

Book Reviews

Havik, Philip J., and Malyn Newitt, eds. 2015. *CREOLE SOCIETIES IN THE PORTUGUESE COLONIAL EMPIRE*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 255 pp. \$81.95 (cloth).

Creole Societies in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, coedited by Philip J. Havik and Malyn Newitt, is a volume of essays that comprises eleven original articles and a crisp, stimulating introduction by the coeditors. It delves deeply into the apparently marginal, ambiguous, elusive world of articulations and symbiotics between the so-called colonizers and their erstwhile colonized.¹ It deals with the wide-ranging multicultural and intercultural world comprising the African, Atlantic, Brazilian, and Asian regions, all of which formed the Portuguese colonial empire from the early 1400s up to 1974.

Creole populations, well covered in this volume, are much more than double-barreled entities: they are triple-barreled or even multiple-barreled, never the simplistic result or end product of contact between conquistadores from a European metropole and “primitive” indigenes passively laid out in an African or Asian colony-in-the-making. The stage was always much more complex, more kaleidoscopic, and more erratic. *Lançados*—as well as their wives, friends, mercantile allies, brothers-in-law, and sisters-in-law—were actors, conscious and strategic players within a boiling drama enacted on diverse stages along the entire West African coastline over centuries. These theaters have been ignored by the academic mainstream, and one wonders why.

There is no longer room for the now archaic binomial of predictable power relations confronting the dominant colonial leaders and their dominated indigenous populations. Nowadays, it is not enough simply to refer to individuals or groups as subaltern. The multifarious social spaces between these extremes elucidate an array of categories comprising various types of intermediaries and mediators, who manipulated as well as parried, on the one hand, with their superiors and, on the other hand, with their inferiors.

In Fanon-like language, the wretched of the earth have always had strategies of defense, resistance, and retaliation, however weak or mute these might have been. This is the true nature of Creole realities: novel creations of linguistic, cultural, musical, and even culinary styles; negotiations both economic and personal; bargaining in trade and apparel; mixtures of infinite complexity; new hybridities and unexpected novel social rainbows of subtle class, ethnic, religious, and gender interfaces.

One may wonder what, indeed, Creole *societies* might be. Contributors to the volume go a long way to provide clear-cut empirical examples of such societies, regions, and communities on three continents and two oceanic expanses. The first edition, born in a 2004 seminar at King's College in London in honor of the centenary of the birth of doyen Charles Boxer, was published in 2007 under the same title, as number six in the Lusophone Studies series of the University of Bristol, linked to the department of Hispanic, Portuguese, and Latin American studies.

I was privileged to read that publication with great interest shortly afterward. The current edition reproduces these articles unaltered, except for the addition of a useful index at the end (absent in the 2007 edition). Obviously, the book thus does not intend to update its text in relation to relevant research on the theme since 2007, in itself now a fascinating current and future challenge for scholars in history and anthropology who pursue Creole studies within African, Asian, and Brazilian contexts.

Perhaps a less interesting way of commenting on or evaluating the essays is to start from a geographic angle, which might first conglomerate seven of them, those that focus on West Africa and the Atlantic islands. Three treat Angola; another three, Guinea; two, Cape Verde; and one, São Tomé. Some of these, however, deal with two areas simultaneously (Guinea and Cape Verde, Guinea and Angola). Then, another three treat India and the Indian Ocean (one Goa, another the Northern Provinces, including Daman and Diu, and another Madagascar). Yet, another deals with late colonial Brazil.

As space and time always afford us two initial (and only initial!) baselines, on a temporal scale, the eleven texts fall into three groups. Those in the first deal with the entire colonial period, stretching roughly from the early fifteenth century up to 1974 (Philip J. Havik, José Lingna Nafafe, Gerhard Seibert, and Teotónio R. de Souza),² those in the second apply microscopes to more specifically delimited chronological periods (Toby Green, Rosa Williams, A. J. R. Russel-Wood, Arne Bialuschewski, and Glenn J. Ames),³ while those in the third focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Luís Batalha, Beatrix Heintze).⁴

One could not praise adequately the general introduction by Havik and Newitt (himself another doyen of studies on the Portuguese empire), with its avoidance of a simple listing of the articles, its allergies to trendy recent terms (such as *postcolonial*, *hybridity*, and *globalization*), and its much more captivating thematic weaving of the major topics among the volume's contributions. This is really what an introduction should be: an appetizer not only for the book, but for food for thought generally within the interrelated, multidisciplinary worlds of Creole and colonial studies. Four themes are subsequently dealt with: Portuguese diasporas, the elusiveness of identity, the Black Portuguese, and the creation of new ethnicities. This introduction really makes a reader stop to think.

