

## The Last Mission: Religion and Colonial Francoism in Spanish Representations of Africa

*Durante el Franquismo, la producción cultural española sobre Guinea Ecuatorial asignó a los misioneros una importancia narrativa central, exaltando su labor evangelizadora. Este artículo se concentra en la representación de la misión colonial en obras de tres autores laicos que compartían una afinidad ideológica con el régimen y recibieron su apoyo institucional: el documental Una cruz en la selva (1946), la película Misión blanca (1946) y la novela Tierra negra (1957). Estas obras calificaron el colonialismo católico español como superior a otros modelos europeos, pero a pesar de su intención propagandística, también revelaron una serie de ansiedades y contradicciones inherentes al proyecto colonial español.*

Palabras clave: *producción cultural franquista, Guinea Ecuatorial, colonialismo*

*During Francoism, Spanish cultural production on Equatorial Guinea placed missionaries in a central narrative role, exalting their evangelizing labor. This article concentrates on the representation of the colonial mission in works by lay authors who shared an ideological affinity with the regime and received its institutional support: the documentary Una cruz en la selva (1946), the film Misión blanca (1946) and the novel Tierra negra (1957). These works branded a kind of Spanish Catholic colonialism as superior to other European models, but despite their propagandistic intention, they also reveal a series of anxieties and contradictions inherent to the Spanish colonial project.*

Keywords: *Francoist cultural production, Equatorial Guinea, colonialism*

In the famous Equatoguinean novel, *Las tinieblas de tu memoria negra* (1987) by Donato Ndongo, the narrator remembers his childhood in the Spanish Guinea of the 1940s and his internalization of the arguments with which colonial education legitimized Spanish rule:

The *Dalmau Carles Pla Encyclopedia* ... showed clearly that the Spanish had come to liberate you from your bad habits ... Because it's only natural that God should send a

superior chosen race to save the heathens from eternal damnation, as he had sent Moses to tear away the Israelites from the satanic pharaoh, and just as he had sent those very same Spaniards to other lands filled with unbelievers to Christianize them and bring them Civilization and the One True Doctrine. (25)

As seen in Ndongo's novel, the role of the Spanish Catholic church in Equatorial Guinea was not only decisive for its material involvement, but evangelization also provided the basis for articulating a civilizing mission with which to defend the Spanish presence in Equatorial Guinea. Since the liberal government of Práxedes Mateo Sagasta endowed the Claretian order the monopoly on the Catholic mission in Equatorial Guinea, evangelization became a state mission in which, as Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida has put it, colonizing action and Christianization became agglutinated (181).<sup>1</sup> During Francoism, the period of most intensive colonial development in Equatorial Guinea, evangelization became even more closely equated with colonization. This identification drew upon the Spanish right's deployment of Catholicism as a unifying national force in the late nineteenth century (Junco 189-94), but also built on a long tradition of appealing to the Catholic evangelization as a justification for Spanish colonialism. Despite enormous variation around how the Spanish Catholic church intervened in the various colonies that Spain held through different periods and geographical areas, Catholic evangelization was consistently invoked as one of the distinctive features that set Spanish colonialism apart from other colonial models.

During the Francoist national-Catholic regime, Spanish colonialism in Equatorial Guinea was depicted as a superior spiritual mission and a significant part of Spanish cultural production on Equatorial Guinea – both by priests and by secular authors – exalted the work of its missionaries. Within the catalogue of empire-building figures that populate Western colonial narratives – explorers, scientists, plantation owners, and political and military leaders – the Spanish works often privileged priests and missionaries as their central figures. Within this production, my analysis will concentrate on the short documentary *Una cruz en la selva* (1946) by Manuel Hernández Sanjuán, the film *Misión blanca* (1946) by Juan Orduña, and the novel *Tierra negra* (1957) by Domingo Manfredi Cano. Like many other contemporary novels and films,<sup>2</sup> these works all praise missionary labor, but the three examples selected here coincide in their relationship to Francoist colonial propaganda, as they were all either designed to promote the regime's colonial vision or awarded for extolling its values. *Una cruz en la selva* was part of a documentaries series on Equatorial Guinea commissioned by the Department of Morocco and Colonies. *Misión blanca* was classified as a film of National Interest by the National Commission of

Cinematography. *Tierra negra* was the most comprehensive work about Equatorial Guinea by Domingo Manfredi, a falangist author named “Comendador de la Orden de África” by Luis Carrero Blanco, for Manfredi’s alleged labor divulging knowledge about Africa (B.O.E, 1964).<sup>3</sup> In examining a production more directly linked to colonial institutions and state interests, I seek to study how these works reproduced official discourses, but also how they illuminate a series of paradoxes and anxieties that are symptomatic of the challenges of Spanish colonialism in the region during Francoism. Despite being contemporary works that share ideological values, *Una cruz en la selva* and *Misión blanca* reflected different challenges of colonization and indeed contrasted in their effectiveness as propagandistic pieces. *Tierra negra* was published one decade later, but the chronological difference allows me to explore how narratives adjusted to the changes in the status quo of Equatorial Guinea and the Spanish colonial politics.

Influenced by the affective turn in social sciences, Harald Fischer-Tiné has recently argued that contrary to the widespread image of calm Europeans “running the show of empire,” colonizers experienced angst or embarrassment as a regular part of their everyday experience (1). The works I examine here contain a very explicit propagandistic message about the alleged superiority of the Spanish “Catholic colonialism.” However, they also display uneasiness about the colonial encounter, insecurities about the comparisons between colonial powers, and doubts about the organization or even future of the colonial administration. By drawing attention to the anxieties that pervade these texts, I do not mean to diminish the crushing domination of Spanish colonialism but rather to question the image of colonialism as a solid phenomenon without fissures. Colonial history has proved that the translation of official colonial doctrine into practice was quite complex, if not unattainable. Cultural productions about Spanish colonialism during Francoism reproduced this official discourse at the same time that they exposed the complexity of branding an assimilationist and proselytizing colonialism as Spanish, while simultaneously attempting to produce cultural difference.

#### A “CATHOLIC” CIVILIZING MISSION

Modern Spanish colonialism has traditionally occupied a quite marginal position within postcolonial theory, which disregarded Spain as an old model of empire disconnected from nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial expansion. This conception was substantiated by some commonplaces currently questioned in recent postcolonial theory, such as the transition from empire to the nation-state or the dichotomization between early modern and modern empires (Stoler and Cooper, Burbank

and Cooper, Wilder). Furthermore, the reductive image of Spain as an old empire has also obfuscated the historical fact that Spain held some colonial possessions after 1898, namely, the African territories that today are part of Morocco and Equatorial Guinea. In the last years, studies on Spanish colonialism in Equatorial Guinea (Sundiata, Nerín, Martín Márquez, Aixelà Cabré) and a robust scholarship on the Equatoguinean literature in Spanish (Ugarte, Sampedro, Fra-Molinero, Lewis, Rizo) have provided increasing visibility to Spanish colonial history in that area. This has coincided with a healthy self-critique from the field of colonial studies about how postcolonial theory was mainly developed around the models of the British and French empires. This critique has broadened the concept of imperial formations and highlighted the need to consider the cultural and local specificity of colonial projects.

