

ARE WE STILL AN OVERSEAS PROVINCE OF PORTUGAL? COMMEMORATIVE TOPONYMS AND THE COLONIAL PRESENCE IN THE CITY CENTRE OF KUITO, ANGOLA

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Abstract

In the recent past, the world, with particular mention of the African continent, has witnessed a mass of protests, mostly by student movements. Among other things, they demanded the removal of colonial heritage from the spatial landscape as well as the decolonization of education. Nearly half a century after independence from the Portuguese colonial regime, the Angolan spatial landscape still celebrates the greatness of the so called heroes of the Portuguese civilization mission, whereas for many, the recognition of national historical figures remains an illusion. This article attempts to stir a debate, stemming from the sentiment that names of streets that constitute colonial cultural heritage and identity should be de-commemorated in the Kuito city centre and elsewhere in Angola. This is because they offer direct exposure to unbearable psychological memories of the ruthless regime that tortured natives for centuries. We argue, that by preserving these names, we are directly or otherwise abettors of the colonial's tale that they were the 'heroes' of the African people who needed to be saved from their uncivilized *modus vivendi*. The paper examines all the names surrounding the urban area of the city centre of the Kuito municipality and exposes the contributing role, if so, of each, in order to examine the impetus behind their preservation.

Keywords: colonial. commemorative toponyms. City of Kuito. Angola

Resumo / Resumen

AINDA SOMOS PROVINCIA ULTRAMARINA DE PORTUGAL? TOPÓNIMOS COMEMORATIVOS E A PRESENÇA COLONIAL NAS RUAS DA CIDADE DO KUITO EM ANGOLA

No passado recente, o mundo, com particular destaque ao continente africano, testemunhou uma massa de protestos, na maioria dos casos, de movimentos estudantis que, entre outras várias coisas, exigiam a remoção da herança colonial da paisagem, bem como a descolonização da educação. Durante quase meio século após a independência do regime colonial português, os nomes das ruas ainda celebram a grandeza dos chamados heróis da missão civilizatória portuguesa, enquanto para muitas figuras históricas nacionais o reconhecimento permanece uma ilusão. Este artigo foi desenvolvido a partir do sentimento de que os nomes de figuras coloniais que constituem o património cultural e a identidade colonial deveriam ser descomemorados nas ruas do centro da cidade do Kuito e noutros locais de Angola, uma vez que oferecem um acesso directo a memórias psicológicas insuportáveis do regime implacável que torturou nativos durante séculos. Argumentamos que ao preservar estes nomes, somos cúmplices directos ou indirectos da história colonial de que eles eram "heróis" do povo africano que precisavam de ser salvos do seu *modus vivendi* incivilizado." O artigo examina todos os nomes que rodeiam a área urbana do centro da cidade do município do Kuito e expõe o papel de contribuição de cada um para ver os motivos por detrás da sua preservação. E por último sugere a descolonização dos nomes para reflectir o valor cultural, político e etnográfico do povo angolano e africano em geral.

Palavras-chave: colonial. topônimos comemorativos. Cidade do Kuito. Angola

SEGUIMOS SIENDO UNA PROVINCIA DE ULTRAMAR DE PORTUGAL? TOPÓNIMOS CONMEMORATIVOS Y PRESENCIA COLONIAL EN EL CENTRO DE LA CIUDAD DE KUITO EN ANGOLA

En el pasado reciente, el mundo, con especial mención el continente africano, fue testigo de multitud de protestas, en la mayoría de los casos de movimientos estudiantiles que, entre otras cosas, exigían la eliminación del patrimonio colonial del paisaje espacial, así como la descolonización de la educación. Durante casi medio siglo después de la independencia del régimen colonial portugués, el paisaje espacial angoleño todavía celebra la grandeza de los llamados héroes de la misión de la civilización portuguesa, mientras que para muchas figuras históricas nacionales el reconocimiento sigue siendo una ilusión. Este artículo se desarrolló a partir del sentimiento de que los nombres de lugares que constituyen patrimonio e identidad cultural colonial deberían ser descomemorados en las calles del centro de la ciudad de Kuito y en otras partes de Angola, dado que ofrecen un acceso directo a recuerdos psicológicos insoportables del régimen despiadado que torturó nativos durante siglos. Argumentamos que al preservar estos nombres somos, directa o indirectamente, cómplices de la historia colonial de que eran "héroes" del pueblo africano que necesitaba ser salvado de sus incivilizados *modus vivendi*. El artículo examina todos los nombres que rodean el área urbana del centro de la ciudad del municipio de Kuito y expone el papel que aporta cada uno de ellos para ver el impulso detrás de su preservación. Y por último sugiere la descolonización de nombres para reflejar el valor cultural, político y etnográfico del pueblo angoleño.

