Introduction

In 1918, former colonial administrator Luiz de Mello e Athayde published an article in the influential Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Lisbon, warning about the ongoing depopulation of Angola, Portugal's long-standing colony in West Central Africa. While old calculations, he argued, had assumed a total population of 10–12 million, or a density of nine inhabitants per square km, newer ones suggested a density of six, or even as low as 3.3, confirming his intuition that Angola's once abundant population had been and was still diminishing markedly. For the causes, Athayde pointed at the old emigration of slaves to the Americas, new emigration flows to Angola's neighbouring colonies and various factors that diminished fertility and augmented mortality. For the Ganguela population in southern Angola that he had administrated and studied, these were constant raids by the neighbouring Kwanyama, who enslaved Ganguela people and destroyed their livelihoods; diseases such as smallpox and the lesser-known local scourges of *michila* and *lindunda*; alcoholism; and birth-spacing practices. Athayde's rationales were less humanitarian than political and economic. If depopulation continued, he argued, Angola would soon face the same labour problem as other colonies, since only 'natives' could provide the necessary labour force needed for the colonial economy.[1]

Athayde was neither the first nor the last Portuguese colonial official to warn about Angola's demographic decline. From the late nineteenth century until the aftermath of the Second World War, a steady flow of alarming reports expressed, provoked and cemented great concern about the 'quantity and quality' of Angola's 'native' population. Many of them made a similarly uncritical use of available demographic data and expressed rationales and solutions similar to those of Athayde, who urged the complete pacification

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[1] Athayde, 'Perigo do despovoamento'. I use 'native' *(indígena)* as an actor's term. Contemporary Europeans used the terms interchangeably, either to designate the vast majority of Angolans still considered 'uncivilised' and hence subject to a specific political and civil status *(indigenato)* or, in a broader 'racial' sense, to designate all 'black', 'African' people in Angola. See also footnote 4.

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and 'civilisation' of the colony, the spread of modern medicine, protection of infants and reduction of emigration. Fears among the colonisers that the African population, so crucial to the colonial project, was declining and degenerating dovetailed with broader (and shifting) ideological and political, economic and scientific concerns and interests and gave rise to a wide range of medical and administrative interventions.

These population discourses and policies are the subject of this book. It examines fears around depopulation and how these were entangled with a broad array of policies aimed at preserving, increasing and physically improving the 'native' population in Portuguese Angola. It argues that discourses and practices of population improvement affected Angola's African population in multiple ways, even if they were often underfunded, half-hearted, inconsistent and contested, as they involved a wide array of actors with sometimes converging, but often also conflicting, interests. It therefore analyses the agency and mutual interactions of ministers and governors, local administrators and imperial inspectors, doctors and missionaries, journalists and scientists, national and international organisations and networks, as well as Africans in their role as patients and nurses, mothers and midwives, labourers and chiefs, migrants and peasants. It also argues that depopulation anxieties and population politics in Angola were inextricably linked to similar discourses and practices in other parts of the (colonial) world. By exploring transnational and transimperial connections, I show that Portuguese colonialism was firmly embedded in a larger European context and thus make a broader argument against reductionist views of Portuguese exceptionalism so common in the literature.

The narrative is picked up in the 1890s, when colonial expansion, ideological shifts and epidemic sleeping sickness challenged conventional views on the 'native' population and triggered unprecedented concern among doctors, administrators and missionaries in Angola. The book follows this depopulation discourse through the first half of the twentieth century, showing how it was constantly reiterated by alarming reports about deadly diseases, low fertility, high infant mortality, endemic labour scarcity and rampant emigration, until it gradually faded away after the Second World War. I thereby explore the ambiguous role of demographic knowledge, arguing that anxieties about the size and evolution of the 'native' population were partly based on demographic data that colonial actors did not hesitate to instrumentalise for their purposes, even though these data were (often ostensibly) incomplete, flawed and contested.

