

**LUIZA CALIXTO TARASCONI**

**EXHIBITING ‘INVISIBLE’ NARRATIVES  
AND OBJECTS AT THE PORTUGUESE  
MARITIME MUSEUM IN LISBON**

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Faculdade de Ciências Sociais, Educação e Administração  
Departamento de Museologia**

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Presidente - Prof. Doutor Mário Caneva de Magalhães Moutinho, Universidade Lusófona;

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*Museums are more than just physical places designed to house collections. Their purpose is to shape identity and memory. They do not and cannot represent complete stories, but the distilled narratives they propose often contain the most treasured and the most contested facets of identity, national or otherwise.*

*A museum is a place we can go to find and tell stories about ourselves and others. It is not the only home for knowledge, but it is one that often holds a national curriculum of identity, preferring the dominant and mainstream narratives.*

*Alice Procter*

## **Acknowledgement**

Over the past 2.5 years, my exploration of museology and sociomuseology has been incredibly enlightening because I have recognised the significant role museums play in improving social, cultural and political education and the challenges of finding the inclusion of different cultures and narratives inside exhibitions. Cultural and social education plays a crucial role in understanding individuals' and societies' beliefs, ideas, objects, experiences, attitudes, values, rituals, and practices. It allows a deeper comprehension of past cultures and people's perceptions of themselves and the world. By acknowledging that the selection process involved in curating exhibits is far from innocent, it becomes evident that the deliberate manner in which objects are displayed significantly influences the knowledge society gains about them. In doing so, museums play a pivotal role in shaping our understanding of "our" history and that of others, effectively acting as instrumentalists in the narrative construction of our shared past (Murawsky, 2021. p. 34-38). Political changes might not be the obvious perspective of museums. Nonetheless, museums can have political implications and reinforce a sense of national or regional identity, supporting different claims for autonomy or statehood to help people understand the complex political issues of the past and present, historical events, and social movements. Museums can also host presentations on topics such as civil rights, social justice, and political activism that foster dialogue and engagement on important political issues, creating space engagement and offering critical perspectives on government policies, historical injustices, or contemporary challenges. The museological space can be opened to political commentary, activism, and protest, challenging the status quo and advocating for change. And we must not forget that local museums can play a role in local politics by engaging with communities and addressing local issues. They can provide a platform for community voices and contribute to civic discourse.

Suppose we stop and analyse the profile of museum visitors. In that case, this result might not represent the majority of the population, and this is because the majority of the public inside museums come from school visits, but the so-called spontaneous visitation audience in general is families and adults. Inclusivity in museum spaces has

been debated and sought for more than four decades. This is a persistent reality that reflects society's unequal social structure that must be explored and changed.

Researchers and museum workers have to rethink practices imbued with structural racism so museums can act as spaces for reception, dialogue and debate instead of simply propagating information and content of just one side, far from the different realities of the majority of the world population. Increasingly, we need more researchers and museum professionals who care about inclusive practices to combine the proactivity of initiating respectful dialogues that consider the public's values, aspirations and motivations.

I would like to thank my FAMILY for their immense support over these past few years, for understanding and never letting me back down, no matter how arduous this journey has been.

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Additionally, I would like to thank the Museu Marítimo Português (Portuguese Maritime Museum) and the patrimony staff, who were kind enough to embrace my ideas and help me in my research in the many ways possible. A special thanks to Ana Ferreira as well, for constantly receiving me at the museum and also being available to help me.

## **Abstract:**

This research aims to examine the permanent exhibition in the “Sala dos Descobrimentos” (Discoveries Room) of the Museu Marítimo Português (Portuguese Maritime Museum), identifying whether there are decolonial representations or concepts aimed at the encounters of the Portuguese explorers with Africans and Indigenous peoples in the exhibition. The museum’s collection will also be analysed working toward revealing objects and histories that have never been exhibited in the museum before, hoping to later develop a proposal bringing visibility to these invisible artefacts and narratives, showing their sociocultural importance, and proposing to correct historical distortions. It intends to contribute to the decolonisation of the museum’s narrative and allow these objects to play a protagonist role as well.

The research involves a meticulous analysis of the exhibition area, aiming to discover how certain objects, stories and historical realities have been silenced in the museum’s narrative by addressing this lack of their cultures and traumatic histories during colonial encounters and showing how the absence of these ethnicities and critical historical events are relevant for the history of Portugal.

**Keywords:** Museology, Museological Objects, Invisibility, History, Portugal, Museum, Archives, Museological Practices, Decolonial Studies

## **Resumo:**

O objetivo desta pesquisa é examinar a exposição permanente na “Sala dos Descobrimentos” (Discoveries Room) do Museu Marítimo Português, identificando se a representações de objetos e narrativas decoloniais que exibam os encontros dos Portugueses com Africanos e os povos Indígenas. O estudo pretende identificar artefactos anteriormente nunca expostos na exposição permanente do museu, abordando a ausência de suas histórias traumáticas durante os encontros coloniais, ausentando as suas importâncias, etnias e eventos históricos críticos na história de Portugal.

A pesquisa envolve uma análise meticulosa do espaço da exposição, com o objetivo de descobrir como certos objetos, histórias e realidades históricas foram silenciados na narrativa do museu. O estudo pretende elaborar uma proposta de exposição permanente trazendo visibilidade aos artefactos e narrativas invisíveis, mostrando as suas importâncias socioculturais, propondo corrigir distorções históricas e contribuir para a descolonização da narrativa do museu.

**Palavras-chave:** Museologia, Objetos Museológicos, Invisibilidade, História, Portugal, Museu, Acervos, Práticas Museológicas, Estudos Decoloniais.

## **Abbreviations, Acronyms and Symbols**

**MM** - Portuguese Maritime Museum

**ICOM** – Conselho Internacional de Museus

**IPM** – Instituto Português de Museus

**ULHT** – Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias (Lusophone University of Humanities and Technologies)

**UNESCO** - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



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## INTRODUCTION:

Within the context of the Master's program in Museology at ULHT, this dissertation is dedicated to a comprehensive case study conducted at the Museu Marítimo Português, in Lisbon, from now on referred to as Portuguese Maritime Museum or MM. The primary objective is to analyse if museum's permanent exhibition, "Sala dos Descobrimentos" (DiscoveriesRoom) is decolonising its colonial elements and history. Identifying a range of approaches and tools to actively promote the decolonisation of the exhibition's ingrained concepts. In this study, the methodological approach was inductive, and within this method, two distinct analysis approaches were employed:

By analysing this exhibition, I want show the different possibilities of decolonising an exhibition and to answer the following questions: if it is possible to Decolonise a colonial exhibition or a colonial museum? And if the museum explores more different ways to make museums more welcoming to diverse narratives, audiences, and stories?

**1. Thematic Analysis:** This method involved the identification of systematic narrative themes and patterns within the museum's permanent exhibition and the invisible objects. By using this analysis in the study, it unveils the recurring narrative structures and themes within the museum's displays and the invisible objects.

The second analytical approach focused on:

**2. Comparative Analysis:** This is the examination of museum initiatives implemented in various European museums. This comparison shed light on the concepts of sociomuseology and Decolonisation, serving as a reference point for evaluating the Portuguese Maritime Museum's exhibition. Through this analysis, the study aimed to assess how the MM's exhibition aligns with or diverges from contemporary socio museological and Decolonisation practices observed in some European museum settings.

Within the framework of this thesis, I conducted a series of four visits to the museum as a crucial part of my research methodology. Among these visits, the initial one held particular significance. During this first visit, I had the opportunity to meet with Ana Pacheco, an intern who played a pivotal role in facilitating my access to the museum's reserves and providing invaluable insights into reservation-related information. This initial encounter allowed me to gain my first insights into the museum's reserve collections and to examine the records associated with these objects. Due to time constraints, I could only review a portion of the assembly during this visit, selectively focusing on records and objects that bore the highest relevance to my thesis. The second visit, equally as pivotal, entailed a guided tour of the museum's permanent collection conducted by a museum's heritage team member. This visit refined and crystallised my research objectives, enabling me to narrow my focus to collections or individual artefacts that have never been exhibited, objects of African and Indigenous origin. Regrettably, in my quest for Indigenous objects, I encountered notable challenges in sourcing information and obtaining results.

The thesis structure will consist of four main sections. The first section, Chapter 1, will serve as a theoretical discussion, which will introduce the core concepts of Sociomuseology and Decolonisation, outlining the concise yet comprehensive definition of these concepts, showcasing an awareness of their significance and highlighting the synergies they share within the field of Museology. This chapter will delve into the ideological principles underpinning Sociomuseology and Decolonisation, elucidating their respective domains of study. Moreover, it will trace how museums approach and apply these principles, clarifying how they give rise to distinctive narratives and facilitate active community engagement across various facets of museum operations, examining the multifaceted approaches that can actively participate in helping communities and stakeholders shape the museum practices and narratives and highlighting the role of museums to be more dynamic and socially responsible for the reflection and the engagement with the diverse and evolving societal contexts they serve. Decolonisation will be explored more in the subchapter 1.1. To provide readers with a study will consult a bibliographic analysis, based on historical documents, books and

deeper understanding of the origins and historical development of Sociomuseology, authors such as Hughes de Varine, Mario Moutinho<sup>1</sup>, Bruno Brulon, Judite Primo<sup>2</sup>, Mario Chagas, Inês Gouveia<sup>3</sup> and Sharon MacDonald are significant figures that have contributed to the improving of the concepts, and the relationship between museums. The subsequent subchapter 1.2. delves into the introduction of the concept of decolonisation ideals and its omission of themes related to invisibility and silencing objects and stories. This more minor chapter will show an international interest in changing the museum's role with society, encompassing processes of deconstructing colonial legacies and dismantling the structures of power that have historically dominated the museum landscape. This entails confronting and dismantling representations, visuals, and language reinforcing white supremacy and colonial dynamics, and changing the Eurocentric, colonial, and hegemonic perspectives, not merely focusing on the act of symbolic recognition and the transformative process aimed at fostering inclusivity, acknowledging marginalised voices, and opposing the complex entanglements of colonialism within museum collections and narratives. It brings its relevance in academic studies, particularly in fields such as history, sociology, political science, and cultural studies, which cannot be overstated. This concept has put a critical lens through which scholars analyse and address the enduring legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and oppression as authors such as Anibal Quijano, Walter Dignolo, Frantz Fanon, Judite Primo and Bruno Brulon did.

The second chapter of this thesis aims to uncover the foundational principles and historical origins of the Maritime Museum, shedding light on the dominant discourse commonly found in many history museums, often shaped by the perspectives of the Navy or the hierarchy of individuals, resulting in the presentation of “clean” and idealised versions of historical museums. Aspiring to share the history of the MM, the

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<sup>1</sup> Mário Moutinho is a professor of Museology, founding member of the Museu do Casal de Monte Redondo, member founder and current President of MINOM-ICOM. Coordinator since 2007 of the Master's and Doctorate in Museology at the Lusófona University. He has publications in the area of Sociomuseology. Former dean of the Lusophone University.

<sup>2</sup> Judite Primo has a degree in Museology from the Federal University of Bahia, Master in Museology from the Lusófona University of Lisbon, PhD in Education and Heritage from the University Portuguese. She is currently coordinator of the Department of Museology at Universidade Lusófona and the Master's and Doctorate in Museology. Director of the Journal *Cadernos de Sociomuseologia* and board member of directors of MINOM-ICOM Portugal. She works in the areas of Sociomuseology and Cultural policies.

<sup>3</sup> Utilizing authors Judite Primo & Mario Moutinho to speak about the introduction, importance, ideas and concepts of sociomuseology. Mario Chagas, Inês Gouveia and Sharon MacDonald to speak about museum studies and improvements on museum connections with the participation of different groups and society.

academic research by authors Alfredo Motta, António Pedro de Loureiro Ramos, Isabela M, Maria Lorena, Manuel Lopes, Martins Moreira, Mariana Selister Gomes, Sancho Querol, and Tiago Filipe Resende Carvalho who help understand the core ideals of the museum.

The third chapter consists of the analysis of the permanent exhibition in the Discoveries Room, providing images, the museographic and curatorial aspects, and objectives. It will analyse with great detail four specific themes/panels; **“The Problematisation of the Word ‘Discoveries’”, “Portuguese Shipbuilding”, “Atlantic Slave Trade”, “Religion and Missionary Work”, and “Spice Jars”**, also bringing the extension subchapter that will analyse this same exhibition, addressing existing gaps of it, as the lack of the socio museological and decolonial concept and the lack of inclusion that were not found in the permanent exhibition.

In the fourth chapter, the thesis delves into the African objects concealed within the museum’s reserve. It meticulously unveils their absence from the permanent exhibition, shedding light on their historical neglect. This chapter’s primary objective is to accentuate the significance of these long-overlooked artefacts and advocate for their integration into the museum’s exhibition, contributing to a more enriched and diverse representation of its collection. The fifth chapter revisits the previously invisible objects and discusses their integration into the permanent exhibition. It showcases the inclusion process and explores potential future projects to enhance the museum’s display further.

The conclusion aims to answer the significant objectives with evidence gathered; Is it possible to decolonise a colonial exhibition or a colonial museum? Can the museum explore more different ways to make museums more welcoming to diverse narratives, audiences, and stories? This study also interviewed the former curator of the MM and the permanent exhibition, Bruno G. Neves. He was very delightful and helped me understand the overall idea of what was to be exhibited and why they chose what was in the exhibition.

This dissertation aims to reach other English-speaking countries and museology studies worldwide, hoping to increase the necessity of international recognition for the field and the importance of Decolonisation. This is an opportunity for reflections, discussions and to produce knowledge to give Sociomuseology a broader recognition worldwide. For this same reason, the study will briefly introduce sociomuseology and the Decolonial concept, exploring different European museums that are taking initiatives regarding both ideals.

I hope this work can contribute to people realising the potential museal institutions have inside of politics, inspiring public policies focused on cultural and identity integration. It is a fact that there are many integrational policies focused on housing, work, and education, but not enough on the previously mentioned dimensions of culture and identity of minorities.

Museums, as institutions, are tasked with the preservation, interpretation, and presentation of cultural heritage, and play a pivotal role in shaping collective memory and influencing public consciousness. They should demonstrate their relevance to a broader population, actively break barriers that limit cultural access, and strongly work to counteract and reduce inequalities, choosing to become agents of social change, inspiring meaningful and relevant experiences that promote inclusivity, critical thinking, and social cohesion. We are talking about how museums can play essential roles in society and critically describe their social purpose, how this component is perceived today and all of the ideas underpinning it. There is a need to register interest in how culture is shown, what is displayed, who displays things, and who consumes meaning from museums. A belated awareness of museums' sociological relevance indicates a modern intersection of social sciences and museological activity. Museums can serve as spaces for reflection and debate on historical, social, cultural, and scientific concerns. (Moutinho, 2021). Although, it must be very clear that over the years, the differences made and changes seen by the population did not come within the museum walls. These changes were imposed by social movements. Social movements are the ones who play the critical role in constructing and interpreting history in many ways. These movements often challenge dominant narratives, question power structures, and contribute to the evolution of collective understanding of past events. In short, social movements have challenged museums to evolve, adapt and expand their vision, becoming more inclusive, accessible and relevant institutions for a variety of audiences. These changes contribute to a more comprehensive and critical understanding of history, culture and society. This study explores why these changes are not coming within the museum, showing attentively how social movements are still definitely necessary and could not be left aside, as they play a significant role in the way museums operate and relate to the public.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This study does not delve deeply into social movements and the various examples of its influence that have transpired globally in recent years, movements that have profoundly altered the world, reshaped the manner in which museums curate exhibitions, changed research approaches, and transformed the pedagogy of history. Nonetheless, it remains a closely related topic that accompanies this study and merits recognition for its significance. It serves as a reminder of the importance of considering these movements in future research endeavors, as they have played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of museum practices and historical discourse.

## **1. Theoretical Discussion**

### **1.1. Sociomuseology**

This is a school of thought and a branch of museology that centres on the social dimensions of museums and their profound influence on society. Going beyond the conventional concept of museums as static repositories of artefacts, “sociomuseology delves into a museum’s dynamic role as interactive social institutions that shape and impact communities. It critically examines the intricate relationships between museums, their audiences, and the broader social context in which they operate” (Primo, 2020, p. 15) This school of thought, field of study, actively engages museology with disciplines like humanities, developing studies, science services, and “territorial planning with the multidisciplinary approach of sociomuseology aiming to establish museology as a valuable resource for promoting sustainable human progress, based on principles of equality of opportunity and economic and social inclusion. It acknowledges the societal intervention of museums in preserving both tangible and intangible cultural and ecological heritage” (Moutinho, 2014, p. 2-3).

The critical aspects of sociomuseology explores and challenges traditional museum practices, where the museum can actively engage in social change, in audience engagement, focusing closely on inclusivity, catering to the needs of different diverse social groups, fostering a sense of ownership and representation among visitors. Cultural expression is highlighted to ensure a fair and accurate portrayal of marginalised communities and their contributions to society, challenging Eurocentric perspectives. (Primo, 2020, 17-34) Sociomuseology also explores the social impact of museums in facilitating discussions on social issues, cultural understanding, and community development. Education and learning are emphasised as museums are recognised as powerful educational tools, providing experiential and interactive learning experiences that promote critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning. (Primo & Moutinho, 2012). The concept of social responsibility is present and encouraged, urging museums to address social and environmental challenges and advocate for social justice, sustainability, and human rights.



In recent decades, sociomuseology has gained recognition in various countries as a subject of study and research, building on the works of influential pioneers and incorporating new practices and observations. It encourages a departure from traditional museum practices, focusing on enhancing the social purpose of museums and their positive impact on society (Moutinho, 2021).

“Sociomuseology is a path that starts from the perception of exclusion, prejudice, the search for visibility” (Primo, 2021)<sup>5</sup>

The significance of Sociomuseology in this study lies in its dedication to combating this invisibility within exhibitions. By providing a visibility for forgotten memories, diverse narratives, and artifacts hidden away in archives, “it works towards Decolonising museums and ensuring an inclusive representation that embraces and celebrates previously marginalized voices.” (Brulon, 2020, p. 243).

However, many challenges remain, such as the need to diversify the public and overcome barriers to cultural access. Museums must demonstrate their relevance to a wider population, actively break barriers that limit cultural access, and actively work to counteract and reduce inequalities. Ultimately, sociomuseology empowers museums to be more than mere repositories; they become agents of social change, inspiring meaningful and relevant experiences that promote inclusivity, critical thinking, and social cohesion. Sociomuseology fosters the museum's pivotal role in shaping a more informed, empathetic, and inclusive society through its engagement with various disciplines and commitment to addressing contemporary social issues. (Murawski, 2021, 63-97) Hughes de Varine<sup>6</sup> is widely recognised for his pioneering work promoting the concept of “living heritage” and advocating for a more participatory and community-oriented approach to museums and heritage conservation. He emphasised the importance of engaging local communities, preserving and interpreting their own cultural heritage, challenging traditional top-down museum practices.

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<sup>5</sup> Master's Class by Professor Judite Primo called “Museologia Patrimônio e Desenvolvimento” in 2021 (07/05/2021)

<sup>6</sup> Varine, H. (1985) Images of the Ecomuseum; Museum; Vol.:XXXVII, p. 4

We are talking about museums that play essential roles in society. It is critical to describe the museum's social purpose, how this component is perceived today, and all of the ideas underpinning it. There is a need to begin registering interest in how culture is shown, what is displayed, who displays things, and who consumes meaning from museums. There is a belated awareness of museums' sociological relevance, indicating a modern intersection of social sciences and museological activity. Museums can serve as spaces for reflection and debate on historical, social, cultural, and scientific concerns (Moutinho, 2021). Inequality, decoloniality, feminism, racism, popular culture, visual representation, structuralism, post-structuralism, cultural studies, social class theory, and concepts of cultural capital are all ongoing research methods in this "new" world of museums. Subsequently, this study aims to use sociomuseological approaches to bring solutions and demonstrate how museums can combat invisibility within exhibitions, getting the public's attention to the memories, artefacts and stories hidden in the archive and decolonising the museum and giving these small stories an identity and inclusion, showing all the details and facts possible. These objects are essential; they are not incidental. They must become protagonists in their stories, contributing to people's and the country's cultural and social education.

For this dissertation, it is crucial to define what was learned and to explain the term sociomuseology, since we hope to show that museums are not all about artefacts or paintings. They are about memory, interactions, experience and present-day stories or causes that happened and that are happening now in forms of art, education, and transformation. It is important to recognise the existence of an audience that does not need guides or subtitles. It is just common sense that eventually forces the museum to elaborate dialogues that are simultaneously more complex and less standardised (Moutinho, 2010, p.4). Suppose museums recognise that they are a production or even a child of the community, which gives it life. In that case, it will have to admit the changes and the process of finding new ways of communication that can take those who produce and consume the museological discourse. Reflections on museums and society have been taking place worldwide for a long time and have been contributing to and fostering experiences that seek to adapt to multiple views of the world and museology.

It is important to mention that in 1972, at the Round Table in Santiago de Chile, a presentation on the socio-political, economic and technical situation of Latin America was given by the architect and urban planner Jorge Henrique Hardoy. This was a fundamental roundtable for the understanding of museums and how they can participate more actively in the community, its educational, formative and knowledge-spreading character. On that occasion, “a new concept of action by museums was defined: the integral museum, intended to provide the community with an overall view of its material and cultural environment.” (ICOM, 1972) That would be Sociomuseology, which endows the museum with the mission of being a facilitator of social development and transformation. It takes on this task, based on the social sciences, promoting, through educational pedagogical activities, reflective practices on cultural heritage. The “dialogue” between the man and the musealised object depends on the approach the museum professionals chose to mediate the action.

“The museum is an institution at the service of society, of which it is an integral part, and that it possesses in itself the elements that allow it to participate in the formation of the conscience of the communities it serves, that it can contribute to the engagement of these communities in action, placing its activities within a historical framework that allows for the clarification of current problems, that is, linking the past to the present, engaging in ongoing structural changes and provoking other changes within their respective national realities” (Round Table of Santiago de Chile, ICOM, 1972). It is also widely recognised that all societies are in permanent change, so the actions of museums should be based on this change whenever they seek to play a socially intervening role. Museums are spaces for negotiating differences by selecting what is represented, what is included, what is excluded. They have, in turn, the potential to assert themselves as spaces for promoting intercultural dialogue, debating society’s themes and the plurality of perspectives, and bringing absent or neglected voices to the arena by creating constructive environments conducive to joint reflection. They can, in this way, contribute to tolerance and to better understanding of the obstacles and challenges of life in society (Kreps, 2013)

Recognising that museums have only sometimes been effective in representing and promoting diversity and intercultural dialogue, it is necessary to clarify that it is not only a question of representation but also a question of whom museums are aimed at; we therefore speak public (Brulon B., 2020, p. 181-183). One of the significant challenges of museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is, without much doubt, the increase, but above all, the diversification of the public. “The studies that are being published confirm that it is still a minority, economically and socially favoured, that frequent museums. The majority of the population is alienated from museums and, to a large extent, from cultural institutions” (Brulon, B., 2020, p. 181-183). In the latest study by the European Barometer on cultural access and participation, the main barriers mentioned by the Portuguese were, firstly, lack of interest, followed by lack of time, and only then by economic reasons (European Commission, 2013), which demonstrates the urgency of museums to demonstrate their relevance to a wider population. To some extent, the prevalence of a strategy (or lack thereof) that does not seek to counteract or break with the barriers that limit cultural access to an institution is also a way of actively maintaining these inequalities (Holden, 2010). So, the lack of representation of aspects of their culture in museum programming may be a reason for some groups and communities not to attend museums, in general, other barriers persist that are shared by most of the population: interest, economics, habits of visiting, reception, availability/time, among others.

## 1.2 Decolonisation

Decolonisation will walk along with sociomuseology, representing a global movement aimed to dismantle colonial legacies and redefine narratives within museum spaces. It is a mechanism constructed deep in our society, no doubt, and has been done repeatedly. It seeks to challenge historical biases and power imbalances while promoting principles of equal opportunity, cultural inclusivity, and social justice. For museums to engage in decolonisation, they must embark on a transformative journey, reassessing their institutional history and confronting colonial structures that have shaped all aspects of their work. The concept of decoloniality emerges as a proposal to face coloniality and modern thought, mainly through the studies of the MCD group (Modernity, Coloniality and Decoloniality). Noteworthy scholars, such as Walter Mignolo, Anibal Quijano, Judite Primo, Marcelle Pereira, Mario Chagas, Amy Lonetree, and Sharon MacDonald, have made substantial contributions to the discourse on decolonisation in museums. Primo's (2012) & (2014) research underscores the significance of decolonising colonial narratives to accurately represent diverse cultures. Chagas and Gouveia explored in their studies the complexities of decolonial approaches, highlighting the need to confront historical injustices. MacDonald's work has focused on the role of museums in confronting complex histories and acknowledging previously marginalised narratives.

There has been a surge in innovative approaches to decolonisation efforts within museums in recent years. Case studies, initiatives, and projects have gained prominence for their contributions to reshaping museum practices. Museums are reevaluating how they interpret and present their collections, including acknowledging the multiple perspectives and voices related to the objects on display and challenging biased or one-sided narratives that colonial-era collectors and curators may have perpetuated. Some museums are taking steps to educate visitors about the history of colonisation and its impacts on Indigenous and marginalised communities. This includes providing context for objects on display and offering resources for visitors to learn more about these issues.

Decolonisation also extends to the physical spaces of museums. Museums are rethinking the design and layout of their galleries to create more welcoming and accessible environments for all visitors. Several European museums are working to make their exhibitions more inclusive and diverse. These museums use decolonial methods to represent various communities and narratives, even when dealing with difficult subjects. They also teach important lessons from the past to educate future generations. Some history museums, especially maritime museums in Europe, are taking proactive steps to address the darker aspects of colonial history. They are changing their spaces and exhibits, focusing on historical and cultural elements. These examples can serve as models for other museums, including the one mentioned here, that want to include more information and narratives about decolonisation.

Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum in the Netherlands is an exciting and important example to look into because they have recently started establishing new inclusion principles in their museums. They have begun incorporating the dark aspects of their history into the displays. Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum<sup>7</sup> has joined the ranks of institutions that are attempting to decolonise their institution. This museum holds a couple of online exhibitions/projects related to slavery. The first is an online exhibition called "Slavery", where the museum shares different stories about the Netherlands' role in the matter.

"Not as an abstract concept, but in the form of personal and true stories. This exhibition shares stories from Brazil, Suriname and the Caribbean, as well as from South Africa and Asia. Stories about people who were enslaved or were slave owners, about people who benefited from the system or fought against it. They are an inextricable part of our history. The exhibition tells ten true stories from people who were involved in slavery in one way or the other. Ten personal stories about people who were enslaved, and people who kept slaves; about people who resisted, and people who were brought in slavery to the Netherlands. What were their lives like? How did they relate to the system of slavery? Were they able to make their own choices?"<sup>8</sup>Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum Website

This same museum has another exhibition, but this is a physical one inside the museum called "Rijksmuseum & Slavery". This was a project where the museum

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<sup>7</sup> The re-contextualized exhibits attempt to humanize the history of enslaved people in the Dutch Colonies. It also created an exhibition from Feb-March called "Ten True Stories of Dutch Colonial Slavery".

