

# **Nationalism and the colonial imprint: the stamps of Portugal and Lusophone Africa and Asia.**

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## **Abstract**

Postage stamps may be seen as tiny transmitters of the dominant ideologies of the state destined for both the imagined community of the nation and the epistemic community of philatelists. The imagery of stamps therefore often promotes the dominant discourses of a particular nationalism, recalls historical triumphs and myths and defines the national territory in maps or landscapes. Issuing authorities also print stamps for sale to a large community of stamp collectors and this has been of particular importance in many colonial authorities and impoverished postcolonial states. This paper addresses these themes by focussing on the stamps of Portugal and its empire. The changing representation of women on the stamps issued during the Portuguese Monarchy, the Republic, the *Estado Novo* and in the colonies all confirm the patriarchal construction of Portuguese nationalism and the Portuguese imperialist project in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries

## **Introduction**

Postage stamps might be seen as small insignificant pieces of gummed paper, the focus of interest for an introverted band of desiccated philatelists and boy hobbyists. Stamps however are not a neutral, meaningless part of material culture but carriers of potent images of the dominant ideologies of the state, of patriarchies and the international system of states. Stamps can also be seen as small pieces of art and as Janet Wolff has pointed out ‘the major focus of critiques ... of art and culture in general ... has been the task of exposing the ideological nature of art’ (Wolff 1981: 9). This paper will examine the stamps of Portugal and the Portuguese colonies in Asia and Africa and show how various dominant ideologies, often discourses of nationalism and patriarchy, are projected, so exposing the ideological nature of these particular little pieces of art.

The first postage stamps were issued in Great Britain in 1840, and like many of the subsequent issues soon to follow in Europe, showed the reigning monarch’s head. Stamps were a kind of paper pseudo-coinage. The nation was here represented by the alternating heads of Kings and Queens, often looking one-way and then another. Thus, the first Portuguese stamps of 1853 show Queen Maria II looking to the left, followed after 1861 by King Pedro V looking to the right. Some hybrid models of nation formation in Europe have stressed the contribution to this task of the consolidation of power around an absolute monarchy and the slow accretion of territory and peoples around that centralising power (Balibar: 1991:87). It is therefore appropriate that in nineteenth century Europe the monarch’s head portrayed on postage stamps should represent the nation.<sup>1</sup>

In examining here the stamps of the Lusophone World a particular model of the construction and maintenance of national identity is used. National identity is seen as an

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<sup>1</sup> The monarch’s head has not survived on many stamps except in Britain where the Queen’s head, even if only a minor part of the design, is always shown. Here we have an excellent example of Michael Billig’s banal nationalism, the everyday, often unnoticed nationalism of the unfurled flag (see Billig 1995).

evolving set of national discourses where any appropriate material is summoned to the task of national construction. This view of a particular national identity might be compared with that of a collage assembled by an artist, in this case the state and the ruling elite. For example, the author has argued elsewhere that in Equatorial Guinea, the only Spanish speaking-state in Africa, this collage consists mainly of four different national discourses: the Hispanic 'inheritance', an appeal to 'Bantu unity', a shared recollection of tyranny and various contributions from those 'on the move' (Cusack 1999). This is the 'cut and paste' version of nation-building and it is useful here in examining Portuguese national-identity.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, stamps were not only produced for payment for postage of mail but for the stamp collector and the paper will show how this trend emerged in the Portuguese colonies. Nowadays, there is a vast world-wide epistemic community of philatelists. The internet auction site, Ebay, may have as many as 1400 different auctions of 'Portuguese and Colonies' stamps over a period of eight days with numerous bidders competing to win ([www.eBay.co.uk](http://www.eBay.co.uk), 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2002). Many collectors specialise in themes, so that impoverished third-world nations, compete in the production of spectacular issues showing for example, plants and animals, trains, minerals and Olympic sports. Thus, for example, Guinea-Bissau the former Portuguese colony, issued a set of stamps celebrating the birth of William, Prince of Wales, in 1982 (Stanley Gibbons 1995: 910). Few of these stamps are actually used for postage. For some countries, especially those that are highly dependent on foreign aid, philatelic sales may make a significant contribution to foreign currency receipts. For example, São Tomé and Príncipe earned money by producing stamps showing Marilyn Monroe and the Beatles.<sup>2</sup> The European colonial powers had recognised early-on that money could be made from sales to philatelists so that the present postcolonial frenzy of philatelic stamp issues can be viewed as yet another colonial 'legacy'. Most national post offices recognise the large profits to be made from stamp collectors and even target young collectors. For example, a 1996 Canadian issue featuring 'Winnie-the-Pooh' has been suggested as an example of this trend (ws: the stamp as medium)

To examine the stamps of Portugal and colonies it is necessary to briefly review Portuguese history and ask what particular discourses contribute to Portuguese national identity.