While the turn to historicizing colonial experience and grounding the analysis of colonial processes in their particular context has been long-awaited, scholars such as Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper also warn about overly isolationist portraits of the distinctiveness of a given colonial project. Empires, as they have put it, “existed in relation to each other” (7): they had their own influences and distinctive histories, yet in many cases, they were closely entwined. Concurrently, within the field of Spanish historiography, scholars have underscored that, contrary to the myth of Spanish exceptionalism, modern Spain did share historical processes with the rest of Europe (Fusi and Palafox; Balfour and Preston, Balfour). Thus, while the unique characteristics that emerged within the Spanish colonial scenario in Africa must be acknowledged, Spanish modern colonial discourse also arose in opposition to other contemporary colonial models in the continent. Not only was the history of Spanish action in Equatorial Guinea enmeshed within that of Portugal and the United Kingdom, but its self-presentation as an exceptional missionary colonialism implied a contentious comparison with other colonial powers.

During the “Age of Empire,” national campaigns to legitimize empire proliferated in Europe, consolidating the discourse of the “civilizing mission” as a justification for the enterprise. Of course, apologies for colonialism have a history as long as colonialism itself, yet, the idea of the “civilizing mission” successfully enmeshed in modern nationalism by bringing together multiple metropolitan social groups under the self-laudatory portrait of guiding the colonized towards the path of progress. European imperial powers produced their own “civilizing mission” adjusting it to their history and context: In France, the governing principles of its *mission civilisatrice* were paradoxically shaped by emancipatory Universalist republican values (Conklin 7-8), while other countries invoked the benefits of bringing the “enlightenment” of the liberal market or the

value of Christian conversion. Defenses of Spanish colonialism appropriated evangelization as the signature feature of Spanish colonialism, yet the conversion to Christianity constituted a fundamental claim of several other nations to support their intervention in Africa. In his comparison of the African colonial states, Crawford Young has noted that outside the Islamic zones, African societies lacked the shield of a significant religious system (280-81), and thus Christianization became a compelling justification for colonization. The rhetoric of missionary philanthropy appeared both in Protestant countries such as England (Twells 3-7) and Catholic nations such as Belgium, where King Leopold II even depicted the colonization of Congo as a “Christian crusade” against the Arab slave trade in Africa (Young 124). Thus, missionaries were not only fundamental in their material contribution, but the idea of Christian conversion was also central to the articulation of the civilizing mission.

In the Spanish Africanist discourse, Gustau Nerín identified a trope he called “hispanotropicalismo,” the affirmation that Spanish colonialism was less racist and more humanitarian on account of the assimilationist politics of the evangelizing colonial project (11). This assertion was directly connected with discussions that can be traced back to the nineteenth century in which Spanish intellectuals argued that, unlike other European colonial projects, the Spanish model epitomized an altruistic mode of colonialism. By alleging that Spanish were driven by spiritual interests and not by financial motivations, intellectuals intended to make up for Spain’s modest status in Europe and respond to the idea that Spain had failed to make its former American colonies commercially productive (Arbaiza 50-51). However, as compensatory discourse, these defensive arguments still reflected an inferiority complex about Spain’s image and accomplishments as a colonial power. During Francoism, missionary action in Equatorial Guinea became a resource for colonial legitimation, but also a narrative theme that crystallized a series of latent fears and desires. Rather than addressing an international audience, or even Spain’s own colonial subjects,<sup>4</sup> the three works I examine were designed to convince their metropolitan public of the greatness of Spain’s rule in its last colonial to uphold, consolidating colonialism for the regime’s attempt of nationalistic unification. Nevertheless, as Jo Labanyi has suggested, cultural production under dictatorship is not an accurate mirror of a monolithic State ideology. Representations against the grain proliferate under these circumstances of cultural production, and even the ideology of the most repressive State can generate its own internal contradictions (28). The religious emphasis of the works I analyze here reproduced the national-Catholic values of the regime. However, they also reveal the desire to emulate other colonial practices as

well as fears about how to undertake or maintain the ever-praised evangelizing mission.

*UNA CRUZ EN LA SELVA: THE CONTRADICTIONS OF LEGITIMATIZATION*

In 1968, at the imminent independence of Equatorial Guinea, Franco gave a speech in which he emphasized the civilizing character of Spain's actions: "Vosotros sabéis que España no ha sido nunca colonialista, sino civilizadora y creadora de pueblos" (Campos Serrano 377). Twenty years earlier, in 1944, José Díaz de Villegas, head of the "Dirección General de Marruecos y Colonias," commissioned the director Manuel Hernández Sanjuán to shoot a series of documentaries that would promote this idea of Spanish civilizing mission in Equatorial Guinea. The regime partially subsidized the fieldtrip of Hernández Sanjuán's team between 1944 and 1946, a period in which they shot 31 documentaries that strove to glorify Spanish presence in the colony and that included Catholic evangelization as a central legitimizing force. Nevertheless, the documentaries were coldly received by the Spanish government. After an official screening at the Palacio de la Música in Madrid in 1946, Hernández Sanjuán did not receive the regime's the help with the national distribution and the films fell into oblivion until their recovery by Peré Ortín and Vic Pereiró.<sup>5</sup> The ultimate lack of institutional support from the Francoist regime is quite surprising given that the Hermic films were not subject either to criticism or thorough censorship – the later mostly restrained to images of partial nudity (Ortín 27-28) – and that short propaganda documentaries were often shown in movie theaters during this period. However, governmental indifference might have been motivated by the fact that as propagandistic films, the Hermic documentaries were not that effective. As *Una cruz en la selva* exemplifies, while the films mimicked Francoist rhetoric, their value as propagandistic pieces was undermined by a series of contradictions that I consider related to the Spanish colonial position.