Harking back to our lists of lusophonic terms, readers will certainly remember *cafre*, *casado*, *crioulo*, *crypto-Jews*, *degradados*, *forro*, *gentio*, *quilombolas*, and *reinóis*. But they might not have come across those in

the following list: *ambakista*, *angolar*, *aviado*, *castiço*, *Kriston*, *lançado*, *malata*, *pombeiro*, *ñara*, *tangomão*, *tonga*, *tungumá*. All these terms are dealt with in detail in the articles that we are discussing. A reader may again wonder: what is their significance and novelty?

Let us take a closer look at the term *lançado*, for instance, a particularly curious type of colonizer. Let us imagine ourselves on the West African coast in the mid-sixteenth century. Modern anthropologists might characterize the *lançados* as cop-outs, ex-soldiers who stayed so long among, and identified so deeply with, indigenous populations that they veritably transformed themselves into Africans. Dress, language, corporal movements, tatoos, and newly adopted names marked them as somehow “less Portuguese” and somewhat “more African” than their cohorts. One may wonder if we could term them as Luso-African, or African Portuguese, or Eurafricans. My deliberate use of multiple “ors” indicates the complexity of the matter, and the difficulty of pinning down or defining these individuals in any kind of minimally convincing way. They would have married local women and established firm, nearby networks of trading partners, with their children becoming *mulatos* or *mestiços*, reproducing and further layering the ambivalent social and cultural nature of their European-born father. On their mothers’ sides, their world of relatives and neighbors would be distinctly African, not Portuguese. Their links to the Portuguese Crown would grow steadily less intense.

The official hierarchy would have seen them as renegades or deserters, if not even tax evaders; in practical terms, they might soon become their own commercial competitors. Reinvoking our anthropologist mannequin, in professional slang, the *lançados* had simply “gone native.” Let me expound my answer to the aforementioned query by touching on three major themes, which the book elucidates. The first theme concerns the role of brokers. Havik’s essay brings the topic to the fore, stressing the mediating roles that the *lançados* and similar figures played. True, this concept—either in its form of political power brokers or simply social brokers linking two distinct or separate fields or groups—was fabricated along with the anthropological notion of social networks, since the latter was coined for the first time in John Barnes’s classic 1954 article on Norwegian fishers.

One is further reminded of Jeremy Boissvain’s 1974 study of “friends of friends” and their manipulations of coalitions in Malta, and of Anton Blok’s monograph of the same year on violent peasant entrepreneurs in a Sicilian village. The pertinence of this tool cannot be overemphasized in the contexts of creolization under focus on the coasts of West Africa, for example; it was precisely these brokers between Europeans and Africans who developed and maintained enormous amounts of social capital as guides, interpreters, merchants, or traders. But brokers’ power tends to be obscured frequently by their ambiguous, Janus-like positions, facing one way one moment and the opposite way in the next.

Certainly, many of the terms in the list above refer to one or another kind of broker, many of whom were in fact women—a situation that should

lead readers to reconsider many previous analyses, where male-dominated views ring louder.⁵ In discussing pirates on the Eastern coast of Madagascar in the early 1700s, Bialuschewski highlights the key roles played by women. Similarly, Havik, Heintze, and Nafafe stress the important activities of male and female brokers and mediators. And of course, as Batalha notes, the birth of Creole studies in the late nineteenth century viewed Creoles as intermediaries between European and native languages.

Meanwhile, given the rich array of empirical examples presented and analyzed in the volume, its spotlight on these brokers serves to advance our knowledge of the nature and structure of colonial Creole societies. We face confirmation that the latter have *always* come to existence within complex interweaving networks of *multiple* individuals, kindred groups, and other forms of social alliances. In a kind of subalternist fashion, these mediators, both men and women, are focused on and “given voice,” thereby shifting attention from the one-sided shape of the *colono* to the multiplex rotations of the broker.

The second theme is the way in which virtually all the essays share a tone of critical rethinking. This is quite refreshing, as it demands the reader’s constant attention throughout the texts and the footnotes, which are generally dense and occupy in some cases many pages. So-called traditional, archetypal, archaic, outdated, simplistic, and *passé* views are attacked or placed aside, in favor of new lines of thought and novel angles of interpretation. Assumptions are challenged, labels and categories redefined, and political whitewashings are unmasked.

In Batalha’s and Seibert’s analyses, respectively, Cape Verdean political and intellectual elites were shadowed by old colonial identity representations, and Creole elites in São Tomé never promoted the existence of Creole society, which would have undermined nationalist ideology and vested interests. To use a well-chosen metaphor of Seibert’s, legends were indeed “embroidered.” Other particularly critical melodies are sung by Williams, Russel-Wood, de Souza, Newitt, and Havik.