<sup>8</sup>In this exhibition, we wanted to focus for the first time on slavery in the Dutch colonial period. This era spanning 250 years is an integral part of the history of the Netherlands. It was a time when people were reduced to property, to objects, to items in the accounts (Rijksmuseum, May-July, 2023, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/past/slavery>).

displayed in its permanent collection how the Netherlands had a slavery past. “It’s a relationship you probably won’t notice at first glance, and one you won’t read about on the museum label next to the object.”<sup>9</sup> Rijksmuseum & Slavery added NEW 77 labels to paintings and objects in the museum permanent collection. Some labels tell the stories of people who, under Dutch rule, were enslaved and put to work and how their status reduced to that of an object, while others highlight people who profited from slavery or spoke out against it. The museum mentioned that after this exhibition ends, they will re-evaluate pre-existing and new labels with the new information that will bring order to do greater justice to the Netherlands’ complicated history.

Researcher and curator Niilofur Farrukh shared the challenge faced in finding material on the lives of slaves that in the official colonial records appear only as commodified units which were bought, insured, transported and sold. A multi-disciplinary approach, incorporating elements such as songs, music, and innovative reinterpretations of visual materials like maps and paintings, has brought enslaved individuals’ lives out of the shadows. Notably, the museum has acquired information revealing how enslaved women ingeniously concealed rice in their braids, ensuring food security and preserving traditions. Their invaluable seeds and skills even gave rise to a novel rice strain in the Caribbean and beyond. While numerous questions remain unanswered, the slavery exhibition at a national institution historically aligned with colonialism has embarked on a journey to engage with contemporary social discourse. This breakthrough has kindled expectations of subsequent exhibitions and essential dialogues, poised to unveil previously untold chapters of a colonial empire profoundly shaped by the transatlantic slave trade. These revelations hold particular significance in the context of today’s politics and societal attitudes, especially concerning the substantial population of descendants of enslaved individuals residing in the Netherlands.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “From the nutmeg harvested by enslaved people, to an enslaved woman shipped off to the Netherlands; from the image of a dance party on a Surinamese plantation that hides critical messages about the slaveholder, to the pulpit from which an 18th-century legal philosopher made the case for abolishing”. All of them focus on the colonial power of the Netherlands, which from the 17th century onwards was inextricably bound up with a system that included slavery.

<sup>10</sup> Farrukh, N. (2021) Exhibitions that Decolonize: Disrupting the Passive Museum. The Karachi Collective. <https://thekarachicollective.com/exhibitions-that-decolonize-disrupting-the-passive-museum/>

Another great example is at The National Maritime Museum – Het scheepvaart. This same page also shows different paintings to “represent” the colonial era. However, now they criticize how these paintings do not show the true story behind it. This museum has taken the first steps in decolonising itself, visibly showing the hidden truths behind paintings and artefacts. The most important thing for an exhibition is not the object but the narrative and curatorial ideas and the possibilities they can bring. Its education department developed several educational programmes that identify the vital role of slave-trading history. “The UnfreeStories” programme is about people from both then and now. How is it that people look at our slave-trading history in different ways, and how can we ensure that stories are always passed on to future generations?”<sup>11</sup>

The Royal Museum Greenwich,<sup>12</sup> also a National Maritime Museum located in England, has on its website a specific page that focuses on the topic of the Atlantic Worlds, where their gallery looks at the complexity of the histories, linking Africa, the Americas and Europe. They show different paintings and artefacts from enslaved people who were captured in the colonisation period, and the visitor has access to pictures and additional information regarding the artefact as well as how they have been working representation, mentioning that “the legacies of Transatlantic slavery is noticeably absent, and Black voices are not well represented in space.”

Lastly, the Tropen Museum in Amsterdam has just launched a new exhibition called “Our Colonial Heritage”. In this exhibition, the museum delves into the extensive Dutch colonial history and its lasting impact across regions such as Indonesia, Suriname, Curaçao, Saint Maarten, and numerous other nations. Visitors will come across narratives with a wealth of untold stories awaiting exploration. This exhibition provides insights into how colonialism has indelibly shaped the contemporary world and the resilience of those who lived through it. It is an opportunity to understand how

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<sup>11</sup> History of Slavery & the National maritime museum, frequently asked questions page. [//www.hetscheepvaartmuseum.com/about-us/history-of-slavery-and-the-national-maritime-museum](http://www.hetscheepvaartmuseum.com/about-us/history-of-slavery-and-the-national-maritime-museum)

<sup>12</sup> Exhibitions and projects from the royal Museum of Greenwich related to the remembrance and history of slavery. <https://www.mg.co.uk/search?search-term=slavery>



individuals strived to carve out their own destinies, resisted colonial rule, and retained a sense of agency<sup>13</sup>. This way, the audience can put a face to these people and show that they were not just victims but strong personalities who developed different strategies for their survival, says Beatriz Gomes Dias.<sup>14</sup>

It has been challenging because many museums need to consider the implications of debates and the context of decolonisation to be a part of their organization. There is ongoing debate about what decolonisation means and what its ultimate goals should be. Some argue for a narrow definition, focusing primarily on political independence from colonial powers. In contrast, others advocate for a broader interpretation that includes social, cultural, and economic aspects, addressing the legacies of colonialism beyond formal sovereignty. Scholars debate the timeline of decolonisation. While many associate it with the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century wave of independence movements in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, others argue that the process is ongoing and that true decolonisation involves addressing continuing structures of domination and oppression. Economic decolonisation involves addressing economic inequalities and dependencies that persist in post-colonial societies. Some scholars argue that true decolonisation requires restructuring global economic systems and dismantling neocolonial practices.

To break through this normative pattern of coloniality, Mignolo (2008) advocates epistemic disobedience, a process that implies disobeying established knowledge and recognising the knowledge of peoples historically subordinated by European modernity and the colonial process. In this disobedience, it is necessary to recognise that subaltern people not only suffered violence against their bodies but also suffered epistemicide. Whenever their knowledge was silenced, made invisible, subalternised, eradicated or annihilated, we are in the presence of cognitive coloniality, in the presence of epistemicide (Primo, J & Moutinho, M. 2021, p. 31). The argument is to display and confront the harsh realities of colonisation within history in this exhibition, fostering a

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<sup>13</sup> “Our Colonial inheritance page: <https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/en/whats-on/exhibitions/our-colonial-inheritance>

<sup>14</sup> Beatriz Gebalina Pereira Gomes Dias is a very important figure for this dissertation as she is a strong and fundamental person who drives the social movements against racism, colonialism and other topics. She was born in Dakar, Senegal. She has lived in Lisbon since she was four years old, is a Portuguese teacher, activist and politician. She currently works as a counselor at the Lisbon city council. With a degree in Biology from the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Coimbra and a master's student in Science Communication at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the Nova University of Lisbon, she was a primary and secondary school teacher in Lisbon. She is a member of the anti-racist association, SOS Racisms and in 2016 she founded Djass – Associação de Afrodescendentes, of which she is a leader. Beatriz Gomes Dias: Grupo parlamentar do Bloco de Esquerda (no date) Beatriz Gomes Dias | Grupo Parlamentar do Bloco de Esquerda. Available at: <https://parlamento.bloco.org/deputada/beatriz-gomes-dias> (Accessed: 22 December 2023). <https://parlamento.bloco.org/deputada/beatriz-gomes-dias>

path towards healing and deeper understanding. Embracing this approach, the museum can emerge as a vital space for fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and empowerment within their communities and beyond. This process of confronting painful truths must also entail rigorous self-examination by colonial institutions regarding their past and present relationships with Indigenous tribal nations and people (Lonetree, 2021, p. 27-47). The mythscape preserved in the Portuguese public space, or day-to-day educational system and academic research, has silenced a number of issues related to the country's imperial past (Araújo, 2013). So, it is necessary to question the quality of the information provided by museological institutions and the emerging vision that makes museums more open and community-relevant sites, and how a new museum theory and practice is developing alongside this work. The dialogical dimension is certainly mutual recognition, but above all, there is space to construct new problematisations.

Imperialism and colonialism are firmly embedded and intertwined in society, but we must remember that “decoloniality” is a theoretical perspective, but above all a praxis. It is the act of taking part in genuine transformation battles, in the awareness and possibility of developing something different, producing fractures within the decoloniality system for the construction of something other” (Quijano, 2005, Wash, 2012). For this to happen, it is necessary to work in a context where we speak of cultural public policies, thinking of essentially new forms of retraction, which each day assume new contours. Decolonisation involves reclaiming and revitalising Indigenous cultures, languages, and identities (Primo e Moutinho, 2021, p. 28). It aims to make these aspects of identity visible and respected within society.

Decolonisation efforts in museums extend beyond national boundaries. International collaborations, guidelines, and conferences have facilitated a global exchange of ideas and best practices. Decolonial thinking stands as the voice of invisibility to the subaltern and oppressed peoples who have been silenced for a long time. It is considered a social, political, cultural and economic liberation project that aims to give respect and autonomy not only to individuals but also to groups and social movements, such as feminism, the black movement, the ecological movement, the LGBTQia+ movement. This thought has attempted to undermine colonial assumptions held by non-European people. “One of the most important goals is to assist communities in their efforts to address the legacies of historical unresolved grief by speaking the hard truths of colonialism and thereby creating spaces for healing and understanding.”

(Lonetree, 2012, p. 32). It is essential not to adopt a colonial posture; even if the political and administrative landscapes in European-colonised territories alter, coloniality must not stay. It is a complex and multifaceted process that has played out differently in various world regions. International perspectives on decolonisation vary depending on the specific historical context, the colonial powers involved, and the unique challenges each decolonising nation faces.

Here are some international perspectives on decolonisation from different regions: Africa witnessed a significant wave of decolonisation in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, with many countries gaining independence from European colonial powers. The Pan-African movement was crucial in advocating for African self-determination and unity. International support for African decolonisation came from various quarters, including the United Nations, which adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960. However, the legacy of colonialism, including borders drawn arbitrarily by colonial powers, continues to shape political and economic challenges in many African countries. While most Latin America achieved independence from colonial rule in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some territories remained under colonial control until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The region has experienced various forms of decolonisation, including struggles for Indigenous rights and land restitution. Latin American countries advocated for global decolonisation efforts, particularly in forums like the United Nations'. Many countries gained independence from British, French, Spanish, and Dutch colonial rule in the Caribbean. The struggles for independence were often linked to movements against slavery and racial oppression.

It is not about erasing the past. Rather, it is about presenting an opportunity to address historical gaps and build connections that might remain unnoticed. Although this process can be unsettling for some, it serves as a chance to confront stories and objects with “colonial” origins and consider their place in exhibitions. By embracing decolonisation, museums can create a space for meaningful dialogue, acknowledging the complexities of history while fostering a more inclusive and honest representation of all cultural heritage. Nevertheless, decolonisation calls for a more inclusive and nuanced approach to museums and exhibitions, that recognises history’s complexities and seeks to highlight diverse perspectives. By engaging with colonial artefacts and stories in a sensitive and thoughtful manner, museums can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the past and promote reconciliation and healing in the present.

It is an ongoing journey that encourages openness, empathy, and an appreciation for the multiplicity of voices and experiences that shape our shared history. Decolonisation has been defined as a process of dismantling colonialism's negative institutional and cultural legacy. Scholars have written extensively on decolonisation from the perspectives of the former colonies, but a study of the decolonisation process in the former colonial powers needs equal critical attention. It is also here that colonial ideologies need to be deconstructed, and the mechanisms of power that support attitudes of superiority, Eurocentrism and privilege to be questioned in museums, academia and political institutions. Quick and easy access to information has shattered the myths of the moral high ground that colonisers laid claim to and citizens are increasingly becoming aware of the manipulated history they received, with its hyper-glorification of conquest and power to underplay the gory ramifications of expanding and controlling the empire (Farrukh, N, 2021, p.1).

Ignoring the decolonial history is to accept the continuing violence of racism in our society (Martins, 2018). Author Jacques Le Goff draws attention to the importance of the study of memory as “one of the fundamental means of approaching the problems of time and history in relation to which memory is now withdrawing, sometimes overflowing” (Le Goff, 2003, p. 422). The problem with museums that refuse to reveal the negative aspects of their history is that they are unwilling to decolonise their exhibitions. This is where history and objects, along with their memories, are stored away, making them invisible to the public and education. Museums, at present, find themselves increasingly detached from their traditional roles as repositories of memory and shapers of cultural identity. This reevaluation is intricate, spanning diverse fields of knowledge, prompting a profound reexamination of history, human relationships, and fundamental human rights. It calls upon us to address the persistent challenges related to racism and social exclusion in their various forms. The thesis relies on existing literature up to August, 2023, and it is essential to acknowledge that new developments and research may have emerged since that time.

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the state of the art in sociomuseology and decolonisation in museums, framing the subsequent analysis and discussions. This chapter will delve into the specific research conducted in the context of the Portuguese Maritime Museum, the invisible objects and a final exhibition proposal, applying and extending the insights from the existing literature to illuminate the nuances of decolonisation and sociomuseological practices.

### 1.3. Persisting Invisibility in Museums

Invisibility, on the other hand, is a concept often used to describe the erasure or marginalisation of certain groups within a society. In this study, “invisibility” refers to the notable absence of significant artefacts and narratives from public displays. These omissions carry not only significant historical and cultural weight but also hold the power to spark curiosity and ignite visitors’ interest. They serve as an incentive, compelling visitors to delve deeper into their ancestries and the museum’s collection, where they can unearth the captivating stories hidden behind these objects. Whether driven by a conscious agenda or a lack of awareness, some museums routinely obscure the historical contributions, memories, legacies, creative endeavours, and celebratory cultural expressions of individuals hailing from various minority backgrounds. This silence perpetuates the memory suppression of those who have endured marginalisation, subjugation, or discrimination despite the enduring imprint of their narratives. (Bulhões, C. G., 2017, p. 1-4) Invisible stories in museums create emotional bonds between visitors and artefacts. These stories often mirror visitors’ own experiences or cultural backgrounds, fostering a personal connection. Personal anecdotes, tales of adversity, and narratives of resilience profoundly impact museum visitors, evoking empathy and leaving a lasting impression.

By unveiling these hidden stories, museums challenge the assumptions and biases that visitors may carry with them. These narratives encourage visitors to question their preconceived notions, fostering personal growth and expanding their worldviews. In essence, these hidden stories enrich the museum experience by delving beneath the surface to reveal the intricate web of human interactions, struggles, and achievements. They underscore the vital role of museums in shaping collective memory, promoting empathy, and urging visitors to engage thoughtfully with the artefacts and narratives they encounter. This invisibility often arises from historical and systemic factors, such as colonisation, which have frequently suppressed Indigenous cultures, languages, and identities. Epistemic disobedience emerges as a powerful means to reclaim the identities of disregarded communities to achieve visibility and decolonial thoughts. It empowers them to assume their rightful political roles within the system, allowing them to carve out spaces in the narrative reconstruction.

This process promotes diverse and polyphonic dialogues, positioning these communities as creators of subjectivities, custodians of ancestral knowledge, and generators of fresh insights. This act of disobedience catalyses the emergence of spaces within society, institutions, politics, and the economy where historically excluded individuals become visible, acknowledged, and capable of forging new reference points. Through this disobedience, the marginalised communities gain the potential to rise both politically and socially, creating ruptures within the entrenched system of coloniality. Consequently, museums and educational institutions become arenas for these insurgent movements to occupy. These institutions, rooted in modernity, continue to bear the marks of coloniality. The objective of this insurgency movement is to enable these institutions to engage with Decolonial Pedagogy (Walsh, 2013)<sup>15</sup>. This pedagogical approach advocates for a policy of actions and reflection geared toward equity and respect for differences. It goes beyond formal and normative educational paradigms, promoting transformative educational processes that foster critical thinking and self-reflection. This transformation seeks to redefine the roles of museums and schools as instruments for promoting inclusivity and equity in a world deeply marked by colonial legacies. The related point is also what Winter calls “essentialist silence”, where some voices are silenced because they are not seen to have the authority to speak (Winter, 2010, p. 6)

It also often resulted in the imposition of dominant colonial cultures and the suppression of Indigenous cultures and languages. This process contributed to the invisibility of Indigenous cultures and identities within the larger colonial framework.

It is encountered several history museums now taking proactive steps to address the sombre aspects of colonial history. Notably, some of these initiatives are emanating from various European maritime museums. These institutions have initiated alterations to their spaces, particularly concerning historical and cultural elements. These examples hold the potential to serve as valuable models not only for the mentioned museum (MM) but also for other museums seeking to incorporate and delve deeper into decolonisation-related information and narratives. The concept of decolonising will be brought into this analysis as an overall theme, aiming to face and critique the challenges and solutions that will revise narratives within museums, advocating for the visibility and acknowledgement of previously hidden/excluded cultures and unseen objects. The concept of “invisibility” will also be important in this study because it will illustrate if there are objects and narratives that have been excluded, with a lack of identification of author, date, culture, display, category, and description, making them challenging to define and seemingly unimportant or unfit for inclusion in the museum’s exhibition.



## Chapter 2. The Portuguese Maritime Museum

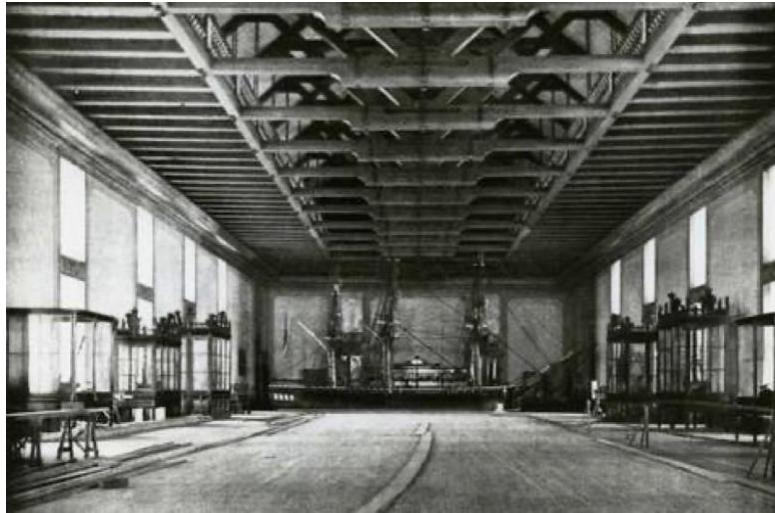
As the investigation commenced, it became crucial to acknowledge here the challenging circumstances of the early months of 2021, which affected not only me but the global community as well. The limitations and disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant hurdles to our research efforts and hindered our ability to visit museums. In fact, many museums remained shut in compliance with the World Health Organization's regulations. The closure of these institutions resulted in unresponsive emails, creating a formidable barrier to initiating our research. Following an extended period of waiting and multiple attempts to establish contact with several museums, marked by numerous miscommunications, I eventually succeeded in securing communication with a museum for the purpose of this case study.

After exchanging many emails and embarking on a couple of museum tours, my interest in conducting a case study at the Portuguese Maritime Museum (MM) grew significantly. The MM's historical significance left a strong impression on me, stirring numerous questions about its permanent exhibition. With many inquiries racing through my mind, I pressed forward with my investigation by initiating contact with the MM's archive and delving into its collections. The MM experience will serve as a compelling reflection of Portugal's grand ambitions, rich cultural heritage, and the multitude of Portuguese narratives that contribute to our contemporary understanding of the country. My curiosity was piqued by the prospect of uncovering more facets of the museum's exhibitions, particularly considering Portugal's prominent role as a formidable nation during the age of exploration.

The Portuguese Maritime Museum was established on 22<sup>th</sup> July, 1863, by the proclamation of D. Luis I, King of Portugal, to construct a Maritime Museum throughout his reign to display all of the past and present collections that saw all of the Portuguese Navy's interactions and activities. *"The Museum was born from the will expressed by this monarch, with an enormous artistic and cultural sensitivity, to preserve a historic past in the national collective memory."* (Revista da Armada, 2012, p. 5). Its foundation all came from the imperial power of Portugal and expressed the authority as well. This museum is a representative monument connected to the expansion of the Portuguese crown.

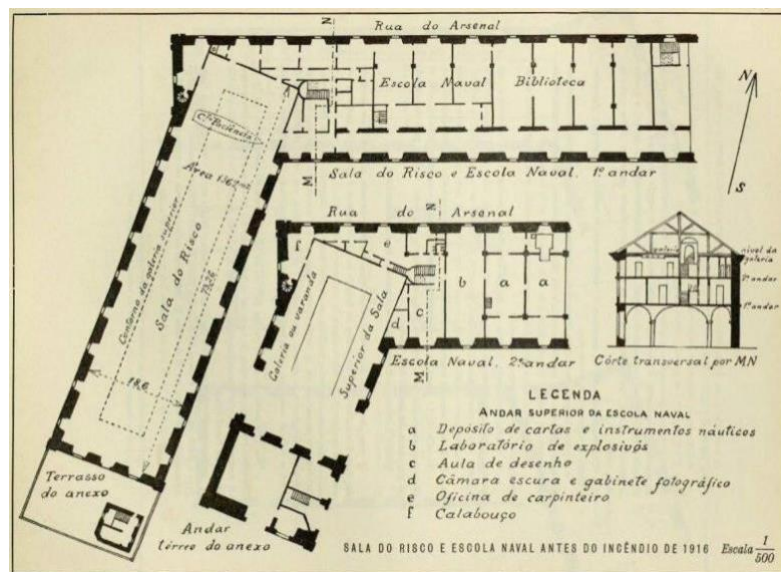


**Figure 1.** Image of the old “Sala do Risco” (Risk Room or Space of Design)



**Source:** Website Museu da Marinha<sup>1, 5</sup>

**Figure 2.** Map of “Sala do Risco” before the 1916 fire.



**Source:** José Leite in October, from Restos de Coleção. Arsenal da Marinha.<sup>16</sup>

The museum has been relocated multiple times over the years but began in a modest space known as “Sala do Risco” (Risk Room or Space of Design), in the Old

<sup>15</sup> < [https://ccm.marinha.pt/pt/museumarinha\\_web/atividades\\_web/Documents/Newsletter%20JUL22.pdf](https://ccm.marinha.pt/pt/museumarinha_web/atividades_web/Documents/Newsletter%20JUL22.pdf) on March, 2023.

<sup>16</sup> < Blogspot. <https://restosdecoleccion.blogspot.com/2014/10/arsenal-da-marinha.html> on March, 2023.

Arsenal of the Navy<sup>16</sup> in Lisbon. Located in the west section of the Arsenal buildings, it was, for a long time, the largest hall in Lisbon (72.26 X 18.70 meters). In 1796, the construction, the design and formwork of the room were set up for the Naval Construction course that existed at the time, and this space was designated “Casa das Formas” for having served as a storage and trace of the forms of the ships that were built in the Arsenal. This was an area between Terreiro do Paço (aka Commerce Square) and the riverfront that was a favoured location for shipbuilding in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> “On 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1916, unfortunately, a fire broke out in “Sala do Risco” (Figure 3) where the Naval School operated, and it consumed a large number of pieces from the museum’s collection. Despite the destruction, the Museum remained in operation in the same location until 1936, when the Naval School moved to Alfeite, in Almada.” (MM, 2019).<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 3.** “Sala do Risco” after the fire in 1916.



**Source:** Retrieved the Website Arquivo Historico Militar in May 2023.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Website of Museu de Marinha

<[https://ccm.marinha.pt/pt/museumarinha\\_web/multimedia\\_web/Paginas/museu-marinha-faz-156-anos.aspx](https://ccm.marinha.pt/pt/museumarinha_web/multimedia_web/Paginas/museu-marinha-faz-156-anos.aspx)

<sup>18</sup>< <https://ahm-exercito.defesa.gov.pt/viewer?id=155229&FileID=1107995&recordType=Descripti>

The goal of constructing a Maritime Museum was to display all of the past and present collections that saw all of the Portuguese Navy's interactions and activities<sup>19</sup>. In 1949, the museum was installed in the Palácio dos Condes de Farrobo in Laranjeiras, Lisbon, because, over the years, the museum's collection grew to be too big, and after an extraordinary collection donation of Henrique Maufroy de Seixas, it was decided the museum had to have a new home (Lopes, 2009, p.12). Finally, on 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 1962, it reached its latest and final destination at the Jerónimos Monastery as seen below.<sup>18</sup> Located in Praça do Império, in the district of Nossa Senhora de Belém (aka Our Lady of Bethlehem), in Lisbon, the museum has facilities in the north and west wings of the Jerónimos Monastery.<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 4-5.** Image of the front of the Portuguese Maritime Museum, more specifically the outside patio of the main entrance.



**Source:** Retrieved from Playocean. (n.d.). Museu de Marinha. Playocean.<sup>21</sup>

The Jerónimos Monastery, also known as the Monastery of Santa Maria de Belém (aka Monastery of Holy Mary of Bethlehem), began to be built in 1501 and took nearly a century to reach completion, making it over 500 years old. It originally housed monks of the order of Saint Jerónimo, as it was their residence until 1833 when a law mandated their departure. The Portuguese crown could only finance and pay

<sup>19</sup> Folheto/desdobrável do Museu de Marinha.

<sup>20</sup> Valentim, B. & Vale, P.2022. Os 60 anos do Museu no Mosteiro dos Jerónimos. Os Webnars do Museu de Marinha. [https://ccm.marinha.pt/pt/museumarinha\\_web/atividades\\_web/Documents/Newsletter%20JUL22.pdf](https://ccm.marinha.pt/pt/museumarinha_web/atividades_web/Documents/Newsletter%20JUL22.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.marinha.pt/conteudos\\_externos/ReviSanta\\_Armada/2004/index.html#p=92](https://www.marinha.pt/conteudos_externos/ReviSanta_Armada/2004/index.html#p=92)

<sup>21</sup> <<https://www.playocean.net/portugal/lisboa/museus/museu-de-marinha> on August 2023.

construction with the enormous profits supported by the lucrative spice trade with the East. Dom Manuel I (aka King Manuel I of Portugal) channeled a good part of this trade, approximately 5% of revenues, from the trade with Africa and the East, which was the equivalent to 70 kg of gold per year, to fund the construction work of the Monastery (Mosteiro Jerónimos, 2023).<sup>22</sup>

The Monastery's strategic location along the banks of the Tagus River, precisely where Portuguese sailors once embarked on their voyages using large wooden boats, such as caravels, ships, and galleons, setting sail for uncharted lands, was no mere coincidence. This is where renowned explorers like Bartolomeu Dias set sail on their journey to the Cape of Good Hope in 1487, Vasco da Gama reached India in 1498, and Pedro Álvares Cabral discovered Brazil in 1500 (Neto, 2023) (Melo, 2015, p. 23-26). These routes signify the daring spirit of the time and the audacious accomplishments of Portuguese exploration, forever imprinted in the annals of history (Brito, Ramalho, 1940, p. 4). The entire Monastery project is intimately connected to the apex of Portuguese navigation and exploration. This period of maritime expansion coincided with the reign of D. Manuel I, representing the pinnacle of Portugal's historical exploration, so the Monastery stands as a symbol of this significant era, commissioned by the king to immortalize its glory. This monument represents a true connection to the expansion program. The Monastery, with its extensive facade spanning over three hundred meters, exudes a sense of tranquility and serenity, making it a captivating representative of Manueline architecture often referred to as the "jewel" of its kind (Brito, Ramalho, 1940, p. 6-12). Both the Monastery and other structures like it from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Portuguese maritime epic, were often exploited by ruling powers to legitimise their projects and ideologies, particularly during the Estado Novo era. While these monuments commemorate the advent of ongoing interactions between the Portuguese and Africans, they are also intertwined with the dark legacy of the Portuguese slave trade, which forcibly displaced and enslaved thousands of Africans for centuries.

