

# Women Writing the Exotic: Cultural Representations in a Portuguese Travel Journal

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**Abstract:** This essay combines ideas derived from social history, literary criticism and cultural studies in order to illustrate the notion of exoticism in late nineteenth-century Portuguese discourse about the Far East, which is still implicit in many contemporary representations of Asia by the Western imaginary. Using the example of *Journal of a Journey to Timor* [*Diário de uma Viagem a Timor*] (1882-1883), by Isabel Tamagnini, the essay explores the implications not only of race but also of gender in the production and circulation of the Eurocentric notion of the “exotic” Orient. Tamagnini categorizes, includes, excludes and creates stereotypes in order to organise an unknown social and cultural reality within which she was forced to live. The *Journal* is a paradigmatic text about the categories and hierarchies of Portuguese colonial power. Tamagnini’s vivid comprehension of family, religious, social, ethical and aesthetic details is completely unaware of the harsh political and economic realities of colonial administration, illustrating how social and cultural restrictions shaped women’s perspectives and identities. The *Journal* merges specific social and cultural practices as well as their significance, which paved the way for a metaphorical process of incomplete self- and hetero-discovery.

## The *Journal* and the Journey

*Journal of a Journey to Timor* [*Diário de uma Viagem a Timor*] (1882-1883) was written by the young Isabel Pinto da França Tamagnini when, as a twenty to twenty-one year-old young lady, she was one of the party of fourteen who

accompanied her step-father and the newly appointed Governor of Timor, Major Bento da França Pinto d'Oliveira, an officer in the Portuguese army with extensive colonial service in Africa and India. *Diário* is the only direct documentary evidence of this voyage. In it, Isabel Tamagnini describes their journey from Singapore to Dili, a colonial city where she lived for little more than a year amongst family dramas, political intrigue and a prolonged socio-cultural exile that would eventually result in Governor Bento da França's resignation. Unfortunately, the diary is incomplete, as there is no trace of the handwritten notebook in which she recorded the first stage of their journey, the trip between Lisbon and Singapore.

After leaving Singapore, the ship called in at Batavia (present-day Jakarta), then sailed across the Java Sea, calling in at Semarang (on the north coast of Central Java), Surabaya, Makassar (in the South of Sulawesi or Celebes), Bima (capital of the island of Sumbawa) and Laruntuka (one of the Flores Islands), where they caught sight of the islands of Adonara and Solor. The ship also called in at Kupang before arriving at its final destination, Dili, but the diary entries for this last stage have been lost.

On 1 June 1883, the party (without Tamagnini's two younger siblings, who had died of malaria in Dili) boarded the Dutch steamship *Lansberge* for the return journey. The first entry in Isabel Tamagnini's return diary is dated 21 June, in front of the island of Lombok, in the Java Sea. Leaving Dili, the ship called in at Banda, a small island in the Moluccas, south of Ambon, then at Ambon, Manado (capital of the North of Sulawesi), Makassar, Lombok, Bali and Surabaya. From there, and because of the extreme heat wave in Batavia, they steamed directly to Singapore. The return journey as far as Lisbon, onboard the *Anadys*, a steamship belonging to the Compagnie des Messageries, is documented in her diary and includes descriptions of stops at Colombo and Aden, as well as the 26 and 27 July crossing of the Suez Canal (inaugurated in 1869). Once in the Mediterranean, they called at Naples, Marseille and Barcelona, where the party left the ship as the last stage of the journey to Lisbon was to be overland.

In this paper, I am essentially interested in following the cultural itinerary that surfaces from Tamagnini's narrative of her journey and intercultural experience, as well as in analysing the socio-cultural background implied in her observations of the voyage and daily life.

### The Socio-Cultural Status of Women

A woman's physical and intellectual freedom were severely restricted in nineteenth-century Portuguese society, and her education was limited to domestic arts, such as entertaining, and other household skills such as needlepoint, drawing and watercolour painting, a little French, the piano and singing. In other words, the minimum she needed to entertain or amuse others at salons or family gatherings.

The matter of female education was recognized by some of the more advanced sectors of Portuguese society during the second half of the nineteenth century as a factor of social progress. Even so, this education only addressed the needs of a woman in her traditional role of domestic governess and educator. Consequently, it was not a case of favouring female emancipation or ensuring that a woman was provided with the means that would enable her to choose her future, but simply to give her the skills she needed to fulfil her mission as a mother.<sup>1</sup>

We know that Isabel Tamagnini had good tutors at home and that she was versed in literature and languages (xxxvi). In Dili, she had private lessons in English with a doctor who had trained in Bombay (55), whilst in Surabaya, she enjoyed reading the life of Shakespeare (37). For the remainder, her activities motivated constant complaints of "I am bored to tears" (38) as there was little more for her to do than work on some piece of needlepoint or prepare a dish in the kitchen, take walks, chat with other women, go to church and strictly observe the religious calendar.