Simultaneously, this volume shows how depopulation fears gave rise to a broad array of policies aiming to increase both the 'quantity and quality' of the population. It attends to the colonial response to sleeping sickness from the late nineteenth century onwards and the emergence of an ambitious programme of African healthcare after the First World War. This *Assistência Médica aos*

Indígenas (Native Medical Assistance) attempted to combat epidemic and endemic diseases, but also included new approaches to reduce infant mortality and improve maternal fertility and health. Finally, I underline the importance of colonial attempts to curb cross-border emigration via prohibiting most forms of labour migration and providing incentives for border populations to stay in Angola.

The book transcends major political caesuras. In October 1910, the revolutionary overthrow of the old constitutional monarchy (1822–1910), which had been dominated by landed elites, led to a republican form of parliamentary democracy in Portugal, commonly called the First Portuguese Republic (1910–26). It had its power base in 'progressive' urban bourgeois and intellectual milieus and was marked by huge social tensions, anti-clerical laws and endemic political instability, with 45 governments in 16 years. While these shifts had repercussions for colonial policies, the most fundamental change was the decentralisation of the Empire. New organic laws granted greater autonomy to the colonies, a change that reached its apogee in the 1920s, when Angola and Mozambique were governed by high commissioners with far-reaching prerogatives.[2]

In May 1926, the Republic was overthrown and replaced by a military dictatorship, during which royalists, conservative republicans and radical nationalists struggled for power, until, around 1930, the Minister of Finance (and from 1932 Prime Minister) António de Oliveira Salazar consolidated his position and began to construct the *Estado Novo*, resulting in a new constitution in 1933. The conservative, authoritarian and corporatist policies of the *Estado Novo*, which also included financial austerity and an increasingly proclerical stance, were gradually applied to the colonies. Perhaps the most defining moments were the reaffirmation of the unity of Empire and its political recentralisation in Lisbon, with the Colonial Ministry receiving strong powers of oversight, through the Colonial Act (*Acto Colonial*) of 1930 and the Organic Law of the Portuguese Colonial Empire (*Carta Orgânica do Império Colonial Português*) and the Overseas Administrative Reform (*Reforma Administrativa Ultramarina – RAU*), both in 1933.[3]

This volume attends to the impact of these regime changes on the colonies, as they entailed ideological changes, the renewal of political elites and the reform of governmental and administrative structures. However, it is critical of the extent to which they determined important shifts in demographic discourses and 'native' population policies. The long time-span of this book allows it to show that such changes were often gradual and that some milestone events, such as setting up the *Assistência Médica aos Indígenas* at the

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[2] Proença, 'Questão colonial'. See also Rosas and Rollo (eds.), *História*.
[3] Meneses, *Salazar*; Oliveira, 'Ciclo africano', 479–86.

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beginning of the military dictatorship in 1926, resulted from plans that had
been conceived under earlier regimes. This is not surprising given the funda-
mental continuities in colonial policies between political regimes. All of them
were strongly nationalist, pro-colonialist and anxious about Portugal's colonial
prestige. Moreover, throughout the late nineteenth and first half of the twenti-
eth century, deeply entrenched racism pervaded their paternalistic 'civilising
missions' and discriminatory policies towards the 'native' population in
Angola. The *indigenato* system, gradually established after the official aboli-
tion of European-controlled slavery in the 1870s and frequently (re)codified in
the first half of the twentieth century, was only legally abolished in 1961.
During that period, the vast majority of 'black' Angolans were considered
'uncivilised' *indígenas* and, much like in the French colonies, subject to a
specific political, civil and judicial regime that excluded them from citizenship
and key political rights and imposed specific labour duties and sanctions unless
they had gained the status of 'civilised' *assimilados*.[4] Certainly in some cases
regime changes clearly mattered, but the continuities in population policies
across political regimes underline the fact that the prisms of political, metro-
politan and national history are not sufficient to understand changes in demo-
graphic and medical discourses and practices in Angola. A key argument made
herein is that these were also – and sometimes primarily – provoked by
international disruptions such as the two World Wars and the world economic
crisis of the early 1930s and driven by broader changes in ideas, perceptions
and practices that circulated among colonial powers through processes of inter-
imperial learning and competition.