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<sup>22</sup> História do Mosteiro dos Jerónimos: Um conto atemporal de cultura e arquitetura. Available at JeronimosMonasteryTickets.com. (n.d.). História do Mosteiro dos Jerónimos. <https://www.jeronimosmonasterytickets.com/pt/historia/> Access: 25/06/2022-12/05/2023. Available at (<https://www.patrimoniocultural.gov.pt/pt/museus-e-monumentos/dgpc/m/Mosteiro-dos-jeronimos/>) Access: 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2023.



In the present day, this historical and memorial site has evolved into spaces that continuously commemorate the past, seamlessly integrating into the city's tourist culture and blending knowledge with leisure.

**Figure 6:** Outside front view of the Jerónimos Monastery.



**Source:** Photography by Ingo Mehling. 2022<sup>23</sup>

The Monastery was recognised as a National Monument in 1907 and later designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983; the Monastery proudly holds the distinction of being one of the Seven Wonders of Portugal since July 2007. This symbolic significance makes it an ideal location for the Portuguese Maritime Museum, signifying a remarkable connection between Portugal's history of exploration and its purpose (Melo, 2015, p. 23-25). While the Monastery's status as an iconic attraction enhances the museum's visibility and visitation, the fact that it was not originally designed as a museum poses particular challenges. Adapting the exhibition to fit the existing structure may lead to occasional breaks in thematic or chronological linearity, which requires careful consideration and innovative solutions.

Despite these challenges, the Portuguese Maritime Museum skillfully utilises a distinct area of the Monastery to host its exhibitions. Spanning across 50 thousand square meters, with 16,050 square meters dedicated to the permanent exhibition, the

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<sup>23</sup> < [https://pt.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Mosteiro\\_dos\\_Jeronimos\\_-\\_Left\\_Wing.jpg](https://pt.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Mosteiro_dos_Jeronimos_-_Left_Wing.jpg)

museum showcases an impressive array of artefacts and displays. (Melo, 2015, p. 23-26). Among its treasures, there are models of galleys and river boats, along with an assortment of paintings, weapons, engravings, decorations, uniforms, navigation instruments, maritime charts, photographs, and diplomas, amidst other captivating items. The museum's careful selection of this sacred space within the Monastery pays homage to Portugal's history of exploration and the maritime journeys that shaped the nation's identity. Some statistical analysis done by Josiane Limahas found that the museum primarily attracts an audience aged between 30 and 49. In a survey, out of all the museums in the Belém area, 7.9% visited the Maritime Museum. As for the Marine Museum, 41.7% of first-time visitors came out of curiosity, 36.8% returned for the quality of its exhibitions, and 20% made a third visit due to its stimulating nature. Regular visitors are motivated by the museum's stimulating environment (40%), with other factors like family (9.1%), curiosity (4.5%), educational purposes (4.5%), location (4.5%), uniqueness (4.5%), and work (4.5%) also playing a role. However, the majority (70.8%) had never seen advertisements for the Portuguese Marine Museum (Lima, J., 2011, p. 16).<sup>24</sup> These percentages show that this museum is not the most popular even though it sits in the Monastery which is considered the most visited place in Belém. Therefore, showing that there are some issues that the museum needs to address to gain more visitations.

The region of Belém was created immensely for touristic purposes, introducing (possibly not on purpose, but over time) a specific route.<sup>24</sup> This route has 98% colonial characteristics and ideology because it was purely built to showcase the Portuguese discoveries (Marcelino, 2016, p. 50-95). The Torre de Belém (aka Tower of Bethlehem) and the Padrão dos Descobrimentos (Discoveries Monument) are next to and inside the Tagus River. They present their beautiful white features during the summer sunny days, along with nice gardens and parks. Although these two structures carry a significant narrative, they once sailed many ships on their way to colonise new lands. However, you

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<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to add this research here because the author studies Cultural Marketing and this study focuses on the Notoriety of different Portuguese Museums. The point of bringing this 2011 study is to show that this is not a well-known museum, many who have been there did not know it was there and did not know what it was about. However, it is very interesting and contradicting at times because this museum is housed in an important building and touristic zone, yet it is not visited as much. It was not possible to find a more accurate study of a similar topic but it is interesting to think that even those places, museums that are not visited as much do need to make changes as well. Thus the lack of marketing the MM museum has also speaks for itself in some ways, and leaves wonders on why do they not market more, who are they targeting and how the competitions within museums play a big role.

cannot find a statue, building or museum in this area dedicated to the colonised lands and victims. The MM is located in a place and follows the same colonial path inside its exhibitions, displaying only the “great” stories of the time of navigations from Portugal, excluding rare incursions that are still as important, such as slavery and the Indigenous people. It is essential to highlight this here because these monumental ideas were part of a vast project; every building was thought out carefully. The counterpoint here is that the MM is located in a specific area that only shows the country’s conquests. All of these important structures were planned and created down to the smallest detail - geographical, historical, symbolic, cultural, and touristic. In museological terms, they are all part of the conventional Eurocentric route, from the colonisers’ perspective solely. The MM is in the same spot where the old Portuguese navigations would leave for their long, monthly sails. As you follow the path to the museum, the main objective is to tell a story, the story of the Navy and how it helped the Portuguese with their sails. For this, it uses scenarios and technologies of the time. In a broader sense, they also want to show the various aspects of the Navy, commercialism, fishing and leisure. The museum’s museological narrative essentially begins in the 15<sup>th</sup> century with the “Golden Age ” of the Portuguese Discoveries. Later and throughout most of the exhibition and the museum itself, there is a greater focus on the Portuguese people’s strong relationship with the sea (Revista da Armada, 2012, p. 5). “The Navy, resulting from its history spanning over 700 years, owns a vast historical heritage, and the Navy Museum (MM) has the mission of ensuring the conservation and exhibition of assets of historical, artistic and documentary value” (Ramos, 2018/19, p. 1). Lima’s study was conducted in 2011, so it is important to keep in mind that some changes could have definitely occurred since then, therefore meaning these numbers can have changed. But in the small research conducted here, it still seems that the museum still does not market its space enough, there is no instagram page and the website itself is the only place where tourists can find any information regarding this museum.

## **2.2 The Portuguese Era of Navigations and Colonisation (XV-XVII)**

It seems important to briefly explain that amid the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Portugal grappled with multifaceted trials that posed formidable impediments to its ascendancy and prosperity when juxtaposed with its European peers (Pereira, J., 2016, p. 169-171). The nation, historically modest in wealth, was under the House of Aviz's dominium. Portugal contended with the Moors, exerting partial control until a succession of expulsion campaigns eventually liberated its territories from their influence. However, Portugal remained entangled in a complex web of vulnerabilities, in which Castilian assimilation loomed as a persistent threat. With the advent of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Portugal embarked on a transformative trajectory, an era that marked the convergence of national fiscal systems, legal structures, and armed forces, culminating in a symbiotic synergy that invigorated the endeavours of the burgeoning mercantile class (Pereira, J., 2016, p. 169-171). This harmonious fusion of policies expedited their commercial undertakings and paved a path to considerable material advancement. The resultant affluence created a propitious milieu, nurturing the appetite for venturing into novel business ventures and fostering a climate ripe for investment. During that epoch, the prevailing trade routes converged on the exchange between flourishing Asian realms such as China, Persia, Japan, India and the economically vibrant European powers. Muslim intermediaries often facilitated the flow of goods, which adeptly transported coveted Eastern spices to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. Simultaneously, Italian merchants wielded control over the entrance of these Eastern treasures into the continent, primarily through overland routes.

With the conclusion of the Middle Ages, the crowned heads of Europe were driven to augment their power while reducing their dependence on the Church, the aristocracy, and their general subjects. To achieve this, they harnessed an array of influencers, from propagandists and writers to painters and composers. Even cartographers contributed to their projection of authority.



As a last resort, military forces were employed when alternative measures fell short. In response, the enterprising Portuguese bourgeoisie embarked upon a bold endeavour: to chart uncharted maritime pathways that would establish direct communion with Eastern traders. This strategic move sought to circumvent the substantial tolls levied by these intermediaries, consequently augmenting profit margins and enhancing commercial gains.

In the mid-nineteenth century, European colonial theory shifted its focus towards newly discovered civilisations in overseas territories. These newfound civilisations became the central point of interest in the context of European colonisation. Following in the footsteps of other empires, Portugal incorporated the political mission of civilising Indigenous peoples into its ruling strategy. “The concept of ‘civilisation’ encompassed various assumptions that served to justify the perceived superiority of Portuguese culture and the notion that the qualities of ‘other’ cultures could be enhanced through this encounter. Unfortunately, this implied the denigration of Portugal’s colonial subjects, depicting them as inferior and incapable of self-government” (Menezes, P. G. M., 2010). The maritime and commercial expansion, or the Great Navigations, is part of the European mercantilist context that began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the search for a new world, in the imagination of the modern citizen, was present. However, its main objective was to search for riches, to provoke the accumulation of capital of the modern national states (Gianolla, Raqui e Querol, 2022, p. 81-83). This historical period is essential to be summarised because the objects and collections studied in this dissertation all lead back to Portuguese colonisation. Colonisation changed many things in the entire world, especially on the Iberian side, in Portugal. The king who pioneered this was Infante D. Henrique, best known as Prince Henry the Navigator. The third son of D. João I (aka John I, King of Portugal) and D. Filipa de Lencastre (aka Philippa of Lancaster), D. Henrique was born in the city of Porto, on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1394. The infant was born into a kingdom in a severe political and dynastic crisis. This dynastic succession crisis could have caused a failure and loss of Portuguese autonomy, thus being incorporated as part of the Kingdom of Castile (Silva, 2016, p. 69-72).

At age twenty, Henrique participated in the plan and expedition to capture the Moroccan city of Ceuta in 1414. His father, D. João II (John II), commissioned his three sons on this journey, in the south of Portugal to the Algarve, where Henrique commanded his first military campaign in 1415. This invasion and conquest was considered a crusade, a military and religious campaign. Ceuta provided Henrique with a one-of-a-kind education and curiosity. This location served as a point of contact for trade between North African Muslims, West Africans, and Indians. This newfound understanding of Africa and Asia piqued Henrique's enthusiasm for adventure and commerce. The town of Sagres in the Algarve region was significant since it was here that he began his ideas for future development. He lived part of his life in the Algarve, where he acquired his taste for science, particularly mathematics and its applications to nautical science (Silva, 2016, pg 44-50). He spent a portion of his life in the Algarve, where he developed an interest in science, particularly mathematics and its applications to nautical science (Silva, 2016, p. 45-53). Henrique gathered hundreds of navigation professionals, cosmographers, boat builders, captains, pilots, and sailors who lived and worked together for much of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, assisting Portugal in making scientific improvements in navigation. Henrique's broad team of experts was crucial to the development of these gadgets for navigating uncharted waters. Henrique obtained the title of "The Navigator" through his tactical and planning expertise, rather than by embarking in the excursions firsthand. His primary purpose was to fulfill his interests, but more crucially, to expand Portugal's possessions and wealth, and to promote Christianity.

D. Henrique, or Prince Henry the Navigator, was a pivotal figure who significantly encouraged the first voyages to explore new territories. Henrique's visionary approach transformed the pursuit of discoveries into a crown-supported activity, laying the very foundations for the Empire's expansion. Some of his stories, interests and achievements are showcased in the permanent exhibition at the "Sala dos Descobrimentos". This period can be classified as a period of various changes and revelations of different worlds (Andrade, M., 1999, p.50).

The Portuguese nautical instinct to travel to sea was also motivated by survival. Henrique's expeditions needed serious investment and funding, so the Portuguese had to rely on trade with the Hispanic kingdoms and even the Moors and Arabs, as well as other friendly nations such as England, France, and Holland, to fill this lack of resources (Gianolla, Raqui e Querol, 2022, 83-85). Henrique's epithet sprang from the manner in which he defended and instigated the first expansionist trips, and he will be eternally associated with this moment in Portuguese history. His acts began Europe's age of exploration, which connected people all over the world. His efforts, however, kicked off the process of European colonisation, capitalism, and, eventually, the transatlantic slave trade. Henrique's legacy, like the man himself, is complicated. While he opened businesses and brought many peoples and civilisations together, his colonial efforts resulted in some of humanity's worst tragedies (Gianolla, C. Raqui G & Querol, L 2022, p. 86- 88).

Colonisation had profound and far-reaching effects on societies, the most evident impact of colonisation was the cultural disruption it brought about. Colonisers often imposed their culture on the Indigenous population, resulting in the suppression or replacement of traditional customs, languages, and belief systems. This fact led to cultural disintegration and the loss of cultural identity for many Indigenous communities. Economically, colonisation was marked by exploitation. The colonisers took advantage of the resources in the colonised lands, leading to economic disparities and inequalities. Indigenous people were often forced into labour, subjected to unfair trade practices, and had their lands taken away, leading to economic hardships and dependency on the colonisers. Politically, colonisation resulted in the loss of sovereignty and self-governance for the Indigenous populations (Brulon, B., 2020, p. 181-183).

Colonisers established political control over the colonised territories, often replacing Indigenous governance systems with colonial administrations that served the interests of the colonisers. This political subjugation further disempowered the colonised communities. Socially, colonisation introduced social hierarchies based on race, ethnicity, and class. It led to the creation of privileged elites among the colonised, who were often aligned with the colonisers, while the majority of the population faced discrimination and marginalisation. These social divisions continue to have lasting impacts on societies affected by colonisation.

The consequences of colonisation also had devastating effects on the African and Indigenous populations since the introduction of new diseases such as smallpox, measles, and other illnesses to which the Indigenous people had little immunity, along with harsh working conditions and mistreatment, led to significant population declines in many colonised regions. Land dispossession was another major consequence of colonisation. Colonisers seized Indigenous lands for agricultural or resource extraction purposes, resulting in forced displacement and loss of traditional territories for the native populations (Brulon, B., 2021, p. 181-183). This land dispossession caused enduring trauma and disruption to Indigenous ways of life. The signing of the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 exemplifies the exploitative nature of colonialism. The treaty, negotiated between Spain and Portugal, divided the newly discovered lands in the Western Hemisphere between the two colonial powers. This division was made without consideration for the Indigenous peoples who already inhabited these lands, as their perspectives and interests were entirely disregarded.

Despite the attempts to suppress Indigenous cultures, some level of cultural fusion occurred as colonisers and Indigenous populations interacted. This led to new cultural practices and traditions, reflecting a blend of colonial and Indigenous influences. This cultural syncretism is evident in various aspects of society in former colonial territories. The legacy of colonisation also included violence and conflict. The history of colonisation often involved wars, brutal combats, and atrocities against Indigenous populations. The trauma of these experiences continues to resonate through generations, impacting the social fabric and psychological well-being of affected communities. On a broader scale, colonisation played a significant role in reshaping the balance of power on a global level. It contributed to the rise of colonial powers and the decline of Indigenous civilisations, altering the geopolitical landscape.

The effects of colonisation have persisted over time, contributing to enduring inequities and socioeconomic disparities between colonised and coloniser countries. Understanding the historical impacts of colonisation is crucial for fostering awareness, promoting reconciliation, striving for social justice, and empowering marginalised communities. It is essential to recognise past injustices and work towards building more equitable and inclusive societies in the present and future.

The era commonly referred to as the Age of Discoveries or exploration is a remarkable epoch defined by its iconic ships, distinctive features, and a trove of intriguing realities brought back to Europe. However, it is paramount to acknowledge that the multitude of voyages conducted from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries went beyond mere “discoveries” or explorations. The Portuguese navigators encountered diverse peoples, cultures, and religions in the various lands they visited. These societies possessed unique languages, customs, cuisine, and ways of life. A critical shift is required in recontextualising the term “discoveries”, as it encompasses the aspects mentioned above, while leaving out numerous stories, and the concept of “decolonisation.” These insights hold immense significance for our current generation, scholarly pursuits, and the ongoing exploration of our historical predecessors.

The era of exploration acted as a crossroads where cultures, societies, and beliefs intersected, facilitating exchanges between the European and Eastern parts of the world. Through the lens of this museum, we glimpse Portugal’s oceanic journeys, landings in African territories, and the interactions with Indigenous inhabitants to establish dominance. Reflecting on this theme, I recognize my own lack of knowledge concerning the viewpoints of Indigenous peoples, Africans or Brazilians. Consequently, I have analysed the “Sala dos Descobrimentos” within the Portuguese Maritime Museum. By meticulously scrutinising the displayed artefacts and associated narratives, my objective is to evaluate whether representation is absent, as well as a veiling of cultures, untold narratives, and historical truths linked to these vibrant communities. Through this analysis, I hope to shed light on any disparities in the museum’s portrayal of history and bring attention to the potential omissions or biases that may exist.

By acknowledging and addressing such invisibility and inaccuracies, I aim to contribute to a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of the interconnected histories shaped by the interactions between Portugal and these cultures during the Age of Discoveries. Ultimately, this research intends to highlight the importance of diverse perspectives and the necessity of providing an equitable platform for the narratives of Indigenous peoples, Africans and Brazilians in the museum’s representation of the past.

### **Chapter 3. The MMs Permanent Exhibition “Sala dos Descobrimentos” (Discoveries Room)**

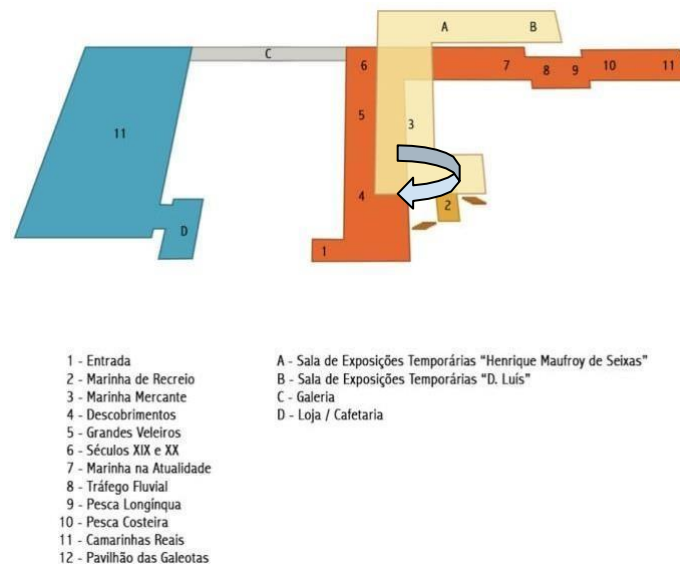
This chapter discusses the analysis of the MM’s permanent exhibition. I want to clarify that the exhibition follows a chronological order regarding the varied themes inside the exhibit. As it unfolds, distinct sub-themes will emerge, eloquently portraying the chronological evolution of the Portuguese Navigation. Each sub-theme delves into the intricacies of what transpired, the underlying motivations driving these events, and the overarching trajectory that guided these navigational endeavours. There are roughly 30 ones, such as; “The Conquest of the Atlantic, Vasco da Gama and The First Maritime Voyage to India, The War at Sea, Naval Artillery, Afonso de Albuquerque, Military Sphere, Spice Jars, The Cartography and Discoveries, Astronomical Navigations, Soldiers and Gunners, D. Francisco de Almeida, First Viceroy of India, King Manuel I, King D. John II, Gama’s Family Chest, Shipwreck Artefacts of Nossa Senhora dos Mártires (aka Our Lady of Martyrs), Privateering in the Western Mediterranean, Naval Battle of Cape Matapen, Tall ships and Maritime empires, Admiral Domingos Xavier de Lima Marques of Nisa, the Portuguese Navy in the Napoleonic Wars, The Portuguese Navy at the turn of the 18th Century, Royal Naval Brigade, From Ribeira das Naus to the Naval Arsenal, Naval Battle of Cape Saint Vincent, The Frigate of D. Fernando II e Gloria, and the End of the Age of Sail, Atlantic Slave Trade, The Portuguese Shipbuilding for the Discoveries, Spice Jars, and Religion and Missionary Work”. This analysis will delve deeply into the last four themes as I aim to scrutinise the extent to which this museum actively decolonises its exhibitions and portrays diverse cultures within them. While the other themes outlined above hold undeniable significance, this thesis cannot delve comprehensively into each of them in intricate detail due to time and scope constraints. However, they are still compelling themes, inviting paths with future potential for exploration<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Images of these other themes will be available in the attachments of the document.

Trying to analyse the key historical figures, the evolution of naval technology and its applications, slavery, Indigenous cultures and conflicts encountered, and the new discoveries made. This analysis will focus on finding and examining the permanent exhibition of any Eurocentric biases, colonial narratives, and the portrayal of African, Indigenous, and Brazilian cultures. This study will selectively address specific themes and events, spanning from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, as comprehensive coverage of all aspects beyond this timeframe is beyond the scope of this research. Currently, the “Sala dos Descobrimentos” is the first chamber all visitors have access to, and it is a small hall/portion of the overall museum, located at #4 on the map below (Figure 9). The permanent installation at this museum arose my interest because of its unique themes and potential for more diverse exhibitions. The museum was established to house numerous artefacts from previous royal families and donations, possibly dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The first step was to conduct research online, which led us to various documents and texts that summarised and stated what visitors could see inside the MM and its permanent exhibition.

**Figure 7.** Map of the exhibition rooms in the MM. 4 is the Room of Discoveries



Source: MM website.<sup>26</sup>

The online website of the Portuguese Parliament shares a description of the permanent exhibition at the MM, and it states:

*“It shows all the great adventures of the Discoveries. Presents the evolution of Portuguese shipbuilding throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and how they produced new and larger ships that allowed for longer voyages to even more distant destinations. From the medieval barges used in the first voyages, to replicas of the Portuguese Latin caravels, the great icon of the Portuguese Discoveries that made it possible to open the Atlantic to navigation, to the large travel ships that allowed the connection to Brazil and the East. The Portuguese shipbuilding was capable of innovating and producing the ships needed to carry out the sea voyages that changed the world. While the 15<sup>th</sup> century was characterised as a period of maritime exploration and discoveries, the 16<sup>th</sup> century saw the establishment and consolidation of maritime trade routes that, for the first time, .... the India Route is undoubtedly the most impressive and which has no other parallel in world maritime history, whether in terms of the distance covered or the duration, remaining practically unchanged over more than three centuries. Between crew and passengers, on board the ships of the Carreira da Índia often sailed more than four hundred people, from the most varied trades and social strata, and in some cases this number could even be exceeded by a few hundred. Indeed, there were sometimes more people on board these ships than inhabitants in many villages and towns in the kingdom. By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese had established a maritime trade network, made up of shipping routes that went from Brazil to Japan. In the following century, new European maritime powers will compete with Portugal at sea. The main challenge now would be to keep open tonavigation the routes that were navigated by the Portuguese for almost two centuries.”<sup>27</sup>*

It is vital to note that reading this text makes it possible to conclude that the MM’s permanent display will show numerous artefacts and topics dating back to the early years of Portuguese navigation. In my opinion, however, this is not detailed enough, as it barely mentions Brazil or Africa, countries that the Portuguese benefited from enormously. With this in mind, I hoped to find a representation of various civilisations in the permanent exhibition. That said, it is essential to point out that the majority of the museological articles, publications or research examined on the internet all specify this permanent exhibition in the same manner: highlighting and glorifying the Portuguese sailors and

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<sup>26</sup> < <https://ccm.marinha.pt/pt/museu/exposicoes/exposicaoopermanente> Retrieved on March 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Dimensão Parlamentar da Presidência Portuguesa do Conselho da União Europeia. 2021. [https://parleu2021.parlamento.pt/cultura\\_detalhe?id=2](https://parleu2021.parlamento.pt/cultura_detalhe?id=2)



maritime vessels, depicting the early years of navigation as a fairytale, and only exhibiting the exchange of goods with the Indies and their travels to Japan. Here's another example of a publication published on MM's website.

*“At the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Portugal began an expansion process facing the sea. New ships and innovative Astronomical navigation techniques were needed to overcome the many challenges that arose on each voyage. Oceans were explored, contacts and new trade routes were established with distant people. The Portuguese Discoveries thus contributed to a new reality, for the first time on a world scale. A first and important step towards globalization through one of the most fascinating aspects of human history: the maritime adventure!” (Room of the Discoveries. Navy Museum. (“Sala dos Descobrimentos”, s.d.)*

Tourists and students use these resources not only to educate themselves and their families but also to stimulate their studies. Not knowing that most information on the internet is rather deduced leaves out some important historical data. When read, visitors may come across multiple artworks, naval ships, or different items from Portuguese navigation, as well as additional objects that prove the various connections and cultures that the Portuguese sailors, scientists, and even nobles encountered. As a result, I encourage others to read about what was uncovered in the permanent exhibition in the “Sala dos Descobrimentos” through my lenses and my words.

The Entrance Hall greets visitors as they enter the Portuguese Maritime Museum. It is positioned at the far west wing of the Jerónimos Monastery and serves as the primary interpretational venue for the exhibition's introduction, as shown in Figure 1. As the visitor walks straight inside the building, the following elements stand out: in the foreground (in the centre) of the room there is a statue of Infante D. Henrique made by Leopoldo de Almeida, as seen below in Figure 6. This statue is surrounded by other statues of the first male navigators of the Atlantic in Figure 7, glorifying Infante's pivotal role in the Maritime Expansion. Infante D. Henrique was the first promoter of the “discoveries”, navigations in the Atlantic Ocean during the 15th century. A map or planisphere built by the museum's workshops, comparable to maps from the 15th and 18th centuries, can be viewed in the background or, in this case, as a “backdrop”, as seen in Figures 6 and 8. This planisphere characterizes, among other things, the diversity of the places reached by the navigations during this period, along with different animals and species found.