The structural subordination of women is naturally reflected in the literary scene, where it is evident in the self- and hetero-deprecation of women as authors or "holders of authority." One of the most common mind-sets that reflect both this subservience and the fear of being different is the dread of appearing ridiculous, which Isabel Tamagnini also expresses in her diary:

I had doubts as to whether I should write this diary as I feared that someone might accidentally read these lines and say to himself, look what a fool she is! But as I am almost certain that this will not happen and as I am only writing this diary to amuse myself later by reading it to my cousins and intimate friends, to whom I promised to tell all, everything that happened during my journey, I decided to go ahead and describe this most remarkable event here. (48)

However, as this diary is destined to be no more than a trivial “diversion,” to be shared with a restricted female and family audience, to cite Isabel Tamagnini, she is saved from the inherent ridicule of the woman-author and her selection of narratives. By admitting that her literary ambitions do not extend beyond the domestic, Tamagnini justifies and absolves a text that remains frankly contained within the boundaries that were set for women.

A flagrant example of the society’s acceptance of this structural subordination in the field of literature is the “feminine” quality of the art of translation, subject to a historically persistent tropism that distinguishes between productive and reproductive activities: “[...] the opposition between productive and reproductive work organizes the way a culture values work: this paradigm depicts originality or creativity in terms of paternity and authority, relegating the figure of the female to a variety of secondary roles” (Chamberlain 57).

In nineteenth-century Portugal there are a considerable number of anonymous translations that have unequivocally been done by women. The act of casting doubts as to the gender of the author is a reflection of the social, political and cultural constraints of the period as it maps out the frontiers of the narrow territories that women were authorized to occupy or to which they were relegated. Like the translations themselves, throughout the ages women also were associated with fragility, betrayal and subservience. The archetypically femininity of the translation is reflected in the total, or partial, invisibility of the translators, who wrote under a pen name or a name that had been cryptically reduced to initials or a single forename so as to neither expose nor provoke aspersions upon the family name. Between 1801 and 1833, more than twenty translations were published in Portugal as the work of “a lady,” “a young Portuguese girl” or a “Portuguese lady.” Anonymity confined the translator to her sex and stripped her of individuality and authority, a strategy that effectively silenced woman as producers.<sup>2</sup>

Also in the literary field, the *Novo Almanach de Lembranças Luso-Brasileiro*, which circulated in Portugal and Brazil between 1850 and 1932, is of special interest regarding the socio-cultural context of Portugal during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Almanacs containing light literature and edifying, informative and easily understood articles appealed to a considerable reading public and proliferated during the 1880s.

The *Novo Almanach de Lembranças Luso-Brasileiro* is a faithful reflection of the literary talents and preferences of its readers and contributors. Aware that the great attraction of this almanac was the varied information and the light entertainment

it provided, its editors were particularly careful to avoid any type of religious or political controversy by openly declaring that they censured all texts that did not respect the standard of neutrality that was demanded as one of the principle criteria for publication. In addition to articles from well-known contributors such as Eça de Queiroz, Bulhão Pato, Júlio César Machado and Latino Coelho, among others, we note a preference for ethnographic texts, legends, moralistic tales and ultra-romantic poetry and prose. Symptomatically, the list of the *Almanach's* contributors was shared by very few "Ladies" (the collective gender description) and multiple "Authors" (male individuals that possess "authority").

In reality, although writing poetry or painting still lifes were recognized female skills, on a par with piano and needlework, a woman's "scribbling" was still associated with the most dismal amateurism. A 1912 text in the *Almanach* about Ellen Key begins with the following sentence: "Of the many female philosophers and scholars who today scribble or scrawl their way across this world of Christ, Ellen Key is one of the most charming and prominent figures; [...] she has never fallen into the trap of defending the pernicious nonsense produced by most feminists." This is why articles with edifying titles such as "Woman—The Angel of the Home" ["A Mulher—Anjo do Lar"] (1916) and "The Model Woman" ["A Mulher Modelo"] (1914) continued to be published in such a widely read and respected publication as the *Almanach*. In "The Model Woman," the author cites the opinion of "a moralist from Berlin": "The model woman must be like the snail, who never abandons her home; [...] she must be like the echo, who never speaks without first being spoken to." The *Almanach* undertakes the mission of teaching women their role and place in society.<sup>4</sup>

The post- or late-colonial editorial policies of the *Almanach* also allude to the subordination of women. The close cultural relationship between Portugal and Brazil that is apparent throughout the *Almanach* is, however, notable for the profoundly paternalistic attitude of the former towards a country that had been independent since 1822. Brazil is depicted as being historically, culturally and linguistically dependent on Portugal, especially in the manner by which Brazilian artists, thinkers, politicians and writers are portrayed. The slightest reference to the quality of their work invariably leads to praise for the Portuguese nation, whilst editors stress that their value is a product of the dependence, gratitude and admiration that they nurture for the language and culture of Portugal. Interestingly, Brazil is always addressed as a feminine entity ("Sister Nation"), a fragile dependant of a masculine and dominant Portugal, the creator of her name and status. Something very similar occurred during that



period in the United Kingdom, where Ireland, still cruelly subjugated by the British, was popularly personified as the fragile and feminine Hibernia.

