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1 Lusotopie was founded in 1992 (the association) and 1994 (the annual journal) by an anthropologist, Christian Geffray, a sociologist, Christine Messiant, and a historian, Michel Cahen, all three of whom wished to develop political analysis of contemporary spaces stemming from Portuguese history and colonisation. This initial trio was soon joined by a number of specialists in social sciences of thirty or so different nationalities, whose working languages were Portuguese, French and English.

2 What this network was interested in, was not a “Lusophone cultural area” whose meaningfulness it in fact disputed, nor the study of Portugal for Portugal’s sake, of Brazil for Brazil’s sake or indeed of Mozambique for Mozambique’s sake. What it was interested in, was posing the general problems of social and political analysis in the contemporary world – reform of the State, political democracy, ethnicity, neo-liberalism, civil wars, social movements, nationalism, etc. – with the sole specificity that its “empirical area of research” was formed by the spaces stemming from Portuguese history and colonisation. Christian Geffray expressed this very clearly: the aim was to highlight contemporary issues which, through this specific field, could then be contributed to global thinking in social science.

3 The fact that the linguistic factor was only of relative importance pointed attention towards other historical “traces”. For example, true as it may be that nobody speaks Portuguese in Goa and that Goans are very far from all being Catholics, who in fact make up only a small minority, it is nonetheless the only State in India to be governed by Roman Law and the Catholic minority there is larger than elsewhere in the country. Also, could it not be argued that the model of the centralising State as the main player in the economy, the collective imagination built around the production of a homogenous nation by the single party, linguistic uniformity and lusotropicalism, etc. are all very much “Portuguese” traits that were conserved in the “Marxist-Leninist” Angola and Mozambique of the period 1977-1989? In Brazil, lusotropicalism and “cordiality” aside, is the fact that local Trade Union tradition allows the workers in a company to join only one
Union affiliated to just one Confederation, and that unionists are often “experts” who are external to the company, not very clearly derived from Portuguese corporatist tradition? And was Catholicism not a focus of resistance and identity in Timor?

4 Of course, the Lusophone linguistic factor does exist, no matter how relative its significance might be. As Eduardo Lourenço put it so well, the Lusophone world can only be a specific area of intersection with other identities. But when nobody speaks Portuguese, even this strict definition stripped of the tawdry rags of a post-imperial vision so often synonymous with an extension of Lusitaneity no longer works. Yet the places (topoi) shaped at least in part by Portuguese history and colonisation really do exist. Hence the concept of “Lusotopia” invented by Louis Marrou in 1992, followed by the Lusotopie journal soon afterwards!

5 Yet journals such as Lusotopie are often consigned (or should we say relegated?) to the status of journals of studies of an aire culturelle, an expression which, in French, is both more precise and more restrictive than the English Area Studies. Aire culturelle or Area Studies, however, both refer to anything but “generalist” studies: we are never very far from Subaltern Studies... Lusotopie, on the other hand, refers to an empirical area of research, which is quite another thing. The contemporary spaces stemming from Portuguese history and colonisation outline (without defining) an area every bit as meaningful as other “areas” which see no need to give their names in the journals dedicated to them. Why should Lusotopie be seen as the journal of an aire culturelle merely because it analyses spaces stemming from Portuguese history, while the Revue française de Sciences politiques, the Revue Historique, the American Journal of Political Science, Political Science Quarterly and the Journal of Contemporary History, etc., all excellent journals which dedicate 95% of their content exclusively to the study of the western world, are seen as being “generalist” in their scope? Could it be that the centre of the world tends to take itself, even among scientists, for the whole of the world? We feel here the full weight of prevailing hegemonies within social sciences, and this has always been and continues to be one of the main difficulties of our project: it is difficult for those who do not work on the centre to gain acceptance as a “generalist”!

6 Despite this, we have not budged one inch from our original orientation which has given rise to the fruitful collaboration in Lusotopie of authors of thirty or so nationalities, often from the countries of the South. The existence of a trilingual journal (French, Portuguese and English) has created an original, egalitarian space for scientific exchanges. For eleven years, Lusotopie has been publishing large annual volumes, each with a dossier on a specific theme¹.

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7 If the international dimension (themes, authors) of Lusotopie is to be effective, however, it is essential that distribution of the journal should also be increasingly international. Admittedly, the website (<www.lusotopie.sciencespobordeaux.fr>) has made this possible to a certain extent², placing the full text of articles at the disposal of readers free of charge. The journal will henceforth be available on internet, like the others published by Brill (<www.brill.nl>), on the Ingenta database, with free access for all individual subscribers, as well as for all users of institutional subscribers. The trilingual abstracts and a few articles will continue to be freely accessible on the website of the journal.
But nothing will ever replace the “print” edition: not everything can be read on screen, and no one will imagine printing the whole thing out on A4 paper! In reality, the “print” edition remains the heart of all those journals that publish longer articles, even if the website is an indispensable supplement to it. It is in the light of all this that Lusotopie has decided to “migrate” from French publisher Karthala (Paris) to Brill (Leiden), an old and very much international house which already publishes somewhere in the region of a hundred journals. In so doing, the journal hopes for wider international distribution, especially in the English-speaking countries and in Latin America. Brill, meanwhile, sees Lusotopie as a means of improving its penetration of markets in Brazil and Portuguese-speaking Africa. Our partnership with Karthala continues, however, since the “Lusotopie” collection of books will be remaining with that publishing house.

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The journal was a particularly hefty annual publication: it will now be half-yearly and somewhat slimmer, if still substantial (150 to 250 pages per issue). It will often, but not systematically, include dossiers on specific themes (such as the one in the present volume on “Gendered social relationships in Portuguese-speaking spaces”) and the section with mixed articles may turn the spotlight on a given theme through three to five articles, while the bibliography section will continue to be very extensive.

We have plenty of ideas for the future: Islam in the Lusophone world; Judaism in the Lusophone world; nationalism; racism, racialism and anti-racism; globalisation and Lusophone geopolitical issues; Macao under China; Lula II; Galicia without Fraga; thirty years of independence in Portuguese-speaking Africa; gender and politics; Timor without Indonesia; Portugal and Spain; etc. Our wish is that the section of the journal with mixed articles should tackle topical subjects more systematically. There will therefore be a number of slight changes along the way, but Lusotopie is not changing its editorial tack, and is simply starting a new, more professionalised, more internationalised phase of its existence.

So now take a look at this first issue published by Brill, the twelfth volume since 1994, and send us any criticisms and ideas you might have. Along with those subscriptions, of course!
Bordeaux, 12 July 2005

NOTES

2. As of 12 July 2005, the website <www.lusotopie.sciencespobordeaux.fr> had had 33,532 visitors, making around one hundred hits a week since 1998, and more than 200 visits a week in the last year. This is significant but still far from being sufficient.

3. Only one volume has been published to date: Jacky Picard (ed.), Le Brésil de Lula. Les défis d’un socialisme démocratique à la périphérie du capitalisme, Paris, Karthala 344 p., ISBN: 2-84586-410-8, abstracts in French, Portuguese and English (“Livres Lusotopie”, 1). Among other projects currently being studied or prepared: Viriato da Cruz; the political economy of post-colonial Angola; the Portuguese Communist Party and the colonial question; racism in Portugal; etc.