**Figure 8.** Statue of Infante D. Henrique (Prince Henry the Navigator)



**Source:** Photography by Philip Larson in 2008.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 9:** Statues located in the main entrance of the museum. Infante D. Henrique, surrounded by Portuguese Navigators



**Source:** MM Website<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> < Retrieved from Wikipedia contributors. (2023,October 18). Museu de Marinha. In Wikipedia. Retrieved October 18, 2023, from [https://www.wikiwand.com/pt/Museu\\_de\\_Marinha](https://www.wikiwand.com/pt/Museu_de_Marinha)

<sup>29</sup> < [https://ccm.marinha.pt/pt/museumarinha\\_web/exposicoes\\_web/exposicaoopermanente\\_web/Paginas/entrada.aspx](https://ccm.marinha.pt/pt/museumarinha_web/exposicoes_web/exposicaoopermanente_web/Paginas/entrada.aspx) Retrieved May 2023

**Figure 10.** Huge backdrop, a map planisphere in the entry room of the MM.



Source: Parliament Website Photograph<sup>30</sup>

“Sala dos Descobrimentos” or Discoveries Room is located on the ground floor of the West wing, on the left side of the hall, as you naturally progress through the museum's pathway. It serves as the initial focal point of our investigation, encompassing this dissertation's primary theme and central topic. The core concept that the museum aims to convey through its permanent collection is the Portuguese people's relationship with the ocean, the diverse contributions they obtained from the sea and the multitude of maritime expeditions undertaken by them across the oceans, along with the different Discoveries they achieved. The museum mentions that this space is characterised by great diversity, and, as the visitors continue walking to the left, along the room, there is a myriad of objects appearing in the background with the function of evoking various sub-themes associated with the Discoveries, such as Religion, Portuguese Kings, Ships, Spices, India, Japan and more. In the entryway of “Sala dos Descobrimentos”, as shown below in Figure 12 the following text is presented:

*“Europe was constrained by the same geographical boundaries since Classical Antiquity. The Mediterranean was the center of the known world while the Atlantic was the dark and period's set which few dared to explore in the early fifteenth-century, Portugal looked seaward for expansion. New ships and innovative Astronomical navigation techniques helped to overcome the many challenges presented by each new voyage. Oceans were explored, contacts were made and new trade routes with distant peoples established. The Portuguese discoveries helped to create a new concept of the world. They were an important first step towards globalization through one of the most fascinating aspects of human history: the maritime adventure!”*

<sup>30</sup> < Photography taken in 2021, retrieved in Parlamento.pt. (n.d.). Cultura. Parlamento Europeu.  
[https://parleu2021.parlamento.pt/cultura\\_detalhe?id=2](https://parleu2021.parlamento.pt/cultura_detalhe?id=2)

**Figure 11.** Introductory text in the first room of the Permanent Exhibition “Portuguese Discoveries.”



**Source:** Photography by author<sup>31</sup>

As visitors swerve to the right in Figure 13, they encounter an informative panel delving into the historical significance of Ceuta's conquest. Here, they can gain insights into the methods employed and the pivotal role it played in Portugal's history. The text in the panel explains how and why the Portuguese were situated on the northern fringes of Africa. Ceuta stands sentinel across the Strait of Gibraltar from the Iberian Peninsula, its history intricately intertwined with Portugal's past. Its strategic location made it a valuable outpost for controlling maritime trade routes between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>27</sup> The Portuguese saw its capture as a way to gain control over these vital trade routes. The conquest of Ceuta marked the beginning of Portugal's overseas expansion and the establishment of its empire. It was one of the first major overseas conquests undertaken by a European power during the Age of Exploration (Pereira, J., 2016, p. 167-169). This event set a precedent for future Portuguese explorations and conquests in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. In summary, the Portuguese conquest of Ceuta was noteworthy for its strategic location, economic potential, religious motivations, and role in setting the stage for Portugal's subsequent expansion into a global empire. It was a pivotal moment that contributed to shaping the course of European exploration, colonialism, and international trade in the centuries that followed.

<sup>31</sup> Taken in November 2022

**Figure 12.** Panel “From the Conquest of Ceuta to the Atlantic” in the Permanent Exhibition



**Source:** Photography by author<sup>32</sup>

The following display showcases the different Portuguese Maritime Trade routes in the Middle Ages, and highlights the integration of Portuguese navigations in the Atlantic into the State's policy. This transformation was marked by Infante D. Henrique's growing determination and confidence in his pursuit of marine ventures, particularly following the triumphant expedition to Ceuta in 1415, where he played an active role. During the Middle Ages, the maritime trade routes established by the Portuguese played a crucial role in connecting distant regions and fostering economic and cultural exchange. (Araujo, 2019. P 2-5)

<sup>32</sup> by Luiza Tarasconi in May 2023



**Figure 13.** Panel from the Permanent Exhibition “Merchant Ships and the Portuguese Maritime Trade Routes in the Middle Ages.”



**Source:** Photography taken by Luiza Tarasconi May 2022

The curatorial text explains how the diverse routes were instrumental in shaping Portugal's influence on the global stage and contributing to the Age of Exploration. Portugal's strategic location along the Atlantic coast enabled it to engage in trade with the Mediterranean civilisations (Childs, 1992, p. 195-219). Goods from the Mediterranean, such as spices, silk, and precious metals, were transported by land routes to ports in the Mediterranean. From there, Portuguese merchants could ship these valuable commodities to northern European markets, creating a lucrative trade network. Infante D. Henrique's vision encompassed the promotion of commerce and Christianity, driving him towards the audacious aspiration of reaching uncharted and enigmatic lands, territories often shrouded in vague details and uncertain accounts (Miranda, 2012, p. 121-129). After the Trade Routes showcase, the subsequent room covers various subjects with some chronological and explanatory inconsistencies. In continuation, the visitors are presented to a huge panel in Figure 15 which is supposedly an image of the mythical school, D. Henrique would have created for his nautical colleagues and other navigators to examine the strategies for their future explorations.

**Figure 14.** Panel of the Permanent Exhibition “School of Sagres Allegory”.



**Source:** Photography taken by Luiza Tarasconi in May 2022.

To the left, the portrayal of Diogo Cão<sup>33</sup> and his crew raised a stone pillar in Cape Cross, symbolizing Portuguese territorial claim, and a little to the right there is a replica of the pillar in the painting. A small portrait of D. João II<sup>34</sup> emerges along the narrative thread. D. João II was born circa 1455, inheriting his role as heir from D. João I. While diverse topics unfold in this section, a more coherent and explanatory organisation could enhance the overall experience. D. João II was important because he continued the exploration legacy of his predecessors, particularly Infante D. Henrique (Prince Henry the Navigator). He recognised the potential of maritime exploration and trade and actively supported and sponsored expeditions to discover new trade.

<sup>33</sup> Attempted to reach the southern tip of Africa.

<sup>34</sup> D. João II was a fourth-generation member of the Aviz dynasty and his father's only surviving son. During the 1470s, João gained military experience while participating in his father's African campaign. The King later entrusted the prince with further exploring Africa on Portugal's behalf, encouraging and financially supporting explorers willing to venture into uncharted territories. He sponsored expeditions to the African coast, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic islands, contributing to Portugal's knowledge of the world and its expanding global presence. Under D. João II's reign, navigation technologies and instruments were improved. This included advancements in astrolabes, compasses, and shipbuilding techniques, enhancing the capabilities of Portuguese ships to undertake longer and more ambitious voyages. (Freitas, A., 2015. D. João II – Um Líder Estratégico) [https://recil.ensinolusofona.pt/bitstream/10437/9601/1/D\\_Jo%C3%A3o%20II.pdf](https://recil.ensinolusofona.pt/bitstream/10437/9601/1/D_Jo%C3%A3o%20II.pdf)

To the right, next to the Panel of the School of Sagres, is another small biography of Infante Dom Henrique, who played a crucial role in shaping Portugal's maritime expansions, marking a pivotal figure in the nation's exploration endeavours. He was often regarded as a pioneer of Portuguese expeditions to uncharted lands, routes, territories, and valuable resources (Silva, 2016, p. 20). The content in this section of the exhibition covers who pioneered the navigations and the numerous circumstances that led to these conquests, as well as how it encouraged Portuguese advances and explorations of the world.

**Figure 15.** Panel with painting of D. João II. XVII Cannon and Diogo Cão Cross religious painting.



Source: Google Virtual Visit<sup>35</sup>



**Figure 17.** Location of the curatorial text on Infante D.



**Figure 18.** Curatorial Text on Prince Henry the Navigator.

<sup>35</sup> < Figure 16 & 17 photographs are from Google Images Website Virtual visit Virtual Visit/Museu Marinha. Figure 18 is by Author



After this section (Figure 19), the visitor is presented with a big hall, with a compelling view of the expansive hall that welcomes visitors, adorned with an array of paintings, statues, and intricately crafted ship replicas adorning the backdrop. Within this space, a striking assortment of navigation instruments takes centre stage, ranging in size, fragility, and meticulous craftsmanship, each elegantly displayed within several glass vitrines.

**Figure 19.** Image from afar the hall and exhibition vitrines



**Source:** Photography retrieved from visit Google Arts & Culture.<sup>36</sup>

The exhibition showcases a captivating collection of intricate boat models throughout different panels, as exemplified in Figures 19 to 23<sup>37</sup>. The glass vitrines vividly portray the evolutionary journey of diverse galleons, battleships, and other ship types employed by the Portuguese on their exploratory endeavours. The curatorial texts accompanying each ship or a group of them give a small explanation of the vessel and what it was used for in the early explorations and voyages. This offers visitors insights into the historical context and how the vessels were utilized. Fishing was the primary activity the smaller boats were used; later, they constructed bigger ships used for mercantile pursuits and trading activities that created a more active maritime industry from different regions of the country. The bigger ships, like in Figure 22, were used for

<sup>36</sup> < Explore Museu de Marinha. Google Arts & Culture. [https://artsandculture.google.com/story/jQUBbguRM\\_d3OQ?hl=pt-pt](https://artsandculture.google.com/story/jQUBbguRM_d3OQ?hl=pt-pt)

longer voyages, conflicts and coastal defenses. This evolution came to happen with the increase in land exploitation.

**Figure 20.** Merchant Model Ship



Source: MM Website<sup>38</sup>

**Figure 21.** Round Caravel of 3-4 masts.



Source: MM Website

**Figure 22.** Caravel of two masts.



Source: MM Website

In early modern history, shipbuilding played an essential role in shaping colonial empires. This transformative industry spurred the need for raw materials, technological advancements, and a substantial workforce. Often, it enjoyed direct support from official channels. While the Portuguese shipbuilding sector reaped the rewards of multiple incentives from the crown, its success was intricately woven from both public initiatives and private ventures. The expansion of Portugal into overseas territories facilitated the establishment of shipbuilding and repair facilities across diverse regions. The metropolitan authorities initially viewed it negatively because they feared losing control. However, as the empire's logistics needed to grow, public and private institutions began to provide shipbuilding facilities in Portugal's overseas possessions. The vessels were a result of the various sets of influences received from different cultures, but also as a result of their own experience. Sailing ships underwent more changes between 1400 and 1550 than in the entire subsequent period (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 3-6). The three main ships known for trade and fighting at sea and from the sea between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries were the caravel, the nau and the galleon. They all have their own special qualities and relevance, but their characteristics were decisive in giving greater scope to the wide range of maritime activities, at the same time that they led to a better operational performance of the Portuguese at sea and from the sea.

<sup>38</sup>< Image retrieved May 2023 from the website [https://artsandculture.google.com/story/jQUBbguRM\\_d3OQ?hl=pt-pt](https://artsandculture.google.com/story/jQUBbguRM_d3OQ?hl=pt-pt)

The Portuguese galleon probably appeared during the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, contributing to Portugal's hegemony in the East. It was a more robust and better-armed ship; with less cargo capacity. The vessels used in transporting goods proved to be especially suitable for escorting these in fleets and convoys, namely, on the route to India. Below there are some images of the first “caravel” ships that were used at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, small fishing boats that were used to explore the sea. (Ribeiro, 2011, p. 1.) The diversity of boat types employed by the Portuguese reflected their adaptability to different navigational and operational requirements. This variety allowed them to explore uncharted territories, establish trading posts, and defend their interests in far-flung regions. The innovation in ship design and technology during this period contributed to the Portuguese Empire's expansion and to the broader evolution of maritime exploration and naval architecture across Europe. The development of the different ships used during the Portuguese Navigations definitely shows to be significantly larger themes than the others in this permanent exhibition. Therefore, it was one of the busiest global navigations to show how Portugal has an enormously rich ocean-related story, with vast scope and depth, from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The map below delineates the varied sailing routes undertaken by the Portuguese during the Middle Ages.

**Figure 23.** Panel from the Permanent Exhibition “Conquest of the Atlantic”.



Source: Website Marinha.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Retrieved from the virtual exhibition of Google Images Marinha. (n.d.). Museu de Marinha. Marinha Portuguesa. Consulted in [https://www.marinha.pt/Conteudos/Externos/visitas\\_virtuais/museu\\_marinha/entrada.html](https://www.marinha.pt/Conteudos/Externos/visitas_virtuais/museu_marinha/entrada.html)

Penultimately, this section delves into the poignant theme of the Atlantic Slave Trade. The museum provides a briefly overview of slavery, as shown below in Figure 24.

**Figure 24.** Panel “Atlantic Slave Trade” from the Permanent Exhibition<sup>40</sup>



**Source.** Photography taken by Luiza Tarasconi May 2023

*“The existence of slavery dates back to antiquity. Initially, it was about the use of prisoners of war, as a labor force - Slave labor. The African continent is no exception, a slave trade route dating back to this period, with the main destination being the shores of the Mediterranean. From the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Portugal started to participate in this commercial network, making exchanges with local intermediaries along the west African coast. To the existing trade, Portugal added a maritime aspect, transporting enslaved individuals to Europe, the Atlantic Islands and, later, to Brazil. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Portugal began an abolitionist process, with the prohibition, in 1761, of the slave trade to the Portuguese Continent. In 1869, with the abolition of slavery throughout the Portuguese Empire, this process was finally concluded, although the Navy had previously patrolled the seas against slave ships.” (Maritime Museum, 2023).*

<sup>40</sup> A pair of metal rings connected by a chain and fastened to a person’s wrists or to the bottom of their legs to prevent them from escaping. (Cambridge Dictionary)

As seen in Figure 31, the metal shackles in this panel represent a grim symbol of the dehumanising and oppressive system of slavery that prevailed throughout history. These shackles were instruments of control and subjugation, used to restrain and confine enslaved individuals, stripping them of their basic human rights and autonomy.<sup>41</sup> The shackles represent one brutal reality of the transatlantic slave trade and the profound suffering endured by countless people who were forcibly subjected to a life of hardship, labour, and unimaginable cruelty.<sup>42</sup> They stand as a poignant reminder of the atrocities committed during that dark period of history and the ongoing importance of acknowledging and confronting the legacy of slavery.

The next theme I wish to discuss in this study, encountered by visitors, revolves around the “**Religion and Missionary Work**”. The MM presents three main paragraphs that state:

**Figure 25: Religion and Missionary Work Panel**



**Source:** Photography of Panel by Luiza Tarasconi

<sup>41</sup> Schwarz, J. P. 1988. Slaves and the Criminal Laws of Virginia, 1705-1865.

<sup>42</sup> Nelson, Charmairie. 2004. Hiram Powers' America: Shackles, Slaves and the Racial Limits of Nineteenth-Century National Identity. Volume 34, Issue 2. P 167-184.

<https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/CRAS-s034-02-03?journalCode=cras>

*“The presence of priests and missionaries on board ships bound for India dates back to the maiden voyage of Vasco da Gama, similar to what happened through the early exploration voyages of the African Atlantic coast in the fifteenth century. Having sailed to India in 1541, it was now up to St. Francis Xavier and the Society of Jesus to lay the foundation for the new missionary strategy in Asia. From now on, the presence of religious men, mostly Jesuits, on board Portuguese ships bound to India is ever increasing. And these would also ensure more support for all those traveling on these ships. In addition to performing religious ceremonies, they also provided medical and health care for the many that, in the course of such a long and difficult journey, would come to need it.”*

There are also two paintings by unknown artists to share some insights into the history of Portuguese missionaries. Portuguese missionaries played a significant role in spreading Christianity during the Age of Exploration and Colonisation. Their efforts were intertwined with the broader objectives of expanding Portuguese influence, trade, and power across the newly discovered lands. This religious zeal was deeply connected to the cultural, political, and, most significantly, economic motivations of the Portuguese crown and the Catholic Church. The missionaries, often members of religious orders like the Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, and Augustinians, embarked on these journeys and paid for these missions to the far-reaching corners of the world, including Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The painting in Figure 25 is called “Miracle of Saint Francis Xavier”<sup>43</sup> and it is from around 1549. It evokes a miracle of the time that supposedly happened.

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<sup>43</sup> The main figure, Saint Francis Xavier, is on the right side of the altarpiece, standing on a platform. Different events are combined and used to display Saint Francis Xavier performing many miracles. From Venice, where he was ordained a priest in 1537, Xavier went on to Lisbon and sailed to the East Indies, landing at Goa on the west coast of India. For the following ten years, he laboured to bring the faith to such widely scattered peoples as the Hindus, the Malayans, and the Japanese.



**Figure 26.** Painting “Miracle of Saint Francis Xavier”.



**Source:** Photography by Luiza Tarasconi

**Figure 27.** “Nau Santa Cruz” Miracle made by Saint Francis Xavier whensailing from Macau (China)



**Source:** Photography by Luiza Tarasconi on May 2023.

The last theme to be shown in the exhibition is the Spice Jars as seen in Figure 27. In this panel the museum shows **3 small sentences that say,**

*“Pepper and cinnamon were the main cargo in volume and value, aboard the Portuguese ships and were usually transported in bales and sacks. Other fragile or rare oriental spices were transported in ceramic containers of different sizes and provenance, that protected them from humidity and harsh conditions aboard the Portuguese indiamen. Upon their arrival in Portugal, these oriental jars became a very popular product, and were often exported to the main European markets.”*

Here, the museum is trying to show how the different ways the various natural resources from the oriental territories came in and how exciting and different these specific jars looked.

**Figure 28:** Panel “Spice Jars” in the Permanent Exhibition



**Source:** Photography taken by Luiza Tarasconi<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> On August 2023



### **3.1. Interview with Bruno Gonçalves Neves**

After a comprehensive examination of this exhibition, it becomes evident that establishing contact with the exhibition's curator would be of great value to this research. The primary objective of conducting this interview was to gain a profound understanding of the exhibition's content and its underlying motivations, and figuring out why this exhibition does not show and explore the intercultural exchanges and stories between the Portuguese, Brazilian and African objects. Engaging in dialogue with these professionals can offer valuable insights into the artistic and historical vision that underpins the exhibition, thereby enabling visitors to appreciate the contextual and intentional dimensions of the featured works.

Bruno Gonçalves Neves, an official at the Portuguese Navy, assumed the role of curator of the exhibition in “Sala dos Descobrimentos” or Discoveries Room. With his background in history, Bruno dedicated nearly 22 years of his career to the Maritime Museum (MM). During this extensive period, he effectively served as both curator and head curator of the MM, overseeing all critical aspects of the pivotal displays. Despite Bruno's lack of an official curator title, his practical responsibilities and contributions closely mirrored those traditionally associated with curating a permanent exhibition (Neves, B., 2023).

During my conversation with Bruno, he emphasised a crucial aspect of the museum's situation: “While the collection boasted an impressive quantity and diversity of artefacts, it lacked a cohesive narrative”. This deficiency prompted Bruno to introduce a renovation project for the Maritime Museum's “Sala dos Descobrimentos” on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2021. His vision for the museological programme aimed to draw upon the artefacts within the MM's collection to let these objects themselves narrate the compelling stories they held (Neves, B., 2023). Bruno's insights further revealed that their collection originated from various donations and other supplies, and they do not form a single unified production. While holding valuable pieces, it suffered from a lack of integration and contextualisation. The museographic framework needed to be updated, necessitating a comprehensive overhaul. As a result, they initiated an extensive analysis of their collection to assess its condition and explore the potential for enhancement (Neves, B., 2023)

During our discussion, I raised several critical questions. Firstly, I observed a more detailed treatment of the Portuguese voyages to India and Asia, while almost none were on the maritime expeditions to Brazil and Africa. Additionally, there seemed to be a shortage of objects related to these specific cultures, and I inquired why there was not more extensive coverage of these countries and cultures within the exhibition. Lastly, I asked if Bruno believed there was room within this permanent exhibition to delve deeper into the topic of Brazil-Portugal relations and the historical aspect of slavery and Africa.

Bruno responded to the questions above by explaining, “The Museu de Marinha (MM) collections contain a limited number of items associated with Africa and Brazil. Consequently, these geographical regions are not depicted in the permanent collection with the same level of prominence or significance as the voyages to the East. This happens in the reference to slavery that is made in the ‘Sala dos Grandes Veleiros’ (in English, Big Sailboats Room), from a set of handcuffs attributable to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and which thus allows us to talk about this subject. But this does not happen because, as I mentioned, the MM collections do not have these pieces.” (Neves, B.2023).

What is understood from this interview is that museums may sometimes fail to convey specific narratives due to the absence of relevant sources or artefacts. This may occur with or without the awareness or intent of curators. Sometimes, museums aimed to tell certain stories which required additional exhibits or objects they did not have. In retrospect, the absence of objects from Brazil and Africa in the exhibition can be seen as a contributing factor to the limited depth of explanation regarding Portugal’s historical ties with these countries. Conversely, a museum’s extensive collection can inadvertently obscure certain possibilities, silencing particular narratives while selecting items for display. This selection process inevitably prioritises some memories while relegating others to obscurity, a phenomenon described as “silences in motion”. Museums and archives, characterised by their dynamic nature involving the creation, borrowing, retrieval, transfer, and even theft, can also harbour latent silences.” These are dormant reservoirs of memory that may or may not be reactivated, whether intentionally or by chance. As further elaborated below, these latent silences can take both random and structural for

### 3.2. Analysis of the Exhibition

“Sometimes I remember me being a child and living in Lisbon and having no references, looking at the majority of Portuguese people and not being like them and not having a place for me and for people like me.” Beatriz Gomes Dias<sup>37</sup>

Undertaking this study at the Portuguese Maritime Museum was a conscious decision driven by the desire to critically examine and reflect upon the prevailing lack of inclusive representation within the museum’s exhibitions. The primary motivation behind the research is to shed light on the longstanding issue of exclusion and the deliberate silencing of non-European voices and historical facts related to Portugal’s colonial past. Here, I sought to uncover and challenge the invisibilities, biases and omissions that have persisted in the museum’s displays, particularly regarding the stories and contributions of Indigenous, African, and Brazilian cultures, which are integral to Portugal’s colonial history.

As I paused to contemplate the various problematisations of this exhibition, the first passage in Figure 13 is prominent to delve into. I cannot help but notice a glaring omission regarding Brazil, the Indigenous and African communities, sugarcane plantations, or other pivotal historical milestones in Portuguese history. The silencing of these cultures in the introductory text is evident, and Portugal’s maritime narrative seems to overlook and neglect crucial elements that intricately weave into the grander fabric of the Portuguese Golden Age. This shows the invisible obstacle to be confronted as I explore this exhibition. The second concern that caught my attention revolves around the excessive usage of the term “discoveries”.

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<sup>37</sup> Beatriz Gebalina Pereira Gomes Dias is a very important figure for this dissertation as she is a strong and fundamental person who drives the social movements against racism, colonialism and other topics. She was born in Dakar, Senegal. She has lived in Lisbon since she was four years old, is a Portuguese teacher, activist and politician. She currently works as a councilor at the Lisbon city council. With a degree in Biology from the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Coimbra and a master's student in Science Communication at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the Nova University of Lisbon, she was a primary and secondary school teacher in Lisbon. She is a member of the anti-racist association, SOS Racism and in 2016 he founded Djass – Associação de Afrodescendentes, of which she is a leader. NPR. (2018, October 11). Portugal Explores the Dark Side of Its Colonial Past. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/11/656455247/portugal-explores-the-dark-side-of-its-colonial-past>

During the XV and XVI centuries, the terminology “Descobrimentos” or “Discoveries”, in both singular and plural forms, was commonly employed to depict the unveiling of uncharted territories and oceans of the Americas and Asia. The reality is that the term “discoveries” has long been a subject of controversy and debate. The word “discoveries” might seem innocuous at first glance, but it carries significant implications that reflect the perspectives and biases of the time in which it was coined and it continues to be used. The term often reflects a Eurocentric point of view that diminishes the recognition of the civilisations and cultures that existed prior to European contact. It implies that the lands and territories encountered by European explorers were previously unknown or uncharted, ignoring the fact that these regions were inhabited by Indigenous peoples with their rich histories and cultures. It implies ownership or entitlement to lands already occupied by Indigenous communities. It suggests that European explorers had the authority to claim these lands as if they were unoccupied, contributing to the narrative of colonialism and cultural appropriation. Using the term “discoveries” in the exhibition can perpetuate the erasure of African and Indigenous contributions, knowledge, and civilisations, reinforcing the idea that these societies were passive recipients of European “discovery” rather than active participants in their own histories. It oversimplifies and fails to acknowledge the intricate relationships, trade networks, and cultural exchanges that exist among different societies. At the heart of this thesis lie the crucial concepts of recognising and valuing distinct viewpoints and perspectives.

Labelling these lands as “discovered” becomes problematic when viewed from the standpoint of non-European individuals. We must think about how these populations feel when they visit a museum space that deprives their ancestors of historical initiative, reducing them to the role of object of the discovering action. Language plays a decisive role in shaping perceptions and attitudes. The term “discoveries” frames historical events from a Eurocentric perspective, reinforcing a narrative of conquest and dominance. The better alternative is to review and find an alternative option that can be an interpretive term to reflect better how stories and objects displayed came into our museums, including the legacies of imperial and colonial history. The term “discoveries” can influence how people perceive their own identity and heritage. Indigenous communities may view this terminology as a form of cultural insensitivity and historical distortion.

According to Marta Araujo, “the European romanticism view of the Western world, of the good colonisers, is more benevolent than other European peoples”, and it has clearly persisted to this day. Thus, the narrative of the good coloniser lives on in this exhibition, and there are no doubts about why certain events are included while others are not. The continued use of the term “discoveries” can perpetuate inequalities and power imbalances, as it indirectly validates the historical actions and attitudes that led to colonialism, exploitation, and oppression. Instead, the museum should be reevaluating the language we use to describe historical events, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of history. It will encourage a broader perspective that considers multiple viewpoints and experiences.

Furthermore, some tourists overlook how these narratives may include some while excluding others. However, for all who do not feel represented, it is necessary to decolonise this exhibition, narrative, and the manner in which they are depicted (Silva, 2023, p. 1-2). Decolonial education inside museums, particularly within displays, does not imply the removal of history; it entails challenging alleged absolute truths and those who proclaim them as tradition. In other words, it is a method that calls into question the racist, xenophobic, misogynist, and nationalist narratives that continue to shape today’s society. It is simply deconstructing, interrogating, and democratising domains of knowledge. (Silva, 2023, p. 2-3). A constructive approach to address this concern involves engaging in exercises that encourage critical reflection, thereby enabling the selection of words that steer clear of inaccuracies and sensitivities. It entails crafting narratives that encompass individuals and experiences from diverse geographic regions. The persistence in utilising the term “Discoveries”, which predominantly highlights Portuguese accomplishments rather than striving for comprehensive inclusivity, raises a pertinent question. Furthermore, its continued use might potentially hinder museological evolution by failing to present both the adverse and beneficial facets of these historical events (Marques, Franco, 2018, p. 1). This introduction text overlooks the importance of memory and history by neglecting to capture the authentic historical narratives and interactions between Portuguese settlers, Brazilians, Indigenous and African communities. There’s an opportunity to illuminate a fitting chronology and thematic framework within this publication.

Expanding a bit more on the idea of “discovery” or “finding”, I have undertaken a comprehensive examination of how the exploration of Brazil serves as a prime example to elucidate this concept. Firstly, the navigation and Brazil’s exploration should be mentioned more precisely in the exhibition. What is depicted is the Portuguese settler’s intention to reach the Indies by crossing the Atlantic but veered off course. This navigation error ultimately led them to the captivating and mystical landmass we now recognise as Brazil. The Portuguese right away knew this fascinating new land was not deserted because “Brazil at the time was inhabited with around 3 to 3.5 million natives, or Indigenous people.” (Pagliaro, p. 13-20) However, Portugal is still credited with the European exploration and colonisation of Brazil to this day. The concept of discovery inherently implies that the place in question was previously uncharted and uninhabited. Still, as the sands of time-shifted, the Portuguese claimed dominion over this newfoundland and transformed it into what was then dubbed Ilha de Vera Cruz or Terra de Santa Cruz.