Palabras-clave: colonial. topônimos comemorativos. Ciudad de Kuito. Angola

INTRODUCTION

The European ‘discovery’ of Africa in the fifteenth century, as well as Columbus’s ‘discovery’ of the Americas, meant that these new geographical spaces, and in particular their inhabitants, had to be re-inscribed in European discourse (AHLUWALIA, 2001, p.20). This inferred that the European colonial history of control and exploitation of other continents was supported by the production of new maps; not only was a name given to what was nameless for the European explorer, but also what was already identified by an Aboriginal name was modified and accommodated to the European ear and mouth (CASAGRANDA, 2013, p.291).

Yet, not only was the landscape renamed and new towns and cities founded and chartered, but also the sense of identity and belonging of the Aboriginal / *indigenous* people was subverted and perverted for good. The assumption that colonies were a sort of *terra nullius* in need of being shaped by the civilising tools (and weapons) of the west justified the imperial enterprise of charting the world in which toponyms played – and still play – a pivotal role (CASAGRANDA, 2013, p.292). Indeed, besides forcing a new geography onto their history and a new history onto their geography, such naming practices (CASAGRANDA, 2013, p.293) served as an imposition of their own identity and other cultural values onto indigenous Africans.

Nevertheless, some African countries, if not all of them, after they had attained independence from colonial rule, immediately proceeded to remove or symbolically replace charged colonial monuments *and other colonial heritages* – often in publicly staged acts of triumph and in celebration of a new beginning (MARSCHALL, 2010, p.12; my emphasis), Angola was not an exception in this regard. It renamed Nova Lisboa city as Huambo, São Salvador do Congo in Zaire Province as Mbanza Congo, Sá de Bandeira in Huíla province as Lubango, to mention but a few.

Inspired by its ex-colonies, Portugal itself, to mark the end of *Estado Novo* (1926-1974), renamed the famous *Ponte Salazar* [Salazar Bridge] which was inaugurated on August 6, 1966, and named after Portuguese Prime Minister António de Oliveira Salazar, as *Ponte 25 de Abril* [The 25 de Abril Bridge]. The date marks the celebration of the Carnation Revolution of 1974 that paved the way for the decolonization of Africa Lusophone. In this respect, an important question one should pose is, why the nomenclature related to colonial culture, symbols of exploitation for the colonized, is still preserved. This is particularly relevant at a time when the narrative(s) of decolonization(s) (see ‘Decolonizing public space in South Africa: from conceptualization to actualization by Landan and Makakavhule), is gaining recognition worldwide, particularly in the African milieu. To be straightforward, why were place names, “old symbols of the imperial nation” (PERALTA & DOMINGOS, 2018), re-inscribed on the cultural landscape of Kuito city centre in the post-independence period, nearly half a century after independence?

This article attempts to provide answer(s) by exploring the dynamics of Kuito city in the light of place names “paying tribute to heroic victories, events and achievements of white settlers and colonial officials” (MARSCHALL, 2010, p.20) at the expense of national heroes and heroines. Thus, the paper endeavours to analyse the factors that contributed to the preservation of colonial names in the City of Kuito. Lastly, the paper suggests, to borrow words from Uluocha (2015), the imperativeness of decolonizing place names as an essential strategy for reinstating, preserving and promoting the continent's distorted place-names to their original form. For the sake of comprehension, the terms 'street naming' and 'commemorative toponym', have the same meaning.

KUITO CITY

The name Kuito or Cuito (this last version is an adaptation to suit the Portuguese colonials), is the capital city of Bié province. The name has its origin from Umbundu, a language spoken by the Ovimbundu people in the southern part of Angola. According to Laurindo (2015), two versions of the meaning are attached to this name namely “*vakutiwa Kwi*” meaning ‘tied up strongly’; the second is *ko*-(place) and *ositu* - (meat) namely '*ko-ositu*', meaning place of meat.