### **Portugal: small state on the edge of Europe or a great imperial power?**

As Portugal could not compete militarily and economically with the other European colonial powers, cultural influence and the projection of Portuguese civilisation and of Christianity would have to do. As is typical of most nationalist ideologies, Portuguese national identity is constructed from a series of different *ad hoc* discourses which have been traced back to a number of different sources: to a revolt against the Romans by Viriatus, a Lusitanian shepherd in the second century BC; to the long and eventually successful fight against the Moors; to a 'persistent historical and cultural differences between the Portuguese West, the humid periphery and the dry Spanish tableland, the

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<sup>2</sup> Jędrzej George Frynas, Geoffrey Wood and Ricardo M. S. Soares de Oliveira, 'Business and Politics in São Tomé and Príncipe: from cocoa monoculture to petro-state', *African Affairs*, Vol. 102, No. 406, January 2003, p. 58.

*meseta*; more generally being defined as not being Spanish; to a ‘spirit of contented melancholy’ seen in the wistful and melancholy songs, the *Fados*; or to a Portugal which achieved independence in the twelfth century – the oldest European nation with firm borders (Chilcote 1967: 43-47). However, it is perhaps to the ‘great discoveries’, to Henry the Navigator, Vasco da Gama and his followers, to Camões the chronicler of the ‘discoveries’ and the recall of that ‘Golden Age’, which forms the core of modern Portuguese national identity. During the period of the *Estado Novo* [New State] from 1926 to 1974, a weak Portugal, on the edge of Europe, looked to its empire with renewed vigour. This is exemplified by the editorial of *O Mundo Português* which in 1935 declared ‘ [w]e must always keep alive in the Portuguese people the dream of beyond-the-seas [*Ultramar*] and the consciousness and pride of empire ... Without it we would be a small nation; with it we are a great country’ (Guimarães 2001: 11).

For many years after 1951, under Dr Salazar and his successor, the Portuguese former colonies were claimed to be an integral part of Portugal so that, for example, children in this ‘Portugal’ were taught that the highest mountain in ‘Portugal’ was Mt. Tatamailau in East Timor. Postage stamps certainly reflect this view with many issues of similar designs, headed *Republica Portuguesa*, being used throughout the ‘greater Portugal’. Perhaps memories of this greater Portugal and the Salazarist ideologies that went with it found deeper roots than might have been thought so that modern day Portugal, although with a new focus on the European Union, still has great cultural interest in the Portuguese-speaking world, its former empire.

Portuguese stamps would be expected to portray the characteristic discourses of Portuguese national identity discussed above as well as the usual flags, maps, characteristic landscapes, botany, architecture and national heroes that are the staples of stamp design. The ‘great discoveries’ are found throughout the period of stamp issues: through the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century Monarchy, through the Portuguese Republic from 1910 to 1926, during the *Estado Novo* and finally into the modern European, post-dictatorship Portuguese state.

As mentioned above, the first Portuguese stamps were heads and busts of monarchs: Queen Maria II (1853); King Pedro V (1853-1861), King Luis (1861-1889), King Carlos (1889-1908) and finally King Manoel II 1908-1910. These were the everyday definitive stamps of the monarchy. The first Portuguese commemorative stamps were issued in 1894 and celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Henry the Navigator who had marked the beginning of the great Portuguese expansion by crossing to Africa and seizing Ceuta from the Moors in 1415. This moment has been seen as the end of the ‘inward-looking European middle-ages and the beginning of the outward-looking age of expansion’ (Birmingham 1993: 25). One of the designs of the 1894 stamps shows Henry directing the movement of the fleet surrounded by allegorical figures and elephants – Henry’s gaze across the sea is also on to India where Portugal was for a short period gather great riches (See figure 1). The designs were based on paintings by J V Salgado and were printed in Leipzig in Germany.



**Figure 1** Prince Henry directing Movements of his fleet

A second well-known Portuguese set of stamps followed in 1895, commemorating the 700<sup>th</sup> Birthday anniversary of Portugal's patron Saint, St. Anthony. Christian religious themes, seeing Portugal as being chosen by God to propagate Catholicism were to become an important theme in later Portuguese issues and in the colonial imprints. Then in 1898, the 'great discoverers' return, with the issuing of a 'Vasco da Gama' series celebrating the 400 years since the route to India was discovered (see Figure 2). These were issued throughout the Portuguese Empire with the particular colonies name included on the stamps. In this series of designs, Camões, the writer who chronicled the Great Discoverers, makes his first appearance on Portuguese Stamps.<sup>3</sup> Postage due stamps of the period also reflect the same concerns and showed Vasco da Gama being received by the Zamorin of Calicut (Gibbons 1996; 6)