“Neste mesmo dia, a horas de véspera, houvemos vista de terra! A saber, primeiramente de um grande monte, muito alto e redondo; e de outras serras mais baixas ao sul dele; e de terra chã, com grandes arvoredos; ao qual monte alto o capitão pôs o nome de O Monte Pascoal (monte da Páscoa) e à terra A Terra de Vera Cruz!”(Carta de Pero Vaz de Caminha)<sup>45</sup>

The proof that the land was inhabited and that the Portuguese encountered the Indigenous people can be found in a letter from 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1500 AD, narrating the navigation, arrival of the Portuguese and the 9-day trip to the beautiful beaches of this unknown continent.

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<sup>45</sup> Born in the Porto region of Portugal, Pero Vaz de Caminha was a faithful Portuguese clerk and cartographer, who wrote these incredible details and much more about other sails and other aspects of the navigations. Pero Vaz de Caminha’s letter is part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In it, we find information about veryimportant historical moments in our country. The date, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1500, generated encounters that still influence our politics, our sociology and many other facets of our society, such as the destruction of forests, prejudice against Indigenous people – and their culture – and even crimes of hatred committed against them. In the letter, Pero Vaz de Caminha shows how the first meeting between the Portuguese andthe Indigenous people was. Carta de Pero Vaz de Caminha. In: MARQUES, A.; BERUTTI, F.; FARIA, R. História moderna atravésde textos. São Paulo: Contexto, 2001) Fundação Pero Vaz de Caminha. <https://fundacaoperovazdecaminha.weebly.com/pero-vaz-de-caminha.html> [https://www.ebiografia.com/pero\\_vaz\\_de\\_caminha/](https://www.ebiografia.com/pero_vaz_de_caminha/)

“Pardos, nus, sem coisa alguma que lhes cobrisse suas vergonhas. Traziam arcos nas mãos, e suas setas. Vinham todos rijamente em direção ao batel. E Nicolau Coelho lhes fez sinal que pousassem os arcos. E eles os depuseram.” Pero Vaz de Caminha.

“A feição deles é serem pardos, um tanto avermelhados, de bons rostos e bons narizes, bem feitos. Andam nus, sem cobertura alguma. Nem fazem mais caso de encobrir ou deixa de encobrir suas vergonhas do que de mostrar a cara. Acerca disso são de grande inocência. Ambos traziam o beijo de baixo furado e metido nele um osso verdadeiro, de comprimento de uma mão travessa, e da grossura de um fuso de algodão, agudo na ponta como um furador. Metem-nos pela parte de dentro do beijo; e a parte que lhes fica entre o beijo e os dentes é feita a modo de roque de xadrez. E trazem-no ali encaixado de sorte que não os magoa, nem lhes põe estorvo no falar, nem no comer e beber.” - Pero Vaz de Caminha<sup>39</sup>

This extract is the real documentation of the first time the Portuguese made contact with the Indigenous, and their attempt to communicate. This document was an extensive letter written to D. Manuel I, narrating all the aspects of the expedition in this new land, produced on the day Brazil was, in this case, revealed to Europe. “The letter gives a very detailed account of the customs of the inhabitants of the land, their peaceful, even docile behavior, their houses, food, clothing, various utensils such as bows, arrows, axes, birds, the color of the earth, the dense trees, the absence of domestic animals.” (Torre do Tombo, liv. 13, f. 43.) Analysing and reflecting a little further, a discernible pattern emerges in this excerpt, where the Portuguese introduced their Eurocentric beauty ideals, evident in their description of Indigenous people’s “good faces and good noses, well made.” Moreover, this characterization underscores a patronizing attitude, deeming the Indigenous population as inherently naïve. So, in the absence of a more precise term, the use of “finding” to describe the encounter with this land can be seen as somewhat inappropriate, and the usage of this same word in exhibitions misrepresents the conventional understanding that typically associates such encounters with the notion of discovery. In reality, Portugal did not merely discover Brazil; rather, the country was occupied, invaded, and thereby subjected a range of Indigenous populations to its dominion.

This letter also describes a crucial point where the European colonisers desired to colonise and impose their culture (religion) on people they considered “backward or wrong”. Pero Vaz de Caminha describes the first Catholic mass held in Brazil and, shortly afterwards, advises the king of Portugal that the main mission of the Portuguese

is to convert the Indigenous people to the religion of the kingdom, ignoring that they already had their religion and their own religious rituals.

“On Easter Sunday, in the morning, the Captain determined to go hear Mass and a sermon on that islet. And he ordered all the captains to get ready in the boats and go with him. And so it was done. He had a pavilion erected on that islet, and a very well-arranged altar built inside. And there with all of us the others had the Mass said, which Father Friar Henrique said in a chanting voice, and officiated in that same voice by the other priests and priests who all attended, which Mass, in my opinion, was heard by all with much pleasure and devotion.” Pero Vaz de Caminha

“However, the best fruit that can be drawn from it seems to me to be saving these people. And this must be the main seed that Your Highness must sow in her.” Pero Vaz de Caminha

These are all elements of the Indigenous and Portuguese navigation history that could be a part of this exhibition. If the collection demonstrates narratives from their explorations in India and Japan, why not mention their investigations and encounters in Brazil?



### **Natural Resources and Exploitation of Lands:**

The point of analysis pertains to the noticeable absence of a panel dedicated to the “Exploitation of Lands in the Americas” or “Natural Resources”. It becomes strikingly evident that there is a lack of acknowledgement of the immense wealth that the Portuguese derived from Brazil, a wealth that significantly bolstered and supported the Portuguese crown. Unfortunately, the existing panel mentions only two spices originating from the Indies, cinnamon and pepper, inadvertently downplaying the crucial significance of numerous other resources that came to Europe during the colonial era. There is an unfortunate omission of any recognition of vital elements such as the pau-brasil trade and the sugar plantations, among others. It is imperative to include these two distinct themes within the exhibition for several compelling reasons that will be mentioned in this section, as they are pivotal in understanding the historical context and the multifaceted impact of the Portuguese economy and colonialism.

The exploitation of these lands by the Portuguese is a significant part of the broader legacy of colonialism, which has left lasting economic, social, and cultural imprints on these regions. The conquest and colonisation of Portuguese America resulted from the maritime expansion of the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, reinforcing the idea that nature existed at the service of man. Picking up on the above thread, Brazil was vital to Portugal because it contributed significantly to the Portuguese economy. Its valuable source of wealth for Portugal came from various natural and produced commodities in high demand in Europe. Firstly, it began as escambo<sup>46</sup> of pau-brasil, but eventually it continued with the sugar plantations and, much later, the gold, diamonds, coffee, tobacco and timber.

Since the Portuguese did not find metal or gold in Brazil at the beginning of the XVI century, they had to find another resource, and soon they appealed to the sugar cane, aiming to sustain the colonisation. Sugar was an expensive product but quickly sold and easily marketed and soon emerged as a possible important raw material for the economic development of grantees. It was then that many factors contributed to the establishment of the plant as a source of income:

Brazilian soil was favourable for sugarcane planting;

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<sup>46</sup> Exchanging goods or services without using currency.

The sugar generated had high added value on the international market, as it was a product used only by the upper social classes;

The Brazilian climate was favourable for the development of the vegetables;

The Portuguese were already working with sugar exports in their African colonies, which made handling on plantations easier.

Martim Afonso de Souza decided to test this information and brought the first sugarcane seedlings to Brazilian territory. In 1530, the first sugar mill plantation began its process in the city of São Vicente, which belongs to the coast of the State of São Paulo. Sugar production began to play a fundamental role in several aspects of the entire Portuguese colonial system, and Portugal was able to maintain a monopoly on Brazilian trade, ensuring that all goods produced in the colony were exported through Portuguese ports, allowing the crown to control and profit from Brazil's economic activities. It had a significant impact on food in the colony and also in the world; its large-scale production allowed greater access to the product, and the advantages of rapid growth of this economic cycle transformed sugar cane into the Portuguese economic foundation in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Schwartz, S., 2005, p. 98-102).

Portuguese settlers made attempts to use native Indigenous labour to work on sugarcane cultivation, but with the failure of this model, for various reasons, the Portuguese resorted to trade and enslavement of Africans. The extensive use of enslaved Africans in these processes was the operation that contributed to the colony's economic success, generating wealth for both local landowners and the Portuguese crown through their forced labour. It's important to note that Brazil's contributions to the Portuguese crown were substantial. Still, they also came at the expense of Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans who suffered greatly under colonial exploitation and forced labour. The economic prosperity of Brazil was built on the backs of enslaved individuals and the extraction of natural resources from the colony.

To understand the premise of the exploitation of the land by the Portuguese can be found in some documents legitimised during the voyages of discovery, the dominion/possession of places and the submission of people. "This is a reference to the papal bulls (Dum diverse, of 18/6/1452; Romanus Pontifex, of 08/01/1455 and Inter Coetera, of 13/03/1456) that authorized Royal initiatives in the race for maritime and

commercial expansion and the reflect the attitude and aspirations of the king, or of those who petitioned the papacy in their name, corroborating the spirit of the ‘Age of Discoveries’. (Boxer, 2002, p. 37-53) In this sense, in the search for land and wealth, the Portuguese Crown subjugated exploits as part of a commercial monopoly of natural resources, spices and precious metals, essential materials for its climb to becoming “owner of an extensive maritime empire” (Boxer, 2002, p. 38). Due to this, Portugal had an overbearing attitude towards everything found in the conquered Portuguese Africa and America, including its natural resources (Siqueira, M., 2009, p. 2-3).

Finding and exploring natural wealth was part of the Portuguese interest in meeting the demands left by the scarcity of gold and silver in Europe from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, stimulating oceanic discoveries (Siqueira, 2001, p.111). The reports of chroniclers and conquerors at the time highlighted the riches of Brazilian lands, such as the extensive wooden forests that covered an area of vegetation occupying practically the entire coastline that went from Rio de Janeiro to Rio Grande do Norte, entering a little territory (Souza, 1939, p. 104-107), in addition to other natural resources such as cotton, pepper and animal feathers (Saintaden, 1999, p. 59). Guaranteeing possession of the area and “exclusive” rights over natural resources was the objective of the Portuguese. The strategy used was legal control of exploration. The Brazilian lands represented for Portugal the possibility of “returning to the agricultural tradition, abandoned by the commercial adventure and whose merits justified the insular experience” (Azevedo, 1973, p. 233). For this reason, the Charter and the Letters of Donation (1534), legal instruments, were handed over to the grantees with the aim of stimulating land occupation, farming and trade. “The king delegated rights and duties to the grantees, reserving for the Crown those within its competence and, in the granting of land in sesmarias, by the grantee, the promotion of agriculture was highlighted, in addition to the search for precious metals. The reinforcement of the ‘exclusive’ over all the natural resources that could be found in nature at the service of the King, explaining domination/exploitation as we can read in the passages of the Foral handed over to Duarte Coelho” (Mendonça, 1972, p.126). (Siqueira, M., 2009, p.4).

“If there is any sort of gems, pearls, gold, silver, coral, copper, tin, lead or any other sort of metal in the lands of the said Captaincy, it will be paid to me the fifth (...). The brazilwood (...) and thus any spice or drug of any quality whatsoever, that it contains, will belong to me (...).”

Portuguese Ordinances showed the use of natural resources in the service of the Crown even when the evidence referred to the cause of deforestation, explained, for example, in the Tree Law of 1565 (Devy-Vareta, 1986, p. 29). This law, by highlighting the possible needs of residents, expresses their concern about using wood for other purposes, such as those aimed at meeting metallurgy and shipbuilding activities.

(...) in many places in my kingdom there is a great lack of wood & firewood & because forests are destroyed & unrooted & cut into many parts, the residents suffered great detriment for not having wood for their houses & building other things they need (...) (Souza, 1939. P. 104) (Staden, 1999, P.59)

In light of the compelling evidence presented regarding Portuguese exploitation of various lands and natural resources for their exclusive gain, it appears that the museum may not have made a concerted effort to address these aspects in its exhibition adequately. They may have overlooked the intention to shed light on these historical acts, consequently failing to present a comprehensive narrative of their navigations and inadvertently suppressing the authentic stories of what transpired in South American lands.

It is puzzling why the museum omitted these exploration narratives from its display, especially when they reference something strikingly similar but with a different origin. So, this work highlights the injustices and inequalities stemming from colonial exploitation and the exhibition. This injustice, the lack of representation and misrepresentation, is present through many panels. By addressing these exploitative practices, the museum illuminates the intricate cultural heritage that often suffered under colonial rule and underscores the imperative of acknowledging this history for the preservation and revitalisation of these invaluable cultures.

## **Slavery:**

The permanent exhibition encompasses multiple facets, and the transatlantic slave trade theme is by far the least explored. The museum had insecurities regarding this topic, hence why they did not want to mention it. When discussing slavery, it is essential to emphasise that both Indigenous and African people were used for forced labour. As early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese were involved in the slave trade along the African coast, facilitated by interactions with African villages that were well-acquainted with the commercial value of enslaved individuals, as highlighted by Fausto, in 2006. The connection and marking impact Portugal had in Africa is so evident in Lisbon that the city's population has an intense background of African descendants whose stories have been kept quiet. (Fora, J., 2011, p. 3) Slavery, colonialism, the African history is not really talked about here. We cannot ignore the African presence.

Portugal integrated the territory that we now know as Angola into its expansionist policies with the justification of propagating the Catholic faith and the intention of extracting wealth, obtaining more land for the cultivation of sugarcane, exploitation of slave labour and profitability in the enslaved people's sale until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Santons, P. J. A. Lourêdo, F. G. & Souza, M.K. H., 2016). What initially seemed easy, the process of Portuguese colonisation met significant resistance from the local population who fought for their beliefs and tried to guarantee the history of their ancestors intact.<sup>47</sup> Soon, Africa became the chief area to export slaves and Portugal's dominant colony, and Brazil emerged as a pivotal centre for the transatlantic slave trade and a substantial number of enslaved Africans were transported to toil on plantations cultivating crops, like sugar and coffee, and mining. The crown implemented regulations and codes concerning the treatment and conditions of enslaved individuals (Lara, 2000, p. 27-30).

It has been proven that when the Portuguese arrived in West Africa in the fifteenth century, they almost immediately began setting up trading stations along the Atlantic coast. As the Portuguese traders were integrated into the economic and political

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<sup>47</sup> Santons, P. J. A. Lourêdo, F. G. & Souza, M.K. H., 2016,)

landscape of West Africa, they became a frequent subject of representation in the arts.

Many objects created by native artists, such as statues, weapons, and saltcellar, were sent back to Europe, where they were considered luxury goods. Once in Europe, these objects could either be displayed on the dining tables of the wealthy, fulfilling their practical function of wealth, or added to princely “cabinets of curiosity” along with other natural and man-made “wonders”. The Portuguese Chronicles of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea was consulted in order to be considered to be the best source of verifiable information about the presence of the Portuguese in Guinea. This Chronicle was written in 1448 by Gomes Eanes de Zurara and explained in great detail some of the Portuguese Discoveries from those times. Zurara narrated much of how the land was, and reported events that he encountered with the men, such as the capture of slaves, trade, fishing, and the battles between the Portuguese and the natives as exciting (Zurara, D. G., & Prestage, E., 1970). The chronicle is of \_ incalculable value for the history of Portugal and the world since it is the first book that mentioned the countries of the West Coast of Africa located beyond the Bojador. Far from boring, it also says how Antam Goncalvez brought back the first Captives. (Beazley, p. 25-40)

In 1441, Portuguese navigator Nuno Tristão captured Africans and began what could be the first African slave trade commerce to Portugal from Guiné Bissau. The colonisers very soon installed trading posts to carry out the slave trade with the native population. In 1444, 1,000 Africans were enslaved to Portugal once more before its colonisation in 1446. For centuries, this territory was an essential point for the slave trade. It became a source of an estimated 150,000 enslaved Africans transported by the Portuguese before 1500, mainly from Upper Guinea. Some were used to grow cotton and indigo in the previously uninhabited Cape Verde Islands. The only form of representation of Guiné Bissau found was on the maritime museum website, which reports on the colonisation in Guinea Bissau very briefly. (Museu da Marinha. 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2023. A Colonização Portuguesa da Guiné 1880-1960.)

So, the 3 small paragraphs found in the theme “Transatlantic Slavetrade” in the MM permanent exhibition do not mention or show anything related to the Angolan or

Guinean people or any other African group the Portuguese had contact with during the XV-XVI century. In an interview, Beatriz Dias<sup>48</sup> she says “we have been denied a place in Portugal’s history, our representation will contribute to the construction of emerging counter-narratives and to the Decolonisation of the imperial narrative by creating a space of dispute centered on the perspectives of Africans and Afro- descendants.” (Sampaio, 2023) As shown above and as Dias mentioned it has been mentioned again and again that many stories have been kept in silence.

With the lack of representation in the exhibition, it was not hard to find relevant information that proves the contact established between Africans and the Portuguese in *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*. So, why is it not essential to remember the relationships between the African population and the Portuguese settlers, as well as what occurred then. No objects from Guiné Bissau, Angola, Cabo Verde or other African countries are in the slavery theme. Unfortunately, African culture and ancestry were nowhere to be mentioned in the exhibition, and the representations of these people ought to be kept in museums so that their histories can be preserved and taught but not excluded.

Unlike Indigenous slavery, African slavery was never questioned because their capacities to contribute to better activities with iron and cattle breeding were superior to those of the Indigenous people.<sup>49</sup> So, they became the object of simple observations as a solution for work in the colony (Vainfas, 1986, p. 80). With no representation in this exhibition, it seems like it should continue not to be questioned, whereas to show the relevance of the people in the slave trade, how this process began, what objects these people had with them, and how they came to Portugal. This is relevant because if we

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<sup>48</sup> Dias, has participated in many interviews, talks and educational projects where she debates and speaks on racism and the exploration of Portugal dark side of its colonial Past, like in NPR “Portugal Explores The Dark Side of its Colonial Past” (2018) <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/11/656455247/portugal-explores-the-dark-side-of-its-colonial-past>. Also in Esquerda “Institutional Racism and the colonial legacy” (2019) <https://www.esquerda.net/dossier/racismo-institucional-legado-do-colonialismo/63835>

<sup>49</sup> Although African enslavement has consolidated itself as a more viable option than that of Indigenous peoples, we must always argue that the slavery of black people was not something they passively accepted. Escapes, many attacks, and deaths characterised this resistance in the relationship between masters and slaves. Let us also remember the treatment given to black people in legislation. The contrast between Indigenous people and black people is evident in this aspect; they had protective laws against slavery, although these were not applied. Enslaved black people had no rights, even because they were legally considered a thing and not a person (Fausto, 2006, p. 52-54).

dive back into Portugal in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, many African people were living in Lisbon, 1% of the population was African, and several of them were actually higher class coming from Congo, but the majority was captives. Some 140,000-150,000 enslaved Africans entered Portugal between the mid-fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. “The relative size of this contingent is evidenced by the fact that around 1530, Portugal’s entire population was no more than 1.2-1.4 million. Brazil also had a huge case in colonial slavery, but Africa did just as much or even more, and the individuals and their cultures were impacted. Meanwhile Portugal had an enormous economic, social and political growth, but the significance of slavery in these metropolises is stereotypically overlooked.” (Arantes, T. J., 2016 & Oliveira, J.D. L., 2015). “The colonial empire that Portugal built is no longer there. Yet, these enduring connections to Africa linger conspicuously within Lisbon. They are etched in the very architecture that once facilitated the slave trade, and they thrive in the vibrant communities of immigrantsailing from Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea Bissau, São Tomé, and Mozambique who now proudly call Lisbon their home. It’s in the diverse African restaurants and markets that serve locals and the immigrant community”, says Naky Gaglo.

The preceding information underscores Portugal’s extensive historical connections with various regions of Africa, to the extent that six African countries today have Portuguese as their primary language. This historical interaction is undeniable, and its legacy persists to this day, as evidenced by the significant presence of Africans from these nations residing in Portugal. However, what is particularly concerning is Portugal’s apparent reluctance to acknowledge and educate future generations about these historical stories and interactions. The museum has a tendency to focus on its own history and achievements rather than on the experiences and contributions of colonised regions.



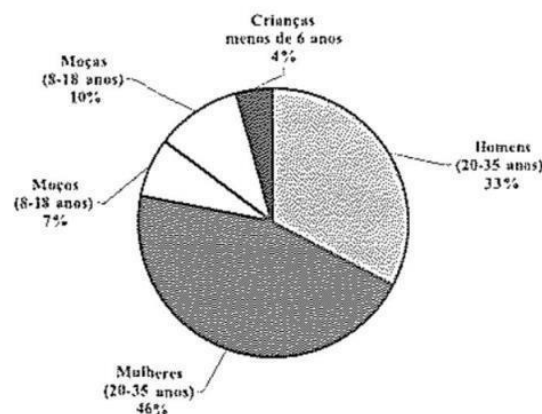
## **Navigations and Ships:**

Another prominent part of the exhibition is dedicated to the great collection of Portuguese ship models, demonstrating the remarkable innovation and capacity to navigate exotic lands. However, the focus on ship construction overshadows other critical aspects that I will discuss here. Notably absent is the clarification and the role ships played in the transatlantic slave trade, a pivotal yet overlooked narrative. The exhibition fails to delve into the ship's significant role in transporting enslaved individuals to different territories under the Portuguese crown's control and expansion. The exhibition's limited coverage of slavery is concerning; while it acknowledges its presence, it omits almost everything, offering an incomplete picture of colonisation, trafficking, and obscured aspects of maritime exploration. Ignoring slavery distorts historical narratives, it suppresses empathy, and neglects the crucial contributions of enslaved individuals. It is vital to acknowledge the descendants of those enslaved, who endured immense suffering, and allow society to grasp their identities and origins, bridging historical gaps. The exhibit should explore ship construction and the conditions endured by those on board. Unveiling enslaved individuals' stories and their experiences is vital for a more comprehensive understanding. Portraying the truth of the past, including its dark chapters, challenges the idealisation of Portugal's colonial history and fosters societal transformation. Lisbon has numerous existing monuments around the city that occupy public spaces and celebrate explorers, but they overlook the victims of slavery, highlighting a critical imbalance. This is something that needs "to dispute the hegemonic national narrative. They should also erect public statues to tell our stories, or tell the reverse side of this glorified history" (Dias, 2020)

The Portuguese nation's early exploration stemmed from economic necessity in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and led Portuguese navigations to mercantilist relations and to an empire built in Africa. This change demands an authentic portrayal of ship life, acknowledgement of slavery's profound impact, and an exploration of Portugal's role in shaping Africa's history.

António de Almeida Mendes uncovers significant findings in his research, revealing a solid connection between Portuguese expeditions and the history of the slave trade. The study delves deep into the events leading up to the embarkation of these individuals and their challenging sea voyages. Mendes found, amongst the documented slave voyages, a striking 41 out of 51 slave ships originating from Arguim in Mauritania, each carrying more than 100 enslaved people. Notably, it is reported that 6,042 out of 6,298 of them sent from Arguim reached Lisbon alive, reflecting an average mortality rate of 4.24%. Noteworthy, voyages include those of Santo Afonso and Conceição in 1511 and 1514, respectively, with 260 slaves onboard, categorized by age groups. The graph below shows us the average age of enslaved individuals embarking from Arguim.

**Figure 29.** Graph of the average age of enslaved individuals embarking from Arguim.



**Source:** Mendes, A. (2020) Portugal and the Slave Trade in the First Half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

The most exhaustive analysis of shipping records pertaining to the slave trade is found in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, under the editorial stewardship of Professors David Eltis and David Richardson. It is worth noting that, while the editors themselves cautiously classify their figures as estimates, they are widely regarded as the foremost estimates available, essentially constituting the “gold standard” within the field of slave trade studies.

According to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database<sup>50</sup>, spanning the period from 1525 to 1866—the entirety of the slave trade to the New World—an estimated 12.5 million Africans were transported. Of these, approximately 10.7 million endured the harrowing Middle Passage. They arrived in North America, the Caribbean, and South America, and between 1550 and 1855, four million slaves entered Brazilian ports, the vast majority of them young men (Fausto, 2006, p. 51).

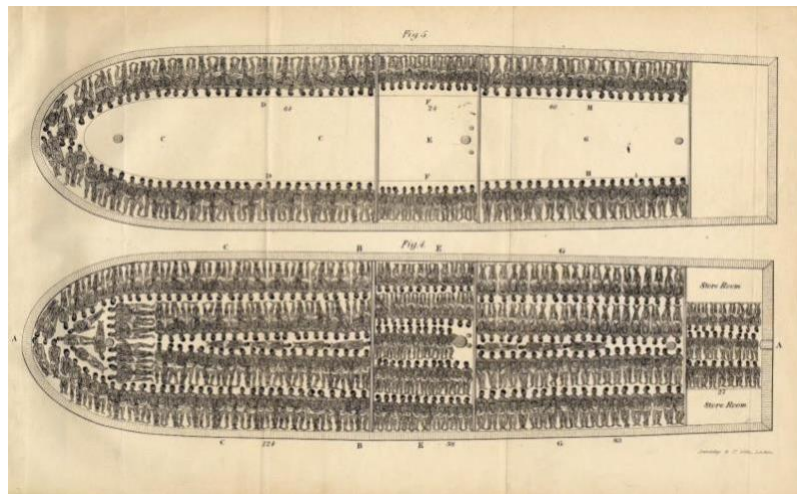
These data show that there is more to the story and that the road to the recovery and treatment of the collective memories of excluded groups is also insurgent from the field of education. We think in particular of Paulo Freire, who says that taking as a starting point the oppression of the working, poor and excluded classes and stories, the recognition of the violence of the oppressors that dehumanizes the oppressed should be proposed as pedagogy, questioning the stories thought throughout a critical reading of the world (Primo, M., 2021, p. 32). The racialisation of the other, being cisgender, and a heteronormativity reference work in contemporary times to legitimise economic exploitation and physical and social control, but beyond that, they also work on the psychic level in the production of knowledge and subjectivity. They work as the foundation of identity that sustains society's power politics. One of the critical challenges Sociomuseology faces is positioning itself as a decolonial School of Thought, establishing and nurturing arenas for contemplation and restorative actions. The museological space can serve as the bedrock for ongoing critical examination of our world and the cultivation of a historical-political awareness regarding the pervasive influence of colonial power, knowledge, and identity that underpins the global power structure (Pereira, 2018) (Primo, 2021).

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<sup>50</sup> “The Trans-Atlantic and Intra-American slave trade databases are the culmination of several decades of independent and collaborative research by scholars drawing upon data in libraries and archives around the Atlantic world.” <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>

In the contemporary context, Sociomuseology must grapple with the imperative recognition that its role within society is far from neutral, constructing narratives and interpreting our world through the prism of inherited artefacts that represent inherently political acts. From the early 1500s to the early 1800s, ships known as "Nau Negreiro" or "Nau Tumbeiro" seen below played a significant role in transporting slaves. Due to their distressingly high mortality rates, these vessels earned the nickname "Tumbeiros" which refers to the tomb, the place where the dead are buried. These operated on transatlantic routes, delivering “supplies” to Africa and returning with enslaved individuals alongside commodities like sugar, coffee, and gold. This triangular trade system revolved around the slave trade, a highly profitable industry that fueled production, in Brazilian plantations, and gold mines.

