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Review of Timothy J. Coates, *Convict Labor in the Portuguese Empire 1740-1932*

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Timothy J. Coates. *Convict Labor in the Portuguese Empire 1740-1932*. Leiden: Brill, 2014, 205 pp. 205.

Timothy J. Coates' *Convict labor in the Portuguese empire* is an apt and much-needed follow-up to his first book (*Convicts and Orphans: Forced and State-sponsored Colonizers in the Portuguese Empire*) on aspects of demographic movements in the Portuguese empire. This sequel focuses specifically on convict labor from roughly the mid-18th century to the first quarter of the 20th century.

A general chapter after the introductory chapter traces the Portuguese global penal system to the year 1830. The origins of the punishment of exile in Portuguese law “drew from Roman roots” (11). The major milestones are pegged at 1415, 1554, and 1609 for instance – the first marks the Portuguese beginning of using overseas locale for exile, the subsequent two dates represent the setting-up of the High Court in the various overseas locale, in these cases in Goa and Salvador. Since constructed jails only became more common in the nineteenth century, prisoners were either sent to the remoter region of Portugal (for example, Castro Marim, up until the 1860s or 1880s; or Lisbon penitentiary from 1895) or offshore to parts of the empire; the distance sent being proportional to the degree of the crime. By 1650s, *degredados* (exiled criminal or convict) were “omnipresent throughout the global Portuguese empire”. Between 1550 and 1755, 50,000 convicts and transgressors of the Inquisition were “banished within the empire” (12).

Throughout the eighteenth century and up until the beginning of nineteenth century, *degredados* were sent primarily to Brazil until its independence (1822) and after that to Angola. The first major legal revision was traced from 1852 when the degree or classification of the exiles were distinguished or sent either to western (the offshore islands of Cape Verde, Guiné, as well as São Tomé & Príncipe were included here) or eastern Africa (India included here). A “complex blend of seemingly unrelated events from the gradual end of slavery and slave trade in Portuguese Africa, penal reform in Western Europe, and the regeneration movement in Portugal” prompted rationalizing changes in the prison system (33). The subsequent legal reforms of 1864, 1867, 1869, 1884, and 1886 led to the “creat[ion] of the first real prisons in Portugal” (27). Meanwhile, the creation of the *Depósito Geral de Degredados* (in Luanda) imitated the systematic administration of the labor of the prisoners of the British.

The closing of the *Depósito* or the end of exiled labor in 1932 was a function of the financial infeasibility (or unprofitability) of the operations as well as the ineffective administration of the system. All these problems were tied to the issues of sustainability and law and order in the colonies. The concluding chapter of the book summed up the experience of Portugal by making comparisons to the British, French, and Spanish systems; thereby locating its experience in the

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context of the wider trends of the trade in labor, penal reform and development of colonies.

The book might have given more attention to the chronological periods and geographical regions. For a book professed to discuss the lengthy period between 1740 and 1932, more attention might have been given to the periods of Pombal, Maria I and Maria II. In terms of geographical coverage, additional attention could also have been devoted to Brazil and India notwithstanding the limitation of the sources. Coates did intend for the study to be a “sourcebook”; in this direction, the aggregated data compiled for *degradados* going to the various exile locations (including India) in table 5 (34), the aggregated figures for convicts and vagrants in the sub-periods 1755-1822, 1822-81 and 1881-1932, as well as the list of prisoners leaving for Portuguese Asia and yearly arrivals of *degradados* in the various exile locations in appendices 1 and 3 respectively (135-39, 144-51) lend themselves to further analysis for anyone researching on India and the non-African parts of the Portuguese empire.

Stylistically, the sub-heading “introduction and conclusion” at the beginning of each chapter might better be sub-titled “main tenets of the chapter.” Overall, the book could have benefited from a glossary although the bibliography does an admirable job by providing the detailed listing of the archival documents consulted on top of the update of the latest literature in the field. In terms of the scholarship on demographic and social history of the Portuguese empire, Timothy Coates’ work is a book that should be read by anyone researching on the field.

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