The city was founded in 1771, at the time of the rule by the Governor of the Overseas Province of Angola, Dom Inocêncio de Sousa Coutinho Júnior. It is an evolution of the original village called

Amarante, founded by Father Gonçalo de Silveira around 1771; later on it was called Belmonte, and then Silva Porto, in memory of the Portuguese countryman, for his contribution to the occupation of this portion of land by the then-Viye kingdom, followed by the Portuguese. On August 31, 1925, with the creation of the District of Bié, the village was elevated to the category of town, upon a proposal from this village. Later, through the legislative diploma n. 740, dated 31, 1935, the village was elevated to the category of city (LAURINDO, 2015, p.27).

Bié province is located in the central area of Angola, in the heart of the country. The name Bié derives from the name of a traditional leader, Viye, who named the entire area now corresponding to the district, prior to the arrival of the “Sertanejo Silva Porto”. Bié is an area where several ethnicities converge, with the Bieno predominating, a subgroup of the Ovimbundu, whose name is related to the name of the province (LAURINDO, 2015, p.24). It is relevant to note that in regard to naming, during the colonial epoch, the City of Kuito acquired three names, Belmonte, Amarante and then Silva Porto, this last name was after a Portuguese explorer, Francisco Ferreira da Silva, better known as Silva Porto or Silva do Porto (the name now appears in the Kuito streetscape, see Figure 1.).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the recent past, the world, with particular mention of the African continent, has witnessed a mass of protests (see #RhodesMustFall and Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford, (RMFO)). In most cases the protests were held by student movements, who, among other things, demanded the removal of colonial heritage from the spatial landscape. These calls to decolonize provide a counter narrative to colonial historiography that normalizes symbolic representation of slavery in the spatial landscape, on the one hand, and critiques the colonial legacy that downplays pre-and-post colonial Africa, on the other. The decolonization calls correspond with the volume of work worldwide that addresses colonial toponyms in a post-colonial epoch.

These toponyms protect and immortalize colonial marks and “the need to Africanise the symbolic landscape, to cultivate an environment befitting an independent African nation” (GOODMAN, 2022, p.84). This is the case with the work by Mamvura et.al. (2020), which analysed the motives behind the preservation of colonial place names in the Central Business District in Harare, which of course accounted for the continued visibility of colonial street names in the cultural landscape of this district. Interestingly, one of the conclusions points to this naming system, in the words of these scholars, “as a conscious ideological strategy to use the past to serve present aims and agendas *or rather* an affront to their and claims of ownership of the land in the entire country” (MAMVURA et.al., 2020, p.30). Similarly, Ndletyana (2012) argues that post-apartheid South Africa’s toponymy was no different to any other country with a long colonial history. The scholar explains that it inherited a racist and Eurocentric toponymy, which, in many cases, replaced indigenous place names. Some place names were derivatives of racial slurs: kaffir, boesman and hotnot (NDLETYANA, 2012, p.91-92). Ndletyana further deems that only two of the nine provinces have shown much zeal for renaming. This implies that some place names still bear a colonial and apartheid identity. Nevertheless, as is obvious, South Africa's negotiation of political independence is different from other colonized nations like Angola which had a more violent agenda. In Angola, white Portuguese inhabitants were forced to leave the country, at least most of them, and negotiation, to a certain extent, was not on agenda, whereas for South Africa, national reconciliation and nation-building was the ultimate goal. However, it is difficult to trivialize the sociopsychological implications of names commemorating non-Africans on African soil (BIGON and NJOH, 2013), particularly taking into account the past peculiar relationship between colonizer and colonized, on the one hand, and the “persistence of colonial toponymy” (NDLETYANA, 2012, p.93), on the other hand. Interestingly, the work of Mahumane and Tembe (2023), which coincides with this study, given that both Angola and Mozambique were overseas provinces of Portugal, or better in terms of having Portuguese as the colonial master, questioned the permanence of colonial names in the city of Maputo.

According to these scholars (Mahumane and Tembe), this happened in spite of efforts by the post-independence government to follow a process of toponymic 'cleansing' in the entire country as a way to erase the vestiges of colonialism in strategic and more visible places. They deem these toponyms to be '*ilegais*' [illegal] and '*extintos*' [in-disuse] with less political weight compared to their more

politically charged names such as 25 de Junho District or Georgi Dimitrov; the former celebrates the independence day of Mozambique and the latter a Bulgarian Prime-Minister, who died in July 1979. The commemoration of this personality is due to FRELIMO's ties with Marxism-Leninism ideology.