**Figure 30.** “Slavetrade Ship” Illustration



**Source:** A 1836 American edition of Clarkson's History of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade. The GilderLehrman Institute of American History. (n.d.). Historical Context: Facts about the Slave Trade and Slavery. TheGilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/teacher-resources/historical-context-facts-about-slave-trade-and-slavery>

As the Africans boarded the slave ship, the voyage to the New World turned into an unimaginable horror. They were stripped of their belongings, branded, chained, and sent below decks. Sometimes, two captives were chained together at the ankle, and ropes around their necks tied together columns of captives. These individuals were separated from their villages and families and were now thrust into a hostile and alien world. The slave deck itself was a living nightmare. They were piled up as seen in Figure 26 and chained, but not during the entire trip, because if they made the entire journey in prison, they would not arrive alive or would arrive in poor physical condition. So, sometimes, on the high seas, these individuals were let loose in the holds and were regularly taken out on deck to exercise because the trips from Africa to Brazil or Europe usually took around 20-35 days without bad weather. Conditions on the ships were precarious, with no ventilation below deck, where they spent most of their time, nor adequate hygiene (Marques, 2012, p. 155-179). Nausea was continuous, and human waste was a constant presence in the reality of the cellars. They were often cleaned with seawater and vinegar to soften odours and dirt. In this way, many diseases spread on ships and reached ports, such as measles, diarrhea and scurvy. Food was very restricted and they received small portions of flour and dried meat and a little water, which was rare even among the crew (Rediker, 2011, p. 15-23).

Portuguese merchant ships continued to dominate the transatlantic slave trade for another century and could not lose their merchandise. These individuals were cargo to slave sellers, and slave ships were explicitly intended to convey as many prisoners and goods as possible, with little regard for their health or humanity. The proximity, filth, and fear drove many insane, and suicide attempts were rampant. Despite all the horrific torture and slavery, they endured, it cannot be denied that Africans also shaped the culture and history of Portugal. The traces are still seen today in many expressions in the Portuguese language, originally from Angola, for example like “iá”, “bué”, and “bazar”.<sup>51</sup> (Costa, M, J. 2008) The same occurs in Portuguese cuisine, with dishes which came from Mozambique, like samosa, amongst others, and have been deeply influent in the country, with their delicious spices and different preparation techniques. (Djass,

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<sup>51</sup> In Cabo Verde and Mozambique also use this word and means thanks. It means a lot in Angola.  
/https://certaspalavras.pt/qual-e-a-origem-de-bue/

2020) The recent initiatives of African and Afro-descendant communities and organizations are playing an affirmative role in questioning the narrative of the Portuguese empire, rooted in colonialism and slavery and reflected in the heritage landscape of Lisbon.

Addressing the topic of slavery is not easy, but it remains crucial to society as it continues to exist in our contemporary world. In 2017, and now in 2023, there were cases of people enslaved in Portugal. The first case was of immigrants in Alentejo who were forced to perform illegal slave labour on agricultural properties (Marques, 2017). The second case is of a couple, aged 52 and 53, and their son, aged 35, who were arrested and submitted to judicial interrogation in March for being suspected of crimes of “trafficking persons, for the purposes of labour exploitation and slavery”. A woman had lived with this family in a situation of slavery for 23 years, time in which she had a son, now aged 9, who will also have grown up under the couple’s control (Da Manhã 2023). Another example is a couple aged 40 and 42 who were arrested by the Porto Judiciary Police for having enslaved a Mozambican citizen, who was brought to the municipality of Espinho with the promise of having a sponsor to study and a place to work. The victim received 50 euros a month and only one meal a day. (Kotowicz, A. (2022) These and many other stories show us the effects of slavery remain evident in present days and are still required in contemporary society.

### **Religion:**

Lastly, to understand the importance of implementing Christianity, it must be understood that Portugal maintained beneficial relations with the Roman Catholic church, when Afonso Henriques declared Portugal a vassal State. This meant that the country's government answered to the pope, should he choose to direct its leadership. In addition, the church helped drive the remaining Moors out of Portuguese territory in exchange for significant land deeds, and, as the Portuguese Empire grew, the church enjoyed the benefits of Portuguese expansion. As Portuguese sailors arrived in Brazil, they initially encountered an unfamiliar land with untapped potential. They recognised the need to establish contact and alliances with Indigenous groups to navigate this new territory. (Siqueira, I, M. 2009. P.25-34). This collaboration was crucial for the Portuguese to understand the landscape, its resources, and where to find them. The Portuguese relied on the Indigenous peoples, who had inhabited the region for many years, to guide them in their exploration. Soon, it became apparent that Brazil held a wealth of resources, including valuable spices and other products that could make the Portuguese crown build wealth. (Siqueira, I, M. 2021). However, the Portuguese faced a challenge: the lack of workforce to extract and cultivate these riches. Consequently, they began to realise the necessity of getting the Indigenous to labour for them (Severo, P., 2018, 30-40).

The Catholic Church played an important role in this process of commercialising as did the maritime expansion of European powers, notably the Portuguese monarchy. It is not insignificant that one of the main reasons for the conquest and occupation of new lands was the need to expand the Catholic faith, combating heresies and different religions. (Marrie, L., 2018, p. 1-3) The Kingdom of Portugal was one of the Pope's strongest allies and was one of the first to accept, unconditionally, the decisions of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), whose objective was to reaffirm all the dogmas of the Catholic Church in the face of the Protestant Reformation. "The alliance between the Portuguese monarchy and the Church of Rome was called *Padroado Régio*. According to this alliance, the Pope granted the Portuguese kings spiritual power over the faithful, his subjects, through which the moral and religious government of the kingdom and overseas colonies was exercised. In return, the Portuguese State had to reaffirm and obey all the principles and dogmas of Catholicism regulated by the Council of Trent,



tirelessly combating the Protestant threat and all other beliefs and heresies” (Del Priori, M., 1994, p. 81).

So, the main objective of the Portuguese was the process of attraction, catechesis and “civilisation” of the Indigenous with the use of their workforce and the expropriation of their lands. (Cardim, P. 2019). Throughout the History of Brazil, Indians were presented in the role of supporting actors in the colonisation process. Regardless of the orientation of Indigenous policy, villages played a fundamental role in the process of attracting and socialising Indigenous people. (Souza, M. M. T., 2007, p. 14). During the early Stages of colonisation, the exploitation and maltreatment of Indigenous labour were pervasive. The priests used the discourse that the slave was a necessary thing for the colonial enterprise to be successful, as were the animals and other inputs.

Owning slaves is, here, necessary, very wise, the most certain way, in short, of supporting the Colégio da Bahia. [...]. As owning natives brings inconveniences, perhaps missionary ethics, the solution lies in African slavery. [...]. (VAINFRAS, 1986, p. 73).

Initially the native population was on the verge of disappearing due to disease and war. As the Indigenous groups came in contact with the Portuguese, they slowly became infected by the various diseases Europeans brought to the Americas (Vainfras 1986, p. 79). The white man brought ailments the Indigenous had no antibodies for, from dental cavities to bladder illnesses, whooping coughs, tuberculosis, measles, smallpox and the flu. Since the Indigenous did not have antibodies, they ended up dying. It has been estimated that approximately 56 thousand Indigenous died (Will, K., 2014, p. X). “The indigenous knew no diseases other than itches and fainting from momentary loss of soul but these releases began in the first hour, and continue as a relentless biological war.” (Ribeiro, p. 46-47). The Portuguese also used this to their advantage, knowing these diseases and using it as a technique to occupy lands, where the Portuguese left contaminated clothes for the Indigenous to take home to their communities and families, and soon many were dying. “Harmless, defenseless people began to die in bunches.” (Ribeiro, p. 47).



The Indigenous population was tragically and tactically subjected to enslavement, with three distinct methods employed for procuring them.

The first method, marked by discrimination, involved displacing natives from their ancestral lands and relocating them to designated “allocation tribes”. These allocation tribes would then coerce them into labour within those areas. It is important to acknowledge that the Indigenous people did not willingly choose to work for the Portuguese; they were subjected to coercion and threats.

The second option was termed “rescue” (Cardim, 2019, 39-49). They would buy native slaves who were prisoners of tribal wars. It was common for different tribes to fight amongst each other, and the winner would make prisoners. The third option was to create a “Guerra Justa”, a direct war started between the Portuguese and the indigenes. This open conflict was called like that because the Portuguese monarchy legislation defined under which criteria, they were allowed to consider a war against a tribe (Cardim, 2019, 42-49).

The Portuguese could not simply say they wanted war, they needed authorisation and would only allow this war to be framed inside specific criteria. Warlike Tribes are dangerous tribes that have callous behaviour, that threaten and attack. They could potentially attack the colonisers; they could also get in the way of catechising practices. These tribal characteristics could be targeted as “Guerra Justa”. There was an investigation “process” to check if this authorization for war existed. But as known, the colonisers did not wait for these authorisations. Many times, they provoked and even attacked the Indigenous for them to retaliate and then for the fight to happen. The Indigenous who were captured or those who lost and were caught would become enslaved and taken to work. It was a form of recruiting labour. There was an establishment for the Indigenous labour work recruiting, so we will consider this legislation will define the Indigenous labour work exploration. When the Portuguese saw this tactic would not work anymore, they shifted to another solution. The Indigenous were the first to be enslaved, considered one of the leading wealth of the colonies. The attempts to enslave the Brazilian Indigenous were faced with a series of inconveniences, given the purposes of colonisation, as these were not culturally compatible with the intensive, regular and compulsory work as intended by the Europeans.

“The Indians resisted various forms of subjection, through war, through escape, through refusal of compulsory work” (Fausto, 2006, p.50).

Undoubtedly, the settlers wanted to use more obvious methods to forcefully utilise these individuals to fuel economic enterprises such as sugar cane mills, generating sugar for international trade and flour for domestic consumption. The missionaries played a more central role, resorting to coercive methods like threats and resource withholding, like food or medical care to compel Indigenous conversions, aiming to suppress Indigenous religious practices, viewing them as pagan or incompatible with Christianity. They would also harshly disrespect their cultures, prohibiting the Indigenous from practicing their religion cultural aspects and rituals, evaporating many lives, their beliefs, their cultures and languages, and turning these people and their lives invisible (Will, K., 2014, p. 36-39).

Missionaries sought to replace Indigenous religious texts, symbols, and artefacts with Christian equivalents (Ferreira, 2011, p.13). Indigenous shamans, priests, or spiritual leaders were often targeted for conversion or suppression by missionaries. (Del, P. M. 1994) By discrediting or sidelining these figures, missionaries sought to weaken Indigenous religious influence. During the colonial era, particularly in regions where European powers like Portugal established their presence, there were instances in which enslaved individuals were forced to work alongside Indigenous populations under the auspices of the Church. This complex dynamic involved various factors, including colonial economic interests, religious conversion efforts, and the broader power dynamics at play during that time (Ferreira, 2011, p.14). The missionaries praised themselves for helping these people and “conquering the land of the “ ‘unfaithful’ ”. (WILL, K., 2014, p 39). The current exhibition fails to address critical historical facts of Indigenous cultures. It fails to show inclusivity, lacking representation when there are facts, written accounts, and other means to convey their narratives and experiences. It is undeniable that missionaries played a profound role in reshaping Indigenous, Brazilian, and African societies. Their core mission was to convert and assimilate these populations into European norms, often suppressing their origins and cultures. This conversion legitimised Portuguese authority, cultivated loyal Indigenous allies, and established a foundation for colonial rule.

It is essential to reflect upon these processes of evangelisation of Brazil and its people by the Portuguese during colonisation because history shows the symbolic violence imposed by the conquerors, colonisers and evangelisers who, taken by a Eurocentric vision, did not respect at all the tradition, culture or identity of the Native people. It saddens me not to be able to see the inclusion or representation of these people and historical facts in the XX century are the same.

Instead, the prevailing narrative romanticises colonialism and the Catholic Church, whereas the two paintings also do not explain anything of significance. So, a more inclusive perspective is needed, one that delves into the darker aspects of religious influences in the colonisation of other cultures. The history of these interactions is complex and multifaceted, influenced by the broader forces of colonisation, economic interests, religious objectives, and power imbalances. There needs to be recognition of the Indigenous and how important they are to education.

If society and museums are not able to explore the diverse themes of intercultural perspectives, resulting in showing the role of the minorities that were once invisible, there is no way to build a better social societal historical view of Lisbon and Portugal. Along the walls of the permanent exhibition of the MM we see no representation of Indigenous people, none, zero. The constant research all share the same conclusion, that this huge problem creates an absence in history, the history of Brazil and its Indigenous people. The visitor is not presented with a diverse point of view, thoughts, experiences, or critiques. It is as if their lives, their existence, are irrelevant, invisible. The MM, unfortunately, was unable to materialise the objects, the memories and stories in this exhibition. The things and curatorial texts work as a tow machine when it should actually be moving forward, creating better and unique exhibitions. It must be necessary to add that during the colonial period museum displays advanced the notion of Indigenous cultures being backward, evil, and barbaric whilst Western museology elevated white dominant cultures as superior deployed. Even after attaining political independence in 1980, Zimbabwean museums still operate in a colonial shell. Educational frameworks, content delivery methods and some operational cultures still display colonial tendencies.

Thus, colonial systems have been found to linger in the current education systems. There is a need to decolonise museum education so that the content and the manner in which it is delivered speak to the educational needs and learning styles of current museum audiences.

In every section of “Sala dos Descobrimentos”, where the permanent collection lies, the curatorial text, the painting, the objects of the exhibition were not analysed with the purpose of including these cultures. After not finding these representations, the final decision was to hopefully find something in the archives of this museum. What we found in the museum archive thoroughly indicates that African objects are present and that they have been invisible for a very long time, because they were never a part of any exhibition, whether it was permanent or temporary. So, for me, it is about building a bridge to the past to establish a dialogue about these historical facts that caused much violence but are not mentioned at all in the permanent exhibition. This offers comfort for those who would rather pretend the past is just that or that a few things happened and were never that bad. The story between the conquered and the conquerors has never been a tale told in most countries. There is no escaping from the fact that many European countries have complicated histories, but to display the conquered cultures is not a tale most countries want to talk about, yet they should.

### **Chapter 3.3. The Reserve of the Portuguese Maritime Museum**

First and foremost, the museum's archive is housed within the same building, comprising a spacious main room with a smaller chamber inside. Within these walls, the institution meticulously preserves an array of historical treasures, encompassing records, artefacts, data, maps, photographs, films, videotapes, and various invaluable resources. This archive is diligently managed by a dedicated team, serving as the guardian of the museum's collective memory and other potentially significant facets of history. I would also like to point out that several portions of the archive were unavailable to research or visit due to COVID circumstances, so there were still some limitations for this research.

The archive extends a welcoming hand to researchers and offers opportunities for volunteering. It stands as a crucial repository of memories and history, a fount of knowledge accessible to the public, where one can embark on a journey to learn and safeguard the narratives of our ancestors. At first impression, the inner room is not expansive, the space is almost completely occupied by the tables and chairs of the team that works inside and the organization leaves room for improvement. In the room outside, notably, many objects seem haphazardly placed on tables or scattered on the floor, lacking adequate precautions against potential damage. There were various samurai armors in the left corners, mannequins with sailor's clothes next to glass tables, artillery pieces, wooden boats and chairs. It appeared haphazard and there were not enough shelves, tables or cabinets for all objects to help manage them. Upon observing various archives and conducting research, it becomes evident that there is no universal standard for the protocols and organisational procedures governing museums worldwide. The status of the objects in that area was uncertain; it remained unclear whether they were in the process of being incorporated into the inventory, awaiting cataloguing and photography, or if a lack of alternative storage options necessitated their presence there during that period.

The MMs inventories are such old procedures that they were introduced with the creation of museums themselves. Therefore, there has always been an obligation to catalog and regulate the objects. The MM guarantees the conservation and exhibition of objects of historical, artistic, and documentary value from the Navy's heritage, representing the Portuguese maritime past and the benefits they performed on the colonisation of civilisations and the progress of humanity (Ramos, 2019, p. 4). At the moment, the MM is in the process of migrating its studies and information of its collections from an access database to a database dedicated to heritage management – inpatrimonium<sup>52</sup> (Ramos, J. M. F., 2018, p. 4), accompanying the opportunity for the availability on the market of specific computer resources dedicated to the management of museological heritage. As the investigation began, it was critical to analyse and comprehend how the Portuguese Maritime Museum was established, its collections, archive, general role and duties. It was also critical returning to the museological area as many times as possible to investigate their thoughts and heritage centre for valuable information regarding the invisible objects in this dissertation. This archive began to be assembled at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but it was not until the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of D. Maria I, that they started collecting abundantly. (Dimensão Parlamentar, 2021, MM). The collection is characterised by three essential aspects: its size, diversity and the historical, unique value. At the moment, the MM holds around 20,000 objects and only 2,500 were selected to be on display, to my joy and concern (Tavares, 2022) (Dimensão Parlamentar, 2021, MM). Out of 20,000 items, only 2,000 were chosen to make up the Museum's permanent exhibition in "Sala dos Descobrimentos" (Bruno Neves, 2022).

Ana Pacheco, historical technician at the MM, claimed that the museum also holds a photography archive of roughly 30,000 pieces, as well as 1,500 ship drawings and models. I firmly believe that enlisting additional assistance, whether through volunteers or other means, could significantly enhance both the inventory process and the overall management of the room.

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<sup>52</sup> Sistema Integrado de Gestão do Património Cultural. Esta aplicação é desenvolvida tendo em conta as normas internacionais (Comité Internacional para a Documentação do ICOM, *Collections Trust, Getty Research Institute e Canadian Heritage Information Network*).

During the same visit, I initiated the second phase of my research, which involved the curation process of the museum's "invisible" objects. This task led me to meticulously examine approximately 600 paper files like the one depicted in Figure 5. These files were housed within the heritage and archival centre offices, neatly arranged in a sizable green metal cabinet closet to the right of the room. Before this meeting, I had not thought of how many objects I would want in this research, so the initial step was to review these 600 physical files, examining the information contained within to assess their relevance to my work. As I delved into this process, it swiftly became apparent that I needed to initiate a systematic process of elimination, and I began by setting aside the files associated with naval boat building, Portuguese swords, knives, naval wardrobes, naval ship models, letters, and other photographs that would not participate in this study. After a diligent review, out of the initial 600 files, nearly 20 seized my attention as potential candidates for further exploration.

Within each inventory file, a photograph was prominently positioned on the left, complemented by a comprehensive description on the right, as illustrated in Figure 5. The files that picked my interest were thoughtfully set aside for further consideration. However, out of the myriad options, only 15 objects ultimately met my criteria, aligned with my personal fascination for items rooted in African and Indigenous Brazilian heritage. In due course, I could not help but discern a particular limitation in the diversity of objects within this niche. The museum's stated mission revolves around showcasing and narrating the stories tied to Portuguese navigations, their maritime endeavours, and their encounters during these voyages. In my perspective, these expeditions, replete with discoveries of new lands and encounters with diverse cultures, should naturally encompass a rich tapestry of elements such as food, animals, people, plants, languages, attire, and cultures. It struck me as peculiar to observe a dearth of representation from Africa, Brazil, or Indigenous communities in the museum's collection. The overarching objective of my research was to delve into the accessible inventory. Using the files at my disposal, I aimed to ascertain whether these objects had previously been featured in exhibitions. If not, I sought to explore the potential for introducing changes or incorporating new artefacts into the permanent exhibition.

Additionally, I considered the prospect of crafting a fresh temporary exhibition while remaining mindful of cost implications for the items on display. The importance of periodically refreshing exhibitions cannot be overstated. It allows visitors to gain fresh insights, offering a unique and thrilling experience with each visit.

**Figure 31.** MMs Cataloguing Inventory card

| MUSEU DE MARINHA           |                   | SECÇÃO                                      | AR-I | N.º DE INVENTÁRIO | 10                 |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---|------|-------------------|--------------------|
|                            |                   |   |      | N.º DE ENTRADA    |                    |
|                            | OBJECTO           | Moca  |      |                   |                    |
|                            | ASSUNTO           | Armas Centíficas                            |      |                   |                    |
|                            | AUTOR             |   |      |                   |                    |
|                            | ÉPOCA             |   |      |                   |                    |
|                            | DIMENSÕES         | Comp. total 57,5cm Diâm M 75M/m Diâm m 18m/ |      |                   |                    |
|                            | ESCALA            | Natural                                     |      |                   |                    |
|                            | PESO              |   |      |                   |                    |
|                            | MATERIAL          | Pau preto                                   |      |                   |                    |
|                            | ORIGEM DE FABRICO | Angola                                      |      |                   |                    |
|                            | CONSERVAÇÃO       | Regular                                     |      |                   |                    |
| N.º DE ARQUIVO DE DESENHOS |                   |   |      |                   |                    |
| N.º DE ARQUIVO FOTOGRÁFICO |                   |   |      |                   |                    |
| LOCAL DE EXPOSIÇÃO         |                   |   |      |                   | Exposição 1º andar |
| OBSERVAÇÕES                |                   |   |      |                   |                    |

CL.A.1000 — 20X152 — 1000 EK. — 818/82 — L. H.

**Source:** Photograph taken by Luiza Tarasconi in May 2022

Furthermore, the Maritime Museum offers an online archive accessible to the public, but regrettably, it provides limited access to lesser-known and diverse objects. The online archive comprises ten categories, each containing only a modest selection of 4 to 8 objects. Each object is represented by a solitary image and a brief title, devoid of supplementary details, including historical context, dates, cartography, or additional photographs. Notably, the online archive lacks dedicated categories for objects from the XV or XVII centuries, leaving a significant historical gap. Moreover, concerning Brazil, Africa, or Indigenous cultures, the online Historical Archive of the Marine offers no substantive information; it primarily focuses on the ships that embarked on voyages to these regions, and this portal is not open to public access. My research experience from the Internet perspective has proven to be a challenging endeavour, often requiring additional direct contact with individuals in the archive department or the assistance of a willing professor to facilitate such connections.



## Chapter 4. Invisible Objects in the Portuguese Maritime Museum

In the first week of December 2021, after a few months of arduous and elaborate research, the limiting COVID-19 conditions, some miscommunication, no response to emails, the investigation finally deepened. The MM gave me permission to begin my study in their building and visit their archive and museological headquarters. The reality is that it took some time to contact the museum because I did not have the email of the Head of the Heritage Services, but my advisor was able to help me and make this connection possible.

This chapter's goal is to examine and analyse the museum's permanent exhibition to determine whether it includes objects with African, Brazilian, or Indigenous origins. The second part of this investigation will delve into the museum's archives to identify whether the reserve collection houses items from these same cultural backgrounds. The focus is to uncover any objects excluded from the permanent exhibition. The overarching objective is to comprehend the reasons behind the exclusion of these stories and items that represent these cultures from the permanent exhibition while recognising their significance within the broader context of the museum's narrative, history, and collection. Should such artefacts exist in the museum's reserves, these objects, along with their historical narratives, will play a pivotal role in enhancing our understanding of the past. Objects serve as invaluable windows into historical processes, encompassing both the favourable and less favourable aspects of different cultures. They also reveal narratives that have often been marginalised and rendered invisible in the museum's existing permanent production. This endeavour seeks to open doors to a more inclusive and comprehensive historical exhibition. Ultimately, the aim is to demonstrate that the items and texts in "Sala dos Descobrimentos" provide only minimal insight into the complex interactions between the Portuguese and other cultures. These displays fail to convey the conflicts that arose and the lives lost in the process, effectively representing a form of cultural destructure/erasure.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cultural destruction, also known as cultural heritage destruction or cultural heritage loss, refers to the deliberate or unintentional damage, destruction, or loss of cultural artefacts, sites, traditions, and practices that hold historical, artistic, religious, or social significance. This can occur due to various factors, including urbanization, vandalism, looting, neglect, conflict, and international erasure. Cultural destruction can have profound implications for societies and their understanding of their own history, identity, and heritage. It can lead to the loss of valuable knowledge, traditions, and artefacts that provide insights into the civilization's development and interconnectedness.. Pressbooks. (n.d.). Who Owns Culture? The Preservation and Destruction of Cultural Heritage. Pacific Art History Online. <https://pressbooks.pub/pacarthistory/chapter/who-owns-culture-the-preservation-and-destruction-of-cultural-heritage/>

The subsequent aim is to shed light on the invisible objects that have never been displayed and to elucidate how and why they merit inclusion in “Sala dos Descobrimentos” permanent exhibition. This endeavour is driven by the aspiration to spotlight and rectify any biased selections or omissions within this essential collection. The significance of decolonisation and inclusivity within the MM is paramount. Given its wealth of historical context and an exceptional array of artefacts, the museum holds the potential to convey multifaceted narratives that can educate and enlighten its visitors. Failure to address and rectify these biased selections and ideals would perpetuate a romanticised portrayal of the past without acknowledging the associated complexities, including "guilt, shame, genocide, exclusion, marginalization, exploitation, dehumanisation," as noted by writer, artist, and psychologist Grada Kilomba (2020)<sup>54</sup>.

In the course of this research, 11 objects were encountered in the museum’s reserve, objects that hold untapped potential for a more engaging museal experience. Unfortunately, these artefacts have been suppressed to the technical reserves of the MM, hidden away from public view, and their potential for further exploration remains largely uncharted. These objects can aptly be labelled as “invisible” because, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that most of them lack names, dates, authorship/creators, or the origin. These invisible objects reside in a state of anonymity and are often dismissed as seemingly insignificant, making them excluded from a museum exhibition. This neglect results in these objects concealing their own captivating stories and cultural backgrounds, preventing them from enriching their ancestors and a different audience of the broader narrative of its history and culture. In the academic and museological context, I aim to bring life back into these objects, reassuring their essence. No story should be considered less important than another, for each object carries a unique and captivating narrative, and museums can act as guardians, preserving these stories and the past, with inclusivity, ensuring that each culture and object’s story is recognised and appreciated by all.

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<sup>54</sup> Grada Kilomba was born in 1968, Lisbon, Portugal, is an interdisciplinary artist, whose work draws on memory, trauma, gender and post-colonialism, interrogating concepts of knowledge, power and violence. “What stories are told? How are they told? And told by whom?” are constant questions in Kilomba’s body of work, to revise post-colonial narrative <https://www.goodman-gallery.com/artists/gradakilomba/about>



**Figure 32.** Powder Horn,  
**Source:** The MM Archival files  
**Date:** 2022

**Category:** Indigenous Art

**Author:** Unknown

**Dimensions:** Composition 33cm, Diameter M. 60 Orif.11 m/m

**Scale:** Natural

**Date:** Unknown

**Material:** Leather and Horn

**Origin:** Ethnic Group Fulas and Mandinkas

**Conservation:** Regular

**Inventory Number:** 7

**Nº of Photography Archive:** A-30-88-1

**Area of Exhibition:** Collections Room

**Observations:** “In the form of a horn that is almost completely covered in leather with four ribs for its reinforcement, and which ends on both sides almost in a beak, having in one of them an opening with 11 m/m in diameter through which the gunpowder. The 7 cm area at the bottom has symmetrical details, seams in the respective leather.”



