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Ricardo Roque. *Headhunting and Colonialism: Anthropology and the Circulation of Human Skulls in the Portuguese Empire, 1870-1930.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 342 S. ISBN 978-0-230-22205-2.

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R. Roque: Headhunting and Colonialism

Collections of human remains constitute perhaps the most problematic legacy of nineteenth-century anthropology for contemporary museums. Anthropology as the science of the skull was dominated by French, British, and German scientists in the heyday of imperial collecting. Anthropological objectification of the human cranium, from the 1860s to the 1880s, revolved around the belief that this was the best material for studying race and ancestry. The natural history of man was then dominated by the classification of race based on physical characteristics, notably the form of the skull. This taxonomy of races was supposed to provide the key to the 'ethnological problem': the establishment of connections between racial groups. However the diversity of the human remains brought to Europe from overseas soon made these classical taxonomies look dated. Controversies escalated with increasing volumes of evidence (including fossils), the proliferation of instruments and measurements, and the added complexities of evolutionary theory. Enter the Coimbra- Timor collection of crania.

Ricardo Roque's multi-sited study centres on the biographies of a collection of 35 human skulls sent, in 1882, from the Portuguese colony of East Timor to Coimbra University. These skulls were part of a collection assembled in Macau at the request of the Portuguese government. Roque reconstructs their trajectory from the theatre of colonial warfare in late nineteenth-century East Timor, via Macau, to the French-style museum laboratory of anthropology in Coimbra. He provides a compelling account of the place of headhunting in colonial warfare and ceremonial government in East Timor. Drawing on Bruno Latour's notion of the circulatory system whereby science and society are inextricably linked, Roque conceptualizes colonial headhunting as vitally connecting colonizers and colonized. The fragility of colonial rule in this remote corner of the Portuguese empire is reflected by the fact that irregular troops under the command of Portuguese army officers included Timorese head-hunters. Portuguese officials depended on alliances with the aristocratic and military classes of the surrounding kingdoms whose leaders were invested with ceremonial office in exchange for vassalage and support. These arrangements meant that the Portuguese became jural rulers of worldly affairs while the Timorese remained the supreme lords of sacred affairs. Roque observes that ceremonialism was "the heart of an artful management of stylized behaviours and the symbolic power of colonial authority. Colonial government was the government of ceremonial" (p. 68). The colonial justice system that meted out punishment for rebellion offered Timorese warriors an occasion to practice traditional headhunting against enemies of the Portuguese. Some of the heads severed in these colonial wars went, at a certain moment, beyond local circulation to become part of a transnational movement between colony and metropole. How did this happen?

Headhunting customs were not colonial atavisms, Roque argues, but rather the "quintessence of colonialism in practice" (p. 7). The perceived connection between headhunting and fertility, whereby the plundering of villages and taking of slaves were seen as a 'harvest' that empowered the victors while inflicting great loss and misery on other groups, was pragmatically used by the colonial administrators. Victorious campaigns against rebels were followed by 'head-feasts' which were attended, albeit reluctantly, by Portuguese officials. Although the latter attempted to create and maintain a boundary between themselves and such 'barbarities', in practice this proved difficult to sustain given the weakness of colonial rule. Roque develops the conceptual framework of 'mutual parasitism' to account for the entanglement between the colonial power and indigenous cultures in the practice of headhunting during late nineteenth-century pacification campaigns. This approach extends the term 'parasitism' (coined by Michel Serres) to examine the symbiotic dynamics underlying

colonial violence and the exercise of European rule in indigenous societies. Colonial power, seen in this way, is based on vulnerability. Mutual parasitism makes it possible to explain the complexities of intercultural exchanges taking place between colonialism, headhunting and anthropology in the case of East Timor, 1880-1930.

The Coimbra skull collection can be traced back to the 1877 request from Lisbon to the governor of Macão to assemble raw materials and manufactured goods aimed at proving the productive wealth of Macau and Timor. The collection was originally intended for the 1878 Paris Universal Exhibition but only materialized in 1880, when José Côrte-Real was put in charge of the project. The Timorese collection sent to Macau between 1878 and 1882 were a synthetic jumble over which the organizers had no control. Unlike commercial products, such as coffee, sandalwood, and gold, the 35 crania travelled without papers. Similarly, the crafted cartridge boxes used by Timorese warriors had no description and were virtually unclassifiable. The skulls do appear in the List of objects despatched, as 'Number 197. Name: Human skulls. Provenance [*Naturalidade*] Timor'. It was in Coimbra, where they were sent for their scientific interest, that the skulls were inscribed on the right parietal with a number (from 1 to 35) and the words '*Colecção de Timor*'. This donation was given a prominent place in the 1894 description of the Anthropology collection where they had been reshaped as scientific specimens. Thus Coimbra naturalists created a past for the skulls that centred on the ethnic identity of the things, and on the status of their donor.

The collection was to be the focus of a bitter controversy among Portuguese scholars concerning classification of the Timorese as Papuan or Malayan 'races'. Coimbra student Cunha published a paper in 1894 where he argued that the Timorese were 'Papuan' according to the line drawn by A.R. Wallace in the *Malay Archipelago* (1864). The Porto scholar, Mendes de Correia, disputed this classification in 1916, insisting that the Timorese were Malayan or Indonesian - in terms of the colonial anthropology that had supplanted museum-based studies of crania on which Cunha's argument was based. A former colonial officer then joined the fray casting aspersions on the authenticity of the collection. He evoked the story of skulls having been gathered from a sacred tree at Cová in 1895, after a notorious defeat of government forces. Roque argues that the processes of classification and story-telling were still more complex imbrications of a series of historical agents. He deftly unravels the processes of purification that extended to Portuguese severed heads which were carefully recovered and provided with redemptive national heroes' burials in Lisbon. It is difficult to imagine a starker contrast with the punitive conversion of enemy heads destined to become scientific specimens in Coimbra.

This book successfully combines anthropological and historical approaches in researching the micro-history of a museum collection. The multi-sited account of the mutual parasitism of head-hunting significantly adds to the literature on colonialism. Roque persuasively argues the case for studying the mutual constitution of museum objects through both things and (the deprivation/ augmentation of) words. He makes a crucial case about the interactive processes of classification, story-telling and agency. Without in any way questioning this achievement, one area that perhaps deserves further attention is the visual image. A single example is Wallace's depiction of 'Timor men' reproduced (p. 157) without analysis of how such illustrations work in the classificatory processes analysed in the text. Roque asserts, "Timor came to life in European literature embedded in this imagery" (p. 156). But could it be the other way around? And if Timor came to life through the imagery embedded in this European literature, what are the implications?

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