

1. **Title:** PHOTOGRAPHING COLONIAL BORDERS: looking at the Portuguese Border's Archive

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Photography emerged in early nineteenth century in a context of American and European colonial territorial “expansion”, promoting the visual capture of lands and peoples and making way for a visual information society. It is not surprising, then, that this particular context, among many others, was inscribed in photography’s identity from its inception. The French scientist François Arago mentioned photography’s benefits to the colonial enterprise in his presentation of Daguerre’s invention - the daguerreotype, a first form of photography - at the French Deputy Chamber on July 3, 1839:

“To copy the millions and millions of hieroglyphs that cover, even from the outside, the great monuments of Thebes, Memphis, Karnak (...) equip the Institute of Egypt with two or three pieces of equipment by Mr. Daguerre, and on several of the great plates of the famous work, the result of our immortal expedition, vast extensions of real hieroglyphs will replace fictional or pure convention hieroglyphs; (...) At a glance, everyone will then realize the immense role that photographic procedures are destined to play in this great national company” (François Arago, “Rapport sur le daguerreotype”, AA.VV. Du Bon usage de la photographie, Editions Photo Poche, p. 12).

Oliver Wendel Holmes, introducing the invention to the American public in 1859, also highlighted the benefits of dematerialization, reproduction and symbolic appropriation of any objects in the context of an Imperial gaze and an emerging industrial information age:

“Form is now separated from matter [due to photography and photographic stereoscopy]. In fact, matter as a visible object is no longer of much use, except as a mold in which form is a configuration.(...) There is only one Coliseum or Pantheon; but how many millions of potential negatives - which represent as many billions of images - have been stored since they were built! Every imaginable object of Nature and Art will soon give us its image. Man will hunt any large object, beautiful or curious, just as cows hunt in South America (...). The consequence of this will soon be a huge collection of shapes that we will have to sort and sort into large libraries, just as we do now in albums. The day will come when a man who wants to see an object, natural or artificial, will go to the Imperial Library, the National Library or the Municipal Stereographic Library and ask to see an image as he now asks to see a book” (Oliver Wendel Holmes, *Athlantic Monthly* , Boston, Vol. 3, n° 20, June 1859, p. 738-749) (Portuguese version translated by Margarida Medeiros, in *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens*, n° 39, *Fotografia(s)*, June 2008).

His anticipation is astonishing, although, of course, he couldn’t think about neither the WWW nor about search engines. Thus, photography relations to knowledge and power was immediately perceived and actually motivated the invention. And if we cannot really argue for a “colonial essence” (or any other essence) of photography, it is true that there is a colonial sociogenesis, that made it an immediate instrument within many military expeditions as well as scientific and that the ideas of “capture” and “extraction” are incorporated into the photographic apparatus mimicking the colonial enterprise.

Thus, it is no surprise that we can find photographic documentation in the context of colonial border delimitation expeditions covering an important part of the history of photography.

For this paper, I am taking into account the collection of photographic albums, prints and negatives of different typologies that relate to the Archive of Borders of the Tropical Scientific Research Institute (Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical) that now belongs to the Museum of Natural History and Science of the Lisbon University. This institute has a long history, beginning in 1883 as the Cartography Commission and evolving to comprise many other tropical applying sciences in such domains as tropical medicine, tropical botany, geology, zoology, geography, anthropology, etc. The border delimitation expeditions relate to the Institute's first role as a cartography commission focused on geography and geodesy sciences (in fact, this governmental commission had many ties with the private Geography Society of Lisbon, sharing many of the same members). In the African continent alone (I am not considering Asia in this study), the archive comprises 9 albums documenting border delimitations and 2 albums of more general geodesic works (that include but are not limited to border delimitation). There are about 900 glass negatives, an uncertain number of film negatives, many albumen, gelatin and cyanotype prints, monoscopies as well as stereoscopies and photographic panoramas. The albums have different numbers of images, averaging the hundred, and span from 1890 to 1930's (see table). Although there is documented evidence of the presence of cameras in many more border expeditions, they were not preserved, at least in this archive.

