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cea@iscte.pt

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Cleveland, Todd

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Todd Cleveland

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Todd Cleveland

Augusto Nascimento, Marcelo Bittencourt, Nuno Domingos, Victor Andrade de Melo. *Esporte e Lazer na África: Novos Olhares*

Paginação da edição em papel : p. 249-254

- 1 *Esporte e Lazer na África: Novos Olhares*, edited by Augusto Nascimento, Marcelo Bittencourt, Nuno Domingos and Victor Andrade de Melo, is a welcomed addition to the growing corpus of scholarship that examines sports, athletics and, in this case, leisure in Africa's past and present. This edited volume grew out of a collaborative research project initially launched in 2007, spearheaded by an international group of Lusophone scholars. *Esporte e Lazer* constitutes the third major effort of this cohort, following international fora and the attendant publication of *Mais do que um jogo: o esporte e o continente africano* in 2010. This current collection of essays features a number of new contributors and, arguably more importantly, the volume expands the topical scope of this interdisciplinary endeavor via the inclusion of leisure. Sports and athletic activities – both organized and informal – continue to dominate the constituent contributions, but the incorporation of leisure illuminates pursuits that often feature only distant or tangential connections to more “traditional” sporting endeavors. Temporally, the volume's chapters engage with events and topics that range from the early colonial period, an era during which Europeans were first introducing so-called “modern sports” to the continent, to current times. This broad temporal span enables readers to identify the shifting fields of power on the continent, reflective of the dramatically changing political landscape, and also the ways that Africans' sporting and leisure practices correspondingly changed within this fluctuating environment. The volume focuses almost exclusively on the five former Portuguese colonies: Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe, but the rather unexpected presence of a chapter that considers Germany's former colony of South West Africa (modern day Namibia) adjusts this geographical spotlight ever so slightly. While the editors contend that this inclusion is intended to prompt thinking in “comparative terms and to look at the continent in a more panoramic fashion,” incorporating additional non-Lusophone chapters would have appreciably furthered these objectives (p. 11).
- 2 The editors should be commended for their initial and ongoing efforts to generate knowledge related to sports and, newly, “leisure” in (Lusophone) Africa, inclusive of that which appears in this volume. However, for all the important individual contributions (including chapters authored by each of the four editors) and the analytical potential of *Esporte e Lazer*, the introduction, at just three pages, is disappointingly short. This brevity precludes a sustained, substantive engagement with: the series of essays that comprise the volume; this emerging field of study and the (particular) ways that the volume moves it forward; and, in general, the book's epistemological and analytical contributions, broadly conceived. At over 300 pages, space limitations were seemingly not an issue, so the reader is left to ponder why the chapters were essentially left to stand on their own; nor were the chapters organized thematically or topically, instead appearing as a loosely chronological, uninterrupted stream without any delineation or categorization. Most problematically, it's entirely incumbent upon the reader to draw meaningful connections between the chapters and, thus, to determine what broader lessons and utilizable approaches and analyses the volume offers.
- 3 Ultimately, the editors' efforts to construct a foundation that will inform further research and upon which future scholars will build is certainly laudable. Yet, the absence in the volume of a thorough analytical engagement with the constituent material, which would have significantly enhanced this collection of otherwise excellent essays, is lamentable. Although the authors of many of the chapters admit that their respective contributions reflect only preliminary research and that the work itself is often highly descriptive in nature, lacking sharp analytical