Post-colonial Angola has also this Bulgarian political figure named in the streetscape of Luanda for the same reasons as that of Mozambique. Also, Mahumane and Tembe (2023) point out that the toponym '*Bairro Indígena* [Indigenous District], that was established by the Portuguese regime on racial grounds, was essentially to separate blacks from whites. Coincidentally, Angola also has a district with the same name that is still acclaimed by many locals in spite of the stereotypical meanings associated with it (see the work of Jacob, 2011 for further reading on the matter).

Remarkably, as is the case with the research by Manvura et al. (toponyms in Harare) and Mahumane and Tembe (the case of Maputo), our work also has its focus in the central business district of the City of Kuito; it is a strategic place which gives an opportunity to project western power in Africa (Njoh, 2017). In this vein, Casagrandra (2013, p.297), warns “the coexistence of coloniser and colonised in the street names of the city centre, however, is illusory as the presence of the latter is marginal”. This situation forces us to ask whether or not political transitions usually trigger changes in the cultural landscape. This is because places names are largely political discourses and indispensable constituent elements of a political regime's symbol of power (MANVURA *et. al.*, 2020) and if so, why then the re-inscription of Portuguese colonial place names in the city centres of Maputo, Harare and Kuito? Does it propose that Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola, post-independence, should be interpreted as neo-colonialism(s) in the context of (re)-defining and refining streetscape historiography? Should Angolans, Mozambicans and Zimbabweans feel indebted to their colonial masters for the brutal occupation of land and enslavement of people to a point that we are now forced to co-exist with their memories in the strategic landscapes? If not, why do “post-colonial authorities [...] remain wedded to the colonial tradition of *attributing* most important street and place names to a Eurocentric cultural group” (NJOH, 2017, p. 1174)? To answers these questions, Pinto and Jerónimo (2015) stress that:

For a country with a history that is so marked by the diverse facets of its imperial and colonial past, the theme of imperial memory is a recurring presence in contemporary Portugal. Since the end of the nineteenth century 'national identity', empire and, later, the post-colonial lusophone space, were integrated into the public sphere and the political arena, becoming central dimensions in Portuguese politics and culture (PINTO and JERÓNIMO, 2015, p.2).

The current disposition in these cities (Harare, Maputo and Kuito), according to Jerónimo and Rossa (2022), fostered imperial permanence on the urban and rural colonial landscapes in the territories of former Portuguese Africa. From this perspective, one should not be surprised then that the naming of places is one of the primary ways in which the spatial imaginaries of colonialism have been entrenched within the spaces of everyday life in settler-colonial societies (ROSE-REDWOOD, 2016). Moreover, Light and Young (2018) reckon that:

There are various instances where a new regime has the ability to rename the urban landscape but does not see this process through to completion. This may occur for a range of reasons. In some cases, political change may not be accompanied by a desire to erase the symbolic traces of the former order. While a new regime might portray itself as representing a radical break from the past, it may, in fact, have an ambivalent relationship to its predecessor (rather than simply being hostile to it). In such circumstances there may be limited concern to mark a decisive break with the past so that the new regime shows more continuity with – rather than difference from – its predecessor (LIGHT and YOUNG, 2018, p.186-187).

Light and Young raise an important point here that explains, for instance, how such a toponymic disposition, as observed in the reviewed work so far, “creates a metaphorical connection with colonial masters on a historical and geographical level which functions as a constant reminder of the colonial system of the past” (CASAGRANDE, 299). On this note we want to say that if Portugal's aspiration is to show off its historiography on expansionism and exceptionalism it ought to be done in its own geographical space, after all, the time has long gone since Angola was by force an overseas province of Portugal. In this respect, it is noteworthy to bring forth the work of Reuben Rose-Redwood entitled '

Reclaim, rename, reoccupy: Decolonizing place and reclaiming of PKOLS', a sign of symbolic justice in terms of public commemoration in the spatial landscape by "challenging the neocolonial state's assertions of authority over geographical naming practices" (Rose-Redwood, 2016, p.187). The study of Rose-Redwood typifies a victory for all indigenous peoples throughout the world who have lost their historiography and self-identity to colonial powers in the geographical landscape. The work, as this scholar points out, examined the efforts of indigenous peoples in the W