The first time I saw these albums and photos, a couple of years ago, I accepted the immediate readings conveying ideas of both travel adventures and technical documentation of complicated procedures and great expertise. I never thought of anything different than a pacific entrepreneurship done by Portuguese "heroes", often mentioned as "the great builders of nations". In fact, most photos put together in sequences, generally tell the story of the endeavors to enter into the interior lands of Angola or Mozambique, with no roads and many obstacles, crossings of rivers, mountains and savanas; stories of the need to hunt in order to have food, in spite of the rice, cans and other provisions transported by near two hundred black men carriers, in a way or another, recruited to the job among local villagers. Stories of survival, that Carlos Viegas Gago Coutinho (1869 - 1959), the most active Portuguese military, several times the commander-in-chief of these expeditions, summarized as requiring from the men assigned to the job almost a hollywoodesque character:

"Alongside the special technical preparation and vast experience of the colonies, which the personnel for these services of surveying and mapping the colonial territories should have, it must also not be lost sight of the fact that they must fulfill other requirements: be indifferent to dressing badly or eating poorly, experiencing hardship, etc. He must know something about bricklayers, carpenters, locksmiths, photography, even repairing boots! They must be men of sport, almost capable of meeting the demands of American movie heroes: ride a horse, mule or donkey; climb well to hills and peaks or trees; not suffer from vertigo; governing boats, swimming, diving, flying; to hunt; to fight; have enough strength to throw a 25 kg load into the air, to show that it is light... And, at the same time, you need to have delicacy of hands to rectify theodolites and

micrometers, put spider strands in crosshairs, or point out glasses like a good observer” (Report by Gago Coutinho, Geodesic Mission of São Tomé and Prince, 1918).

And, in fact, photographs do testify all of this, which, in a way, is true and faithful to what those white men experienced and strove for. I did not find at any moment in the official documentation deposited at the archive, a shadow of a doubt concerning the Portuguese right to those lands (if there is it is not in this official military and diplomatic context!).

However, frequently, a story half told becomes untrue, or, at least, incomplete. And this is exactly what I feel now, regarding the photographic documentation of the activities of border delimitation, aimed at the identification of the exact places where the colonial borders should be in the African territories. The goal was to build the maps of the European possessions, divided theoretically by drawing a line in the (uncertain) African map, during the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884/85. From 15th November 1884 to 26th February 1885, fourteen nations (Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden-Norway, United States and the Ottoman Empire) set up to split into slices the appetizing “African cake” among them, regardless African populations and nations, that were not recognized as “civilized” and thus, as political peers. Excluded from the table of negotiations, africans themselves, in the photographic archive I am studying (and in many colonial archives), are often represented at the margins of photographs. Other times, they are the central motives, as often in Gago Coutinho’s many group portraits of all the expedition personnel, and their agency and participation was many times recognized by Coutinho not only in the photos but also in his written reports. Any way, black Africans are never at the center of the power, for instances, at the official meetings to sign the documents that, step by step, are being done to certify the border sections already accepted by the parts: this was always done by the two European authorities that met to determine the respective domains and took the respective photo. Moreover, in reality those many black africans portrayed, many times as agents of the border operations (helping out in diverse unspecialized but crucial activities), are themselves object of the possessions that are being marked. So, all procedures, including photographic procedures, although intended as impartial documents, do act as an overview of the possessions and a kind of certificate of propriety: black men and women included in that propriety (they would be obliged to pay taxes to the respective colonial administration and forced to work through various legislations).

So, what I realized in a second more careful look is that I was witnessing the political occupation of African territories; I was looking at the very actions of occupying and taking over those territories. The story changed dramatically. It was no more a travel story, of beautiful landscapes and friendly “exotic” peoples, of forgotten countries, often represented as “savage” and awaiting for rescue, of lovely and promising dwellings. It was also not a single story on the many technical works accomplished nor of the border landmarks built. It became a violent story, a story of war and occupation, of extraction and robbery, an unspoken story, unphotographed in a way, unphotographable in another.

Therefore, my research strategy evolved to find the out-of-field of these photographs; as well as the “untaken” photos; and to think about what is

unphotographble concerning the phenomenology of both photography and borders.