**Figure 2. The Vasco da Gama series of 1898. (a general 'African' variant)  
(not included in this version of paper)**

Thus during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century monarchy, the first period of Portuguese stamp production, the basic ideologies presented on the images of the stamps might be summarized as follows: monarchism with the sovereign representing the nation and nationalism where the 'great discoverers' and Catholicism in the form of Saint Anthony were important

#### **The Portuguese Republic and Republican imagery.**

The last Portuguese King Manoel II was ousted in 1910. After that, as a matter of expediency, stamps of the monarchy, including the King's head and bust, were overprinted with *Republica* as were the 1898 Vasco da Gama series. With the jettisoning

<sup>3</sup> A small portrait on the blue 50 reis stamp.

of the monarch what designs could be used for the definitive stamps? What new, if any, ideologies could be promulgated?

Marina Warner has shown how women have often been depicted as ideal allegorical figures representing such ideals of justice or liberty. She writes '[o]ften the recognition of a difference between the symbolic order, inhabited by ideal, allegorical figures, and the actual order, of judges, statesmen, soldiers, philosophers, inventors, depends on the unlikelihood of women practicing the concepts they represent (Warner 1987: xx). Allegory, is derived from the Greek, meaning of 'to speak other'. Thus the allegorical figure takes on the meaning of one thing yet signifies another (T Cusack 2003: 6). A whole range of such figures have emerged during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often representing the nation: Britannia, Mother-Russia or the 'Maid of Finland', for example (See T Cusack 2003).

In addition the emergence of *Marianne*, as an embodiment or incarnation of the French Republic and of 'liberté, Egalité, Fraternité' firmly linked some of these allegorical figures to the idea of the republic (see ws French Prime Minister). Marianne wears the cap of liberty<sup>4</sup>, the emblem of the revolution (Warner 1987: 267). Another example of the association of such allegorical figures and European republicanism is shown by the stamps issued during the first Spanish Republic between 1873 and 1874. Here we have two seated allegorical figures of women, one of 'peace' and the other of 'justice'. When the Spanish monarchy was restored in December 1874 a picture of the new King Alfonso XII soon appears.

The stamps designs of the young Portuguese Republic after 1910 show a range of such allegorical figures of women. The King or Queen's head is replaced in 1913 by the figure of Ceres, the Roman name for the Greek God Demeter, the goddess of tillage and corn.<sup>5</sup> These Portuguese definitive stamps, with a number of reissues of different colours and slight design changes, were then used in Portugal up to the 1930s. Similar designs used throughout the empire inscribed 'Angola' or 'Madeira'. Classically attired Ceres is shown holding a sickle and a bale of corn presumably gathering the harvest to feed the people - that is the people of the Portuguese nation at home and abroad. All the new stamp designs issued by the Republic up to 1923 portray similar allegorical female figures. Thus in 1913 a Charity tax stamp showed 'Lisbon' with a castellated crown while in 1915 a large figure of 'Charity' is shown sheltering the poor. Parcel-post stamps of 1920 again show a classically attired bare-breasted female figure with head wreathed in laurel, holding a large cog or wheel, perhaps the goddess Diana, and is accompanied by helmeted male figure, probably Mercury, perhaps ensuring a swift delivery of the mail (See Figure 3)

### **Figure 3. Allegorical figures of women 1913-1931.**

(not included with this version of the paper)

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<sup>4</sup> For the complex classical origins of this cap in Thrace and Rome see Warner, 1987, 274-275.

<sup>5</sup> The first French stamps were issued during the French Second Republic in 1849 and showed a head of Ceres.

In 1925, another allegorical figure appears, this time with wings – ‘the muse of history’ – dominating the design of a stamp showing Portuguese soldiers in Flanders in 1484 and 1918 (Gibbons 1996:10). The muse of history had made one earlier appearance on one of the designs of the 1898 Vasco da Gama series. Again shown with large wings she is recording history as Vasco da Gama’s fleet disappears over the horizon (see Figure 2). The Muse is Clio, one of the nine goddesses or Mousai, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne who were assigned to artistic and literary spheres (ws KLEIO: 1). She was credited with the introduction the Phoenician alphabet into Greece and is often shown sitting with a scroll or a chest of books (ws The Muse Clio:1). We should note *en passant* that, to ‘muse’, is to study in silence. She is a Muse not a historian.

