AN EMPIRE OF PREDICTIONS: INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS AND ISLAMIC GOVERNANCE DURING THE LIBERATION WAR (1964-1974)

Sandra Araújo
Centro em Rede de Investigação em Antropologia
Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas
Universidade Nova de Lisboa
sandraraujo.xx@gmail.com

Abstract

Engaging the theoretical framework of Historical Anthropology and Postcolonial Studies, the paper focuses on Portuguese late-colonialism and additionally it considers potential influences of other European colonial traditions and practices. It draws attention to the performance of a Portuguese intelligence services branch the Serviços de Centralização e Coordenação de Informações de Moçambique (Mozambique Information, Centralization and Coordination Services), hereafter referred as SCCIM. This service operated between, 1961 and 1974, and played a significant role in the development of a governance strategy targeting the Mozambican Muslims, during the liberation war (1964-1974).

Hence, I will address SCCIM’s historical trajectory within the Portuguese colonial apparatus, its surveillance, data collection and analysis procedures. Seeking to highlight cultural, imaginary and symbolic elements contained in intelligence assessments produced on Muslims. Furthermore, I will explore the entanglement concerning intelligence gathering and the development of a corpus of Knowledge on Mozambican Islam, and its impact in the shaping of colonial governance. Showing how such knowledge, despite being equally developed by other state and academic agencies, was highly connected with intelligence-led activities. It kept a very close relation with political power and was germane to generate predictions that were at governance core.

My aim is to offer insights on the study of Portuguese colonial intelligence services, which are often approached with a political and institutional focus. Therefore, through a case study, I will: i) examine SCCIM’s intelligence assessments on Muslims, their rationale, uses and manipulations, particularly regarding Islamic transnational connections; ii) appraise to what extent such predictions conform to pre-existing perceptions - sanctioning them or, on the contrary, shaping new ones - providing the basis for policy and ideology making; iii) finally, consider the role played by SCCIM and its impact the shaping of colonial Islamic policy, during the liberation war.

Keywords: colonial governance, intelligence services, knowledge, Islam.

Sandra Araújo, PhD candidate at CRIA/FCSH-UNL (Centro em Rede de Investigação em Antropologia/ Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas - Universidade Nova de Lisboa). In 2008, she completed her MA in Contemporary History: XXth Century Area (FCSH-UNL) where she studied the ‘Conselho do Império Colonial/Conselho Ultramarino’, during the ‘Estado Novo’. Currently she is preparing her PhD on Anthropology, focusing on Mozambique, during the late colonial period. Her research interests include the study of intelligence services and their role on Portuguese colonial rule, as well as, on knowledge, intelligence gathering and surveillance in colonial governance of Islam.