Most of the *Almanach's* pseudo-anthropological texts on Asia and Africa are replete with judgements of value in which the "other" is described as a curiously ridiculous and inferior "savage" whose traditions are no more than mere proof of his immorality, whereas the European is invariably presented as the immaculate saviour. An illustrated article on the text "Parliament of Savages" in the 1916 issue of the *Almanach* includes the following passage:

The illustration represents the *Sôba* of Ganda, his son, and two of his ministers. They are meeting at a council of state, in the presence of the indispensable array of witchcraft and talismans whose portents will be more respected than all the best advice from the wisest minister. The council meeting is always followed by the traditional hearty banquet and even heartier measures of brandy.

Another article in the 1917 issue of the *Almanach* informs the reader that: "This is a picture of an elegant native couple from Chinde. Dressed in the European style, don't they look smart! What a pity that their, actually quite pleasant, faces are the colour of ebony." Articles such as these and so many others reveal the mindset of a society that freely spouted biased notions such as "the recognized worldwide superiority of the white race," or "the negroes enviously try to raise themselves socially and physically to the level of their bosses," in "How to turn blacks into whites" ["Como Tornar Brancos os Pretos"] in the 1917 *Almanach*.<sup>5</sup>

### Identity and Auto- and Self-Representations

Seen in the above light, Isabel Tamagnini's narrative is the product of a personal sense of identity that includes conscious and unconscious feelings, rational and irrational motives, beliefs and values, in addition to all those factors that shaped the social context within which she experienced these feelings and impulses, such as age, nationality and gender.

Almost all identities can be found in relations of power, in the binary oppositions of "we" *versus* "them," "the rule" *versus* "the difference," "our" *versus* "the other's." Identity and difference always imply inclusion and exclusion, which can lead to the creation of stereotypes, an effective strategy for maintaining the social and symbolic order. The more blatant the inequality of power (as in the case of colonialism or a patriarchal society),

the more specific the categories of identity and the greater the frequency of stereotypes.

Categories of identity classify and label: in the nineteenth century, to be identified as “oriental” was to be labelled as “non-European” and/or “non-Christian,” with all that this implied. For Tamagnini, the matrix, the paradigm for inclusion/exclusion, was Lisbon aristocracy and its practices and values. Here again, the linguistic construct—the narrative—functions as a symbolic marker of the “difference,” of the “exotic,” of “orientalism,” to use Edward Said’s category.

Bearing in mind that “identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality” (Weeks 88); this is much more evident when one is as distant, isolated and vulnerable as Tamagnini and her family. In her Far East, there is no belonging, no personal location or stability outside the restricted circle of relatives and Christian colonial agents.

In such circumstances, the personal narrative attempts to confer meaning and coherence to the random and disordered experiences of real life. Tamagnini tries to organize her experiences by arranging them within a narrative. To tell or write a life history involves interpretation. The choice of events and individuals that will be selected from the experienced whole is, in itself, an act of interpretation. Personal narratives are never simple reflections of the experienced reality; they are, instead, coloured by the author’s need to represent the subject as possessing a certain sense of identity and control. Tamagnini’s narrative following the death of her two siblings (Maria Anna and Henrique) is a very restrained discourse full of Christian resignation. On the other hand, her almost “first-hand” description of the death of Jacinta, the old family governess, on board ship during the return journey, is a narrative of highly emotive verbosity.

This is why autobiographic narratives are constructed according to how the author believes they ought to be told, with moments of drama, comedy and information, in order to provide a coherent meaning. At the same time, they involve real lives, individuals and events, no matter how much these may be altered by the author’s vision. Each territory is rich in different ways of ideologically shaping these very same lives, individuals and events. Yet, what happens when the territory is totally unknown? When there still exists a space without cultural frontiers? When there are no prior ideological moderators? When that occurs, everything has to be reorganized, RE-represented, as in

Isabel Tamagnini's writings, where the physical space, the identity and the discourse intersect and mutually influence each other:

[...] everyday life is not everywhere the same, despite those modernizing effects of uniformity that Lefebvre was obsessed by. Think about walking in the city: doesn't it make a difference if one walks in Paris, down-town Detroit, Melbourne, Mexico City, or Hong Kong just for starters? And, in each of these places, does a woman have the same experience as a man, a gay as a straight, a young person as an old one? The everyday, too, is produced and experienced at the intersection of many fields by embodied individuals. (During 25)

Everyday life is neither always nor universally the same because it is the product of several interacting factors. Our experiences and our understanding of the different spaces and territories that we frequent, or that we see represented in images and narratives, vary. Different spaces generate different social relationships. But a space may also be created from the different social relationships that take place within it. This is the case of the drawing room onboard the *Anadyr*, which was transformed into a ballroom for a *soirée* off the coast of Marseille, with music, dance cards, dances and all the social rituals that were proper to such an event (82-3).