- 4 dimensions (not entirely surprising considering that this volume grew out of conference proceedings), these essays undoubtedly merited more in-depth, extensive editorial treatment. Andrea Marzano's chapter is a fitting way to embark upon a journey through the sequence of essays, not only due to its temporal focus on the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, but also because it so thoroughly engages with leisure – the novel inclusion of this volume. As is so often the case, sports and leisure reflect broader social dynamics and Marzano's contribution captures well key shifts in the colonial capital of Angola, both in a racial and demographic sense. This pivotal time in the colony's history witnessed the influx of Portuguese settlers and the attendant marginalization of mixed race (*mestiço*) and culturally assimilated (*assimilado*) black Angolans, as well as the deepening exploitation of "native" Angolans. As these social and demographic changes hardened racial boundaries, leisure practices and pursuits were correspondingly affected. Marzano is heavily dependent on the newspaper *Reforma*, and the piece lacks a readily identifiable or sustained argument, but her reconstruction of leisure practices in Luanda's hotels and bars illuminates places and spaces largely neglected in scholarship that considers the social history of colonial Angola. The ensuing chapter, by Matheus Serva Pereira, complements Marzano's work well, exploring a similar set of social and political dynamics in Lourenço Marques, the colonial capital of Mozambique (now Maputo) during roughly the same historical period. Pereira also utilizes newspapers from this era, but is much more focused on how representations of Africans – especially "sub-alterns" – in the colonial press were both linked to and precipitated official state oppression. Pereira deftly argues that the press' presentation of these subjugated Mozambicans' leisure activities, including excessive drinking, public disorder, prostitution and theft, led colonial authorities to perceive that a forceful response was necessary. Ultimately, the state's series of policy rejoinders generated a racially segregated city and an acutely exploitative forced labor scheme. In the ensuing chapter, Sílvia Marcus de Souza Correa examines a similar time period, but shifts the topical focus to sport and the geographical focus to South West Africa via an exploration of both horse riding and racing in this former German colony. Correa contends that these pursuits helped settlers "Germanize" the colony and also enabled practitioners to reinforce their common European identity and, thereby, distinguish themselves from both mixed race and "native" residents. Indicative of the new "colonial realities," which were increasingly experienced along racial lines, black Africans were restricted to racing mules, receiving significantly less in prize money for these competitions than did German jockeys who piloted the physically and symbolically superior horses.
- 5 Broadening the perspective, Nuno Domingos' chapter engages with sports and leisure across Portugal's expansive African empire, while also marking a transition within the volume to the high colonial period. Domingos treats sports and leisure as a process, occurring simultaneously within the various territories of the empire. Yet, for all of the commonalities that this process featured from colony to colony, Domingos cautions readers that the application of state-devised sports and leisure policies and the experiences of the colonial residents whom they affected differed according to a number of factors, including the degree of urbanization and the prevailing demographics, *et al.* (p. 82). These particularities, in turn, influenced how sports were both practiced and consumed. Ultimately, Domingos contends that the Portuguese dictatorial regime, the *Estado Novo*, conceived sports as largely functional, intended to instill notions of obedience and hierarchy and offer a variety of social lessons that were far more important than the games themselves. In practice, much of this superb material and analysis would have been excellent fodder for the volume's relatively sparse introductory chapter. In the proceeding chapter, Marcos Cardão maintains the analytical focus on empire, employing various examples from the colonies to explore the political and social impacts of visits to Portuguese Africa by metropolitan soccer clubs. Cardão avers that these excursions were intended to reinforce the supposed unity of the colonies and metropole, as captured in the phrase popularized by the regime: "Portugal is not a small country." This fascinating piece highlights the increasingly patriotic nature of these trips, especially in the wake of the outbreaks of the wars of liberation in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau in the early

1960s. Victor Andrade de Melo's proceeding chapter extends the focus on empire via an interesting look at a series of sports-themed postal stamps issued by the Portuguese state in 1962, with the colonies as their backdrop. This propaganda effort constituted yet another example of how the embattled Portuguese state attempted to emphasize the integrity of the colonies and the metropole, once again invoking the mythical notion of Luso-tropicalism to justify the formation and perpetuation of empire.