In examining the various types of productions of British colonial cinema in Nigeria, Brian Larkin notes that the films destined for Nigerians paid great attention to infrastructure, turning architecture into a spectacle of colonial success to be "sold" to the locals. By contrast, the documentaries for British viewers insisted on stereotyping Africans as primitives removed from modern life (100-01). Alberto Elena has remarked that although the Spanish government had interest in producing a cinema for spectators in the colony, no legislation was designed to support it. Thus, colonial cinema was mostly designed to familiarize the Spanish public with an idealized view of their present or past colonial deeds (34-35). The Hermic film production was explicit about addressing a metropolitan audience, but compared to British colonial cinema, Hermic documentaries mixed the two perspectives

described by Larkin. In their pioneering work about Hermic films (2009; 2014), Alba Valenciano-Mañé and Francesca Bayre have categorized the most recurrent themes of these documentaries and underlined their variety: religious evangelization, technological development, tropical diseases, colonial medicine, Guinean forestry and ethnological description (“Cuerpos naturales, mentes coloniales” 254). Infrastructure and medical technologies also appeared in Francoist newsreels about Spain for national audiences, and these constituted a means to link the regime to ideals of modernization and efficacy, reinforcing the idea of self-sufficiency during the isolationist years and the illusion of parallel modernity from the late 1950s (Medina-Doménech and Menéndez Navarro). In the Hermic documentaries, the display of buildings and new installations mirrored this usage of technology in the NO-DO, deploying it to advertise the benefits of Spanish presence and how Francoism had caught up with other nations’ colonial progress in Africa. Yet, this romance with technological development clashed with other images in which the documentaries emphasized the backwardness of the Equatoguineans and the virginity of the space. This contrast derived from the conflict between the various goals of the documentaries: whether to advertise the modernizing achievements of Spain as a colonial power or to highlight the cultural difference with a “primitive” colonial subject that needed to be rescued.

The ineffectiveness of the Hermic documentaries as propagandistic works also emerged in the disparity between narration and film imagery. While the narrator’s voice exalted the hardships that colonials endured and the straining labor they undertook in their civilizing mission, the images featured a more exploitative side of colonial life. The incongruity between image and discourse was further exacerbated in some films that extolled the role of the camera as the recorder of “reality.” In *Bajo la lámpara del bosque*, a short documentary on the colonial society, the narrator argued that the film would provide an “exact idea of the life of the colonials” thanks to the camera, the instrument “that only captures reality.” This declaration not only disregarded the ideologized act entailed in the process of framing and editing an image, but it also described reality as a monolithic experience. In fetishizing the image as a record and not a representation of “the real”, the filmmakers underscored the authenticity of image over discourse, thus delegitimizing their own narrative voice in the films. In a related lapsus, during the first minutes of *Una cruz en la selva*, the narrator addresses the audience to *listen* to the colonized as a factual testimony of the deeds of Spanish colonization: “escuchad y ved, porque si oís las verdaderas voces de indígenas y contempláis las presentes escenas, no será necesario que ensalcemos una labor gloriosa y abnegada cual ninguna.” Ironically, the voices of the Equatoguineans never materialize except for a brief and quite

unintelligible canticle in the church, while the voice-over completely dominates the rest of the film. The colonials are never heard either, but the viewer feels particularly deprived of the voice of the Equatoguineans whose alleged acceptance of the Spanish religious values had been announced as the ultimate proof of Spanish colonial accomplishment.

It seems unlikely that the discrepancy between narration and image arose from a lack of synergy in such a small team – Hermic was only composed by the director Hernández Sanjuán, the cameraman Segismundo Pérez de Pedro, the film editor Luis Torreblanca, and Santos Núñez, the scriptwriter and the narrator voice to most of the documentaries. Hernández Sanjuán himself commented that all the members participated in a harmonious collaboration (Ortín 19) and that he never understood why the documentaries did not merit better distribution (Ortín 27). The filmmakers' lack of awareness of the contradictions of their work could lie within the complexity of reconciling the multiple and sometimes conflicting agendas of the Spanish colonial model. Indeed, Spanish colonialism struggled in its attempt to mark differences and hierarchy, while praising the humanitarian and assimilationist character of Spanish Catholic colonialism.

Hermic films and *Una cruz en la selva* in particular, include images of subordination that Spanish colonial discourse attributed to other colonial scenarios but not to their model of Catholic assimilation. As the narrator enumerates the efforts of the missionaries to convert the indigenous communities – supposedly “sharing their homes” when travelling and “learning their languages and culture” – the images evince a cold and hierarchical interaction. The narration aligns itself with the “hispanotropicalista” discourse, but the visual presentation indicates a spatial separation between the missionary and the Equatoguineans that corresponded with the structure of subordination of colonial life. The images of evangelical action seemed staged and forced upon the Equatoguinean characters, who maintain an appropriate distance with the missionaries while exhibiting inscrutable expressions. The authoritarian character of the Spanish church also emerged in some NODO documentaries about Spain. Nonetheless, the Hermic films revealed a particularly ceremonious attitude on the part of the missionaries that betrayed a narrative that spoke of the dedication and approachability of the Spanish priests. In the hand-kissing scene, a standoffish priest extends his hand to the stone-faced village children, while the documentary extols the relationship between the missionaries and the children.

While frequently failing, European colonial states in Africa exerted a great effort in creating difference and defending labor and spatial segregation. Spain was no exception, albeit that clashed with its



hispanotropicalist self-presentation. This doubled discourse is particularly remarkable in one of the most prominent scenes in the documentary: the mass celebrated by the first Equatoguinean priest, Father Sialo. Colonization profited from loyalty and involvement from the native community, so the promotion of indigenous clergy was described as an accomplishment of Spanish civilizing work. Nevertheless, a degree of difference had to be maintained to preserve colonial hierarchization. In featuring this local priest, the document rejoices in the Spanish missionary “legacy,” but the voice-over also highlights his racial otherness. When commenting that Father Sialo officiated for his “brothers of race,” the documentary reminds us that the authority acquired by the Equatoguinean priest would not extend to officiate for a white community. This emphasis on racial difference opposes other instances, in which the documentary participates in the assimilationist discourse of “La Hispanidad,” the spiritual community that, according to its advocates, obliterated race and integrated all Catholic Spanish-speaking societies. In this, *Una cruz en la selva* reproduced the inconsistency of prominent advocates of la Hispanidad, such as Ramiro de Maeztu or Zacarías de Vizcarra, who avoided the term “race” in their proselytizing mission but simultaneously followed both a Spanish genealogical conception of race as well as some notions of biological racism. In the opening pages of *Defensa de la Hispanidad*, Maeztu explicitly hierarchized the races within *Hispanidad*: “todos los pueblos que fueron españoles están continuando la obra de España, porque todos están tratando a las razas atrasadas que hay entre ellos, con la persuasión y en la esperanza de que podrán salvarlas” (8). This incongruity of the politics of *Hispanidad* became especially noticeable in *Una cruz en la selva* where the contradictions within the text itself about the allegedly egalitarian message of *Hispanidad* were further punctuated by images that unveiled a colonial interaction as uneven as that of other European powers in Africa.