This book also acknowledges the particular position of Angola within the
larger framework of the Portuguese Empire and hence the situatedness of
Portuguese population politics in Angola. Angola was not just any
Portuguese colony. With about 1.25 million square kilometres and presumably
about 3–4 million inhabitants in the early twentieth century, it was by far the
largest in area and the second largest in population (after Mozambique) of the
eight remaining colonies in what had arguably once been Europe's first global
maritime empire.[5] Moreover, by the late nineteenth century, Portuguese colo-
nial influence in Angola was already four centuries old. 'Discovered' (from a
European perspective) by Diogo Cão in the 1480s, Angola's coastal regions
were, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, gradually brought under formal
Portuguese control.[6] They played a major role in the transatlantic slave trade.

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[4]   See Cruz, *Estatuto do indigenato*; Silva, *Constitucionalismo e Império*; Silva, 'Natives'. See also
     Jerónimo, *Civilising Mission*, 26–30, 38–41. Compare with Mann, 'What Was the Indigénat?'.
[5]   See, for instance, Bethencourt and Curto (eds.), *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion*.
[6]   Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict*; Thornton, 'Early Kongo-Portuguese Relations'; Heintze,
     Studien.

Between 1500 and 1867, an estimated 5.6 million Africans were shipped as slaves from West Central Africa to the Americas, about two-thirds of them from the Portuguese-controlled port cities of Luanda and Benguela alone.[7] Most were brought to Brazil and, over the centuries, cross-Atlantic exchanges forged an almost symbiotic relationship between both Portuguese colonies, to the extent that historians such as Luiz Felipe de Alencastro have characterised Angola as a sub-colony of Brazil.[8] With Brazilian independence in 1822 and the end of the Portuguese slave trade from Angola in the mid-nineteenth century, Angola's position within the Empire changed dramatically. Driven by a widespread belief in the colony's immeasurable resources and economic opportunities and (compared to Mozambique) greater geographic proximity to Portugal, many colonialists came to see Angola as the new cornerstone of the reconfigured 'Third' Portuguese Empire (1822–1975).[9] Angola's particular status, I suggest, exacerbated depopulation anxieties and, alongside local factors, shaped how population policies were conceived and implemented.

Reframing Portuguese Colonialism

By examining population discourses and policies, this book not only moves beyond existing scholarship on colonial Angola and the 'Third' Portuguese Empire in general; it also inevitably challenges how Portuguese colonialism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries has usually been framed and interpreted. Over recent decades, historians have mainly focused on explaining three issues: the particularities and contradictions of Portuguese imperial and racial ideologies;[10] the persistence of forms of unfree labour well into the twentieth century;[11] and the belated and violent decolonisation process, with its protracted colonial wars (1961–74), late developmental policies and African nationalist movements.[12] Looking through these specific lenses has often

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[7] Eltis and Richardson, 'New Assessment'; Silva, *Atlantic Slave Trade*. On the social history of the transatlantic slave trade in Angola, see Miller, *Way of Death*; Candido, *African Slaving Port*.

[8] See particularly Alencastro, *Trato dos Viventes*; Curto, *Enslaving Spirits*; Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange*.

[9] See Chapter 1. The first (maritime) empire was organised around the Portuguese trading posts in India, the second (territorial) empire around the Brazilian economy and the third centred on Portugal's African colonies. For an overview, see Costa, Rodrigues and Oliveira (eds.), *História da Expansão*. See also Clarence-Smith, *Third Portuguese Empire*.

[10] See Castelo, *Modo português*; Alexandre, *Velho Brasil, novas Áfricas*; Matos, *Côres do Império*; Bethencourt and Pearce (eds.), *Racism and Ethnic Relations*; Jerónimo, *Civilising Mission*.

[11] See Higgs, *Chocolate Islands*; Allina, *Slavery*; Ball, *Angola's Colossal Lie*; Cleveland, *Diamonds in the Rough*; Jerónimo, *Civilising Mission* and Monteiro, *Portugal*.