SÁNEĆ and Lekwungen Territories to reclaim their "storyscapes" through the renaming of PKOLS, a mountain known by the settler society as Mount Douglas in Saanich, British Columbia. This of course highlights the ongoing debate over de-colonization and de-commemoration projects throughout the world in order to "Rewrite the cultural geography" (MANVURA *et. al.*, 2020, p.21) over the ideological desire to recover the country's past greatness (CRUZ, 2007, p.417). Uluocha (2015), asserts that the decolonization and restoration of deformed indigenous African toponyms, for example, will invariably result in the restoration, preservation and promotion of the rich indigenous cartographic legacy of Africa and Africans. Uluocha's argument is remarkable, given that, according to Reuben Rose-Redwood: (i) the commemorative naming of streets should be reserved as a measure of public faming for those who deserve it; (ii) the cultural norm in modern democratic societies is that public commemoration is a mechanism for converting reputation into fame, and lastly (iii) unwarranted fame, especially when coupled with abuse of power, provokes resentment (ROSE-REDWOOD *et.al.* 2017, p. 310). This modestly suggests that the current urban toponymic structure of the City of Kuito is, to borrow words from Rose-Redwood (2016), a 'source of indignation' and therefore undeserving of its preservation. To conclude this section, we are thus indebted to Menezes' (2020) point of view when he says that Angolans suffered one of the most hideous colonizations (see also BENDER, 1978; DIAS, 1981; STONE, 1999; BIRMINGHAM 2006). We are once again pleased to agree with Menezes when he states that replacing Portuguese names, just because they are Portuguese, is to overshadow or deny the historical truth. However, to respond to the last argument, we ask, what history and what truth? Should the colonized remember the history of being subjugated, raped, beaten up, and treated inhumanly to the point of feeling shame in their own fatherland? It is true that the psychological effects of colonization continues stalking the colonized for generations to come. It should then be clear, to draw from Igboin's words, that "colonialism altered the belief and values of the Africans significantly and today, the argument oscillates between a return to the 'glorious' precolonial past as the minimum requirement for moral rearmament and a total break with the past" (IGBOIN, 2011, p.96).

METHODOLOGY

This study probes the presence of colonial names in the cultural landscape of Kuito city central business district, thus omitting names on the outskirts. In total 10 names (9 streets and 1 Avenue; see table 1 below) will be analysed in terms of their biographical profile. The aim is to establish whether or not the inscription of the names is justified (although colonialism can never be justified). We hope that with this approach, we can find traces of modest behaviour (from the settlers' side) toward indigenous people (the colonized) in its preservation of the post-colonial state. It is crucial to point here that, despite the widespread renaming conducted after independence in all 18 provinces, including in *Bíe*, which aimed to dismantle all colonial vestiges, the plaques with street names, as left by the Portuguese imperialist regime, were renewed in 2021. Unexpectedly, the names were re-inscribed, except those (two) new local ones that were introduced onto the list, namely *Rua Sagrada Esperança* and *Avenida Joaquim Kapango*.

Table 1: Street names in Kuito City Central Business District

Street name	Citizenship of named figure or Institution	Description
Rua Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa	Portuguese	[Lisbon Geographic Society] (SGL, Portuguese acronym). It was created to help with the discovery, exploration and colonization of new lands.
Rua Artur de Paiva	Portuguese	He was a Portuguese army officer and explorer (1856-1900).
Rua Serpa Pinto	Portuguese	Portuguese explorer, military figure and administrator
Rua Capitão Ângelo de Lima	Portuguese	A poet and writer
Rua Marcelo Caetano	Portuguese	A politician of the New State. Prime-Minister from 1968 to 1974
Rua Salazar	Portuguese	Politician (dictator) and Prime Minister of Portugal from 1932 to 1968
Rua Silva Porto	Portuguese	Portuguese explorer and slave trader
Rua Teófilo Braga	Portuguese	A writer and politician
Rua Sagrada Esperança	Angolan	'Sagrada Esperança' is the title of the best-known literary work by the first Angolan president, Antonio Agostinho Neto.
Avenida Joaquim Kapango	Angolan	A distinguished member of the MPLA party and a commander who fought for the liberation struggle

As we note from Table 1, above, most street names share a similar impressive feature, they celebrate the relic of Portuguese historiography by glorifying politicians, explorers, military figures, writers and slave traders, except for the two examples that reflect the Angolan post-colonial naming heritage namely *Rua Sagrada Esperança* and *Avenida Joaquim Kapango*. In this regard, Ball (2017) reasons that:

From the 1930s until the end of colonial rule in 1975, Portuguese authorities pursued a period of intense commemoration in Angola. In order to assert their recently established authority over the whole of the demarcated colony, they erected statues, issued commemorative money, and hosted international claiming Angola as Portuguese space (BALL, 2017, p.1).