**Figure 33.** Sword / Sabre  
**Source:** The MM Archival files/postcards  
**Date:** 2022

**Topic:** Gentiles Sword

**Author:** Unknown

**Dimensions:** Total composition 74cm, max width 7,5cm

**Scale:** Natural

**Date:** Unknown

**Material:** Brass, Leather and Carneira

**Origin:** Group Fulas and Mandinkas<sup>55</sup>

**Conservation:** Regular

**Nº of Photography Archive:** 25445/392

**Area of Exhibition:** Occupation Room

**Observations:** None

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<sup>55</sup> The Mandinka and the Fula (also known as the Mandé and Fulani, or Peul) are two of the major ethnic groups of West Africa. The Manding, known more commonly by their regional names - the Mandinka (Mandingo) of Gambia, the Maninka (Malinké) of Guinea, the Bambara of Mali, and the Dyula of the Ivory Coast - are descendants of the great empire of Mali that flourished in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Fulas are cattle nomads (or in some cases, settled cattle herders) whose territory stretches across the savannah regions from Senegal to Cameroon. This characterisation, to begin with, is not entirely correct, Fulas and Mandinkas are different ethnic groups from Africa. The Fulas settled in most West African countries for many years. During the Islamic expansion of the Arabs on the continent, they were the first ethnic groups to convert to Islam around the 7<sup>th</sup> century and to adopt Islam as one of their religious and political pillars.” <https://www.jSaintor.org/Saintable/30249756>  
[https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/fula\\_2/hd\\_fula\\_2.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/fula_2/hd_fula_2.htm)



**Figure 34.** Hoe Handle,  
**Source:** The MM Archival files/postcards  
**Date:** 2021

**Category:** Indigenous Art

**Author:** Unknown

**Dimensions:** 44 cm, O cabo 3.5 Cab 8x10

**Scale:** Natural

**Date:** Unknown

**Material:** Wood

**Origin:** Ethnic Group Fulas and Mandinkas

**Conservation:** Regular

**Nº of Photography Archive:** 6

**Area of Exhibition:** Occupation Room

**Observations:** “A hoe handle made of a single piece of wood surmounted by an irregularly shaped head that has a hole across its greatest width, where the blade of the hoe was fitted, which does not exist.”

Unfortunately, the MM did not have additional information regarding these objects, however, they are still important and should be a part of the permanent exhibition, therefore to unveiling their cultural and social aspects, thus helping to strengthen the education on the culture of Indigenous African peoples of these specific regions that were in contact with the Portuguese. These objects can be object generators; they have the potential to approach different interpretations, relationships between the object and its audience, contrast scenarios, socio-historical contexts, issues, questionings of understanding, criticising and (re)contextualising the space and the theorisation of the exhibition within the white cube (Ramos, F., 2016, p. 4, 5-7), avoiding their respective stories to be lost over the years.

The Mandinka “also known as the Mandingo and Malinke” are a major ethnic group in West Africa spread across parts of Guiné, Costa do Marfim Mali, Senegal, Gâmbia and Guiné Bissau (Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau). With a global population of around 11 million, the Mandinka are the best-known ethnic group of the Mande peoples, descendants of the great Mali Empire of central Sahara, that flourished in West Africa from the 13<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, all of whom speak different dialects of the Mande language. The earliest documented records of the region can be traced back to the accounts of Arab traders during the ninth and tenth centuries. These traders played a pivotal role in establishing the trans-Saharan trade route, facilitating the exchange of commodities like slaves, gold, and ivory. Between the tenth and fifteenth centuries, a migration of Hamitic-Sudanese people from the Nile River Valley arrived in the region, eventually settling and intermingling with the local Mandinka population. In the year 1235, Sundiata emerged as the founder of the Mali Empire, marking a significant chapter in the area’s history. Mali achieved its zenith of power and influence between 1312 and 1337, a period notably characterised by the reign of Mansa Musa. However, by the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Western savanna region fell under colonial rule, with the French, British, and Portuguese asserting control (Berry, 1995, p. 38-59). In 1455, the Portuguese became the first Europeans to enter the Gambia River. They were looking for gold. Instead, they found slaves—war captives that the Mandinka **mansas** were anxious to sell, especially for firearms.

By the 1600s, the Portuguese, Spanish, and English were fully engaged in the transatlantic slave trade. The region around the Gambia River became one of the earliest sources of enslaved West Africanstaken to the sugar plantations. About 5,000 slaves a year were shipped to the Americasfrom the Gambia during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Mandinka **mansas** grew rich by raiding neighbouring kingdoms and taking captives to be sold as slaves. They also collected customs duties from the European slave traders.

The Mandinka people and the Portuguese have a historical connection through their interactions during the era of European exploration and colonisation in Africa. The Mandinka played a significant role in the broader context of Portuguese exploration and the Atlantic slave trade. As mentioned through this research, the Portuguese explorers, such as Infante D. Henrique, or Prince Henry the Navigator, ventured along the West African coast in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and encountered various West African ethnic groups, including the Mandinka, as they sought trade opportunities and established early contact. The Portuguese established trading posts and forts along the West African coast to facilitate the capture and transportation of enslaved Africans to the Americas. Like many other African groups, the Mandinka were tragically affected by the slave trade, with many being captured and sold into slavery (Schaffer, 2005, p. 329-335).

So, the interactions between the Portuguese and the Mandinka are of great relevance, as well as other African groups, that all led to some degree of cultural exchange. This exchange involved the introduction of European goods, technologies, and practices to West Africa, as well as the exportation of African cultural elements tothe Americas.

The objects above show this contact relationship between the Portuguese and the Mandinka. These interactions have left a lasting historical legacy in West Africa and beyond, so it is essential to have these narratives in the exhibition to provide a platform to educate the public about Indigenous cultures, histories, and ways of life. The Indigenous objects help visitors gain insights into Indigenous communities' diverse worldviews, practices, and knowledge systems. This promotes cultural awareness, understanding, and respect. Museums often engage in cultural exchange programs with Indigenous communities, allowing for the sharing of knowledge and experiences. Indigenous objects can be lent to other institutions or returned to their communities of origin as part of these initiatives.



**Figure 35. Bottle**

**Source:** The MM Archival files/postcards

**Date:** 2022

**Topic:** Of Indigenous background

**Author:** Unknown

**Dimensions:** height 33 cm, 10 cm of diameter

**Scale:** Natural

**Date:** Unknown

**Material:** Glass, leather and

Sheep**Origin:** Guiné Bissau

**Conservation:** Regular

**Nº of Photography Archive:** A-30-90-1

**Area of Exhibition:** Collected from the 1<sup>st</sup>  
floor

**Observations:** None





**Figure 36.** Indigenous Art

**Source:** The MM Archival Website

**Date:** 2021

**Title:** Hoe

**Author:** Indigenous Art

**Dimensions:** Length Shovel 57cm, Length Arm 87cm

**Scale:** Natural

**Date:** N/A

**Material:** Wood, Iron and

Leather**Origin:** Guiné Bissau

**Conservation:** Regular

**Nº of Inventory:** A-30-86-1

**Area of Exhibition:** 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Storage

**Observations:** “Ethnic Group-Falas, Balantas or Mandingas. The wooden hoe blade, which has its widest part 12.5cm, faces the operator’s side and has a semicircular shape, ending on the opposite side in a point. Sitting on it and connected by leather cords is the coulter in the shape of 1, with the smaller arm being the one that rests on the shovel.”

(MM, 2021)

The two items showcased from Guiné Bissau vividly represent the coastal region of Africa that played a pivotal role in Portuguese exploration during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Portuguese navigators, notably Vasco da Gama, charted these waters in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, making these coastal areas crucial hubs for trade in valuable resources like gold, ivory, and various African products. It is imperative to grasp that the commerce conducted in these African regions significantly bolstered Portugal's economic prosperity during the Age of Exploration. Guiné Bissau's history holds profound significance for Portugal, encompassing not only the early chapters of African enslavement but also serving as a window into the traditional resources of Africa and a reflection of the distinctive style and culture of its people. These objects serve as tangible reminders of this complex historical interplay, shedding light on the rich tapestry of interactions that shaped both African and Portuguese history during this era.

The inclusion of this object in the permanent exhibition within the “Sala dos Descobrimentos” holds immense significance. By showcasing this artefact, we offer visitors a unique opportunity to delve into the creative processes of the region's inhabitants. It allows them to explore the natural materials and gain insights into the available resources that contributed to crafting everyday items. These objects go beyond mere functionality; they serve as powerful conduits of cultural expression, providing a profound window into the customs and traditions of a specific community. They unveil the intricate craftsmanship that flows from the hands of its artisans. These artefacts encapsulate artistry, the cultural richness and social importance that resonate through various facets of society. In essence, this hoe serves as a bridge, connecting individuals from diverse backgrounds with the customs and practices of the people who crafted it. It stands as a testament to the enduring power of art and culture to transcend boundaries and communicate across generations. The idea of exhibiting these objects is also to transform the relationship between object and visitor (the other) and the museum and visitor, breaking the ritualisation of the museum space and effectively introducing a collaborative process for the construction of interpretations that enable the immersion of these cultures in this place, specifically, but not only, their artistic aspect within the everyday and political context of a public.

These items are far from irrelevant: they serve as vessels for profound cultural expression, giving voice to often marginalised and overlooked members of a community or society. The purpose of including such items in the exhibition is to act as conduits for messages that provide individuals with an active voice and opportunities for self-expression. The goal is to seek items that eloquently capture the essence of African people, their origins and how Africans are also a part of Portuguese history. Ensuring that the stories and perspectives of different African cultures and communities are authentically represented is crucial, avoiding generalizations and stereotypes.



**Figure 37.** Sculpture, Indigenous Art  
**Source:** The MM Archival files/card  
**Date:** 2022

**Topic:** Sculpture, Indigenous Art

**Author:** Unknown

**Dimensions:** Total height is 35 cm, Base 6 cm.

**Scale:** Unknown

**Date:** Unknown

**Material:** Natural wood.

**Origin:** Angola

**Conservation:** Bad

**Nº of Photography Archive:** A-30-87-1

**Area of Exhibition:** Collection Room 1

**Observations:** “Handcrafted sculpture, of no interest, made of a single piece of wood representing a woman carrying a bowl on her head.”



**Figure 38.** Gentile Weapon 1

**Source:** The MM Archival files/postcards

**Date of Research:** 2022

**Topic:** Ceremonial Ax 1

**Author:** Unknown

**Inventory N°:** 40

**Dimensions:** Length 37 cm, Max width 23 cm, Cable 2

**Scale:** Natural

**Date:** Unknown

**Material:** Wood, iron and copper wire

**Origin:** Angola

**Conservation:** Regular

**Nº of Photography Archive:** A-30-52-1

**Area of Exhibition:** Occupation Room



**Figure 39.** Gentile Weapon II

**Source:** The MM Archival  
files/postcards

**Date of Research:** 2022

**Topic:** Ceremonial Ax 2

**Author:** Unknown

**Inventory N°:** 128

**Dimensions:** Length 39 cm, Max width 24 cm, Cable 2,5

**Scale:** Natural

**Date:** Unknown

**Material:** Wood, iron and wrought iron

**Origin:** Angola - Ethnic Group Quioco

**Conservation:** Regular

**Nº of Photography Archive:** A-30-52-1

**Area of Exhibition:** Occupation Room

**Observations:** “Belonged to the QUIOCO Ethnic Group, a solid wooden weight, in the shape of a pipe. On the opposite side to the widest part, and in the curve, a wrought iron cleaver is fitted, which is 150m long. On both sides of the cleaver there are drawings made with a beak punch, forming symmetrical figures.”  
MM files



**Figure 40.** Gentile Weapon III

**Source:** The MM Archival files/postcards

**Date of Research:** 2022

**Topic:** Ceremonial Stick

**Author:** Unknown

**Inventory N°:** 43

**Dimensions:** Length 62 cm, Max width 8 cm, Rod Diameter 2 cm

**Scale:** Natural

**Weight:** 200 grams

**Date:** Unknown

**Material:** Wood **Origin:** Angola - Ethnic Group Ovinbundo<sup>56</sup>

**Conservation:** Regular

**Nº of Photography Archive:** A-30-48-1

**Area of Exhibition:** Occupation Room

**Observations:** Item belonged to the Ovimbundu Ethnic Group “A solid wooden weight, in the shape of a pipe. On the opposite side to the widest part, and in the curve, a wrought iron cleaver is fitted, which is 150m long. On both sides of the cleaver, there are

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<sup>56</sup> The Ovimbundu occupy the central plateau of Angola and the adjacent coastal strip, a region comprising the provinces of Huambo, Bié and Benguela. They were a people who relied on subsistence farming, hunting, and some small livestock and cattle husbandry to survive until the Portuguese arrived in Benguela. Caravan trade between the Portuguese of Benguela and the East of present-day Angola was significant for a while. The Ovimbundu people moved from Angola's north and east to the Meseta de Benguela between 1500 and 1700. The Ovimbundu developed a reputation as the most demanding merchants in Angola's interior.

drawings made with a beak punch, forming symmetrical figures.” MM files

The four featured objects are all from Angola<sup>57</sup>, a nation steeped in historical significance and with significant relation to the Portuguese. In 1482, Portuguese explorers<sup>58</sup> made their initial contact with what is today northern Angola, marking a pivotal moment as the first European colony established on the African continent. This momentous development underscored Angola’s exceptional strategic importance in Portugal’s colonial endeavours. It served as a pivotal region where Portuguese colonists procured a substantial number of enslaved Africans, who would later be transported to the Portuguese Atlantic Island colonies of São Tome, Madeira, and Brazil, forming a crucial part of the Atlantic slave trade that endured until the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Slavery was the cornerstone of Angola’s economy during this era, with Portugal actively engaged in the procurement of enslaved individuals for labour on their sugar plantations. Beyond direct capture, people were also enslaved due to inter-African conflicts. Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, slaves, primarily sourced from regions like Congo and the Kingdom of Benin were transported to Portuguese-controlled islands and colonies in the North Atlantic, including Madeira. The consequences were stark: significant population losses and a profoundly distorted demographic landscape, with a notable gender imbalance—twice as many adult females as males (Iliffe, J.,1995). The expansion of the slave trade was but one of several factors that played a role in the rise and fall of the region’s kingdoms. Portugal exploited Angola’s vast natural resources, including minerals, timber, and agricultural products.

The Portuguese brought African slaves in exchange for cotton, clothing, silk, mirrors, knives and glass beads, but their goal was to launch their own expedition to capture slaves in other regions of Africa and thus get rid of the Congolese (Kongolese)

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<sup>57</sup> By the 1500 several large kingdoms occupied the territory of Angola. Of these, Congo, situated in the northern part of the country, south of the Congo River, was the largest and most centralized.

<sup>58</sup> Portuguese settlers got established on their ancestral lands in the 1940s and 1950s, a sizable portion of this ethnic community transitioned to being migratory wage earners. (Malumbu, Moisés. 2005. *Os Ovimbundu de Angola: tradição, economia e cultura organizativa*. Roma: Edizione Vivere In. p. 150-250)

intermediaries<sup>59</sup>. Moreover, the Portuguese converted Congo's king to Christianity, permanently establishing the religion in the country, along with literacy in Portuguese and European customs. (Falola, T., Stapleton, T., 2021, p. 30-54) The Congo kings were not satisfied with this advance and were increasingly alarmed by the effects of European culture and the Christian religion on their subjects. As relations deteriorated, the Portuguese began to look for another trading partner further south on the African coast (Falola, T., Stapleton, T., 2021, p. 30-54).

The colonisers established large-scale plantations and mining operations, often worked by forced labour, from enslaved Africans from different regions. This exploitation of resources and labour contributed significantly to Portugal's economy but left Angola with an underdeveloped and unevenly distributed economic infrastructure. (Iliffe, J., 1995) Therefore, Portugal had a significant impact on Angola due to its colonial rule, which lasted for nearly five centuries, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century until Angola gained independence in 1975. (Reader, J. 1998) This long period of colonisation profoundly influenced Angola's culture, society, and economy, and its legacy continues to shape the country today. So, the objects above can be displayed in the permanent collection and contribute to the narrative of Portugal's different relations with Angola since the colonial period, showing the impact of Portuguese colonialism in Angola and including the country's long history of resistance and struggle for independence. Portugal's colonial legacy contributed to the social and political divisions within the country, which played a role in future conflicts, allowing Portugal to play the role of mediator and negotiator.

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<sup>59</sup> The Congo kingdom was the most powerful state to develop in the region. Portuguese navigators reached Congo, in the northwest in 1483 and entered diplomatic relations with the kingdom after that. Disputes over control of trade, particularly regarding slaves from Congo and its neighbours, led the Portuguese to look for new allies in the area. After undertaking several missions there, the Portuguese established a colony at Luanda in 1575.





**Figure 41.** Sculpture, Indigenous Art and Decorative Art.

**Source:** The MM Archival Website

**Date:** 2022

**Topic:** Vase, Indigenous Art

**Author:** Unknown

**Dimensions:** 27 height, 8,50 cm Boca, 9.50 cm Boca.

**Scale:** Unknown

**Date:** Unknown

**Material:** Natural, organic animal tooth,

**Origin:** Unknown

**Conservation:** Good

**Nº of Photography Archive:** MM0.5677

**Area of Exhibition:** Unknown

**Observations:** None

I carefully handpicked ten objects from the MM reserve that seemed more interesting for this study. These selections were based on their uniqueness, intricate details, and their alignment with the specific theme of items originating from former Portuguese colonies. Notably, nine out of these ten objects are from Africa, while the remaining one remains a mystery. This choice lies in the fact that these particular objects have never been displayed

in the museum, as museum professionals Ana Pacheco and Bruno Neves mentioned. Instead, they have been tucked away in the reserve, their stories and memories hidden from public view. So, the primary aim is to thoroughly explore these objects of non-Portuguese origin, bringing forth their neglected narratives and their cultural significance. Furthermore, it delves into their deep connection with the Portuguese and the age of Portuguese exploration, shedding light on the intricate historical references and influences these artefacts represent, bringing these objects out of the shadows and allowing their voices and histories to resonate within the museum's halls.

Following this thorough museological analysis of the permanent exhibition and the reserve, it is a concerning issue how the museum barely represents other native populations or minorities that have significantly changed the course of Portuguese history. Notably, the exhibition failed to address the narratives of Indigenous peoples, Brazilians, and Africans on the exchanges, thefts, enslavement, and violence against these communities. This glaring omission indirectly serves to justify European invasions while erasing, subjugating, and silencing the histories of native civilisations across the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Preserving this colonial history is essential to integrate these cultures into the broader Portuguese identity; however, this process must go hand in hand with deconstructing the colonial ideal and narrative, which has often perpetuated a dominant white European perspective. Recognising that colonial history is an undeniable facet of Portuguese identity, the museum's silence on these stories becomes problematic. Concealing aspects such as slavery obstruct our collective reflection on a critical and tumultuous era, hindering our capacity to learn from history's missteps and work toward preventing their recurrence.

The presented artefacts are compelling evidence of the intricate interactions between the Portuguese and African communities. These artefacts are tangible proof of the Portuguese's interactions with diverse tribes and groups that resulted in historical exchanges. Therefore, it is important to investigate and show these objects in this study because they have a story to tell and can definitely contribute to history and further the knowledge of future generations. Histories which we are not aware of today and should be brought to light. These items have been invisible for many years, along with their records. Initially, the intention of this dissertation was to examine objects associated with the history of Portuguese discoveries spanning the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Unfortunately,

the documentation for these objects lacks essential details such as creation dates, origins, or authorship. As a result, it was decided to pivot our focus on highlighting the narrative aspect. This shift allowed us to prioritise these objects and demonstrate how they remain integral in including the stories of these individuals within the exhibition.

By showing these objects, visitors can understand that museums can also come to value ordinary people's lives as historically necessary in their own right and move beyond their traditional focus on elite material culture. This matters because, as Susan Crane argues, "being collected means being valued and remembered institutionally, being displayed means being incorporated into the extra-institutional memory of the museum visitors" (Crane, 2000, p. 2). Crane's point here could rightly be read as highlighting that being ignored or absent from the historical record has the reverse effect; it connotes a lack of recognition, non-value and non-existence. While the point is well understood, the processes by which such silences occur deserve further unpacking. This is where the broader literature around silences can be usefully applied to thinking about museums.

These objects share a common thread; they all hail from foreign lands, symbolising a sense of invisibility as they were never showcased. Furthermore, some of these artefacts hold a profound significance by paying homage to the cultures and diverse groups that endured capture and devastation during the Portuguese colonial era. These items are here to illuminate the experiences of these often-overlooked peoples, even though their narratives remain absent from the permanent collection. My proposal advocates for presenting these unseen objects in an exhibition exclusively dedicated to examining the impacts of colonisation. This initiative aims to unveil these concealed stories, fostering a positive transformation in the museum's commitment to inclusivity.<sup>60</sup>

Author Jaló Sumaila also puts it nicely, where "colonization means the undertake that not only the Portuguese administratively dominated the territories they went into, but they also exploited their resources illegitimately and illegally, but was above all an act of cultural alienation of the natives (Indigenous peoples, in the imperialist's vocabulary), who saw their traditions interiorized and ridiculed. These histories were suspended and placed in the wild state in which colonial domination always sought to

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<sup>60</sup> As explains the Parliament member and founder of Djass Associação de Afrodescendantes (Djass Association of Afro-descendants), Beatriz Gomes Dias.

have men and women oppressed; and their languages considered the most uncultured that existed, the more so that they were called dialects, and not properly speaking languages” (Sumaila, J., 2019, p. 1-4). We must show all its facets and stories that actually happened from different points of view, finally working on the relevance of these important objects and their histories.

#### **4.1. Exhibition Proposal**

With the evidence gathered through this research, the last idea that felt important and interesting to present in this study is an idea where the following objects could be presented in a future exhibition project, one that optimistically proposes a positive approach for the MM, promoting greater inclusivity and decolonising their permanent productions in “Sala dos Descobrimentos”. This project strives to bring the “invisible” objects and their histories, analyzed above, to the forefront of the exhibition, making them visible and offering them the recognition they deserve. Their addition can be done in a new exhibition or be an addition to the current exhibition. That will represent the invisible voices that have tirelessly been working to bridge this void. They will represent the different cultural and historical identities of African populations, giving voice to these stories that have long been marginalised and overlooked. As previously observed, the museum’s permanent exhibition severely lacks representation of African, and Brazilian-Indigenous cultures, as well as significant events intertwining these cultures with Portuguese history. This offers an incomplete portrayal of Portuguese explorations in the Americas and Africa, leaving out critical history, stories, facts, objects, and interactions. So, this is an idea to reverse this.

So, to effectively integrate these invisible objects and empower them as storytellers within the museum’s narrative, is to create an entire new exhibition or panels that will have the capacity to create a better historical context, filling the gaps in the exhibition and inviting the public to contemplate and reflect on the enduring impact of the past on our present. Rather than neglecting or concealing history, the museum can create an opportunity to forge meaningful connections across different dimensions of the past, nurturing a contemporary comprehension of our shared heritage. A promising approach involves augmenting the exhibition or panels with supplementary information and the rearrangement of the elements, as indicated in Figures 40-43. For the delicate

innovative approaches, such as the production of online videos or photography exhibitions. These digital mediums hold the potential to offer a fresh and captivating perspective, bringing to life the otherwise unseen aspects of Portuguese colonialism. By depicting diverse narratives encompassing historical events, stories, culture, and the individuals involved, this initiative takes on paramount significance in our collective understanding of history. This enables the museum to establish a significant and meaningful presence, effectively conveying the multifaceted dimensions of colonized lands and populations, as well as slavery, including aspects such as memory, resistance, legacies, and historical parallels. The inclusion of the ten African artefacts, the Gentile Sword, Shield, Hoe Handle, Powder Horn, Bottle, Ceremonial Stick, Indigenous Sculpture, and Ceremonial Axes 1 and 2, into a new exhibition serves as a powerful representation of the rich and diverse African cultures that intersected with the Portuguese and endured the hardships of enslavement. These artefacts not only exemplify the exquisite craftsmanship of these cultures but also serve as poignant reminders of the vast array of historical treasures scattered across museums, far from their countries of origin, often overlooked and underexplored. The invisibility in the exhibition, and especially in the slavery panel, is significant because it does not show how the African presence left a substantial impact on the Portuguese culture of today, in

the fado music<sup>61</sup>, which traces its roots to West Africa, in the many expressions in the Portuguese language that originated from Angola and of course in the Portuguese cuisine, which has been deeply influenced by food eaten in the colonies, from delicious spices to the different preparation techniques. These traces show the interfaces between both countries and how “the Africans resisted their enslavement and fought for the preservation of their cultural roots, and in the end, they even had a decisive influence on the culture of Portugal and Lisbon (Dias, B. & Fernandes G., 2020). So, for this research or exhibition to exist, the MM could hire volunteers and interns. A solution to this could be a simple online survey of the public to see what objects they find interesting. Not everyone has the same taste, and some of the objects that are hidden may pique the interest of someone or a single group. Still, because professionals believe it is not authentic enough or does not match the museum’s vision, they found no “purpose” on displaying them. Learning about the history of Africa is essential to deconstruct the myths and paradigms about Afro-descendants and African History (Muniz F., 2023).

These artefacts purpose to educate and shed light on the shadowed aspects of Portuguese history. These items offer profound insights into the authentic motivations and narratives that underpin Portugal’s exploration of uncharted lands, as well as the extensive repercussions of these voyages. In essence, they beckon our audience to embark on a deeper exploration of the intricacies of the past, cultivating a heightened appreciation for the multifaceted tapestry of historical events and their enduring influence. These objects represent a multitude of distinct cultural groups and their abundant natural resources, and they can highlight how these cultures were silenced and had representation denied in narratives of Portuguese colonial activities.

The second notable gap in this exhibition is the absence of Brazilian Indigenous artefacts, or their story. Regrettably, neither the Portuguese Maritime Museum’s reserve nor the current panels adequately convey the story of Portuguese interactions with these Indigenous communities. Therefore, here, inclusion is not about enrichment but about incorporating the actual history and experiences of all those entangled in these historical processes, ensuring that no single perspective is overly valorised at the expense of others as we strive to grant each facet the respect and recognition it

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<sup>61</sup> As explains the Parliament member and founder of Djass Associação de Afrodescendantes (Djass Association of Afro-descendants), Beatriz Gomes Dias.

rightfully deserves. The exhibition must narrate the profound impact

Portuguese colonial explorers had on the Indigenous groups, showing that it is not too late to acknowledge and exhibit what truly happened, indicating how many were killed, their conditions, their ancestors and their legacy. Such displays can attract a more diverse range of visitors to the MM, broadening the perspectives it presents beyond those of the dominant cultural group, which are particularly white. While this process may present challenges, it is far from impossible. Strategies must be devised to deconstruct the old ideas of Eurocentrism and facilitate the transition to a more inclusive and representative narrative.