[12] Messiant, *Angola colonial*; Morier-Genoud (ed.), *Sure Road?*; Jerónimo and Pinto (eds.), *Portugal e o fim do colonialismo*; Jerónimo and Pinto (eds.), *Ends of European Colonial Empires*; Péclard, *Incertitudes*; Jerónimo, 'Battle'; Alexandre, *Contra o vento*.

induced historians to – implicitly or explicitly – characterise Portuguese colonialism as distinctly brutal and backward compared to other European colonialist projects. Tying in with some newer studies that challenge this idea of Portuguese colonial exceptionalism, this book contributes to rethinking and reappraising Portuguese colonialism in two ways. First, by focusing on the important but understudied domains of demography, medicine and 'native' policy, it contributes to a more complex and nuanced picture of Portuguese colonialism, especially since there are few studies on colonial policies 'on the ground' in Angola for the period between 1890 and 1945. Second, by adopting comparative, transnational and transimperial perspectives, I show that population politics in Angola were firmly embedded in broader European discourses and practices and, in many regards, not so 'different', let alone exceptional.

Population Politics and the Colonial State

Portuguese colonialism in Angola cannot be understood by looking at ideological formations, forced labour regimes and late-imperial intransigence alone, however real and afflicting they were for many Angolans. Portuguese colonialism in Angola was also (often in contradictory ways) underwritten by discourses, logics and practices that, following Michel Foucault, can be described as the 'biopolitics of the population'.[13]

When Foucault coined the terms 'biopower' and 'biopolitics' in the mid-1970s, he referred to a set of technologies that emerged in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, used to know (*savoir*) and optimise the life of both the individual and the collective body.[14] According to Foucault, the individual body was addressed through disciplinary institutions like the clinic, the prison and the army in order to 'produce human beings whose bodies are at once useful and docile', while the collective body required a different 'series of interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population'. Made possible by medicine and the emergence of statistics as a new scientific discipline, these interventions targeted the biological basis of the population, aiming to monitor and improve both its quantity and 'quality'.[15] My use of the term 'population politics' refers to this latter part of Foucault's biopower/biopolitics paradigm. As summarised by Philipp Sarasin, this involved

the registration and regulation of the population 'movements' in a given society, ranging from the statistical registration of births and deaths, the state's efforts to increase the birth rate and the most diverse forms of public hygiene and healthcare to

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[13] Foucault, *Volonté de savoir*, 183.
[14] Foucault, 'Cours du 17 mars 1976'; Foucault, *Volonté de savoir*, 177–91.
[15] Inda, 'Analytics of the Modern', 6 (first quote); Foucault, *Volonté de savoir*, 183 (second quote).

the actual regulation of the population from a 'qualitative' point of view, in the end to the eugenically motivated extirpation of life deemed 'unworthy of living'.[16]

Historians of colonialism have criticised Foucault's biopower/biopolitics paradigm for two main reasons. On the one hand, some have rightly condemned the Eurocentrism of his account, which can be said to be both empirical and epistemological: Foucault neither used non-European (con)texts to support his claims nor does the rise of 'biopower' seem to have been influenced by events or thought from outside Western Europe. Thus, Ann Laura Stoler has asked what Foucault's analysis and chronologies would look like if one included colonial settings.[17] On the other hand, scholars like Frederick Cooper and Megan Vaughan have downplayed the relevance of 'biopower' in the context of colonial rule in Africa, arguing that in most colonial settings power was 'repressive' rather than 'productive', more 'arterial' than 'capillary'.[18] Against the latter critique, however, Nancy Rose Hunt has argued that 'Foucault's notion of biopower needs to be taken seriously for colonial Africa', since 'these were not just extractive economies, but ones that wilfully, if ambivalently, promoted life'.[19]

This book refrains from adopting Foucault's general epistemological and analytical framework, with his contested concepts of (bio)power and governmentality, or from entering theoretical discussions about the validity of his chronologies. Rather, it follows Nancy Rose Hunt's intuition and uses Foucault's concept of 'population politics' as an analytical lens through which to examine 'native policy' in colonial Angola. This unites the variegated discourses and policies targeting the biological basis of Angola's African population, allowing them to be considered holistically. This study even broadens the scope of the concept. Beyond policies geared towards reducing mortality and increasing natality, which have usually been the focus of historical studies on colonial biopolitics,[20] it also analyses policies aimed at curbing African emigration, as these related directly to the size of Angola's 'native' population. Most fundamentally, this book explores how population politics played out in a colonial context where power asymmetries were arguably larger than in Europe and, due to claims of racial difference, differently shaped. Simultaneously, it examines how Portuguese population politics were influenced by the fact that Angola was part of the tropics.