Two years prior to this 1925 set depictions of men reappeared on republican Portugal’s stamps. In 1923, the first Portugal-Brazil trans-Atlantic flight (of 1922) was celebrated on a series of 16 stamps. Here we are shown the Presidents of Portugal and Brazil along with the airmen Gago Coutinho and Sacadura Cabral (See Figure 4). These are four actual and active men. In 1924, a new set of stamps, commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the birth of Camões was issued. These are a biographical set with different designs showing scenes associated with Camões ranging from the battle at Ceuta where he lost an eye, rescuing the first edition of the *Lusiads* from a shipwreck and on to a scene of his death in Goa and finally his tomb and a monument (see Figure 4). Another biographical series followed, this with stamps showing scenes from the life of the novelist Camilo Castelo Branco in honour of the centenary of his birth. Here however two women were also depicted: Teresa de Albuquerque and Mariana da Cruz both characters from Castelo Branco’s novel *Amor de Peredição* (Gibbons 1996: 10). A real life man with fictional women.

**Figure 4. 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of birth of Camões and the Portugal-Brazil Transatlantic flight** (not included with this version of paper)

Thus it is clear that the stamps of the Portuguese Republic between 1910 and 1925 portray women and men in very different ways. Women only appear as allegorical figures of classical origin, wearing classical clothes and accessories or as fictional characters in a novel written by Castelo Branco. The men, apart from the appearance of the helmeted Mercury, are or were actual men, flying the South Atlantic, fighting the moors at Ceuta or the Germans in Flanders, writing novels or as is seen in another 1925 set showing the Marquis of Pombal, planning the rebuilding of Lisbon after the great earthquake of 1755. So although these stamps conform with republican imagery of justice, liberty and charity, presented in the form of allegorical figures of women, and the importance of the ‘great discoveries’ has not been forgotten, Marina Warner’s point that the women are portrayed in roles they do not practice is fully supported by the analysis of these stamps. It is the men who are doing while the women muse in silence. The dominant ideologies of the time, republicanism, and the always present nationalism, are perhaps overshadowed by an all-pervasive patriarchy.

**The *Estado Novo*: The new empire.**

For most of the period between 1926, when the military overthrew the Republican government, until the Revolution by army officers on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1974, Portugal

was ruled by António Salazar and his successor Marcello Caetano. Portugal's political ideology during this period was clearly bound-up with Salazar's regime which became known as the *Estado Novo* or the New State. Although contemporary with the regimes of Mussolini in Italy and Primo de Rivera in Spain and later 'fascist' dictatorships, Salazar's regime was very different to these and has been described as 'fascism deprived of all the attributes of fascism' (Jacques Georgel in Birmingham 1993: 159). There was no mass political party and Salazar although all powerful as Prime Minister remained nearly invisible. During his life no stamps were issued with Salazar's picture unlike in Spain where General Franco's profile was used for the first all-Spain issues after his victory in the civil war in 1939. The dominant ideological themes in Portugal were Catholicism and a renewed pride in the former and remaining Portuguese Empire all accompanied perhaps by a more strident nationalism. The period between 1926 and 1930 was dominated by a series of stamps depicting warriors and battles marking Portuguese Independence (Gibbons 1996: 11-12).

One other aspect of Salazarist ideology needs to be mentioned here. This was Lusotropicalism where a myth of a multi-racial harmonious empire was built based on the writings of the Brazilian sociologist, Gilberto Freyre. Freyre had argued that the Portuguese had a particular gift for living in the tropics and he had exalted this vital 'Lusotropical civilisation'. The *Estado Novo* claimed that this Lusotropicalism resulted in a lack of racial prejudice, in miscegenation and general 'cultural and biological interpenetration' (Nerín 1998: 104-127). In examining the stamps of the empire below we should perhaps ask whether there is any evidence of this Lusotropicalist ideology.

The arrival of the *Estado Novo* did not mark a return to monarchy although Salazar did try to take account of monarchist concerns (Birmingham 1993:160). The new definitive stamp of 1931 maintained the republican tradition of allegorical figures, this time with a seated 'Portugal', with a laurel crowned head holding a large copy of the *Lusiadas*, Camões epic account of the discoveries. Thus for the first time, the definitive, every day stamps of the nation were focused on the 'great discoveries'.