This passage, by Michel de Certeau, could fit in with the *Journal of a Journey to Timor (1882-1883)* and the tragedies the family suffered during its exile:

Writing, a possibility of composing a space in conformity with one's will [...]. From this articulation the book became the laboratory experiment, in the field of an economic, demographic or pedagogical space. [...] To write (this book), then, is to be forced to march through enemy territory, in the very area where loss prevails, beyond the protected domain that had been delimited by the act of localizing death elsewhere. It is to produce sentences with the lexicon of the mortal, in proximity to and even within the space of death. (Certeau 196-98)

According to Certeau, space is activated by rhetorical practices. The traveler's rhetorical options tend to privilege, transform and omit spatial elements, so that these might mean something or, conversely, nothing at all. Tamagnini chooses to omit so many of her experiences both during the journey and in Dili ("the space of death"), while she spends long paragraphs describing an elegant *soirée*, a dance, a *toilette*, a dinner party, a gossip. The space that she



does not understand, the space of the “other,” “wild,” frightening (Certeau’s “enemy territory”; “the very area where loss prevails”) is simply reduced to what it truly means to her: nothing. Tamagnini writes about urban territories or, at least, about those territories that stage a pretended “urban civility,” whose complex social codes are so important to her. She dominates these social codes and puts them into practice with perfect ease and a conscientious critical spirit. This rhetorical option contrasts with her representation of the colonial space itself, which has been deliberately silenced.

### The Colonial Space

Just how is the colonial space described in Tamagnini’s narrative? Just how does this “civilized” and subordinated woman’s identity intersect with the “savage” colonial space, itself also subordinated? Isabel Tamagnini’s description of the Far East is never unbiased, just as the later writings of Wenceslau de Moraes<sup>6</sup> and Jaime Correia do Inso<sup>7</sup> on the Far East are never impartial. Nonetheless, one must emphasize that this woman’s narrative is, indeed, pioneering and written well before those of her consecrated male counterparts, considered as “authors” (individuals that possess “authority”), like Wenceslau de Moraes and Jaime do Inso.<sup>8</sup>

A travel diary paints portraits of other cultures expressly for domestic consumption. There is always an ideological dimension as the traveller observes these “other” cultures from the viewpoint of the outsider, or foreigner, who is writing for an internal, domestic public. Madan Sarup, a follower of Edward Said, summarizes the contradiction inherent in this type of narrative: “On the one hand, it is interesting to leave one’s homeland in order to enter the culture of others but, on the other hand, this move is undertaken only to return to oneself and one’s home, to judge or to laugh at one’s peculiarities and limitations.”<sup>9</sup>

Forced to become a traveller, Tamagnini is both armed with yet captive to socio-cultural preconceptions that, as agents that shape her thoughts, challenge her intellectual independence. Immediate narrations of visual sensations, instant impressions and a certain good-humoured naivety stand out in her writings. But how does she manage to describe and relate such unfamiliar distant social practices to her domestic and female readers at home (her “cousins and intimate friends”)?

In order to interpret the world, we need a network of meanings that enables us to conceptualise and represent people, objects, feelings and

events, in such a way that they make sense. When we come across a concept that is unknown in our culture, in order to transmit it we have to relate it to something similar that already exists in our society so that we can classify it as “similar to/different from.” This is the case of the description of a Chinese wedding in Singapore, in April 1882. Because Tamagnini does not have a cultural yardstick against which she can make an unqualified comparison, she resorts to a meticulous description of the ceremony, occasionally contrasting some objects and rituals with their European counterparts in terms of similarity/difference:

They gave me a large bunch of flowers, saying that these were brides' flowers and that I should keep them. As soon as they walked off, I threw the flowers away because I could not stand their smell. I spotted two dresses, a red satin one embroidered in graduated colours and a yellow satin one, also embroidered, a pair of gold-embroidered slippers, an immense quantity of scarves in every imaginable colour embroidered in graduated colours and in gold. I was also shown a very peculiar type of shawl made of pieces of red and green silk, each one embroidered with a different motif: a rose, a Chinese lady, a tree, etc. Enormous, very splendid jewels, huge diamonds, lovely, lovely. The piece I liked the best was a diamond tiara, all good diamonds. They also wore crowns of flowers on their heads; not orange blossoms, but different flowers. (17)

The same is true of her description of a ceremony at which the natives swore allegiance to King Dom Luis, on 2 July 1882, in Dili:

The men, almost all short, wore loincloths and a bit of red cloth draped over their shoulders and across their chests. They wear their hair very long and as their hair is very kinky, it stands out in an enormous circle around their heads. Some also wore a type of red turban on their heads and others, many very long feathers stuck into their hair. Many bracelets on their arms and legs. Everyone held a small sword or a bush knife in their hands, except for two who carried a type of pot lid in one hand and a wooden stick in the other; these were the musicians. As soon as the men arrived, they began to jump about and give savage shouts, then they lined up two by two. The musicians began to frenetically beat on the said pot lids, as I call them, but which they called Samegon. They then began a dance they call Tabédai, which was, as was to be expected, a dance of savages. (61)

Furthermore, she duly noted her amazement at any behaviour on the part of Westerners themselves that was different from the European paradigm—practices fashioned by their life in the colonies: “going around without a hat” in Batavia (28), sleeping under only a sheet, or the Dutch people’s “lack of religion,” a comment based on the fact that she did not see any churches in Makassar (39).