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[16] Sarasin, *Michel Foucault*, 167.
[17] Stoler, *Race*, 1–18. On epistemological Eurocentrism, see Mudimbe, *Invention of Africa*, 19–20.
[18] Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills*, 8–12 (quotes 10); Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 48–9 (quotes 48).
[19] Hunt, 'Fertility's Fires', 429 (quote). See also Hunt, *Nervous State*, 7–8.
[20] See, for instance, Hunt, *Colonial Lexicon*; Thomas, *Politics of the Womb*; Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene*.

Tropics was not merely a geographical term, designating the area between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, 23°26′ north and south respectively of the equator, and hence including the Portuguese colony of Angola that stretches from latitude 4° to 18° S. It was also a powerful discursive term and social construct: the tropics were imagined as fundamentally different from temperate zones like Europe in climate and vegetation, diseases and human life.[21] Unlike much of the historiography linking colonialism and the tropics, however, this book does not focus on the protracted scientific and political debates about the possibilities of white settlement and acclimatisation,[22] but on how tropical visions and conditions shaped European politics towards indigenous populations. I claim that the indigenous populations in Angola were the object of overlapping processes of Othering, conceived and governed as a racial, colonial and climatic Other. Considered inferior and incapable of self-government and self-improvement, they had to be protected from the particular dangers of tropical nature – or to be torn out of their 'innate laziness' in order to take advantage of the immense possibilities tropical fertility apparently offered for agriculture.[23] As Warwick Anderson has argued, the domestication of the tropics, which became conceivable in the early twentieth century, justified colonial rule and 'technoscientific' interventions.[24]

Of course, population politics in Angola were neither monolithic nor all-encompassing. Although most colonisers viewed a growing and healthy African population as a precondition for the colony's *mise en valeur*, colonial rule in practice often ran counter to this logic, due to the conflicting interests and priorities of different colonial actors. On the one hand, competing rationales such as the search for short-term economic gains or the desire for comprehensive political and military control explain why colonial rule in twentieth-century Angola was never about population improvement alone, but continued to be marked also by exploitation and oppression, and in some cases outspoken indifference or extreme violence. Moreover, although colonial population discourse usually spoke of 'natives' in a generalising and totalising manner, policies sometimes differentiated between population groups. Largely based on the theories and categorisations of colonial anthropology, certain ethnic groups were deemed less important for – or even detrimental to – the future of the colony and 'excluded' from 'positive' population politics. Cases in point are the 'Bushmen' in Southern Angola, who were conceptualised as a

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[21] Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature*; Arnold, *Tropics*, 110–4; Anderson, 'Natures of Culture'.
[22] For a brief analysis, see Chapter 1.
[23] On the 'climatic Other' and tropical laziness, see Duncan, *In the Shadows*, 8, 12, 182–4.
[24] Anderson, 'Natures of Culture'.

'primitive and dying race' and largely neglected by the Portuguese colonial state until the 1950s, or the 'unruly' pastoralist Kuvale, who suffered genocidal violence and forced relocation in the late 1930s and early 1940s.[25] On the other hand, the outcome of population policies was often more modest than, or simply different from, what had been planned or expected, because their implementation was hampered by practical problems and internal conflicts in the colonial administration and/or undermined by the attitudes and actions of the Angolan population. Angolans not only resisted but also actively (re)shaped policies intended to govern them.