The paradoxical juxtaposition of egalitarian claims and hierarchized portraits is particularly conspicuous when the documentary unintentionally exposes a labor situation that questions the allegedly humanitarian character of the mission. As the documentary traces different missionaries moving through various landscapes, the voice-over stresses their “fortitude” in enduring “the greatest fatigues.” However, over the course of a montage, the spectator sees a missionary at the prow of the boat directing six Equatoguineans who industriously row along the river, then several scenes of missionaries ambling through the jungle, followed by porters whose faces are shaded by the parcels they carry over their heads.

Apart from the incongruous relation between image and narration and racism and egalitarianism, the documentaries also showed a latent desire to combine the “hispanotropicalista” discourse of missionary narratives with

the symbolic domination of the narratives of exploration. This is obvious in *Una cruz en la selva*, which is, on the one hand, one of Hermic's most straightforward attempts of glorifying Spanish colonialism by invoking the Catholic mission as the essence of the civilizing mission of "crear una nación" in Equatorial Guinea. The film opens up with the establishing shot of an Equatoguinean church, while the narrator describes Spain as the "reserva espiritual de Occidente" and the chosen nation to spread Catholicism: "He aquí la obra de España que frente al materialismo de la hora actual combate sin descanso por los valores eternos del espíritu." The narrator reproduces Francoist discourse in depicting Spain in a solitary fight against the dangerous expansion of materialist philosophy but also in its megalomaniac rendition of Spain as possessing a global spiritual empire: "Los misioneros de España son las avanzadillas de nuestro imperio espiritual en el mundo." The characterization of the Catholic fathers pursuing a spiritual conquest amidst the difficulties of a materialistic world also appears when following one of those wandering missionaries and whom the documentary refers to as a "moderno caballero andante buscando almas." On the other hand, the documentary also indulges in exploratory images that remind us of more worldly colonial pursuits. In its recurrent shots of missionaries going through the "virgin lands," the film conveys that evangelization was extending everywhere in the colony. Spain had only launched a quite modest number of expeditions in the region,<sup>6</sup> and, as if compensating for this lack, the documentary's imagery and some of its narration aimed at showcasing Spain as an exploring colonial nation through the figures of these missionaries. In a meaningful scene in which the voice-over elaborates on the symbolism of the Equatoguinean landscape for the Spanish missionary, the narrator defines the missionary's vision as a merging of an explorer, a colonizer and a clergyman: "Cada río, una ruta que descubrir. Cada río también un propicio Jordán en donde bautizar a los nuevos creyentes." Occasionally, the narrative line also deviates from the missionaries' search of the lost souls and emphasizes instead the thoroughness of their explorations, thus revealing a certain satisfaction at the material colonial expansion rather than the pure spiritual conquest. These converging narrative lines speak of the multiple agendas that Hermic films attempted to fulfill, albeit that such mixing often contributed to diluting the message that Spain had undertaken a distinctive Catholic mission in Equatorial Guinea. Despite the film's explicit propagandistic intentions, *Una cruz en la selva* failed to deliver this portrait successfully and did so to a great extent due to the naiveté of its team in acknowledging the blatant contradictions between colonial discourse and practices.

*MISIÓN BLANCA: TENSIONS IN THE COLONIAL COHESION*

The same year that Hernández Sanjuán screened his documentaries to little effect, a film about colonial Equatorial Guinea, *Misión blanca*, premiered in Spain with enormous public success. Unlike the Hermic documentaries, the film directed by Juan Orduña was not commissioned by the Francoist government, yet an initiative of the regime had an indirect but still decisive influence in its making. In 1941 Franco's government announced the concession of credits to new film entrepreneurs as a means to support national cinema. The call inspired Jesús Rubiera González, a sales director from Cegui (Compañía del Golfo de Guinea) who did not possess firsthand experience in the entertainment industry. Rubiera convinced two of his coworkers to create the film company Colonial AJE jointly, and, despite their lack of experience, they obtained a credit from the "Sindicato Nacional del Espectáculo" and hired Juan de Orduña, at the time a rising filmmaker. After its release, the film received several awards, including its classification as a movie of National Interest in 1946. As such, *Misión blanca* enjoyed several benefits for its distribution: it premiered during the high season, had priority for second releases, and the movie theaters were forced to screen it as long as it filled 50% of the movie seats (Huot Sordot 166-69). That the regime favored *Misión blanca* is not surprising since the film combined a glorification of the religious mission and exaltation of conservative nationalism that matched the values of the National Committee on Cinematography.

Based on an idea of Rubiera, the script was developed by the writers Jaime García Hernánz and Ángel Torres del Álamo as well as by Father Olangua, as a religious assistant. The film opens with a few words of appreciation for the missionaries: "... con su renovado sacrificio de cada día, [los misioneros] van sembrando en el amanecer colonial las semillas de la religión y de la patria." Despite this apparent communion between the evangelizing and colonial mission, the film unveils an underlying tension about the authority of the Church in the area and its relationship with civil colonials. Álvarez Chillida has demonstrated ("Les Missions claretaines"; "Misión católica") that while the role of the Claretians was fundamental in implementing colonial politics, the interaction between the Catholic missions and the colonial administration was characterized by ups and downs. Governors and missionaries generally coincided in their common goals, but they also disagreed about specific practices and sometimes have conflicting priorities. *Misión blanca* favors the action of the missionaries while pointing to the dangers of an uncontrolled economic migration allowed by the Spanish authorities to favor capitalist development of the colony.

The plot revolves around Javier, a young priest recently arrived to the continental region to serve with the more experienced Father Urcola. Through early scenes of the village church and school, the movie stages a successful evangelization and peaceful coexistence between the missionaries and the native population. The portrait of Urcola's mission attains the "humanitarian" representation of the missionary action that *Una cruz en la selva* had not fully accomplished. Not only did missionaries speak of their desire to live in the colony despite its harsh conditions, but the melodramatic characteristics of the film – the emotional music, the sentimental acting and the indulgence of close-ups – made their claims of self-sacrifice much more convincing.