Tamagnini’s territory *par excellence* is the city, the hotel, the elegant boardwalk, and the salon and its social rituals, even when these are occasionally experienced in an alien context. This is apparent in her detailed descriptions of the *soirée* and the *cotillion* onboard ship (82, 85), countless tête-à-têtes and visits, carriage rides, gifts of flowers and souvenirs, toasts and “protestations of friendship,” which she frequently accompanies with paradoxical allusions to their being “extremely irksome” and “frightfully boring.”

In the vast, unknown space of the Far East, Tamagnini and her party tried—frequently in vain—to recreate their European and “civilized” territories according to their financial, social and geographic circumstances. In far-off Dili, the Church and religious festivals represent the last bastion of civilization outside the family circle:

Yesterday we celebrated the feast of Corpus Christi with a grand festival; a very lovely, very decent affair. Nobody in Lisbon could imagine such a wonderful party here [...] everything went splendidly. Father Alves, a very intelligent and educated man, who speaks very well, preached the sermon. [...] I enjoyed it immensely. (57)

Predilection for a given space—in other words, an identification with that space—is measured by its proximity to the European model, as in the case of Ambon, in the Moluccas (“Ambon is a very pretty, quite advanced city: there are quite a few Europeans and many whitewashed stone houses” [68]); of Menado, in the north of Sulawesi (“Everything is very clean. The houses are very pretty [...] and each has a very well-tended garden” [69]); and, of course, Singapore (“I like Singapore better every day, it is extremely cheerful and is already beginning to smell a little of Europe. Day and night there is a great deal of hustle and bustle on the streets” [76]).

### Representations of Women

As part of this study, the examination of Tamagnini’s cultural itinerary will conclude with her representation of the Asian woman, a subordinate to the subordinate, and also with her portrayal of the non-Portuguese European

woman, also part of the “other” in that she, too, is different from the paradigm, albeit not quite so much so.

Derrida shows how the construction of an identity is always based on exclusion and a violent hierarchy of the resulting dichotomous pairs, as in the “man/woman” or “black/white” binomials:

What is peculiar to the second term is thus reduced to the function of an accident as opposed to the essentiality of the first. It is the same with the black-white relationship, in which white, of course, is equivalent to “human being.” “Woman” and “black” are thus “marks” (i.e. marked terms) in contrast to the unmarked terms of “man” and “white.” (Laclau 33)

In a similar manner, Isabel Tamagnini describes and classifies the kinds of women she encounters and, by visibly ranking them, reflects the colonial attitude as well as the subordination of Western women in her own society of origin. She ranks, includes, excludes and creates stereotypes, in an attempt to establish order in the unknown socio-cultural reality within which she was forced to live. However, whilst she ranks and describes—always resorting to comparisons with the paradigm of the Lisbon aristocracy, which dictates who is included/excluded from the norm—Tamagnini does not attempt to get to know or to understand these new ways of living. She only describes, comments, and, principally, ridicules. For her, the Far East is an exotic curiosity, a diversion, a mixture of the Countess of Ségur and Jules Verne (xxxviii). The dramas and the experiences she narrates are only of a family nature or related to the Western travellers and colonial agents whom she meets during her journey.

During visits and *soirées*, she depicts European women as pleasant and proficient in the domestic arts, as well as belonging to a good social class either by birth or marriage. Following a *soirée* at Mr. A. R. Neubronner’s house, “an extremely charming person,” she describes his daughters in the following manner: “The elder is 19 years old and is called Luzia, and the younger is 18 and called Amélia. They are very amiable and well educated. We spent a very pleasant evening, and danced quite a lot; they would not let us leave before 3 a.m.” (9). Mr. Morhir’s family and daughter, during an evening in Ambon, in the Moluccas, “are delightful. The owner of the house played [an instrument] very well. A Dutch officer and the owner of the house’s daughter sang very well” (68). In Makassar, she tells how she visited and spent a *soirée* in the company of the daughter of the steamship agent in Dili, who “married

a well-placed German resident of Makassar" (71). Only the "Spanish woman" whom she met on board the *Anadyr* is portrayed as a tragi-comic personage because of her total ignorance of the social conventions: "There is a very poor, but still quite young, Spanish widow on board. I do not know whether it is because of her sorrow or because of what might be, the fact is that the creature's head is not very well balanced. Do you want to know what she did on the night of the fateful soirée? She dressed up as a Hungarian, to everyone's amazement and riotous laughter!" (78).