This argument about the tensions and boundaries of population politics links to a broader shift in the conceptualisation of the colonial state in Africa. Counter to earlier visions of a powerful and autonomous colonial state, historians have in the last two decades increasingly highlighted its weakness and internal contradictions. Especially before 1945, that is before the 'second colonial occupation' and the rise of the 'developmental state' with increased funding and expanding bureaucratic apparatuses,[26] colonial states were almost permanently underfinanced and understaffed, and hence unable to completely fulfil their own far-reaching claims of controlling and transforming colonial territories and populations that were often larger than those of their metropoles. According to this revisionist view, the power of colonial states was also limited insofar as they relied heavily on African and European intermediaries and operated with little expert knowledge. Thus, their impact on African societies and cultures was often fragmentary.[27]

Various studies have shown that African intermediaries such as 'traditional' or newly appointed authorities, clerks, interpreters, soldiers, policemen, nurses and catechists were crucial for the functioning of the colonial state but were also difficult to control as they often followed their own agenda.[28] Some scholars, such as the sociologist Trutz von Trotha, have emphasised that the colonial state not only depended on African intermediaries ('external intermediarity'), but also on local European administrators ('internal intermediarity'), who in practice had significant discretionary powers. Until well into the twentieth century, these 'men on the spot', sometimes called 'the real chiefs of the empire', often acted independently from – and even contrary to the policies

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[25] On the 'Bushmen', see Coghe, 'Reassessing Portuguese Exceptionalism'; on the Kuvale, see Pélissier, *História das campanhas*, vol. 2, 267–75 and Campos, *Ocupação*.

[26] See Cooper, 'Modernizing Bureaucrats' and Eckert, 'We Are All Planners Now'.

[27] Compare Young, *African Colonial State* with Berman, 'Perils'; Eckert, 'Vom Segen der (Staats-) Gewalt?' and Conrad and Stange, 'Governance and Colonial Rule'.

[28] See particularly the essays in Lawrance, Osborn and Roberts (eds.), *Intermediaries* and Glasman, 'Penser les intermédiaires'. On medical intermediaries, see also footnote 82.

devised by – the central administrations in the colonial capitals. Bringing them under more continuous and tight control was a long and difficult process.[29] Moreover, before 1945, and certainly before the 1920s, colonial rule in Africa was based on much less, and less systematic and stable, scientific knowledge than many colonial governments wished for, as the number of scientific institutions and experts remained low until the 'second colonial occupation' after the Second World War.[30]

This book further teases out the implications of this paradigm shift for Angola, drawing on recent work by Alexander Keese and Philip Havik.[31] It looks at the internal conflicts within and limitations of the colonial state that conditioned medical, demographic and administrative population policies. Attentive to the tension between colonial discourse and the 'contested, fragmentary and often ineffective nature of colonial practices', it sees failure as inherent to colonial rule.[32] It also attends to the 'epistemological worries' of colonial officials and the feelings of vulnerability and helplessness they often experienced in the colonial situation – topics that have received increased historiographical attention in recent years and further bolstered the notion of a 'weak' colonial state.[33] Portuguese colonial officials not only worried about the size and the health of Angola's 'native' population, but many of them also feared that Portugal was not as effective as other colonial powers in ruling and 'developing' them – or, at least, was perceived in this way by other colonial nations and Angolans alike. These deep-seated and multi-layered anxieties about Portugal's comparative position as an imperial power played out at various levels of the colonial administration and gave way to variegated 'politics of comparison': comparing and emulating practices from colonial competitors in some cases; avoiding being compared in others; and struggling for international recognition of important 'firsts' or particularly 'benevolent' practices. Following Ann Laura Stoler on the 'politics of imperial comparison', this study examines why, how and to what effect colonial actors constantly engaged in comparisons with other colonial powers.[34]

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[29] Trotha, 'Was war Kolonialismus?', 63–4. See also, in greater detail, Spittler, *Verwaltung* and Trotha, *Koloniale Herrschaft*.

[30] See Tilley, *Africa* and, for the Portuguese empire, Castelo, 'Investigação científica'.

[31] See most notably Keese, *Living with Ambiguity*; Keese, 'Searching'; Havik, '"Direct" or "indirect" rule?' and Havik, Keese and Santos (eds.), *Administration and Taxation*.

[32] Duncan, *In the Shadows*, 2 (quote).

[33] See Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, 10; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 3 (quote). See also Reinkowski and Thum (eds.), *Helpless Imperialists*; Fischer-Tiné (ed.), *Anxieties, Fear and Panic*. For Portuguese Angola, see Roque, 'Razor's Edge'.

[34] Stoler and McGranahan, 'Introduction', 13–5.