In Angola, for example, heterogeneous populations were simplified or “collapsed” into two or three categories of *colonos*, *degradados*, and *mestiços*, the actual social tapestry having been infinitely more varied. In Brazil, the birthplaces and origins of incoming African groups weighed heavily in relation to Afro-Brazilians’ attitudes: one’s original African ethnic group or cultural area (*nação*) separated many populations, which arrived not in huge mixed conglomerates, but in more geographically delimited concentrations. And in Goa, Luso-Indian miscegenation was “a trickle,” and at the demise of Portuguese colonial presence merely a scant 3 percent of the population spoke Portuguese. These observations go against the grain.

The third and last theme concerns the hidden corners of the empire comprised by these Creole societies or regions, hitherto relatively ignored. On or beyond the margins, Creole areas are termed by Havik corners, outposts, “a largely forgotten part of the empire,” “far flung Portuguese communities,” or regions whereby the Portuguese settled “beyond the Pale.”

Two other texts hammer this notion even more heavily: these hidden niches are not always spatial, but also social and demographic: while Ames focuses on the provinces of the north in northwestern India (Damão, Diu, Baçaim, Chaul), Green locates an active Crypto-Jewish diaspora in the Portuguese trading posts of West Africa, which extended across the Atlantic. The proliferation of this Sephardic group, particularly in seventeenth-century Angola, leads Green to conclude that West Africa, at this time, harbored “a hotbed of crypto-Jewry.”

We are therefore in the territory of the unofficial or informal empire, where not everything transpires quite the same way as at the heart of the system. Clearly, here on the edges,⁶ Creole mixtures and hybridities can flourish unleashed. The entire volume does justice to its goal, as stated in the introduction, of refining our vision precisely of these distant, outlying nooks. I am reminded of George Winius’s now classic 1983 article on the shadow empire, which delineates a region in the northeastern Indian Ocean area where *degredados* and other freelance mavericks also went beyond the Pale, virtually deserting the Crown while mounting their own, as it were, “small and medium businesses” out of the reach of the formal imperial hierarchy. Was this shadow empire the same kind of world that this volume describes, in the outlying crannies of Africa, Asia, and Brazil? Note what Winius observes concerning these independent, wandering Portuguese entrepreneurs: “the activities of the *bandeirantes* in Brazil and those of the *degredados* in Africa bear a suspicious resemblance to the same patterns.”⁷

The status of this text among historians escapes my critical eye, as anthropology (not history) is my base discipline. But I have dabbled earlier with reasonable detail into the parish records of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Trás-os-Montes, and, currently, I am dissecting ecclesiastical marriage records in Malacca from 1768 to 2009 under the three regimes: Dutch, British, and Malay. In the first case, a kind of dual kinship structure was uncovered, with formal marriage, legitimate offspring, and high status reflected obliquely in the social mirror by concubinage and ephemeral unions, widespread bastardy, and low social status. My materials seemed to jump out of the pages of Georges Duby and Jack Goody. An apparently marginal group of illegitimate children and single mothers served to support—as servants and shepherds—the upper rungs. Which begs the question, already hashed out decades ago: are marginal groups really marginal at all? These bastards (no insult intended!) were my “corner group”—a kind of underbelly, but at the same time upholding the entire basis of the whole village.

The same type of register in Malaysia reveals a quintessentially Creole group: rather than a Lusophone relic, concentrated today within the so-called Portuguese quarter of Malacca (*o bairro português de Malaca*), this population reveals its true composition as a hybrid mixture of Portuguese, Indians, Chinese, Malays, Philippines, Africans, Indonesians, Europeans, and Ceylonese. Numerous brides or grooms had a *pai incognito* (unknown father), *may gentia* (non-Catholic mother), *pays gentios* (non-Catholic parents), or *paes infieis* (infidel parents), and many of course were listed respectively

as *reformados*, *protestantes*, or in one case belonging to a *seita de Calvino* (Calvin's sect). From the late eighteenth century, Dutch surnames abound, followed by British ones. But further analysis reveals that any purportedly Portuguese (read "Portuguese-Creole") name could well hide an Indian or a Chinese ethnic. Only successive names from the parents' and grandparents' generations can elucidate the matter. To be provocative: a *Pereira* might very well not have been a *Pereira*. Or more cautiously: a Creole *Pereira* might not have been a Portuguese *Pereira*. What therefore is the status of our category *Portuguese*?