The search for the out-of-field is, actually, that of context and I am working with Ariella Aisha Azoulay's idea of a counter-archive that she recently experimented in her exhibition *Errata*, at the Tapiés Foundation in Barcelona. The idea is to confront the stories we see in the albums with other documentation that tell a different story or a more complete one. For instance, in the 1890's album of the Lourenço Marques (Maputo) District border, led by captain Freire de Andrade, a new period of "the pacification war" was reactivated in the context of the British Ultimatum of January 1890. The expedition didn't witness or participated in any battle, since these were very localized and dispersed, but a climate of conflict was installed. In Mozambique the war against the Vátuas, the very region of this expedition, was going on intermittently since 1849, and was over in 1895, with the prison of Gungunhana, the Vátua king. In the album of this border there are several photographs of Gungunhana with Portuguese local authorities as well as photos of his wives. The report tells us that the Vátua king complained about being excluded from the works of the border, in spite of his acceptance of the Portuguese flag: "How can you be in my reign, signaling its borders, without me? How do you know its limits?" - he asked. Photographs (the photographic ritual of taking the photos, more accurately), in this example, are an integral part of a diplomatic strategy to convince Gungunhana that his power was acknowledged. But this was only in appearance.

Several of these 9 albums have diplomatic photographs of similar kinds, revealing the force given to images themselves and, most of all, to the act of taking the photo as a diplomatic ritual: some taken with European peers; a few with local African chiefs - mainly visits to the villages. In this case, always demanding to the "Sobas" (the African chiefs) many favors and the raising of the Portuguese flag, an important symbol that was mandatory.

The domination of many of the African peoples was obtained through these "wars of pacification", implying that there was resistance and fight. That is why these border delimitation expeditions were military and were, most of the times, accompanied by military forces.

It is recognized, though, that Portugal had many difficulties to accomplish the "effective occupation" that came out of the Berlin conference, due to lack of human and material means, which played in favor of the local peoples since in many interior areas Portuguese presence was scarce to inexistent until very late in the 20th century.

Another example of the research for a wider context, can be found in labor legislation. Throughout the entire period covered by these albums (the latest is 1930s) many laws passed to put labor as an obligation of the African. The Work Code of 1878 or of 1899 legalized forced labor; later legislation considered it a moral obligation and a civilizing tool. There was an obligation of the local chiefs to provide for carriers.

The "untaken" photos relate to accounts of violence during the expeditions. I only found accounts of violence in the 1890s report (Border delimitation of Lourenço Marques, Mozambique), but there are many reports on escapes by the carriers in the majority of the reports. This was a huge problem for the head of the expeditions. This relates to the overall context of labor regulated by the legislation just mentioned and escapes can also be seen as a resistance. Nor the beatings (in the 1890s report) nor the escapes were ever photographed for obvious reasons of secrecy (actions were still difficult to depict at this point, due to lack of sensitivity of cameras). Unphotographed remained, as well, the working

conditions of the Africans. By contrast, considerable attention was given to the campings of the white personnel, with many photographs and written descriptions and marks in maps.

Concerning the phenomenology of border photographs and of borders themselves, I relate this topic, partially, with the “unphotographable”, since a frontier line doesn’t exist in the soil, unless walls have been built - and unfortunately there are many examples of these walls. If there is no walls, what you photograph is a landscape in front of you: even if there is a mountain or a river signaling the division of the border, the border doesn’t show. What you’ll see is a river or a mountain (the same might apply to the photograph of the wall, if you do not know it stands for a border). But in nature this is more so. Nature has no such divisions. Borders are social and political constructs. Even between different neighborhoods within a city, you cannot photograph their borders. That is why in virtual globes and virtual maps, made up with orthophotographs, you have to select the “border layer”, if you want to know where you are changing districts or countries, for instances. This is the reason to build landmarks along the frontier lines. And this was what could be photographed. That is why the majority of the border delimitation albums depict all built landmarks and organize them in sequences. Unfolding the album pages, we will be able to imagine a frontier line made with the different landmarks that show the inscription of their geographical coordinates in terms of latitude and longitude, so we could know exactly where they are. But the unfolding of such photographs not only documents, but gains a symbolic power. Border photographs, as indexes, are indexes of indexes: they photograph what serves to indicate where the border is. Without these sculpturing practices of land marking we only would have landscapes (since we are photographing vast areas envisioned as a scene it falls on landscape as a pictorial genre).