- 6 While Marcelo Bittencourt's ensuing chapter remains temporally in the (late) colonial period, his examination of the state's vigilance of sporting activity in Angola marks a return in the volume to case studies of individual colonies. Bittencourt ably draws attention away from the dominant historiographical focus on Angolan participants in the armed struggle for independence to those residents who remained in the heart of the colonial state, experiencing the various forms of colonial oppression on a daily basis, via everyday forms. Although, as Domingos indicated, the Portuguese regime utilized sport in the colonies as a tool of inculcation to build loyalty and obedience, Bittencourt utilizes materials from the archive of the secret police, or PIDE, to demonstrate that at least some authorities within the state apparatus deemed sporting clubs and associations in colonial Angola presumptively subversive. Perhaps even more interestingly, Bittencourt's work reveals consequential schisms and tensions amongst the array of Portuguese state ministries, institutions and delegations and the recurring disconnect between policy makers in Lisbon and their subordinates in the colonies. Augusto Nascimento's succeeding chapter maintains the focus on a particular colonial space, in this case São Tomé and Príncipe, but also newly ushers the reader into the post-colonial period. Nascimento considers the ways that sport, politics and society are intertwined in contemporary São Tomé, though he also considers the way(s) that the nation's colonial past is evoked and imagined, often for political ends. This interesting study examines not just sport itself but also the discourse surrounding it. Nascimento argues that despite the government's regular evocation of sport and pledges to emphasize and support it, sport remain on the statal periphery, persevering as a "secondary activity," just as it was during the colonial period (p. 185). Aurélio Rocha's ensuing piece extends the exploration of sports and politics, in this case via an examination of their relationship in post-colonial Mozambique. While acknowledging the preliminary state of the research upon which this chapter is predicated, Rocha's contribution provides considerable insight into Mozambique's contemporary sporting challenges by exploring the history of the post-colonial state's shifting relationship with athletics – reflective of the radical changes in the country as it transitioned from single-party socialism to economic and political liberalism. The subsequent chapter, by Luca Bussotti, maintains the focus on the Mozambican state through an exploration of the country's decision to host the 10th (X) All-Africa Games in 2011. Bussotti examines the politics involved in this resolution and, in particular, how the local press assessed the undertaking. Bussotti concludes that despite the manifest political motivations, which were in some capacity personal, as the Mozambican President, Armando Emílio Guebuza, sought to shore up his legacy, that the process of the Games – including the initial decision, the build-up to, and, finally, the actual event – was favorably reviewed by the local independent press.
- 7 The penultimate chapter of the book, by Fernando Borges, provides the volume's only sustained engagement with Cape Verde – reflective of the minimal coverage that the island nation receives within the broader field of Lusophone studies, dominated as it is by scholarship on Mozambique and, to a lesser extent, Angola. This dearth notwithstanding, Borges diverts our attention away from scholars' persistent geographical foci on Praia and Mindelo to the Concelho de Santa Catarina, on the island of Santiago, for an interesting comparative piece that considers rural and urban practices related to sport and leisure. Some of the findings in this preliminary study are rather predictable, e.g. men watch more football on television than do women. But, the research remains valuable for its quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the differences that location and gender can have regarding how people experience sports and leisure, even within the same, (very) small nation. Finally, in the volume's concluding chapter, Vivian Fonseca offers a transnational investigation of capoeira, tracing its practice from Brazil to both Angola and Mozambique. An earlier stream of the diffusion of capoeira

from Brazil saw it reach the wealthy, industrialized nations of the West. However, Fonseca is more concerned with capoeira's more recent transmission to Angola – its place of origin, or at least of inspiration – via teachers and practitioners who sought not financial gain or “a better life,” but rather to discover the roots of this distinctive leisure practice. Fonseca also explores how the Brazilian state has enjoyed this form of “cultural diplomacy,” but reveals that despite the government's avowed support for capoeira it has failed to deliver upon its material promises to the masters, teachers and practitioners responsible for bringing capoeira “back to Africa” (p. 302).

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Autor

Todd Cleveland

Augustana College, Department of History, 61201-2296, Rock Island, Illinois, United States
toddccleveland@augustana.edu

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