Despite the insistent message throughout the film that the Catholic mission "no distingue de colores en los hombres," the integration of the priests in the local social fabric is neatly hierarchical, with Urcola at the pinnacle as the paternalistic leader. The native characters are typified as childish "noble savages" that speak in an artificial broken Spanish and are easily led to Christianization. Even the most prominent Equatoguinean characters, Souka and Minoa, have little more narrative function than that of catalyzing the central conflict of the film, the struggle between the missionary, Javier, and his father, Brisco, who long abandoned him to become an exploitative colonizer on the mainland. Jo Labanyi has read the focus on the father-son relationship as a plea for feminized masculinity within the complex gender politics of Francoist Spain (33). However, I think that this relationship also speaks to the power dynamics in the colony and the fears that excessive economic exploitation might destabilize the colonization project. Orduña's film establishes the scope of its critique quite early in the film, during a conversation between Javier and two experienced priests. One of the priests laments the Spanish colonial decline, and, because of this, he calls to double their efforts there, "ganando con la cruz, las almas blancas de los negros." To this statement, Javier responds: "Y algunas veces, las almas negras de los blancos." With this exchange, the movie consolidates the hispanotropicalist depiction of an egalitarian Spanish evangelical mission, but it also points out that the relationship between the Spanish church and civil colonials was not always a harmonious one, albeit through melodramatic language.

Film scholars have long demonstrated that melodramas not only have escapist or reactionary agendas but that this genre can also deliver a camouflaged social criticism. In the case of *Misión blanca*, melodrama becomes a perfect propagandistic vehicle to extol the virtues of the Spanish missionary action, but also to reflect on colonial tensions without acknowledging the existence of such, treating troublesome dynamics as isolated cases derived of intimate dramas rather than as usual occurrences

in the colony. The film hints at the dangers of capitalist exploitation, as when Urcola complains about the “colonos desaprensivos [que] solo buscan el dinero y para conseguirlo no respetan las leyes divinas ni las humanas.” However, the movie concentrates its criticism on the figure of Brisco, who runs his lumber mill with ruthless cruelty and whose ungroomed appearance symbolizes his moral disorder and marks him even more explicitly as the identifiable villain of the melodrama. Driven by his greed, Brisco displays an abusive behavior with the Equatoguineans under his service –he beats Minoa and Souka in several scenes, even sometimes using a whip – but the practices of forced labor and physical violence that were relatively common in the plantations are chastised in the film as exceptional instances product of deviant plantation owners such as Brisco.

*Misión blanca* was released in the forties, a decade in which, according to Ibrahim Sundiata, economic activity was skyrocketing in the colony. If by 1934, only three percent of the metropole’s imports came from the Canary Islands and the African colonies, by 1946, the percentage of Spain’s imports from Equatorial Guinea and the Canary Islands rose to sixteen percent (Sundiata 179). This intensification of the forestry and plantation economies brought the increasing exploitation of the workers – many of them Nigerians in conditions of almost neoslavery (Sundiata 8). All this took place after several decades in which forms of forced labor near-slavery would reappear, depending on the fluctuations of economic activity. According to Vilaró i Güell, during the first half of the twentieth century the Spanish church in Equatorial Guinea also participated in highly questionable actions: The Church traditional native priests were persecuted and only converted natives were allowed to attend the Escuela Superior Indígena, to work in the administration, or to possess land for the cultivation of cocoa. However, while the Catholic church promoted the development of capitalist economy in the colony, it was not as invested in the chrematistic exploitation of the colony. According to Nuria Fernández, the civil model of the government and economic lobby supported a practical and segregationist colonialism while the Church maintained a more assimilationist discourse and prioritized evangelization (68). Even the priest Tomás Luis Pujadas acknowledged some of these tensions (*La iglesia en la Guinea Ecuatorial. Fernando Poo*, 4), recalling that major frictions even led the Church to claim at one point that colonialism was becoming an obstacle for evangelization (*La iglesia en la Guinea Ecuatorial. Río Muni*, 510).

The film takes great care to counterbalance its discourse and still support the capitalist development in the colony. In one of the first scenes, the father Urcola shows the surroundings of his village to another newly-arrived priest and explains that the bordering lands were owned by Césareo Urgoiti, “uno de los más ricos hacendados de Guinea, buen católico y gran

caballero.” This character serves to counterbalance the figure of Brisco so that the later should not be interpreted as a general critique of Spanish entrepreneurs in the colony. To some extent, this condemnation of Brisco’s violent methods could be read as a cautionary tale in the interest of capitalist development. After Brisco brutally beats Minoa, another Spanish colonial, Jiménez, warns him, “Los negros te odian.” This statement could be seen as veiled advice that violence could only decrease labor force or prompt a revolt, an admonition that father Javier reiterates in another scene of the movie: “Le odian porque usted los maltrata.” Michael Taussig has pointedly argued that in the name of capital, neocolonialism sometimes resorts to a culture of terror that ends up destroying the labor force that the enterprises need, thus being paradoxically detrimental to economic productivity. *Misión blanca* did not censure the exploitation of the colony per se but hinted at how excess might jeopardize the foundations of profitability. In this veiled reflection on the problems of colonial cohesion, the film avoids portraying the situation in Equatorial Guinea negatively by placing its critique in the past. While Brisco still boasts to Javier that the colony is a space for men like him, Urcola reassures a scandalized Father Mauricio that behaviors such as Brisco’s were no longer common in the present: “Afortunadamente las cosas han cambiado y el explotador sin escrúpulos ha desaparecido. Durante mucho tiempo, la Guinea Ecuatorial fue algo semejante a una legión extranjera en la que no se pedían antecedentes para nada.” *Misión blanca* resolves the story with a remorseful Brisco dying in the arms of his son. Thus, the film follows a characteristic ending of the melodrama, such as the redemption and subsequent death of the villain, to encapsulate its latent criticism as a dynamic of the past. Free of Brisco, the film concludes by pointing at a future in which the Catholic missions should have a decisive guiding role in the colony.

This authority of the Church in the colony is also powerfully legitimized towards the last quarter of the film, in a flashback that underscores the priests not only as spiritual figures but as patriots. After Brisco burns the chapel in Urcola’s village, the old priest risks his life to save a Spanish flag from the building. The choice of the flag over any religious object surprises Father Javier so Urcola explains himself in a voiceover narration during the flashback described above: As a young priest in Annobon, Urcola discovered one morning that a foreign ship attempted to take the island, assuming that no nation had claimed it. Urcola ran to the church to find some fabric with which to put together a flag. Holding some yellow curtains, he desperately looked for some red fabric and found himself almost mystically drawn to the red shawl of the Virgin. Finally, with a flag fashioned out of those materials, Urcola managed to send away the foreign ship. As the old Urcola finishes his account, he solemnly states: “y ahora, aquellos trozos que se juntaron para

formar la insignia de la patria, volverán a ofrendarse a la Virgen como símbolo del esfuerzo de unos hombres que supieron llevar siempre en su corazón el nombre de España.” This cinematographic episode was vaguely inspired by a much less dramatic historical event: the real missionary (father Juanola) merely pointed out the already hoisted Spanish flag to a German commander (*La iglesia en la Guinea Ecuatorial*. Fernando Poo, 441-42). Nevertheless, the flowery elaboration of this story with its bombastic, almost histrionic music and the emphatic discourse of Urcola, is vital in the movie to depict the missionary labor as not only spiritual but also patriotic. In light of the frictions between the Church and the colonial state around their migratory and economic politics, the act of sewing could also be interpreted as a call to reconcile a relationship that needed to be firmly stitched together for the maintenance of colonial rule.