My point is this. With these examples, we are certainly coming upon a plethora of hidden realms, be these social, spatial, historical, or present-day. Some are indeed Creole, some are truly Portuguese, but between these two (Creole and Portuguese), what stands out now is the vastness of the interweavings and articulations, the scale and the gradations.

Various terminologies and categories are in use, including Luso-Malays (rejected), *serani* [Christian] (tolerated, but archaic), Malayan-Portuguese (nonexistent), *geragok* ["shrimp"] (rejected, pejorative), Malaysian Portuguese (accepted), Portuguese Malaysians (accepted), Eurasians (accepted), Portuguese (preferred, but a misnomer), Portuguese-Eurasians (preferred), Malacca Portuguese (preferred), and *kristang* [Catholic] (preferred). So we have at least ten epithets, among which the group's own preference chooses four.

A final query remains: what happened to the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the *lançados*? That is really a tacky problem. I speculate here a bit, on a theoretical plane. If the children of a *tangomão* and a Guinean wife were considered *filhos da terra*, then their children, in turn—rather than being called *filhos dos filhos da terra*—would probably have fallen into the category of *mestiços*. The terms *mulato* and *mestiço* thus became umbrella categories, absorbing a series of earlier, more differentiated categories. This is, of course, inverse assimilation.

One then wonders about the number of generations that it took for the descendants of the *filho do filho da terra* to become virtually African: four? five? six? A similar problem relates to *reinóis*: a son or daughter of these would be *castiços*, but would their children in turn also be seen as *castiços*? or would they expand the category of *mestiços*? Of course, much depends on who marries whom, over the generations. A *reinol* could indeed become a *casado*, true? But the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of a *casado* would also turn into *mestiços*. The process could be illustrated graphically by a kind of inverted filler (*funil*), with the terms *casado* and *reinol* at the narrow top, *filhos da terra* and *castiços* in the middle, and *mulatos* and *mestiços* at the expanding bottom.

Comparatively and, in fact, from my own readings, three titles arise; they do so as key points of comparison with this volume. One is Charles Stewart's edited volume, *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory* (2007),⁸ and another is Gordon Collier and Ulrich Fleischmann's edited volume, *A Pepper-Pot of Cultures: Aspects of Creolization in the Caribbean* (2008).⁹

Yet a third case is a special issue of *l'Homme* dedicated to “Un Miracle Créole?”¹⁰ All three seem to me to provide grist to the mill of comparative debates on Creole societies and afford innumerable links with this book.

Finally, some stylistic printing errors could have been avoided with some more careful proofreading, and in a number of texts a phrase here and there sounds slightly strange, indicating a few minor lapses in the correction of nonnative English. But these are nitpicking points, which should not mar one’s reading of a remarkably stimulating book. Most certainly, our knowledge of Creole societies—in a genuinely multidisciplinary way—has now advanced considerably for general readers and specialists in the Portuguese language.

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NOTES

1. For a truly innovative view on the inner workings of colonizers’ minds, see J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer’s Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (1993). Many of Blaut’s astute observations apply—in an adaptable fashion, of course—to the roles of intermediaries examined in Havik and Newitt’s volume.
2. Respectively: Havik on the Guinea coast specifically, and the Afro-Atlantic world more generally; Nafafe on Guinea and Cape Verde; Seibert on São Tomé; and de Souza on Goa.
3. Respectively: Green on seventeenth-century Guinea and Angola; Williams on Angola, 1875–1912; Russel-Wood on late colonial Brazil; Bialuschewski on Madagascar, 1700–1750; and Ames on the Indian Province of the North, circa 1630–1680.
4. Respectively: Batalha on Cape Verde; and Heintze on West Central Africa, particularly Angola.
5. Much of Havik’s criticism is directed to this feminine lacuna in Boxer’s 1975 classic *Mary and Misogyny: Women in Iberian Expansion Overseas (1415–1815): Some Facts, Fancies, and Personalities*.
6. See Tony Judt’s provocative text, “Edge People,” for some lively food for thought on margins and exclusions (*New York Review of Books*, 23 February 2010).
7. “Portugal’s ‘Shadow Empire’ in the Bay of Bengal,” *Review of Culture / Revista de Cultura* (Instituto Cultural de Macau), vol. 1 (1991 [1983]), year 5, numbers 13/14 (January/June), “The Asian Seas 1500–1800: Local Societies, European Expansion, and the Portuguese,” 273–87. Reprinted in the same author’s *Studies on Portuguese Asia 1495–1689* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2001), 273–87.
8. Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press.
9. Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V. / *Matatu: Journal of African Culture and Society*, 27–28.
10. Numbers 207/208 (Juillet/Décembre) 2013; présentation de Jean-Luc Bonniol.

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