capacity it is acknowledged. As relations with time or space are detached from the image, they are embedded in the discourse, remote from the moment imprinted by the camera shutter. Inasmuch as representation is thus constituted in the process of mediation,

photographs do not mediate but re-represent, that is, they materialise what was, until then, a strictly conceptual element (cf. Latour 1993b: 164–66).

The sort of image involved in this process might, in formal terms, be of virtually any kind. Although formal recurrences may be found (for instance, a simple referent such as measurement), what matters in the process is the layered reduction, to the point of concision, of what it stands for, which is not given by the photograph. Hence the restricted public to which these images were addressed, and the active viewing process they imply, when seen in terms other than those of a formal exercise.

The archive

The museum photographic archive changed during this period, as consequence of the growing volume of museum work, collections and connections, from the by-product of an accumulation of museum photographs in which it had originated, to an end in itself. The archive came to be conceived as the visual register of museum activities and collections. There is a central distinction between the photographs of objects and photographs of events. Photographs of objects seem to place them beyond any social or historical relationship, allowing for permanent retrieval. Photographs of events, by contrast, are endowed with the function of memor(ial)ising time. Since it organises photographs according to specific subjects, the archive is both a classificatory and an analytical device creating its own associations between items, but simultaneously proposing the autonomy of each from the other to achieve that effect. As such, the archival photographs are generally icons of their referents, available for retrieval and further uses that might, or might not, redress their meaning (cf. Bouquet 1991: 334).

Another important issue concerning the museum photographic archive, is the way it corresponds with the catalogue for artefacts in the different museum sections. Working procedures, involving photographs, were mainly internal but could also play a role in cooperation with other museums, scholars and authorities, mobilising the archives and personnel of different sections.¹²

Print-colonialism

One specific element of the Third Portuguese Empire (as compared with its predecessors in the Far East and Brazil), concerns the role of printed media, channelled through both private and public circuits, in disseminating the notion of empire. As Anderson (1983) has shown, the imperial project relates to the metropolitan consolidation of notions of nationality and nationalism based on political objectives. This is even clearer in the Portuguese case, where a consistent imperial policy arose with the *Estado Novo*, putting an end to the social and

political turmoil of preceding decades through the institution of an army-based totalitarian regime.

International and internal objection to the colonial Estado Novo policy – over labour laws and practices similar to slavery – was also contested through printed materials, soliciting public support for political issues. The Portuguese Estado Novo association between nationalist ideology and imperial endeavour did not neglect the printed dimension, which parallels the shift from occupation to other forms of legitimation for the colonial presence such as ‘scientific domination’. Periodical publications contributed to manufacturing popular consensus about Portuguese colonial policy. These periodicals had been associated with governmental departments or missionary societies since the 1930s, neglecting corresponding material within the scientific field. This kind of publication only came into existence through the precedent set by Diamang with the Dundo Museum.¹³ Paraphrasing Anderson, the notion of ‘print-colonialism’ could, perhaps, convey this process whereby the diverse colonial territories become abridged and contiguous at the turn of a page. In the Portuguese case, Mozambique, Saint Tome and Prince, Cape Verde, Angola and Guinea Bissau succeeded Timor and Macau. ‘Print-colonialism’ refers to the practical relationships by which conceptual frames (for nature, people, places or events) are translated into printable form that together actually constitute and integrate multiple topographies. The terms whereby these diverse elements are galvanised into the idea of Empire are both creative and normative. The place of photography within these practices has been seriously neglected, and not only in the Portuguese case. The approach sketched here, underlining the agency behind the production and circulation of photographs in a colonial museum context, is a step towards redressing that neglect.

Acknowledgements

Work in progress as part of the research project ‘Science as culture in the Luso-Angolan colonial situation: the case of the Dundo Museum 1940–1974’, funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology, project Praxis XXI PCSH/P/ANT/41/96, supervised by Prof. Nélia Dias, ISCTE, Lisbon. Associated with the doctorate programme in anthropology at the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Sciences and Technology, University of Coimbra, supervised by Prof. Nélia Dias (ISCTE, Lisbon) and Prof. Manuel Laranjeira Rodrigues Areia (FCTUC). I am grateful to both my supervisors for their discussion of this text, although responsibility for any shortcomings is obviously mine.