*TIERRA NEGRA: ANXIETY OVER THE COLONIAL LEGACY*

If *Misión blanca* expressed concerns about protecting colonialism from its internal frictions, the novel *Tierra negra* by Domingo Manfredi appeared when the United Nations was pressing Spain to conclude decolonization in Africa, and the future of Spanish rule in Equatorial Guinea was uncertain. Written and published in 1957, this work did not explicitly mention the recent independence of Morocco (1956) nor the forthcoming conversion of Equatorial Guinea into two Spanish provinces (1958). Nonetheless, these two processes unequivocally marked a novel that offered an encompassing defense of the Spanish action in Equatorial Guinea while pointing to directions for a future relationship.

A forgotten figure in the literary histories of post-Franco Spain,<sup>7</sup> Manfredi was a police commissioner and quite a successful writer during Francoism. A member of the FET and the JONS, Manfredi worked for several falangist publications and directed the centers of the National Radio in Tenerife and Sevilla. He penned poetry, essays and novels, several of which were awarded prizes such as the Ciudad de Sevilla for *La rastra* (1957) or the Ateneo de Valladolid for *Jeremías* (1952). His semiautobiographical novel about the capture of Sevilla by the insurgent forces during the Spanish civil war, *Las lomas tienen espinos* (1955), was also a considerable success until the end of Francoism. Manfredi visited Morocco and Equatorial Guinea on several occasions, and he found a niche market in the imperialistic fetishism that the regime fomented: He wrote about Spanish exploration and colonialism in Latin America, but also about multiple Africanist topics related to the Spanish interventions in the region. He particularly focused on the Bioko island, the scenario of his work *Ischulla*, which in 1951 received the *Premio África* awarded by the IDEA, the Instituto de Estudios Africanos founded by the Francoist government.

In the decade of the 1950s, other conservative novels about Equatorial Guinea such as *Fang-Eyeyá* (1950) by Germán Bautista Velarde or *Efún* (1955) by Liberata Masoliver closely aligned with the moral values of the regime. However, while these works depicted contemporary plantation life around romantic plots characteristic of *folletín*, *Tierra negra* was probably the most ambitious attempt at offering, in fictional form, a comprehensive and defensive history of Spanish colonial action in Equatorial Guinea. Divided into three parts, Manfredi's novel displayed a biased view of Spanish intervention as evolving towards the Francoist colonial period as the time of greatest benefit for the Equatoguineans. The novel's three sections are set in 1778, 1888 and 1945 respectively, but through accounts of various characters as well as interventions from the narrator, the work also refers to other significant moments of the Spanish colonial history in the region such as the first explorations of Manuel Iradier (1875), the establishment of the Jesuits and the Claretians in the island (1858, 1883), the rebellion of Sas Ebuera (1900-1904) and the Bubi war (1910). Published with the support of the Archbishop of Barcelona, *Tierra negra*, was also, within Manfredi's Africanist production, the work that most vehemently praised missionary action in the colony. The third story offers in particular an embellished rendition of the "accomplishments" of evangelization, albeit the narration also reveals its author's fears of the foreseeable independence of the colony.

In conceiving colonial history as a teleological evolution towards Hispanization, the novel indulges in imperialist fetishism with its allusions to Spain's former Empire but also in belligerent remarks towards competing colonial powers. Manfredi constructs Spanish colonialism in opposition to the British – that had *de facto* colonized Fernando Poo in the early nineteenth century – and insists on the distinctively humanitarian character of the Spanish evangelical mission. However, like the other two works studied here, *Tierra negra* reproduces the Hispanotropicalist discourse while portraying Africans in a racist manner. Indeed, Manfredi's novel is perhaps the most straightforward in its racist assertions, albeit Equatoguinean characters also have a greater role in this work. Africans are as prominent as the Spanish in the first part of the novel and become the main characters in the second and third section. Their representation is as tendentious as the historical commentary in the novel, yet, this change of focus and attention to Equatoguineans demonstrates the author's awareness of the importance of Hispanizing their colonized subjects. On the eve of the Spanish nationalization of Equatoguineans, the novel betrays the non-acknowledged but latent belief that provincialization would only deter independence for a few years.

By unfolding the "evolution" of several generations of the same Bubi family, the "Riebettas," *Tierra negra* has a twofold objective: On the one



hand, the novel offers an idealized version of colonial history and the accomplishments of the Spanish Catholic mission. In the opening pages of the third part, the narrator remarks that Juan, an ill-advised Equatoguinean, reads works by British and French authors about the European colonization in Africa in which “la obra de España quedaba en la penumbra, cuando no totalmente silenciada” (208). The digressions about colonial history intertwined in the plots of *Tierra negra* responded to this fear that Spanish colonial history had not been the object of enough fair renditions. On the other hand, the novel also hints at the relationship that Equatorial Guinea could maintain with Spain if Catholic evangelization would continue to thrive in those final years. *Tierra negra* imagined missionaries as crucial agents of Spanish colonization, but the political events around the time of publication of *Tierra negra*, explain why Manfredi moved the focus from the Spanish fathers to the Equatoguinean priests, whom he envisioned as those who would preserve the Spanish legacy in the case of independence. However, the novel also exposes the authors’ doubts about the materialization of his vision, since it also hints at various potential threats menacing the endurance of Spanish hegemony in the area.

With its different periods, the novel illustrates “progress” by equating it with the consolidation of Christianization in the island. Set in the late eighteenth century, the first section is quite evenly divided between the perspective of Pesa and Riebetta, two “savage” lovers, and the point of view of some Spanish sailors surveying the coast of Bioko. In the second part, the Spanish characters move to the background and the narration focalizes on Juan, the first Christian of the Riebetta family, who is traveling through the island to communicate the death of the *Abba* Eloko. Through Riebetta’s trip, the novel provides a social portrait of Bioko in the second half of the nineteenth century, showing Christianization at a still quite early stage. There are only a few Spanish figures in this narrative, and one of them, the father Joaquín – the priest who baptized Riebetta – only appears in the memories of the main character when he tries to reconcile his Bubi culture with the Christian beliefs. In the final part, the novel concentrates on three Riebetta siblings in 1945: Juan who became a doctor in Seville and is now established in Lubá; Isabel who is married to Expedito, a Bubi who owns a small plantation; and Joaquín, a priest that has just returned to the colony after years of studying in Spain and the unequivocal hero of the novel.