Gago Coutinho acknowledged the importance of photography for the praise of documentation and future understanding of the frontier: “it is very convenient to gather in an album, the photographs of the landmarks that are of interest to the knowledge of the border and constitute documents” (Report of the Border Delimitation Expedition of Tete, South Zambeze, 1904-05, p. 127)”. He was an experienced geographer that valued the description of the local surroundings, which explains the prolific use of photography: “We made a few hundred clichés to fix not only the terrain's relief, as it was seen from the top of the hills, but also the shape of some of them, and finally, we photographed all the landmarks. (...) [we gathered] a number of negatives enough to be able to have an approximate idea of the region we crossed and the location and construction of the landmarks” (Report of the Border Delimitation Expedition of Tete, South Zambeze, 1904-05, p. 126). Along with technical reports, the photographic documentation could inform of the way the territory looks, the way the landmarks look, raising awareness of how the colonies were, like someone inspecting a land prospect, a future investment at a faraway place. The audience of the albums, in this particular case, is the metropolitan politicians and executives most of which never went to Africa. These photographs stir their imagination.

Human activities create places and places are bounded (Yi Fu Tuan, 2008). The limits of a village, its surroundings, the limits created by houses, and the limits within a house. These boundaries general entail different rules concerning permeability: who passes or not. And rules concerning certain behaviors once inside. Medieval villages were fortified, imposing barriers to foreigners, those outside. Ins and outs happened through gates, specially named after their directions (still present today in the toponym of many cities, like Paris: “La porte

de Lyon”; “La porte d’Italie”, etc.). That is probably why there is a striking symbolic of “gates” in Western cultures. After medieval times, with the creation of the nation-states in Europe, wars were fought to establish European state’s frontiers, with different permeabilities and relative mobility. But none of these are specially visible, are phenomenologically visible. Most of the times they are what Yi Fu Tuan calls “conceptual places”, abstract conceptualizations, and non visible places. However, it does not stand for inexistent nor less effective. Conceptual places rely on different types of language and symbolic representations, combined with actual material forces and visibility practices such as landmarks and other buildings, etc. which in turn, give to certain places their imposing visible presence.

Due to this “un-naturelness” of borders, states spend considerable amounts of efforts to maintain borders active, fulfilling the role of gates where only certain kinds of people can pass. Specially those borders, like in the European Union, that are permeable, their visibility is even more reduced. Sometimes only the change of languages or the use of different signs, the way houses are built or fields and crops are arranged enable us to tell the differences. Many times, they are conceptual “unphotographable” places. That is why what one can photograph in order to depict the border are border signs (the landmarks) which are built precisely for the same reasons (today, with digital and gps technologies, borders have dematerialized and do not need landmarks anymore. Well, except when controlling migrations...). Apart from that, we have undistinguishable landscapes.

One more aspect of this. All cultures construct boundaries and symbolic ways to turn some space into a cultural place; not always are these boundaries hostile and imposing and different cultures build different ways to mark and give meaning (and inhabit) the territory they call of their own. The African continent was not a “wilderness” devoid of people. There were many different cultures, political organizations, with different languages, etc. which had their own bounded worlds, also only partially visible (villages, pathways, crops, etc.). These boundaries and borders between different peoples were not taken in consideration by European colonizers, whose attention was turned to see everything as raw materials and the Africans as labor force (trafficked as slaves since the 16th century). In the reports of Portuguese border expeditions, which integrate the albums as the visual counterpart, many stories are told about villages changing place from one side of the border to the other, in order to escape taxes or to choose the most inefficient colonizers at collecting these taxes (this general meaning they prefer the Portuguese side, than Belgium, British or German in the cases of Mozambique and Angola). Another unphotographed events. In my research this “movable villages” also can be understood as a resistance strategy, what Michel De Certeau identifies as “tactics” - a response of the colonized that indirectly responds to the powerful strategies of colonial states. Another important map (as a counter-archive) to add to those that were built by the colonial state, is the map of the local African reigns and their languages, which were forbidden by the colonial powers. Many of these peoples were cut-off by the colonial borders. The contrast between these two maps enables the observers of the albums to question the unquestioned positioned of the “great nation builders” that suddenly emerge as the “great [African] nations destroyers” - even if they were not to blame for their own, personally, since it was the historical context in which they lived. However, integrating more views give us a much more complete story.