Also in 1931 a series of stamps marking the 700<sup>th</sup> centenary of the death of St Anthony appeared. These are the themes that are to recur throughout this period of Portuguese history: the past glories, especially the 'great discoveries' and Portugal as a catholic country. The classical allegories of women so characteristic of the republican period are eventually replaced so that the new definitive stamp of 1943 shows a caravel sailing the ocean: the 'great discoveries' had now moved to the centre of Portuguese stamp design. When women appear it is in a new guise. In 1940, in a series of 'local costumes' designs show, for example, a 'Shepherdess of Madeira' or a 'Fish-woman of Lisbon' and in 1947 a similar 'regional costumes' set is issued. Here women are firmly set in a traditional folk world which is not surprising as part of Salazarist ideology was a 'despairing acceptance' of poverty that was fully supported 'by the senior levels of the traditional church hierarchy' (Birmingham 1993:160). In 1946 a Madonna and child design denotes another new departure in the representation of women.<sup>6</sup> In 1950, Holy Year is marked by a picture of 'Our Lady of Fátima' while another series in 1951 marks the end of Holy Year. The mystical cult of Fátima was nurtured and a huge shrine was built by the state. So here in mid-century Portugal women are represented by either being

dressed in regional folk costumes, as Shepherdesses or Fish-women, or as the Holy, idealized figures of Mary and ‘Our Lady of Fátima’ – no longer classical allegorical figures, nor fictional characters from a novel but still women removed from reality, raised on a pedestal all firmly embraced by tradition. In 1952, to mark the fourth centenary of the death of St. Francis Xavier, the evangelizer of India, stamps are issued portraying the Saint vigorously holding a cross above some huddled figures. There is no doubt that this male religious character is doing something: the women, on the other hand, are passive figures engulfed in clothes (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Carmula Shepherdess (1947), Madonna and Child (1946), ‘Our Lady of Fátima’ (1950) and St. Francis Xavier (1952) (Gibbons 1996: 16-18).**

(not included with this version of paper)

By mid-century in Portugal and elsewhere the number of sets of stamps issued each year was increasing and stamp designers had to search more widely for material. It becomes harder to isolate themes as the multiplicity of designs increases. Some such stamps as the 1935 issue which simply declared *Tudo Pela Nação* – or ‘all for the nation’ are straightforward nationalistic appeals (Gibbons 1996: 13). By the 1940s and 1950s a great range of designs and themes are being used: the castles of Portugal (1946); the surrender by the Moors of the keys of Lisbon in 1147 (1947); the third anniversary of the foundation of NATO (1952); a definitive series showing a medieval knight (1953) and a series showing telegraph poles marking the centenary of the electric telegraph system of Portugal (1955) and a considerable number of sets showing an assorted group of Kings, writers and Saints. However, the theme of the great discoverers runs throughout the *Estado Novo* and into the second Republic right up to the present day with new sets being issued every few years (for example 1972, 1980, 1983, 1988 and 1990) with only the highly collectable *Europa* series making more frequent appearances perhaps marking Portugal’s loss of empire and the refocusing of political activity on the European Union.

The left-wing Armed Forces Revolution of the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1974 has left only a small impression on the stamps of Portugal. There were two issues celebrating the ‘Movement of the 25<sup>th</sup> April’ and its first anniversary and one set of stamps in March 1975 showing ‘Portuguese Cultural Progress and Citizens’ Guidance Campaign’ where the ‘people’ and the MFA (*Movimento das Forças Armadas*) are shown working together. In 1975, in Macao, the only colony that was to remain under Portuguese control after 1975, two stamps were issued, showing a worker waving a banner. This was perhaps the only flicker of socialist ideology that was to appear in Portugal’s colonial history. These are similar to stamps produced in the countries of the Soviet Block and in the newly independent Lusophone states in Africa (Gibbons 1996:31-32). This trend was soon abandoned in Portugal, so that by August 1975, it is the ‘36<sup>th</sup> International Camping and Caravanning Federation Rally’ and other such stamps that dominate (Gibbons 96: 32).

**Portuguese colonial stamps: who is doing the seeing?**

Wambui Mwangi (2002), in his recent article on the changing design of currency notes in British colonial Kenya, asks some questions that I would argue can be clearly applied to colonial stamp design. First, like money, stamps are to a certain extent made to



be 'seen' but not looked at. As with money, the images on stamps are meant 'simultaneously both to be scrutinised and [to] be overlooked' (Mwangi 2002:32). For the user, familiarity with the normal appearance of the particular countries stamps and perhaps confidence in the post office selling the stamps obviates any need for close scrutiny to determine whether the stamp is a forgery or not. However, there is usually a wider choice of stamps available than money – where one takes what is given – and the placing of a stamp or stamps on a hand addressed envelope might be taken as part of a minor artistic creation, especially if one was posting a letter from an exotic colonial location to the metropole.

Who then is expected to look at these stamps? In colonial Kenya the colonial authorities – and here white settlers had an important input – used paper money showing, for example, scenes of Mount Kenya and a Lion. East African stamp design during the period from the 1920s to the 1950s also often showed geographical features – Mount Kilimanjaro or Lake Naivasha, for example, accompanied by the head of the British sovereign. Here in the stamps, as on the paper money, the landscape was being appropriated for the colony and the colonizer and the distant monarch.<sup>7</sup> Mwangi notes that there was no evidence of the native inhabitants of East Africa on the images on the money and the same is true, in general, of the stamps. Mwangi points out the alarm of the British colonial administration, when, in the 1950s, some of the bank notes were defaced with the message 'Mau Mau Very Good'. There was a sudden realization that these notes were circulating among the natives spreading a very different message (Mwangi 48-49). The natives, not just the settlers had looked the bank notes.