She describes Asian women in a progressively disquieting manner, the more they are different from the European paradigm. Malaccan women and, generally speaking, all Malaccans from Singapore only deserve a short comment regarding the fact that they consider themselves "totally Portuguese" (76). When writing about women from Singapore, she praises their cleanliness and colourful garb: "The women are all very clean and they wear brightly coloured clothing; I saw many dressed in green, pink, white, blue, etc.; on their heads, a black or white veil attached with yellow pins. Their clothing is simple; a pair of very long trousers and on top some kind of dress that reaches below the knee (all in the same colour)" (3).

However, it is when she arrives in Timor that Isabel Tamagnini's ethnocentric viewpoint reveals itself in all its force, as she minutely describes the smallest details of the natives' clothing and behaviour, accompanied by long satirical paragraphs and animalesque comparisons. A Catholic family from Timor's visit and the faithful in church on the day of Corpus Christi of 1822 provide the subject for ridicule and her stinging criticism of the Timorese woman:

We had some interesting visitors: the Judge, his wife and sister—three monkeys. They were splendid! Madame wore a black silk dress made in Macau, naturally, a wedding dress covered in frippery, very long, so much so that the poor Timorese woman didn't know how to move. Poor thing, she was a fright. White gloves (half-length, the kind that our maids use), rolls of fat and a hat—but what a hat!—a little black toque garnished with bits of sky blue velvet and many white flowers. Mademoiselle was a darling, dressed in pink! Her dress was made of muslin garnished with a purple wool ribbon. Laden in gold, she wore a lovely white straw hat, shaped like a flat dish, trimmed with blue ribbons and bands of white flowers. Thick as two planks they were, at least so they appeared, and I say so because all I heard them say was "yes" or "no." We really had a very interesting conversation.... These Timorese are quite hopeless. (58-59)



There were many Timorese women wearing hats and dressed like Europeans, but what characters! It was enough to make one die laughing; I found it terribly difficult to keep a straight face, but somehow I managed it. I will describe one of these, beginning with her feet: a pair of enormous yellow boots, of what kind I cannot say, a very stiff white skirt that ballooned out; on top, a very faded pink muslin dress with a long train, decorated with a bright green wool ribbon; a tightly fitted waistcoat of the same colour and type as the skirt showed off the lady's "figure" . . . Her hat was the best of the lot, with yellow flounces, terribly difficult to describe exactly but more like some kind of frying pan, trimmed all round with a wide ribbon of doubtful colour that was tied in back in a large bow with long, hanging ribbons; a kind of cock's tail stuck up in front and, on one side, an undoubtedly very rare flower, at least I have never seen one like it. There you have one of the "elegant" ladies of Timor. The rest dress pretty much the same way. They remind me of the men who, during Carnival, dress themselves up like women. What a sight! (58)

Special note is made of the fact that Tamagnini only directs her satirical remarks to that which can be considered "European" and to the outward appearance of the targets of her pronouncements—the "elegant ladies of Timor" and other "characters." As to the cultural customs of Timorese women, she simply ignores them as being unworthy of notice or comment. It is likewise with anything that transcends mere appearances, considering that she never had any direct, affective or continuous contact with the local population or with anyone outside of the clique of European colonial public servants. For this reason, we should not be surprised at her brusque and outspoken description of the inhabitants of Larantuka, on Flores: "the natives [are almost all] very wicked savages [...]. Their greatest amusement is to chop off white people's heads" (42).

Quite obviously, she makes no attempt at approaching or getting to know anyone outside the European circle, neither during the journey nor during the year she spent in Dili. She states her isolation: "We do make other visits, but they are only courtesy calls, on the outside" (54). There is, however, a surprising exception on board the *Anadyr*, in the Red Sea, regarding a Chinese passenger with whom Isabel Tamagnini was forced to socialize, although she did not spare the expected cutting remarks: "English ladies, a few Swiss, American and Chinese women with their children. One of these is my friend even though she is a frightful bore!" (77).

Nonetheless, Tamagnini does admit that the Europeans can be cruelly “savage,” as she vehemently writes when she repeatedly declares her “revulsion” at the intrigues (and their authors) against her uncle and stepfather, Governor Bento da França (57); or when she describes convicts of European origin who had been banished to Timor and the insolence of the soldiers who were court-martialled in this distant colony.