Whereas this is still hard to stomach, Angola is an independent nation and upon independence in 1975, went through a process of street decolonization. Yet its streetscapes venerate Portuguese slave traders, racists, etc. as if Angola and Angolans lacked their own proud history. Why should the City of Kuito host Silva Porto or Artur de Paiva? The former, according to Birmingham (2006), had been a supplier of slaves to the west coast for half a century and the latter is remembered by the Portuguese as an heroic figure who is venerated for his brutal operations against various members of the Angolan population. His attack on the Fendi, Malanca, Cacoco and Palanca on the banks of the Cunene River or punishing the Hottentots who invaded the district of Moçâmedes, are but a few examples of brutality against the local peoples (see COUCEIRO, 1948).

Figure 1. Silva Porto Street & Artur de Paiva Street. Source: Authors



Heintze narrates a very interesting fact about Serpa Pinto's (honoured in Figure 2) racist behaviour, which once again reinforces our conviction that he and his Portuguese counterparts are undeserving of accolades from Africans and on African soil. Heintze explains that José António Alves (the literature indicates he was of mixed race), the slave trader from Pungo Andongo, who spoke, read and wrote Portuguese fluently and who was called “white” in Bié and “mulatto” in Benguela, was described otherwise by Serpa Pinto by saying «the truth is, that in his veins there is not a drop of European blood, and that he is black not only in color but also in his ancestry, and perhaps in his soul.»(see HEINTZE, 2005, p.185). This example forces us to agree with Williams (1974, p.19) who deems, “we have been floating along, basking blissfully in the sunny heritage of other peoples”. He further argues that there can be no real identity with our heritage until we know what our heritage really is. In this sense it is imperative to modestly say that “in vintage African societies place-names were not just chosen arbitrarily; they were chosen to convey specific and useful meanings to the people” (ULUOCHA, 2015, p.181) which is something that the street names being dealt with here, indisputably do not provide to the Angolan people.

Figure 2. Sociedade Geografia de Lisboa Street & Serpa Pinto Street. Source: Authors



It is important to note that the *Lisbon Geographical Society* (L.G.S.), named after *Rua Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, and founded on 31st December 1875, proved to be a fundamental actor in the definition of Portuguese foreign, imperial and colonial programs and policies [...], whose main role was to rethink the geopolitical and imperial standpoint of the country (PINTO and JERONIMO, 2015, p.4.). Judging by its nature, this organization paved the way by all means to better subjugate and enslave Africans as confirmed by Pinto and Jerónimo (2015). They remark that L.G.S had strong connections with political parties and with almost every institution or association that was involved all imperial and colonial aspects of Portuguese society. Nevertheless, is still difficult, if not impossible, to bear why figures such as Salazar and Marcelo Caetano (see Figure 3), who were the architects of the absolute misery and suffering of Lusophone Africans and some Europeans themselves, are highly recognised at the expense of local heroes. What sort of a message do we propose to send to new generations through these examples by elevating dictators and even foreigners to a high status? As a matter of fact, “Caetano and Salazar were the main supporters of the *authoritarian regime*, Estado Novo [New State], having also supported the wars in the Overseas Provinces that started in 1961” (cf. Martinho, 2019, p. 632), a date that coincides with the ephemeris of the Baixa Cassanje Massacre, which took place on January 4, 1961. This was a genocide perpetrated against cotton planters for demanding better working and living conditions. The savagery, in which the Portuguese Air Force dropped Napalm bombs from a *PV-2 Harpoon* on villages and against an unarmed population on the run, killed over ten thousand black people and destroyed 17 villages (SILVEIRA, 2013; FREUDENTHAL, 1999). It is known that the uprising of about fifty thousand workers went on for two months (see the work of KEESE, 2020; NUNES, 2011; CORREIA, 2020; SILVA 2021 for more reading on the matter). Furthermore, according to Pimenta (2014), in 1961 in Luanda, there was an atmosphere of fear, exacerbated by the continuous murders of blacks and mestizos who died at the hands of extreme right-wing whites. They were framed by men from the PIDE (International Police and Defense of the State). PIDE intended to instil terror among the African population. It is important to stress here that the PIDE was widely known as the *Geheime Staatspolizei* [GESTAPO], the Nazi style secret political police of Portugal, due to its *modus operandi* (see SIMPSON, 2020). The *Estado Novo* authoritarian regime that prevailed in Portugal for 41 years, was originally headed by Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, between 1933 and 1968, followed by Marcello Caetano, between 1969 and 1974. This regime, of fascist ideals, apparently differed from its counterparts in relation to the racial integration policy applied to their overseas African colonies, claiming to always aim for multi and pluriracial unity in which everyone would be Portuguese, whether or not they were in a metropolis (MONTEIRO, 2020, p.67; De MATOS, 2014). Of course, these are just some few examples of the type of governance both Salazar and Caetano imposed on the colonized.