In British East Africa there was a large white settler community (in Kenya in particular) and a devolved colonial administration where the 'East Africa Currency Board' authored the bank notes. What was the situation in the Portuguese colonies? During most of the period of *Estado Novo* control was firmly placed in the centre with stamps being printed by the mint in Lisbon. During the 1950s with decolonization pressures beginning to be put on Portugal the Salazar regime decided to counter this by declaring that the component pieces of the empire were just provinces of Portugal. Similar stamps designs for all the 'colonies' were then issued – with only minor variations, sometimes just the name of the colony or 'province'. At the other extreme, between the 1890s and 1940s Portugal sublet the colonial administration of large parts of Mozambique to two concession companies – the Mozambique Company (*Companhia de Moçambique*) and the Nyassa Company. Both companies issued stamps. In between these two extremes various degrees of colonial devolution was allowed in particular during the Republic between 1910 and 1926 although there is little evidence of this on the stamps of the period. Thus in asking questions about who was supposed to 'look' the stamps it is crucial to know who is issuing them and making the decisions as to what to show. In general it is the Portuguese 'settler' – remembering that the Portuguese had been in their colonies for some 500 years - who was expected to purchase the stamps and there was little evidence of the portrayal of natives or their concerns, as in the British

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<sup>7</sup> This appropriation had been real not just metaphorical as Queen Victoria had made a gift of Mount Kilimanjaro to her grandson, the future Kaiser Wilhelm II so that the mountain is now in Tanzania not Kenya (Thomson 2000:23).

East African banknotes discussed above. There are some marked exceptions and these will be discussed below.

### **The stamps of the *Estado da Índia*.**

Portuguese India was 'founded' in 1510 by Afonso de Albuquerque having been seized from the Indian ruler of Bijapur. St Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Indies converted many inhabitants to Catholicism during the sixteenth century. By the second half of the nineteenth century the Portuguese had been in India for some 400 years. In December 1961 Indian troops invaded and the Portuguese presence ended.

Throughout the rest of the Portuguese empire (except Timor) the first stamps were issued between 1869 and 1880s and were of a common design showing simply a crown, that is the crown of the Portuguese Monarch (See Figure 6). Why a head of King Louis was not used in the design, as it was in Portugal itself, is not clear.<sup>8</sup> Coins used during the reign of King Louis also show the crown on a shield without a portrait (ws tranquebar:2). Perhaps there were fears that the colonial subjects might gaze upon the King whose image was to be preserved for the Portuguese back home? However, before this, in Portuguese India, and not elsewhere in the colonies, between 1871 and the first appearance of the standard colonial Crown design in 1877, a series of simple stamps, designed and produced in Goa were used. These had a simple message: '*Serviço postal. Índia Port.*' On an oval pattern with the value, in reis, simply printed in figures the centre (see Figure 6). The strength of the Indo-Portuguese community in the 1870s, the development of the Indian postal service in the neighbouring British India might perhaps explain the difference from other Portuguese territories.<sup>9</sup>

### **Figure 6. First day cover from Goa, 1953, showing the first stamps issued in Portugal and its colonies. (not included with this version of paper)**

After 1886 the heads of the Portuguese monarchs were used on the colonial stamps, including in Portuguese India. The 1898 'Vasco da Gama' series inscribed with the name of the territory was also issued and set a pattern which was not to change while the Portuguese remained in India. The stamps were nearly wholly preoccupied with Portuguese not Indian concerns. At times the concerns of the centralized colonial department in Lisbon dominated with, for example, the issue of empire-wide sets of stamps. At other times it was a particular Portuguese involvement with India which was highlighted with the stamps just being produced for Portuguese India.

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<sup>8</sup> Coins used during the reign of King Louis also show the crown on a shield without a portrait. Note that the coins of the previous monarch, King Pedro V did have a portrait on one side. See (ws tranquebar: 2)

<sup>9</sup> There a number of publications in Portuguese on the stamps of Portuguese India which are currently been sought by the author. These include Joaquim Leote, *Os selos nativos da Índia Portuguesa: Breves considerações*. Oporto: Club Nacional de Filatelia, 1997; João Augusto Marinho, *Apontamentos sobre selos da Índia Portuguesa*, Luanda: Clube Filatélico de Angola, 1964; Caetano Francisco da Piedade Duarte Catulo, *História e evolução dos C. T. T. do Estado da Índia*, Goa: Rep. Central dos Serv. Dos Correios, telégrafos e Telefones do Estado da Índia, 1953 (?).