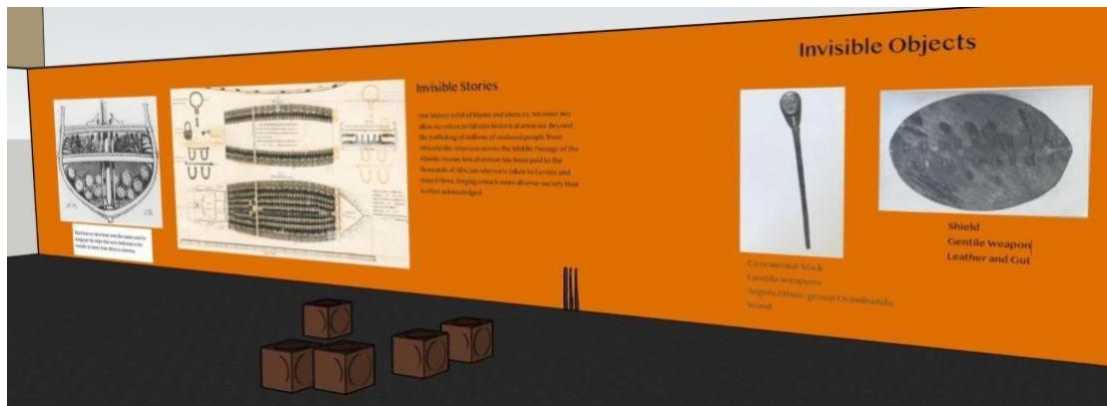
**Figure 42.** Simulation 1 of the new project with invisible narratives and objects.



**Figure 43.** Simulation 2 of the new project with invisible narratives and objects.



**Figure 44.** Simulation 3 of the new project with invisible narratives and objects.



**Source:** Exhibition simulations created on SketchUp by the author

The images presented above serve as a visual representation of a potential redesign for the slavery and slave trade panel or the creation of a new board dedicated to the history and artefacts of Brazilian Indigenous groups. This exhibit could be enhanced with supplementary text that delves into the narratives of the previously invisible objects we have examined, or it could feature new items explicitly borrowed for it. These enhancements can be achieved through minor adjustments or refinements, resulting in a more comprehensive panel that showcases the objects and provides a deeper understanding of the historical timeline of slavery or the Indigenous communities. The expanded panel could offer detailed insights into the diverse countries and cities enslaved individuals originated, shedding light on their origins, destinations, identities, and the artefacts that symbolize their lives and experiences. These visual representations serve as a blueprint for a more immersive and informative exhibit, enriching the museum's storytelling by offering a broader perspective on the historical context and the individuals and cultures it seeks to represent.

In the same way, it can show the different Indigenous groups known in history and those who do not exist anymore. The silencing and invisibility of African and Indigenous can allow for the distortion of historical facts and also for an “escape” from responsibilities. The first step towards building a better future is to face the problems and not run away from denialism (Laurentino G. & Azevedo, R., 2022). These invisible artefacts and stories are of utmost significance as they provide a tangible link to Portugal's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and its impact on Europe. Their presence illuminates a historical reality often overlooked in museum displays and



educational contexts. Portugal's enduring role as a significant participant in the trafficking of enslaved Africans and killings of many Indigenous groups remains a fact insufficiently explained by the exhibition. This omission presents an opportunity to stir profound reflections and provoke deep humanistic contemplation among museum visitors.

Slavery is one of the most pivotal historical events in the world, with enduring consequences for numerous countries, cultures and individuals, such as Africa and Brazil. The impact on social, cultural, and economic facets of society is unmistakable, but the invisibility of these stories and representations persists in institutions until today, silencing around three million African lives and countless descendants of millions of Indigenous people who were killed. It is vital for their legacies to live on and shape the contemporary societal landscape, contributing to justice and unequal complexities to persist. Addressing these complex topics is undoubtedly challenging, but it remains entirely feasible. As proposed in this exhibition, the few existing objects associated with these cultures are intended to serve as symbolic gestures. This exhibition seeks to symbolize a collective effort to combat invisibility and the void within MM's collection and displays by employing these objects from different cultural backgrounds. In doing so, it advocates for intercultural dialogue and emphasises the imperative need for representation and inclusion for all cultures.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, tracing the historical trajectory of the Portuguese Maritime Museum, it presented significant challenges in accessing formal archival documents. Much of the valuable information was conveyed verbally during dialogues with museum staff<sup>62</sup>, making this research a synthesis of my interpretations from these discussions and visual exchanges. This study aimed to unveil the Maritime Museum's permanent exhibition, narratives, conditions, and objectives, along with an analysis of the museum's archive organization and internal mechanisms. The museum's exhibition primarily portrayed the Portuguese colonial empire as the world's first global maritime empire. Yet, it notably omitted references to the Indigenous cultures of Brazil and West and East Africa. This research highlighted the urgency of acknowledging and amplifying the voices of the invisible and shedding light on the problematic nature of museum collections regarding narratives concerning colonised peoples.

To address the questions posed at the beginning of the research, the potential for decolonizing colonial exhibitions and museums is evident. The study of the exhibition highlighted its glaring absence in inclusivity and portrayal of Indigenous and African ancestries. Moreover, this study has shed light on the abundance of available information that can enrich and disseminate these narratives within the exhibition. However, the root of the issue appears to be embedded in the overarching objectives of the museums and the museological team, and their respective intentions and curatorial visions for the museum. Yes, it is possible for the museum to explore different ways to make it more welcoming, with diverse narratives, audiences, and stories but it has to begin with someone, someone willing to step in and bring these important topics and differences.

To address the questions posed at the beginning of the research, the potential for decolonizing colonial exhibitions and museums is evident. The study of the exhibition highlighted its glaring absence in inclusivity and portrayal of Indigenous and African ancestries. Moreover, this study has shed light on the abundance of available information

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<sup>62</sup> Bruno Neves and Ana Pacheco

that can enrich and disseminate these narratives within the exhibition. However, the root of the issue appears to be embedded in the overarching objectives of the museums and the museological team, and their respective intentions and curatorial visions for the museum. Yes, it is possible for the museum to explore different ways to make it more welcoming, with diverse narratives, audiences, and stories but it has to begin with someone, someone willing to step in and bring these important topics and differences.

This comprehensive research provided insights into the museum's evolution over time, mapping its specific trajectories and unraveling the processes that have shaped it since its inception. While the recent renovation of the “Sala dos Descobrimentos”<sup>63</sup>, which houses the permanent exhibition, showcased a modern and minimalist design with a diverse array of authentic artefacts, there were shortcomings worth noticing. The museum's history is closely tied to the maritime military hierarchy, with directors and curators being former naval officials, which created a limited academic sphere, restricting its accessibility. It appears that it is possible to decolonise a colonial exhibition; the answer lies within the museum's management and curatorial team, which can drive transformation. To achieve Decolonisation, they must explore new possibilities and reevaluate certain concepts to foster inclusivity. The challenge stems from the lack of interest in researching, analysing, and presenting objects and stories beyond the Portuguese perspective, perpetuating a biased viewpoint and erasing Indigenous cultures, African legacies, and the conflicts that shaped these interactions.

Museums play a pivotal role in education and must reflect the diversity of society remaining relevant to younger generations. To reshape the role of museums, there is a need for redefining artefact collection, exhibit design, and their purposes. However, the absence of a clear concept from ICOM or the Portuguese government leaves it to the museum director's discretion, which may not always align with the best approach. Museums should actively represent silenced narratives, fostering intercultural exhibitions through collaboration with other museums or alternative solutions like online photography exhibitions. They should serve as platforms for addressing contemporary issues and enhancing visitor engagement through technology and interactive displays.

In preserving privileged accounts, museums face decisions about which voices to

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<sup>63</sup> Museographic drawings of the new MM exhibition space by Celia Anica. Found in the attachments

prioritise. This research encountered a few obstacles, including a lack of in-depth study and investigation into the invisible objects. This material absence signifies epistemological violence and social injustice perpetrated by museums in creating subaltern identities without a voice. Understanding the professionals involved in the exhibition's development proved to be challenging. The individuals accessible to me were unable or unwilling to provide this crucial information. Enhancing the research could entail conducting an additional interview with Bruno Neves, as well as engaging with the museum's president or director. Furthermore, a more comprehensive analysis is necessary to discern the origins of the curatorial texts and the selection process underlying the presentation of information within the exhibition.

In the end, it is our responsibility to drive institutional change in museums, requiring restructure, new governance, and the adoption of a more agile and accountable museological model. This transformation must prioritize the defense and enhancement of significant current representations and publications. Implementing strategies that foster this shift will align with the goals of fostering social justice and equality for all. This research journey has shed light on ongoing issues within the field of museology and emphasizes the importance of addressing these issues and insurgencies to create more inclusive and representative museum spaces.

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### **Annex 1:**

Online Zoom/Video conversation with Bruno Gonçalves Neves, MM Exhibition Maker.

15th

February 2023

Transcription:

**Bruno Neves:** “Se calhar vou falar de mim primeiro, apresentar-me. Assim conheces a minha história no Museu. Porque eu estive no Museu 22 anos quase, ou seja, de 1999 até o final de 2021, praticamente 22 anos lá no Museu. E ao longo desse tempo, eu era o chefe da exposição permanente, também o curador, o responsável pela exposição permanente do Museu. Eu não tinha exatamente o título de curador, mas na prática realizava as mesmas funções que o curador.

**Luiza:** Entendi. A minha primeira pergunta é de como surgiu a ideia de reformar a sala, escolhas e objetivos traçados para criar esta nova exposição?

**B:** Eu cheguei no museu com 29 anos, e percebi que o Museu tinha um acervo notável em termos de quantidade, diversidade de peças, mas que não tinha propriamente uma narrativa, não contavam uma história. As peças estavam expostas em vitrines, numa perspectiva de coleção e não tanto como exposição. Portanto, havia que ativar essa coleção através de uma narrativa, definindo objetivos comunicacionais e organizando ns mensagens que deveríamos passar, quer numa perspectiva mais orientada, quer tanto uma coerência e uma contextualização histórica, espacial e geográfica para essas peças, para que cada um, independentemente dos objetivos comunicacionais do Museu, cada um pudesse desfrutar da coleção, não por seus próprios interesses pessoais. Por diversas razões, nomeadamente essencialmente por questões de recursos financeiros, só foi possível começar a desenhar este projeto nos finais de 2013, talvez princípios de 2014. Entretanto, o Museu teve outros momentos, outras exposições temporárias, ou renovações de outras áreas, mas a parte dos descobrimentos foi ficando. E quando em 2013 começámos a ver que estava-se a aproximar os 600 anos da tomada de cinto, que marca o início da expansão, achámos que inicialmente pensou-se em fazer-se uma exposição temporária, que era possível ao facto, ao início dos descobrimentos portugueses, etc. E na altura, ao invés de fazer uma exposição temporária, por não se fazer o início da remodelação da exposição permanentemente ao Museu, e os conteúdos que nós fizemos relativos a ciúmes, que marcam o início da expansão portuguesa marítimo, ser também o início dessa renovação, toda ela a seguir à uma sequência tecnológica, e foi isso que aconteceu. Em 2014, em início de 2015, durante o ano de



2015, preparámos a renovação dessa primeira parte da “Sala dos Descobrimentos”, para a evocação dos 600 anos do início dos descobrimentos. Depois, em 2016 e 2017, no ano seguinte, fez-se a remodelação de toda a parte das salas dos descobrimentos. Em 2019 terminou-se a aula dos grandes fã, que é a parte que está a remodelar. Entretanto, depois também colaborei nos projetos de remodelação das salas seguintes, os quais estão, neste momento, a ser ultimados e aguarda a sua instituição material. Mas, essencialmente, é isso, é nós termos percebido, fizemos, se quiser, uma análise suave relativamente à condição da nossa coleção. Percebemos isso, tínhamos peças muito boas, mas que não estavam integradas, não estavam contextualizadas. A museografia era obsoleta, portanto, os suportes museográficos, quer de exposição, quer mesmo de conservação dessas peças, porque eram obsoletos, pareciam de uma grande revisão. E aproveitamos essa situação para remodelamos a exposição para a maioria do museu.”

**L:** “Entendi.”

**L:** “E o Bruno acha que foi difícil organizar, por exemplo, fazer a seleção de peças, porque eu sei que o observo tem muitas peças mesmo, porque eu já fui lá, fiz alguns projetos, e tu acha que foi difícil fazer essa seleção em si, ou vocês já tinham alguma coisa em mente sobre as peças, e que seriam mais a parte realmente novel, as embarcações, enfim, os astrolavos, essas coisas?”

**B:** “Bom, a vantagem de ter passado tanto tempo no museu permite-o conhecer muito bem a coleção, quer do ponto de vista das peças, quer do ponto de vista do contexto histórico das mesmas e da sua contextualização. E, portanto, de certa forma, eu fui criando ao longo do tempo, eu próprio, uma negativa para, em eventos, eu não fazia visitas guiadas, portanto era um serviço educativo que fazia, mas quando havia algumas visitas, mais VIPs, se quiser, ou mais institucionais, visitas institucionais, nomeadas não visitas guiadas, visitas oficiais, era ele que fazia essas visitas, e eu próprio tive que arranjar uma narrativa que permitisse fazer a ligação entre as várias peças, ou seja, não podia falar só sobre a construção naval, é um tema, mas para isso tenho que falar da vida a bordo, tenho que falar da navegação astronômica, tenho que falar de uma série de temas de acordo com as peças que eu tinha. Ou seja, os objetivos nunca foi que aquela sala fosse uma aula da história dos descobrimentos portugueses, da história da presença portuguesa no mundo, a ideia era contar partes dessa história através do nosso acervo. Portanto, a função do museu é essa, é ativar o seu acervo e pô-lo, ele sim, a contar uma

história, porque dificilmente poderia falar de temas para os quais nós não tínhamos peças, documentos. E essencialmente evitar que o museu fosse um conjunto de textos sobre esses temas. E, portanto, havia alguns temas, com a coleção que nós tínhamos seria possível agrupar-nos, e essa proposta foi feita, foi debatida internamente, e, portanto, a ideia seria falar da evolução da construção naval aproveitando a coleção dos judeus. Em primeiro lugar, conselto a falar do início dessa expansão marítima, que não é propriamente uma expansão marítima, é uma saída para fora das fronteiras portuguesas, mas marca para todos os efeitos o início deste momento de expansão, a expansão marítima deu-se nos anos e décadas a seguir, mas marca o início desta expansão, depois falar da forma como é que a expansão marítima foi feita e que os feicos permitiram a evolução dos navios, a companhia técnica e científica da navegação e dos desenvolvimentos portugueses, da navegação astronômica e da cartografia portuguesa, que é aquilo que deu a seguir a evolução dos navios, e depois o resultado de tudo isto, que é este comércio global, portanto a Carreira da Índia, os navios da Carreira da Índia, o comércio da Pimenta e Turmanos, estão naquela parte final que será o quarto tema desta parte grande de tema, e depois há temas paralelos, portanto temos a artilharia, temos a religiosidade a bordo, temos, já falei do comércio especificamente das especiarias, as rotas das especiarias, e portanto há alguns temas um bocado paralelos a isso, isto com o acervo que nós tínhamos, com as espécies que o museu tinha para poder, de certa forma, criar ali uma narrativa lógica, coerente, que fosse guiando o visitante ao longo destes temas, e de certa forma intercalá-los, ou melhor, interligá-los. Então os navios só podiam andar no mar se soubessem onde é que estão, e para isso foi necessário desenvolver novos sistemas de localização, como o GPS português, que é hoje do lado, e todo o GPS precisa ter cartografia atualizada, portanto não houve a cartografia náutica também, portanto retorrendo um bocado estas parábolas para que as pessoas possam melhor compreender isso, e depois sabendo, tendo o nosso veículo, tendo as rotas definidas, então vamos ver onde é que vamos, e estabeleceram-se as grandes rotas de navegação. Essencialmente, a tônica nesta narrativa é essencialmente a componente técnica, técnica e marinheira, portanto não entrámos muito na questão das cargas, à exceção da pimenta, porque temos uma tapeçaria que retrata o ato, é uma das primeiras imagens com o ato de carga ou descarga de pimenta da Índia, aquela tapeçaria grande do René, não sei se está a ver, uma retabular muito alta, está na parte das navegações, junto à vitrina da Nossa Senhora dos Mártires, em que ela tem muitas peças, já vimos aqui do Naufrágio do Marinheiros, diferente àquela arca, a arca do esquema, pronto, e em função dos temas que

nós tínhamos lá, das peças que nós tínhamos lá, nós desenvolvemos dias com o tema associado à peça. Entendi. Portanto, esse é um processo que foi sendo maturado, foi sendo discutido ao longo dos anos, e quando houve a capacidade de financiar e os meios estavam repolhidos para fazer esse projeto, portanto, o programa museológico, a programação que nós criamos em termos de objetivos comunicados das cidades, já estava definido.

**L:** “Sim, e eu queria te perguntar também, por exemplo, eu sei que em alguns museus, às vezes eles fazem trocas de peças, por exemplo, a gente não tem essa peça, mas a gente acha que iria combinar muito com a exposição, teve alguma ideia, assim, de talvez trazer uma peça de outro museu, ou tu realmente só quis usar as duas servos do museu em si?

**B:** “Nessa posição permanente, a ideia foi usar as peças só do nosso centro, nós já fizemos posições temporárias em que houvesse muita peça, não é? Agora, a questão é, quando nós temos recursos muito contados, vou ser o mais objetivo possível, quando nós temos recursos muito contados, não dá para planejar exposições que possam... Ok, agora eu vou programar este campo ou esta parte da exposição para esta peça, vou ter lá aqui dois ou três atos e vou criar aqui uma museografia neste espaço para esta peça, porque eu não sabia se passar três ou quatro anos eu tinha recursos para voltar a mexer, ok? A peça é uma das limitações do facto de um museu de marinha total a ser a Defesa Nacional, onde se é da marinha e ainda o que assim é e espero continua a ser, mas uma das limitações que nós temos é que o core da marinha não é a museologia, portanto nós não estamos no Ministro de Arredamento da Cultura, o core é a função da marinha, que é o navio de mar, ou que é o primeiro de suas limitações, o museu de marinha contém menos recursos que outros museus, portanto temos que ponderar muito bem as soluções onde vamos gastar o nosso dinheiro, portanto o facto de termos peças temporárias na exposição permanente acarretava sempre essa situação e depois das peças que nós tínhamos, nós conseguíamos contar relativamente à componente técnica, porque depois há outros museus, a ideia também é que há outros museus em Portugal e Lisboa que complementam as temáticas que nós temos, temos o Museu do Oriente, temos o Museu Nacional da Arte Antiga, portanto se queremos ver produtos também, temos o Museu Nacional da Arte Antiga, portanto temos outros museus que relativamente a outros tipos de vivências, outros tipos de temáticas neste mesmo período cronológico, têm se calhar peças mais relevantes, como disse, há aqui outra questão que eu preciso ter em conta,

que é este é o Museu de Marinha, ou seja, das várias atividades, e se quisermos é o Museu Marítimo, ok? A história marítima portuguesa confunde-se com a própria história nacional, portanto são 9 séculos praticamente de história marítima, nós temos enquanto só, enquanto Estado português, sem contar com a componente arqueológica e antes da constituição do Estado português, e portanto, para além dos descobrimentos, há toda uma série de outros temas, desde a marinha de peste, a marinha de retrai, etc, etc, as embarcações tradicionais portuguesas, a própria marinha de guerra do século 19 e 20, há toda uma outra série de temas, portanto, nós não somos o Museu dos Descobrimentos, e também aí houve que dimensionar a “Sala dos Descobrimentos”, à coleção que nós tínhamos e aos temas que nós podíamos abordar aqui, e aí a decisão foi essencialmente focarmos na componente técnica das de educações, para que o nosso visitante, o nosso objetivo se quiser, para além de vários objetivos comunicacionais, é isso, os nossos visitantes perceberem como é que os portugueses foram os primeiros povos europeus e que mecanismos de ferramentas técnicas e tecnológicas que eles tinham à disposição para chegar ao Brasil, para chegar a Nagasaki, para chegar à Índia, não é? Sim. Como é que isso foi possível tecnicamente, não é? Que navios é que usaram, que técnicas de medicação é que usaram, como é que chegaram lá? E, portanto, o objetivo era o português. Entendi.

**L:** “E eu não sei se vais lembrar, mas eu tive muita dificuldade em entender como foi feita a organização no acervo, eu não sei se lembras. Por exemplo... Antes da remodelação da sala, houve alguma mudança nos processos de catálogo das obras. Gostaria de perceber melhor como é que foi feita esta seleção, mas também como o acervo estava organizado, ou não. agora me fugiu a palavra, mas eu queria perceber como é que vocês estavam fazendo o inventário, o inventário de tudo, como é que as peças são inventariadas, ou eram, não sei se mudou ao longo do tempo esse... não sei se percebes o que eu estou tentando dizer.

**B:** “Não sei.”

**L:** “Porque eu queria perceber, por exemplo, se todas as peças que o museu tem no acervo vieram de colecionadores ou de pessoas da área naval, ou se... e como vocês fizeram, criaram essa coleção em si, todas as coleções?”

**B:** “O museu tem 150 anos de existência, praticamente 150 anos, foi criado em 163, portanto já tem mais de 150 anos, vai-se celebrar este ano 150 anos de existência aqui. 150 ou 160? 160, 170 anos. E a coleção teve várias proveniências, desde as coleções dos antigos arsenal de Marinha de Escoa, junto da Casa Real de Pedro, desde peças de organismo da Marinha ao longo dos tempos, das décadas, dos séculos, desde peças provenientes de contextos arqueológicos e subaquáticos, também como é o caso das peças da Nossa Senhora dos Márquez e muitos dos astrolábios que estão em exposição, desde peças tiras por particulares, como é o caso da Arca dos Gama, que foi oferecida por um particular à Marinha e portanto ao museu, portanto as proveniências das peças são inopéticas. E depois também o registro das mesmas ao longo das décadas, dos séculos, foi feito, sendo feito de forma diferente. Portanto, há peças, nós temos muito pouca informação acerca da sua integração a cerca, nomeadamente as mais antigas, temos outras peças mais recentes, dos anos 80, 70, 80, a partir dessa data é que nós temos a história de uma pronta peça, ou como é que foi feita a incorporação da peça, portanto a origem, a proveniência, etc, o material prefetário, etc. Portanto, tudo isso é muito variável. O museu tem uma aplicação, que é o património, na qual faz um registro de todas as peças que tem na sua coleção. A partir desse registro e a partir dessas peças, foi feita então a coleção das peças para ficarem permanentemente, na coleção permanente. Devo dizer que no caso dos descobrimentos, tanto para períodos, quanto mais recuados são os períodos, menor é o número de peças que nós temos. Portanto, para o período dos descobrimentos temos poucas peças, efetivamente, daquele período, não é? Temos o Arquange de São Rafael, temos o Altar Portanto, temos os eSaintrelados, temos algo como instrumentação científica e cartografia, mas se formos para o século XIX ou XX, a quantidade de peças que nós temos é incomparavelmente maior. E aí sim, nos projetos de remodelação para esses períodos, houve uma série que foi bem mais complexa, não lhe complicado, mas foi bem mais complexa, definir, para dizer que são as peças que ficam na exposição permanente, para dizer que são aquelas que ficam na reserva, o número de peças é consideravelmente maior do que no século XVI ou XVII, por razões óbvias, não é?

**B:** “E, portanto, para a “Sala dos Descobrimentos”, pegando as peças inventariadas e a que elas estavam na exposição, nós praticamente mantivemos todas as peças que estavam, retiramos algumas pinturas, muitas delas que eram pinturas dos anos 50, 60 do

século XX, retornamos essas pinturas para dar espaço moral para ter alguns testes de apoio. Entendi, está certo. Não sei se respondi à pergunta. “

**L:** “Não, não, respondeu, respondeu sim. Aí só uma curiosidade que eu queria perceber, então antes eras o curador e agora estás fazendo o quê?

**B:** “Certo, então agora não tem nada a ver com você, portanto estou na Escola Naval, sou professor de História Naval e História do Poder Naval, portanto a Escola Naval é como no Brasil, é a universidade da Marinha, portanto é o estabelecimento de ensino superior que forma os oficiais, os futuros oficiais da Marinha de Peças, portanto tem cursos de licenciatura e Mestrados aqui na Escola Naval, portanto agora neste momento tenho uma carreira mais académica relativa à História também, e aqui sou também o diretor da biblioteca e de um pequeno museu escolar que temos aqui na Escola e que conta a História da Escola Naval e do ensino militar naval de Portugal. Está certo, está certo, era só isso mesmo. Muito bem, eu posso-lhe enviar um texto, eu publiquei um artigo, há uma publicação que é do Clube Militar Naval e nos anéis do Clube Militar Naval eu publiquei um artigo sobre o projeto de remuneração da “Sala dos Descobrimentos” onde fala um pouco, portanto, desse diagnóstico prévio que foi feito relativamente à situação que havia antes da remuneração, depois quais as opções que nós tomámos para a programação, quais os temas que iríamos ter, isto para o programa museológico, depois também para o projeto museográfico, também falo sobre as opções que nós tomámos também, portanto, o tipo de iluminação, o tipo de vitrines, mas aquilo que nós passámos à empresa depois desenhou e que fez o projeto da arquitetura interior, não é? Mas quais os requisitos que aquele espaço deveria ter. Do ponto de vista da comunicação também à estrutura dos textos, como é que eles deviam ser apresentados, não ter mais que três parágrafos, não sei se reparou nisso, mas nenhum dos textos tem mais que três parágrafos e desses três parágrafos um deles está sob a bulta que já sintetiza um pouco o tema, não é? Portanto, não queremos ter moraes com textos muito extensos, o que muitas das vezes foi muito complicado porque é difícil falar sobre a cartografia portuguesa no século XVI ou sobre a construção naval em três parágrafos somente, não é? Mas temos a noção de que se formais aqui as pessoas não leem. Leiam o primeiro texto, leiam o segundo, o terceiro e o quarto já não vão ler. Sim. Então o objetivo é dar uma contextualização, fazer as peças, brigar, sei que é o objetivo. Mas

como lhe disse, eu vou lhe mandar agora a seguir esse artigo. Tá bom, obrigada, vai ser uma grande... Não há nenhuma pergunta difícil para...

**L:** “Não, não, assim, eu realmente só tive um pouco de problema em perceber um pouco da parte das obras e... Como tu já explicou, porque tem muitas obras que são mais antigas, então a gente realmente não sabe quase nada sobre elas e as que são mais recentes realmente a gente já consegue perceber um pouco mais, mas não, não, não tenho...”

**B:** “Pronto, seja como for, se depois tiver alguma dúvida e depois de ler o artigo também se tiver alguma questão mando no email e... Para sua satisfação, tá bem?”

**L:** “Tá bem, tá certo. E eu lembrei agora de uma coisa. Relativamente ao valor em si da reforma e de tudo isso, eu também não... O museu trabalha... Não sei se sabes saber também, mas o museu na época trabalhava com outras... Outros, como é que eu vou dizer... Não há parcerias, mas eu, assim, pra eu só perceber como é que vocês conseguiram fazer a reforma da sala. Não sei se sabes.

**B:** “Foi com capitais próprios, digamos assim, foi financiado pelo museu. Pelo museu, tá. E pela marinha, com o apoio da marinha. Claro, claro. Que era um projeto estratégico, portanto, a remodelação do museu e a modernização do museu. E, portanto, foi com o dinheiro do museu, com receitas próprias de bilheteira e também com o apoio da marinha portuguesa. Tá bom, tá certo. Mas não houve parcerias...”

**L:** “Ok, tá bom, então. Obrigado. Tá bem. Obrigada. Muito obrigada.”

**B:** “Vou lhe mandar um artigo se tiver alguma dúvida. Tá bom.”

**L:** “Tá bem. Obrigada.”

**B:** Boa tarde. “

**L:** “Obrigada. Boa tarde.”

Reference 43. Museographic Plans by Célia Anica