The three sections are equal in length, but it is in the last story where the novel concentrates the heart of its ideological message as well as a series of repressed fears about the future of Spain in Equatorial Guinea. Following a classic structure in colonial novels, *Tierra negra* starts by presenting Joaquín during his trip by ship from Spain and his immediate arrival. Colonial works often highlight the white passengers’ impression at the

semi-naked Africans who greet them in *cayucos* around the dock. By contrast, the narrator of *Tierra negra* relishes in describing the clothes and poise of Joaquín aboard the ship, a picture that conveys how profoundly colonial society has changed under the egalitarian Christianizing mission. Joaquín himself has to explain this “evolution” to a Spanish colonial on her first trip to Fernando Poo:

La señora se empeñaba en que el Padre Joaquín, por aquello de ser negro, le contara historias excitantes de los bubis salvajes que andaban subiéndose a las palmeras y cazando con flechas. El sacerdote se esforzaba en demostrarle que en 1945 ya no había salvajes en la Isla, ni cazaba nadie con flechas ... Que los indígenas eran negros, sí, pero gente españolizada por completo, en sus vestidos, en su cultura, en su religión, en sus aspiraciones y en todo (196)

As the perfect example of this Hispanization, Joaquín significantly shares his name with the Spanish priest who baptized his first Christian ancestor. While a Riebetta, Joaquín has indeed become a Spanish colonial missionary, wholly identified with the values and goals of the Spanish church in Equatorial Guinea. His cultural capital and performance remind of the Fanonian “White Mask,” but Joaquín is entirely at peace in his assimilation of Spanish standards and devoid of the anguish and “situational neurosis” (60) Fanon appointed as a consequence of embracing metropolitan culture. However, *Tierra negra* is at least as racist as its predecessors and therefore, alterity must be established within this project of assimilation. Already in the first description of the character, the narrator remarks: “He was a true Bubi, in his physical appearance” (195). This characterization has several implications: On the one hand, Joaquín’s *Weltanschauung* is that of a Spaniard, the desired development for the novel since he epitomizes the potential continuation of Spanish cultural values even after the country’s independence. On the other hand, the repeated emphasis on Joaquín’s “Bubi appearance” or his skin color accentuates the differentiation that the narrative still aims to establish.

This fetishization of Joaquín’s body is paradigmatic of the colonial ambivalence noted by Homi Bhabha surrounding the mimicry of the colonial subject. While the novel favors the Africans who assimilate Spanish religion and cultural forms, it also draws boundaries and spatially restricts Equatoguineans. Joaquín, who never questions Spanish colonialism and whose ambition is to remain in his country to further evangelization, is thus the idealized colonial subject in the novel. He personifies colonial continuity in its more ideal form, because while becoming an agent of colonization, he still does not destabilize colonial hierarchy: the text’s insistence on his

“blackness” underlines that despite his education, he is still a colonial “other.”

In contrast to Joaquín, Juan embodies the novel’s fears: like Joaquín, Juan knows and masters Spanish culture, however, opposes the Spanish rule. The novel judges Juan’s behavior as a betrayal but also as an insincere position, the strategy of a parvenu who aspires to create an oligarchy in a post-independent nation (209). Even worse, the narrator “unmasks” Juan, portraying him as a resentful subject because he truly despises his own land and fantasizes about being something other than what he is, a white Spanish man (204). With Juan’s nostalgic memories of Spain and his failed romance with a Spanish woman, the novel also tackles another thorny issue for Spanish colonialism in Africa that Manfredi envisioned as potentially extending to the peninsula: the interracial relations that threatened the colonial hierarchy and even the racial identity of Francoist Spain.

The attempt to regulate sexual relations between different populations was common, albeit quite unsuccessful, across different colonial states in Africa. Fear of miscegenation was a common trope in the Spanish fictions on Equatorial Guinea, even though it contradicted the assimilationist discourse of Catholic evangelization based on *mestizaje* in Latin America. A similar dilemma was also faced by German Catholic missions in Africa that ended up arguing against interracial marriages by invoking “cultural differences” rather than “racial purity” (Hölzl 322). In contrast, Spanish missions combatted miscegenation by adhering to the Catholic imperative that sexual relations ought to take place within the Christian marriage and that most interracial relations were extramarital. Anxiety at interracial relationships also emerged in many Spanish colonial works, including *Misión blanca* when Urcola censored the white men that “succumb to the ebony embrace.” Orduña’s film classified interracial desire as an “obsession” of deviant white men such as Brisco, the consequence of individual pathology rather than a widespread practice and a structural effect of the colonial economy. While the sexual activity of the white settlers remained a marginal topic in colonial works up to independence, in this last period we find a new contradiction: To justify hispanotropicalist discourses, Equatoguinean characters were given much more prominence in the narratives, and yet, interracial romance was absent or impossible to materialize. In negotiating this, *Tierra negra* anticipated films such as *Piedra de toque* (1963) in the instrumentalization of the black priest, a figure who exemplified the success of Spanish evangelizing mission but was conveniently celibate.<sup>8</sup>

Despite deliberate omissions about miscegenation, *Tierra negra* still brought up the topic of interracial relations to condemn them as the secret and blameworthy desires of negative characters such as Juan or Expedito. In the case of Juan, the novel attempts to conceal its own racist prejudice by

criticizing Juan's desire for white women as his own discriminatory attitude towards Equatoguinean women, whom he disdainfully categorizes as unrefined (204). Expedito, Isabel Riebetta's husband, has a minor role in the story, yet he serves a twofold function: his cruel behavior serves to depict labor exploitation as carried out by native landowners, and he is also deployed as a clear standpoint against interracial relations. Expedito dreams of economic success so that his children can study in Spain, marry a white woman, and start a family that would only visit Equatorial Guinea on vacation (203). Expedito's desire for social mobility is as problematic as Juan's rebellion because while Juan's actions reveal Manfredi's fears over imminent independence, Expedito's yearnings expose another threat: that even after independence, former colonial subjects might move to the metropole and menace the "racial purity" of Spanish society. This latent racist fear is concealed by characterizing Expedito's wishes as detrimental for Equatorial Guinea and arguing that if such ambitions were often realized, the country would lose its Hispanicized local population.