An example of the Lisbon, empire-wide, production was during the Republic when stamps showing Ceres, headed '*Republica Portuguesa*' and subtitled 'India' were used (see Figure 3). Later in 1931, a set of definitive stamps was issued showing an allegorical figure of a woman, named as 'Portugal' – her shield shows the central part of the Portuguese flag – and 'Galeasse', a large and heavy 'galley' sailing the ocean. Various other issues mark anniversaries of the great discoverers including an empire wide set in 1938 showing the discoverers and conquerors, Mousinho de Albuquerque, Prince Henry and Vasco da Gama (see Figure 7). Other examples of centralized Portuguese productions, and empire-wide imprints, are the 'Holy year', 'Our Lady of Fátima' and a 'missionary art exhibition' sets of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

**Figure 7. Vasco da Gama issue 1938.**  
(not included with this version of the paper)

A number of other stamps were only issued in Portuguese India but designed and printed in Portugal. These relate purely to the Portuguese in India with no image at all of local Indian themes or people (apart from perhaps a huddled figure of a young man or boy next to two nuns in a 1960 charity tax stamp) (Gibbons 1996: 187). St Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Indies, makes a regular appearance as do other Portuguese religious and military figures (See Figure 8)

**Figure 8 St. Francis Xavier**  
(not included with this version of the paper)

The last stamps issues prior to the Indian invasion show a series of twenty stamps showing Portuguese Indian coins dating from the reign of Manoel I to the Portuguese Republic and a stamp marking the fifth centenary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator. Thus whether empire-wide issues or issues focused on particular Portuguese Indian historical figures there is no evidence on the images reproduced on the stamps of any pre-colonial existence for this part of India nor any pictures for example of 'native' subjects, religions or languages. From an analysis of the stamps, for the Portuguese colonialists and settlers it is as if the territory did not exist before the 'great discoverers' appeared.

### **The African colonies: any sightings of the Africans?**

The Portuguese empire in Africa consisted of five main territories, Cape Verde, Portuguese Guinea (now Guinea-Bissau), São Tome and Príncipe, Angola and Mozambique. These territories were and are very different and each would need to be examined in detail to fully understand the particular imagery used on postage stamps. Just a few comments can be made here.

From 1891 to 1942 the Mozambique Company was granted a concession to administer a large part of Mozambique. It was authorized to issue its own stamps. Similarly from 1894 to 1929 another part of Mozambique was handed over to the Nyassa Company. There are a couple of questions to be briefly addressed here. Did the images shown on the stamps show a major departure from the pattern of Portuguese colonial issues and did a private company issuing stamps make a particular effort to profit from

this authority? It is clear that up to 1918 the Portuguese state maintained strong control over the images used. The first stamps were just King Louis stamps overprinted with the name of the company. The first specifically printed stamp showed the arms of the company – this showed two elephants on their hind legs. In 1898 these were in turn overprinted with ‘*Centenario da India*’ and after 1910 with the words ‘*Republica*’ so that the Company’s stamps still conveyed the Portuguese government’s priorities. However, after 1918, the Company embarked on the production of a whole series of pictorial stamps printed and designed in London. They showed a whole range of subjects and activities from trains, the port of Beira, natives holding ivory, the growing of tobacco, copra, sisal along with giraffes, snakes, zebras and lions. The designs were very similar to those used in British East and South Africa although here natives did make a regular appearance. Whole series of triangular stamps for airmail and others with animal portraits also confirm that this sudden richness and variety of images is for some other purpose than postage. These are mainly for stamp collectors and it should not be a surprise that such a private company should focus on profit and modernization and not on any particular state ideology.

Up to 1961, with the variations mentioned above, stamp issues very much followed the pattern of the *Estado da India*. The bourgeois Portuguese monarchy issued stamps with the crown design and then the King’s head and launched the first commemorative series showing Vasco da Gama; the Republic favoured allegorical figures of classical women while the *Estado Novo* projected with renewed vigour the idea Empire. Unlike the French and the British who decolonised in the early 1960s, Portugal clung on to its colonies until the mid 1970s.

As we have seen, the images on the stamps of the *Estado da India* were fully focused on Portuguese concerns. No ‘natives’ made an appearance. In Africa, this was not wholly the case, although the many centralised Lisbon based issues, such as designs showing for example, ‘the centenary of the Overseas Bank’ (1964) were used in all the territories.