Finally, and adding to Michel De Certeau important statements on place and space, and on narratives as spatial stories, and spatial practices, I envisage all photographing activities as spatial stories and practices, which are related to walking (another spatial story to De Certeau) and moving around is seen as a kind of narrative - a metaphor, which means in contemporary Greek “a mean of transport”. One thing leading to the others. Languages, and most certainly, photographic signs, do establish places, mental maps and identities. Places are not exterior material spaces where we stand. Are cultural significant practices that include materiality but are also founded through language and actions.

Specially in the case of border delimitation photographs, photographing practices are a symbolic powerful way of place constructing. In the case, the dispossession of African from their lands, helping the settlement of a new symbolic colonial order, the imposition of European meanings, powers and rules while annihilating much of the African cultures. However, they resisted and we also may find glimpses of their resistance stories in the Portuguese Archive of Borders.

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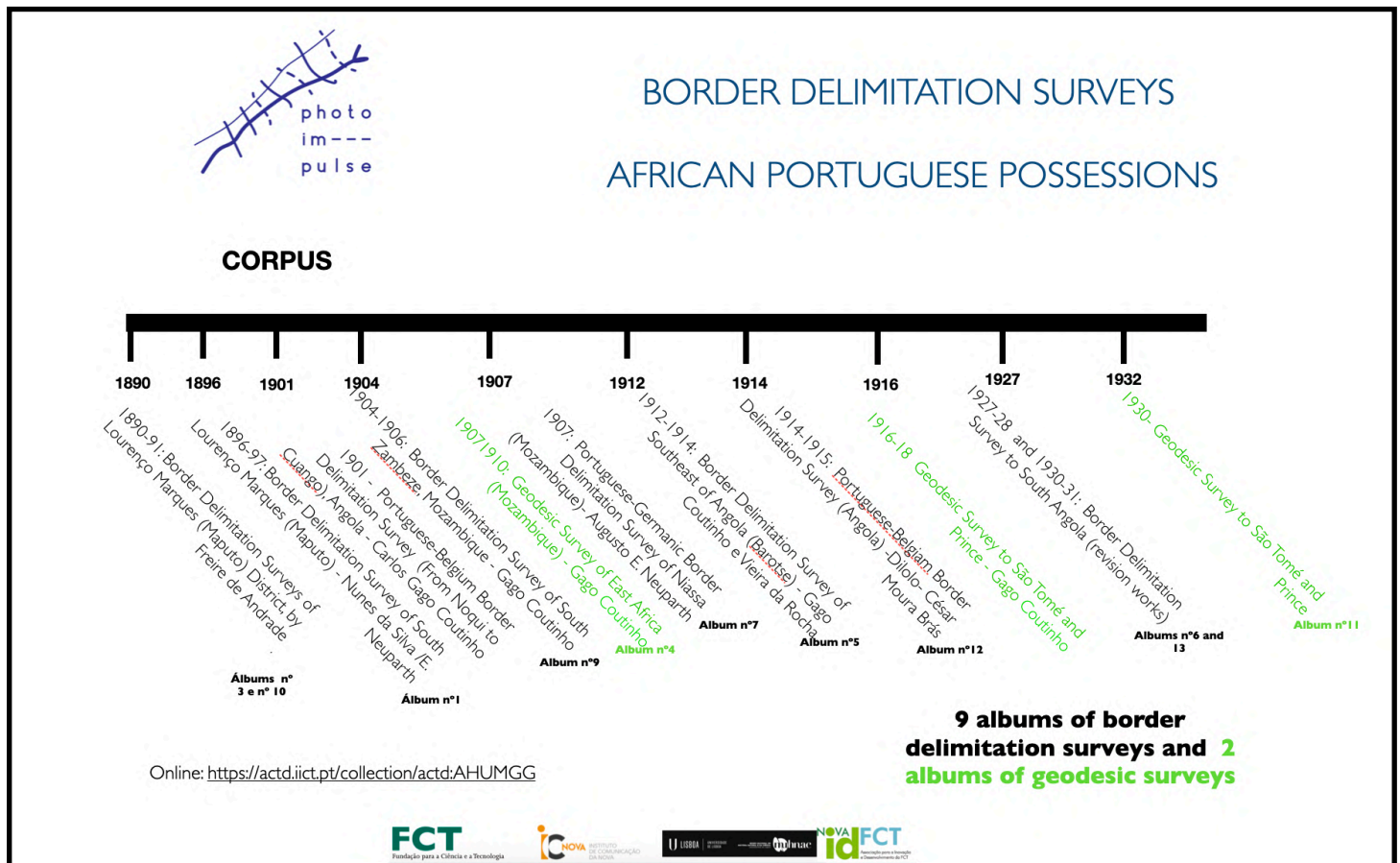
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Table and images:





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1-Landmark number 1, Meridian Luangua (West view),1904-1906, Border Delimitation Survey of South Zambeze, Mozambique by Carlos Gago Coutinho, albumen print, 9x12 cm. Album n° 9. ©University of Lisbon/Museum of Natural History and Science. IICT Photography Collection, INV. ULISBOA-IICT-MGG 23848. (This reproduction is from the original negative)

2 - Landmark number 11,1904-1906, Border Delimitation Survey of South Zambeze, Mozambique by Carlos Gago Coutinho, albumen print, 9x12 cm. Album n° 9.©University of Lisbon/Museum of Natural History and Science. IICT Photography Collection, INV. ULISBOA-IICT-MGG 23808. (This reproduction is from the original negative)

3 - [Landmark being built and deforestation works],1904-1906, Border Delimitation Survey of South Zambeze, Mozambique by Carlos Gago Coutinho. Digital positivation of gelatin silver glass negative, 9x12cm. ©University of Lisbon/Museum of Natural History and Science. IICT Photography Collection, INV. ULISBOA-IICT-MGG 23816



CORAL DA COSTA



AO LONGO DA PRAIA



Boca da Lagoa Huendje



AO LONGO DA PRAIA

4- **[Page of the album showing landscapes and works]**, 1907-1910: Geodesic Survey to East Africa (Mozambique) by Carlos Gago Coutinho,. Gelatin silver print. ©University of Lisbon/ Museum of Natural History and Science. IICT Photography Collection, INV. ULISBOA-IICT-MGG ALB4



5- **[Page of album showing river crossings]**, 1912-1914:Angola Eastern Border Delimitation Survey, by Carlos Gago Coutinho. Silver gelatin prints. ©University of Lisbon/Museum of Natural History and Science. IICT Photography Collection, INV. ULISBOA-IICT-MGGALB5

COMISSÃO DE DELIMITAÇÃO DE FRONTEIRAS DE LOURENÇO MARQUES, 1890-91.



Régulo Gungunhana e int.^{te} Almeida

Andrade-Mazena, Serrano phot.

6. Régulo [Local Chief]Gungunhana and intendent Almeida. Delimitation Survey of Lorenzo Maqrues, Mozambique, 1890. Albuminen print, 18x24. ©University of Lisbon/Museum of Natural History and Science.IICT Photography Collection, INV. ULISBOA-IICT-MGG 4022



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D2459

14
Mouras
N. 3



D2460



D2461

15
Mouras
N. 4



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D2463

16
Mouras
N. 5

7. Sequential pages with photographs of landmarks. Portuguese-Belgium Delimitation Survey, Dilolo, Angola, 1914-1915, leaded by César Moura Brás. Developing paper print, 13x18cm ©University of Lisbon/Museum of Natural History and Science. IICT Photography Collection, INV. ULISBOA-IICT-MGG ALB12.