There are moments of great irreverence, as when she pokes fun at the colonial administration and its agents, and even at her travelling companions. She is particularly scathing of European men whose behaviour is contrary to the rigid rules of etiquette in the salon, or when their dress, dancing, socializing and conversation fall short of accepted social customs. Isabel Tamagnini’s opinion of two young Portuguese officers who attended a dinner in Dili is that they were “grungy,” “extremely stupid,” “dull,” “silly fools” (58). “The Dutch (on board the *Bromo*, in the China Sea) are all very scruffy and not very friendly” (38). Then, as we have come to expect, her mocking of an “Indian, a nice fellow, poor thing,” whom she felt was totally out of place at the improvised shipboard *soirée* off the coast of Marseille (83). Not even the dandy who is courting her sister Maria José escapes her contemptuous but hilarious remarks: “between you and me, you could say that he looks like a piece of dry salt cod” (77); “The gossips are nattering about something that I already know, and as I am very gullible, I believe all their tales. I wager that you are dying to know what that is, but I won’t tell” (80). On the other hand, Tamagnini fully appreciates the value of men who are fully conversant with the rituals of society: “I danced with almost everybody; my first partner was the Russian officer. He speaks excellent French, appears to be very well educated and he waltzes very well” (9); “We have several companions; although some are rather rough types, others are very elegant, pleasant, and sweet” (76); “two Spaniards who are very much our friends; we laugh a lot with them, they appear to be decent persons and are very polite” (77).

## Conclusion

Isabel Pinto da França Tamagnini’s diary, *Journal of a Journey to Timor (1882-1883)*, is a paradigmatic text that reflects the social categorizations and hierarchies of the Portuguese colonial powers, which were originally exercised by a drawing-room aristocracy over a world that was totally foreign to them and whose preconceptions were aggravated by what they perceived as its “savage nature.”

At the same time, this is also a woman's description of colonial society, a narrative that is very different from the usual homophobic and misogynous texts written by men. Tamagnini's perspicacity in grasping family, religious, behavioural, ethical, and aesthetic details is totally detached from the hard political and economic realities of the colonial administration. Nonetheless, we cannot forget that, in general, this diary and its author also mirror the female socio-cultural context in Portugal during the second half of the nineteenth century, and the one in which the first families of colonial employees sent to far-off Dili lived, in particular. Texts such as this one (in addition to other diaries, reports, memoirs, letters and oral reports) therefore constitute a vast and very rich, albeit almost unknown, territory that deserves being explored in a systematic manner in further studies on the colonial intercultural representations of the Far East by and about women, and on how social and cultural restrictions shaped their perspectives and identities.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Although the 1822 Constitution provided for the opening of schools for both sexes, very few schools for girls were actually established. Rodrigo da Fonseca Magalhães's 1835 educational reform did not even mention female education. Passos Manuel's 1836 reform provided for schools for girls in district capitals only. Costa Cabral's 1844 reform authorized the government to open mixed schools, with a view to teaching girls. Although funds were provided for this purpose, very few additional schools for girls were opened. It was only after 1850 that female education progressed a little, with an increase in the number of primary schools for girls. At the same time, the government invested in the cultural level of "female teachers for girls" by creating the first public school for the education of primary teachers for girls, inaugurated in 1862. Given these circumstances, the outlook in 1870 was one of "total despair," to quote António da Costa, one of the individuals who fought the hardest for female education in our country. This is more than evident when one considers the illiteracy rate among women in 1878: 89.3 percent. See Vaquinhas, which is recommended reading on this subject.

<sup>2</sup> See Lopes 319-27.

<sup>3</sup> *Almanach de Lembranças*, ed. Alexandre Magno de Castilho (Paris: Chaussé d'Antim, 1850); *Almanach de Lembranças*, ed. Alexandre Magno de Castilho (Lisbon: Lucas Evangelista, 1853 (2nd edition) to 1854); *Almanach de Lembranças Luso Brasileiro*, ed. Alexandre Magno de Castilho et al. (Lisbon: Typographia Universal, 1855 to 1861); *Almanach de Lembranças Luso Brasileiro*, ed. Alexandre Magno de Castilho II and António Xavier Rodrigues Cordeiro (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1862 to 1871); *Novo Almanach de Lembranças Luso Brasileiro*, ed. António Xavier Rodrigues Cordeiro (Lisbon: Typographia Franco-Portuguesa, 1872 to 1894); *Novo Almanach de Lembranças Luso Brasileiro*, ed. António Xavier Rodrigues Cordeiro (1895-1897); António Xavier de Sousa Cordeiro (1898-1904); Adriano Xavier Cordeiro (1905-1917); O. Xavier Cordeiro (1918-1931) and Armando de Lima Pereira (1932) (Lisbon: Parceria António Maria Pereira, Livraria-Editora, 1895 to 1932); *Novo Almanach de Lembranças Luso Brasileiro*, ed. Alberto de Serpa (Porto: Imprensa Portuguesa, 1954).