Figure 3: Salazar Street & Marcelo Caetano Street. Source: Authors



It is apparent that street naming in the context of City of Kuito is an example of a successful and deliberate neo-colonial attempt, meant to mark the politicization of heritage for the propagandistic aims of *Portugalidade* [Portugueseness] (JERÓNIMO and ROSSA, 2022). These actions foster and maintain the narrative of Portuguese superiority, in post-colonial society, over what many Eurocentric people still label *sociedade primitiva* [primitive society](Angola). By integrating “a superior class mentality and an imperial system” (in this context through cultural historiography), “we will expect the viewpoints of the conquerors to be the same as those conquered on matters relating to our place in the world” (WILLIAMS, 1974, p. 25/6). On this note we want to say, the current toponymic disposition of Kuito city provides two types of sentiments to passersby: shame (to all Africans) and pride (to Europeans). However, besides hosting explorers and politicians, the Kuito memorial landscape also commemorates writers. This is in the case of *Rua Capitao Ângelo de Lima* and *Rua Teófilo Braga*, the latter, besides being a writer, was also a distinguished politician. Nevertheless, irrespective of who they are in society, they remind African people of colonial heritage. One can consider the exhibition of these names as “an occasion to embellish the power of their native countries in a foreign land” thus this can be “viewed as an opportunity to immortalize their own names or the name of a deceased comrade or hero [...] in the colonized territories” (BIGON and NJOH, 2013, p.5). Toponymy is thus employed in the service of ideological legitimation (NDLETYANA, 2012, p.91). As Comaroff & Comaroff (1999) strongly underscore, the racialized colony lives on in the postcolonial era of global rationalization. They further deem, that this in turn, justifies the effort to implant Euro-modern civil institutions in what is presumed to be a politically void country - and concomitantly, ensures that the full humanity of its African inhabitants is endlessly denied (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999, 26). On this note, we agree with Childs and Williams (1997) who claim we are dealing with different empires, different needs, different strategies, different trajectories of expansion or contraction, and different levels of territorial penetration, control and exploitation (1997, p.10).

Figure 4: Capitão Ângelo de Lima Street & Teófilo Braga Street. Source: Authors



Interestingly, Angola is only represented by two names in the memorial landscape namely through *Rua Sagrada Esperança* and *Avenida Joaquim Capango* (see Figure 5). *Sagrada Esperança* is the title of the best-known literary work by the first Angolan president, António Agostinho Neto, and Joaquim Capango is a distinguished member of the MPLA party and a commander who fought for the liberation struggle. Curiously, Joaquim Capango is also honoured in name at the airport of Bie province, a street in Luanda, and at the *Instituto Técnico Agrário No.109* [Agricultural Technical Institute] in Benguela province, to mention but a few. The name, *Sagrada Esperança*, on the other hand, is honoured through a district and a street in Luanda province, a football team and a stadium in Dundo, Lunda Norte province, a Secondary school in Lunda, etc. These two toponyms are the only ones that celebrate post-colonial Angola whilst the others that have been discussed are all loaded with colonial cultural identity. Consequently we say that “the post-colonial social and even political landscape is thus intersected by power relations and forms of categorization, which, although not exclusively a colonial legacy, nonetheless relate to obvious continuities with the colonial period (PERALTA & DOMINGOS, 2018, p. 19).