In the African colonies, or ‘provinces’ a number of stamps were printed reflecting local African wildlife, landscapes and architecture. A whole series of maps of the territories, defining the ‘national’ territory, were issued in 1955 (see Gibbons 1996: 73 for Angola) supporting the view that the colonial state initiated the process of nation-building which was to later preoccupy the post-colonial states.<sup>10</sup> In Angola, nearly all those groups who have fought the prolonged civil war for control of the state were fighting for Angola as defined on those colonial stamps. A spectacular Angolan set of stamps was issued in the 1950s showing Angolan Fauna (1953) and sets of Mozambican fishes (1951) and butterflies (1953). These were mainly produced for the stamp collector.

However, unlike in Portuguese India, the local inhabitants did make an occasional appearance on a number of stamps in some of the African territories. In 1948, in Portuguese Guinea a set included a young bare-breasted young ‘native’ woman (see

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<sup>10</sup> One strand of British colonial policy was certainly one of nation-building (Davidson 1993: 169).

Figure 9) and later in Angola in 1957 a series of ‘native types’ was printed.<sup>11</sup> Sixteen stamps showing ‘Angolan Women’ were also produced in 1961. Why were bare-breasted African women shown during the same period when Portuguese women were depicted as fully-clothed religious figures such as ‘Our Lady of Fatima’ or as peasant Shepherdesses? The portrayal of African women in this way contrasts with the allegorical classical figures of women, the characters in a novel and ‘Our Lady of Fatima’ but might not appear so different to the Portuguese Shepherdesses. Both are in traditional attire. The Portuguese shared the Western ‘orientalist’ discourse so that Portuguese women are fully ‘civilized’ while the Africans are just ‘the other’

**Figure 9. Portuguese Guinea. 1948**  
(not included with this version of the paper)

It is possible that the Lusotropicalist ideologies of the *Estado Novo* might also have some influence here? This ideology suggested that the Portuguese had a particular aptitude for the colonization of the tropics – as briefly discussed above – and were free of any racial prejudice unlike other European colonizers so resulting in widespread miscegenation and the development of Creole societies. Although this ideology was the official ideology of the Salazar regime its application to its African colonies must be looked at with considerable scepticism. Indeed Nerín has described the transfer of this ideology (from Brazil) to Africa as grotesque (Nerín 1998: 143). It is possible that this official view of Portuguese, male, adaptability to the tropics encouraged the publishing of some of these stamps but it is more likely that the 1948 set was a result of reaffirmation of traditional values, of the past, where women were firmly placed. The dominance of purely Portuguese and Portuguese settler concerns on the stamps in India and Africa suggests little cultural interpenetration and supports Nerín’s sceptical view of Portuguese Lusotropicalism.

The portrayal of ‘native type’s was certainly not the normal pattern of stamp issues during the last twenty years of Portuguese colonial rule. Although the focus was often on the territory itself, it was on the Portuguese connection with that colony that dominated on the images of stamps – such as ‘Angolan Churches’ or the ‘500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Pedro Cabral’ (Gibbons 1996: 76-77). The great influx of Portuguese settlers into Angola and Mozambique along with the relative economic success of these territories in the period up to 1974 might explain the increasing frequency of stamps focused on Angolan and Mozambican subjects. Unsurprisingly, the dominant political message was that of Portuguese nationalism and imperialism and as is shown in a 1972 set celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *The Luciards* (Figure 10) the theme of the ‘great discoveries’, with the Church not far behind, remains at the centre of Portuguese colonial discourse.

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<sup>11</sup> At about the same time a set of stamps showing various Timorese natives was issued in Timor (Gibbons 1996: 202). This suggests that the decisions on these imprints were made in Portugal. A set for São Tome and Príncipe showed fruit and nuts (Gibbons 1996: 194) while those in Macao, Cape Verde, Mozambique and Angola (1949) showed landscapes.

**Figure 10. 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ‘The Lusiads’**  
(not included with this version of the paper)

**Conclusion**

From this brief analysis of the ideologies associated with the images on the stamps Portugal and its colonies, two dominant themes have emerged: the relationship of the nation to empire and the gendered basis of the construction of the nation. The recall of the exploits of the ‘great - male - discovers’ is confirmed as an important component of Portuguese national identity. Especially during the period of the *Estado Novo* the idea of empire was crucial to that regimes view of Portugal itself and to its own survival. Portuguese colonial stamps were strongly focused on Portuguese history and culture and on Portuguese activities overseas. In India there is no hint of any non-Portuguese culture. Secondly it is clear that during most of the twentieth century the idea of the Portuguese nation was clearly gendered with women portrayed as passive allegorical figures, muses, Madonnas, shepherdesses or bare-breasted natives while men whether fighting the Moors or evangelizing the Indies were active participants in forging the nation.

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The Muse Clio: <http://www.eliki.com/portals/fantasy/circle/cliio.html> as on 29/12/2002

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