<sup>4</sup> Within the historical context of the *Almanach*, and with a view to improving the condition of women, there existed The Republican League of Portuguese Women, founded in 1909 and headed by Ana de Castro Osório, Adelaide Cabete, Carolina Beatriz Ângelo and Maria Velede. In 1910 there were 500 members, but the League was extinguished in 1919. These women were not feminists in the sense of the British suffragettes, and they disapproved of feminists who preached equality between men and women. In reality, these republican women only wanted to define a role for women within the context of the existing national structure, a collective function that would never go beyond the traditional role of mother and educator. In exchange, they insisted that mothers of the present and the future should be treated with dignity and be adequately prepared to serve their country in the only way that they were allowed. Thus, in 1913, they accepted, with few objections, their being denied the right to vote. Portuguese women had to endure an extremely slow emancipation process, little aware of their rights and capacities, in a patriarchal society that provided the basis for the Salazar regime. In the 1933 Constitution, the right to vote in national elections was only attributed to women with a secondary school, or higher, education. It was only following the 1974 Revolution and the subsequent 1976 Constitution that all Portuguese citizens were given the right to vote, regardless of their gender, social status, or academic qualifications.

<sup>5</sup> See Sarmento 119-29.

<sup>6</sup> Wenceslau José de Sousa de Moraes was born in Lisbon, in 1854. After studying at the Naval College he served aboard the Portuguese Navy. In 1885 he travelled for the first time to Macau, where he settled as the Deputy to the Captain of the Harbour, and also as a teacher at the Macau Secondary School. While there, he married a Chinese woman and established a friendship with the celebrated poet Camilo Pessanha. It was in Macau, in 1888, that he began writing *Traços do Extremo Oriente* [*Impressions of the Far East*]. In 1889, he began his travels to China, Thailand and Timor, also frequently visiting Japan, where he was received by the Emperor. Eventually he deserted his Chinese family and moved to Japan, as a consul in Kobe. His life in Japan is marked by his literary activity and by the chronicles he sent to several Portuguese newspapers and magazines, by his passionate relationship with two Japanese women, and by his increasing fascination for Japanese culture. During the following thirty years, Wenceslau de Moraes was one of the main Portuguese sources of information about the East, sharing his intimate experiences of everyday life in Japan with his readers in Portugal. Saddened by the death of his Japanese wife, Wenceslau de Moraes renounced his post and moved to Tokushima, her birthplace. There he lived with a niece of his former wife, with whom he shared his life until her death. There he also started to dress, eat and live like a Japanese, despite the growing hostility of the local inhabitants. Lonely and increasingly ill, Wenceslau de Moraes died in Tokushima, in 1929. His most relevant works are, apart from *Impressions of the Far East*, *Dai Nippon*, *Letters from Japan*, *Japanese Life*, *The Cult of Tea*, *O-Yoné and Ko-Haru*, and *The Bon-Odori in Takushima*.

<sup>7</sup> In the tradition of the late nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth, Jaime Correia do Inso (1880-1967) assumes the profile of the traveler who is immersed in wonder when faced with the unexpected foreignness of the Far East. A naval officer, he traveled the world and was posted in Timor and later in Macau, between 1926 and 1929. In spite of his short stay, of all the places Jaime do Inso visited, it was Macau that exerted the greatest fascination, aside from China, that constituted the principal theme both of his literary work and of his work of divulgation. When he returned to Lisbon, Jaime do Inso published two collections of essays with Macau and China as the main characters: *The Path to the Orient* (1932) and *Visions of China* (1933). He had also written essays on *Macau, the Oldest European Colony in the Far East* (1929) and on *Colonization and the Problem of the Portuguese Orient* (1934). His monumental work, *China* (1935), is divided in four sections, on the mysteries of the Orient, Ancient China, Modern China, and Macau, "the jewel of the Orient," where he exposes how unfamiliar and despised this colony was in Portugal. He also wrote *Timor-1912* and *Episodes from Life in Macau* (1941), among many others. The work of Jaime do Inso has obvious ethnographic purposes, which was very common at the time. He intended to create a kind of encyclopedia that would elucidate the mystery of the Orient, through the eyes and values of a Westerner. The poetics of his work

bears a resemblance to contemporary authors like Vitor Segalen (1878-1919), Camilo Pessanha (1890-1926) and Pierre Loti (1850-1912). Jaime do Inso's China emerges almost like a fictional entity, like Segalen's, as both prefer to suggest the mystery of China by blending fact and fiction.

<sup>8</sup> However, in the second half of the nineteenth century there were already several narratives written and published in English—biographies, travel journals, memoirs—by/about Western women (travelers, missionaries and relatives of colonial public servants) in the British colonies of South Asia. Among these narratives, there is a curious example, if we bear in mind that boredom was Isabel Tamagnini's greatest enemy during her journey: Alice M. Turkhud, in "A visit to a Zenana" (a harem in India), an article published in the *Indian Magazine*, in 1886, calls the readers' attention to the useless monotony of the life of a typical British woman in India and asks "every Englishwoman out there" to develop some kind of social work "and thus, while saving herself from herself, do the noble work of elevating her native sisters" (qtd. in Sakala 151).

<sup>9</sup> See Sarup 93-105.

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