NOTES

1. The following section is based on more than six hours of interviews with Mr. Oliveira, held in Lisbon in May 1998. Although I have edited what he said, this section of the text is indeed co-authored.
2. The Diamang work contracts for Angola were produced in Lisbon. These were three-year contracts for a period of two and half years, with a six-day working week, and a vacation of six months in Portugal that concluded the contract. When going to Portugal, workers had to empty their house in the Concession area, since it was part of Company policy that no one should have any personal belongings in that area. They were given a month's notice of whether their contract had been renewed or not. If they agreed to return, they were rarely assigned a new house. Apart from the house, food, furniture, equipment and sometimes personnel, were also part of the contract. The type of house and its location were related to position. Salaried workers earned about half the contract workers' wage, had no paid holidays and no priority regarding housing, which meant they had to be ready to move house at any time.
3. The museum director states that: "The Dundo Museum has come to the point where two elements are defined: the conservation of its artefacts, which is simple work that can be done by anybody, as long as they are honest. And scientific work, which can only be accomplished by highly specialised personnel, of the same standing as the museum itself, and the superior quality of its scientific productions, such as the *Cultural Publications*". The marking of this new phase continues throughout the 1950s with specific demands, such as the making of an anthropological section related to ethnography.
4. Thus whereas the biology laboratory director was recruited in Lisbon, the director of the archaeological section and his assistants were all transferred from the Prospecting Services on their own consent. Similarly, doctors, nurses and nearly all of the Company's sections sometimes cooperated on museum work, by sending to it any object found during their own work. (Prospecting workers were compensated whenever they produced any archaeological item, SPAMOI services conducted a Mission for the collection of Native Music, etc.)
5. This became the first Portuguese-based scientific publication on colonial issues, to the despair of the Ministry of the Colonies, which only managed to launch a similar project in the 1950s. The story of what the Minister said when he heard that they had been pipped at the post by "those grocers from the Rua dos Fanqueiros" (the street where the Diamang had its headquarters in Lisbon), became a standing company joke. Diamang, which had no license to trade in any other goods than diamonds, produced a journal. The basic network for its worldwide distribution was triggered by the young biologist responsible for the biology laboratory (from the Faculty of Sciences of Oporto), who had been shelved by Salazar's regime, and who is still acknowledged as a leading Central Africa entomologist.
6. Who became a leading authority on Cokwe art. Marie Louise Bastin worked as assistant researcher at the Belgian Tervuren Museum, with Prof. Olbrecht. She first went to the Dundo in 1956.
7. These were Oliveira, José António de, 1954, *Uma Acção Cultural em África*, s/ed, Lisboa; *Breve notícia do Museu do Dundo*, s/d, Companhia de Diamantes de Angola, Lisboa; this 12 page publication was distributed to museum visitors; *Museu do Dundo – Flagrantes da vida na Lunda*, Publicações Culturais no. 37. Besides these, all the leaflets that related to museum exhibitions elsewhere (Paris in 1958, Salvador da Bahia and Marseille in 1959, Köln in 1961, Madrid in 1962 and Wien in 1965) used his photographs.
8. The project was devised in 1942, when the delegate-administrator visited the Dundo. The next year, commenting on the project, the museum director wrote: "This production should become very interesting, not only for the great appreciation that natives have for being photographed, but also due to the historical side of the matter. Usually, gentile chiefs (by blood), are the most exact representative of the anthropological type of each 'race'. Whether because they descend from the central line of their tribe, or because they tend to be elected by the most pure of its groups" (DMAR 1943: 3–5).

9. These large mural photos were destined for the principal rooms at the four corners of the museum: the Honour Room, the History Room, Musical Folklore and Religion.
10. The problem of forced labour, denounced by the *Bureau International du Travail*, was particularly embarrassing for the company since its contracts with the Angolan Colonial Government, established that a part of the workers needed by the company were supplied by the government. Administrative change that led, in 1950, to colonies (as fundamentally different entities from the metropolis) becoming Overseas Provinces (part of the nation, only not territorially contiguous), was a clear reaction to the growing pressure.
11. In November 1997 the Dundo National Museum still had a Kodak Camera with the following label: "Camera used by the delegate-administrator, Commander Ernesto Vilhena, on his visit to the exploitation area in 1922". Most of the *memoranda* from the Cultural Services to the museum concerning photography, are signed by his son, Dr Júlio de Vilhena who, from the mid-1950s, directed the services. Last (and least), according to Mr. Oliveira, the delegate-administrator hated being photographed. When unable to avoid it (as during public ceremonies) he instructed the photographer to view him from below. Mr. Oliveira interprets this perspective distortion as a means of correcting the delegate-administrator's short stature.
12. Describing the criss-crossing of archival procedures, the museum director concludes: "...the system of the photograph in an independent file card offers better possibilities of use for the following reasons: a) it serves identification; b) it serves its documentary function; c) it remits to any other system, if it were, afterwards, suitable; d) it implies a much reduced number of photographs (documentary ones) that may be augmented until it equals the totality of objects (identification photos). In sum: 1st: The file card to ethnographic objects is produced with some comments explaining the model; 2nd: The photographic file card is studied and one applies the photo to the object file card or to an independent one. 3rd: let us say one decides that the photo in an independent file card is more practical; If so, the File of the Ethnographic collection is indeed a double file composed of descriptive file cards and photographic file cards. Now, to begin working on this matter we shall start by the descriptive file cards. In what concerns typography, card thickness, colour and number of cards to order, we shall return to the subject on which we have already exchanged ideas with the director general. The file card must have enough surface so that any change might be introduced before one prints it. And many other details must be judged. (...) Some registers cannot be supported by only one file card, while others only require a few lines. In these terms we have chosen a model of medium dimensions which, for special cases, can be used once, twice or three times, depending on the quantity of text. Regarding the photographs of remarkable objects, or those requiring amplification for observing details, one might obtain larger prints from the archived negative. Faced with a choice between glass or film negative, we should use film, because it's not so fragile. We do not think, for this purpose, that the negative should be larger than 6x9 cm. Some objects may be photographed in different positions" (DMAR 1950: 32–33). As these remarks clearly show, archive photographs mobilise the print, the general director, considerations of volume, surface, colour, resistance, written text, the quality of artefacts, the artefacts' archive and so on.
13. These are *O Mundo Português* (The Portuguese World), *o Boletim da Agência Geral das Colónias*, (Bulletin from the General Agency of the Colonies), directly dependant on the Overseas Ministry, and, from the missionary side, *Portugal em África* (Portugal in Africa). Concurring with these, with a more selective public with scientific interests, was the older *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, (the Bulletin from the Lisbon Geographical Society). The journal, which came to cover scientific interests in Portuguese Colonies (which became 'Overseas Provinces' by the 1950 Administrative reform), was *Garcia de Orta*, the first issue of which dates from 1952, and was named after the Portuguese Naturalist. This publication was issued by the *Junta das Missões Geográficas e de Investigações do Ultramar* (Commission for Geographical Missions and Overseas Research).