Figure 5: Sagrada Esperança Street & Joaquim Capango Avenue. Source: Authors



It is imperative to observe here that an important figure attached to this city (Kuito), and who should deserve a singular celebration, is King Ndunduma, a symbol of resistance against the Portuguese occupation. After many battles he was detained on December 04, 1890 and thereafter expatriated to Mozambique (see Porto Editora, [https://www.infopedia.pt/\\$bie](https://www.infopedia.pt/$bie)). We had hoped his name would have appeared in the narrative of the Kuito memorial landscape; the example should equally apply to many

other Angolans, pre-and-post-colonial figures, who deserve public commemoration. This of course, validates the argument of Azaryahu (1996) that street names, in addition to their fundamental role in the spatial organization and semiotic construction of the city, are also participants in the cultural production of a shared past.

Remarkably, Chetty and Ginio (2017), in their work, 'Commemoration, Cult of the Fallen (Africa)', aver that commemoration in the form of ceremonies, monuments *and of course street naming*, was for the most part alien to African cultures and was largely a part of European colonial projects; as such, its main aim was to glorify colonialism (CHETTY and GINIO, 2017). This suggests that the continued and insistent presence of Portugal, or rather Portuguese historical figures, in Angolan public spaces, is intentional as at the time “colonial cultural assets [...] were of national interest at the Overseas Ministry in order to monumentalize the colonies]” (JERÓNIMO and ROSSA, 2022) and of course this seems to be a new political strategy in “competing for the symbolic control of the public domain” (AZARYAHU, 1996,p.313). We want to end this section by saying that Angola cannot act “as a metaphor for a modern nation, multifaceted and tolerant” and as an accomplice in the past abuses of the Portuguese regime against natives, by allowing Portuguese European cultural identity to dominate an African public space. By acting as such, we are simply saying that we do indeed approve the “wrongs of Portuguese colonialism such as slavery, forced labour, colonial violence” (PERALTA & DOMINGOS, 2018, p. 18). In addition, it is true that naming the *streets of Kuito* after the *men* whose namesake underwrote *enslavement policies*, has served as a daily reminder that the material and symbolic violence of colonial dispossession continues to shape Indigenous-Settler relations in the neocolonial present (ROSE-REDWOOD, 2016,p.189). This has persisted in ways of thinking and acting, in politics, the economy and everyday life, influencing models of governance and social relationships (PERALTA & DOMINGOS, 2018, p. 19). By denying the prominence of (but by no means erasing, however) indigenous place-names, a settler cartography that employs its own patterns of historical remembrance as a vehicle for configuring spatial arrangements, effectively scrubs itself from consciousness when its presence becomes the normal way of organizing space (SMITH, 2017, p.38).

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined the presence of colonial names in the streets of City of Kuito in the province of Bie. The presence of some notorious names have been de-commemorated, even in their own native land, as is the case with Salazar, who is also associated with the massacre of many Africans. This has prompted some to question the reason behind this act of eternalizing the Portuguese imperial venture in the memorial landscape, whilst marginalizing native heroes and heroines nearly half a century after independence. In this regard, the article established that Kuito is “one of the sites of colonial knowledge production by glorifying colonial history and ostracising *the cultural legacy of pre- and post-colonial Angola* (CASAGRANDA, 2013, p.296). The study has demonstrated that the names of celebrated Portuguese figures, which “were designed to [...] commemorate, honour and immortalize the achievements of the colonial and imperial heroes, serve as a constant reminder to 'racial / cultural others' of the real or imagined superiority of everything European” (NJOH, 2017, p.1177).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The disposition of street names in the City of Kuito which magnifies the colonial victories on expense of the local one is a clear example of geographical appropriation of the colonized territories by the colonizer and constitutes a threat to the Angolan historiography due to prominence of toponyms in terms of their socio-cultural, historical and political values. There is therefore a need to “question the post-colonial dichotomy” (CASAGRANDA, 2013, p.301) and acknowledge the urgent need to disregard the history of “voyage/exploration and colonization” (Uluocha, 2015,p) and white supremacy from the spatial landscape in the City of Kuito, if not across the Angolan territory. As a matter of a fact historically, a study of names of places can reveal much about how people viewed (ULUOCHA, 2015) forcing us call to decolonize street naming to reflect the reality of the African historiography and with its cultural values.

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