Moving between the cautionary tale and the euphemistic diagnosis of the political developments, *Tierra negra* does not conclude with the reassuring redemption of Juan or Expedito as would have been fitting in the most favorable colonial climate of the 1940s. However, the novel treats them more as potential threats for spreading discontent than examples of a generalized behavior among the colonized (219-20). The open ending with an indecisive Juan and a still optimistic Joaquín crystallizes the anxieties but also the hopes of Manfredi about the political status of the colony. As Joaquín emerges as the success story of Spanish colonialism, he also incarnates the native elite that Manfredi envisions could maintain the Spanish values even after a possible independence. While the Equatoguinean priest completely identifies with the Spanish values, he does not at all aspire to return to Spain, and on the contrary, he intends to stay in his country and evangelize within the most remote areas:

Hay algunos hermanos míos perdidos en el bosque que viven como animales y yo quiero darles algún medio de que vivan como personas. No podemos consentir que la civilización se quede por los exteriores, al pie de las carreteras, alrededor de los edificios oficiales o de las personas que pueden vigilar y castigar ... Hay que llevar a Dios con la civilización hasta el fondo del bosque, para que la gente conozca a Cristo (261)

Joaquín's involvement foreshadows that Equatoguineans would soon take charge of the government and the public culture of the region. While the narrative does not let the reader forget about Joaquín's black skin as a differentiating element, his mimicry still represents the ideal outcome of

Spanish civilizing mission: a colonized subject who will continue spreading evangelization, an evangelization that was associated, if not wholly identified, with Spanish colonialism. Thus, the consolidation of an Equatoguinean clergy appears in *Tierra negra* as the last hope of preserving Spanish influence in the area after independence. In the concluding pages of the novel, a scene takes place that I consider to be highly symbolic of Manfredi's vision. During a visit to the small village of La Concepción, Joaquín and Juan encounter a Spanish colonial woman, Teresa Martín, who has fallen sick and needs a blood transfusion. Joaquín volunteers for the job, as the narrator solemnly describes: "Minutos después la sangre de Joaquín de Riebeta, cura negro de la raza bubi, pasaba a las venas de Teresa Martín, una mujercita blanca española ... La sangre era roja, rabiosamente roja" (279-80). Since no medical reasons are raised for Juan or Teresa's Spanish husband to avoid donating blood, the choice of Joaquín is quite deliberate. By highlighting the intense red color of the blood in exchange, the narrative reiterates the non-racist image of Spanish colonialism while avoiding the shared blood of miscegenation. Moreover, the choice of Joaquín as the donor suggests that it could be loyal Equatoguineans who would drive the metropole toward colonial restitution. The nineteenth-century figure of Spain in colonial decline as a bloodless frail woman drained by her colonial subjects is reversed here,<sup>9</sup> as the convalescent patient that takes her vital force from faithful colonial subjects that would continue her civilizing mission.

The works examined here constitute part of a cultural production long forgotten. These are an understandably controversial corpus, given the imperialist perspective they purvey, or as J.F. Siale Djangany has mentioned, the "banalization of racist prejudices" (12) contained therein. There is undoubtedly a risk in recovering this corpus without careful critical analysis, and the digital era has facilitated the visibility of highly problematic archives such as photos of newsreels that circulate without a contextualized commentary. However, as Benita Sampedro (2008) has noted in a seminal article, this colonial archive could also provide us with essential insights and opportunities, such as discovering and reinscribing local agency within it. Another approach that I have proposed here is to reconsider this archive as an important source for the critical study of the politics and tensions of Spanish colonialism in Equatorial Guinea. Despite the obvious racist character that permeates the works of this study, they remain valuable not only to underscore how colonial propaganda worked, but also the inherent paradoxes and inconsistencies of colonial discourse that underlie Spanish national identity.

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## NOTES

- 1 Jacint Creus devotes the first two chapters of this book (2014) to the other Catholic missions before the arrival of the Claretians. The Jesuits evangelized between 1858 and 1872, but they faced several problems with missions from bordering colonies, with the local government and with the new Spanish government after the Revolution of 1868.
- 2 See for example the missionary novels *El último negrero* (1954) by Tomás Luis Pujadas and *Operarios de última hora* (1955) by Augusto Olangua, or the commercial films *Cristo negro* (1963) by Ramón Torrado and *Piedra de toque* (1963) by Julio Busch.
- 3 Carrero Blanco was then Director of the African Provinces and as Álvarez Chillida and Martín Corrales have argued, he was a fierce defender of Spain's labor in Africa ("Haciendo patria en África" 424-27).
- 4 The Hermic documentaries were never released in Equatorial Guinea (Ortín 35), although in 1948, they were privately exhibited in Tétouan for the colony's director (Ortín 27).
- 5 The journalists Pere Ortín and Vic Pereiro discovered the Hermic films in the late 1990s. In 2006 they published *Mbini*, a book with a selection of photographs and a DVD with three documentaries.
- 6 After the first and failed expedition by the Count of Argelejos (1778), the Spanish government sent Juan José de Lerena y Bary in 1843 and Adolfo Guillemard de Aragón in 1845 to claim sovereignty and investigate the conditions for colonization. The expedition of the first Spanish governor in Bioko, Carlos Chacón (1858) and the one by José de la Gándara (1859) had similar purposes. However, the first most prominent scientific explorations were the trips that Manuel Iradier y Bulfi led in 1875 and 1884 in the islands of Corisco and Elobey, and the continental area around the Muni River. Iradier's expeditions acquired some fame later, but his work was poorly acknowledged during his lifetime. For more information about subsequent expeditions, see *España en Guinea. Construcción del desencuentro: 1778-1968* by Mariano de Castro and Donato Ndongo.
- 7 There are few secondary works on Domingo Manfredi. Even the complete work of Julio Rodríguez Puértolas does not devote more than a couple paragraphs to this author (vol. 2, 662, 961). See also *The Novel of the Spanish Civil War* (1936-1975) by Gareth Thomas.
- 8 This is the case of films such as *Cristo negro* (1963) and *Piedra de toque* (1963) that gave a prominent role to Equatoguinean characters to offer an image of egalitarianism but simultaneously avoided interracial romance. *Piedra de toque* opted for the character of an Equatoguinean priest as example of the accomplishments of the Spanish colonial mission, while in *Cristo negro* the

African hero, the pious layman Mikoa ends up crucified at the end of the film. Susan Martin-Márquez has noted that with Mikoa's murder by the hand of fellow Equatoguineans, the film denounces the political aspirations of those who challenged the Spanish rule, but also this martyrdom serves to sexually nullify Mikoa and his libidinal desire for Mary (285-89).

- 9 This image was common in turn of the century satirical press, but it also appeared in some literary accounts. See Joyce Tolliver's analysis of this figure in Emilia Pardo Bazán's short story "La exangüe."

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