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Mouzinho de Albuquerque: Traces of a Colonialist Cult in Portuguese Public Space

Andrea Vacha
Instituto de História Contemporânea, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal

Abstract

This article analyses the persistence of commemorations of Portuguese colonialism in Portuguese public space, focusing on Mouzinho de Albuquerque. Drawing on street names, museological practices, and commemorative repertoires, the article reflects on a largely erased memory that, in certain contexts, nevertheless persists through the selective management of the past: commemoration is often preserved in forms that provide little context, while justificatory narratives silence or frame the violence of conquest. Among these traces, particular attention is drawn to the half-bust erected in Batalha, whose 1997 inauguration seems anachronistic in light of contemporary approaches to cultural heritage management. The 2025 commemorations at the Monastery of Batalha, marking the 170th anniversary of Mouzinho de Albuquerque's birth without mentioning the 130th anniversary of the 1895 African campaign that made him a national hero, highlight tensions between the founding values of democratic citizenship, memory policies, and colonial legacies. They also reveal how public space can become a field of contestation over what is remembered and how it is remembered, oscillating between a military-centred form of patriotism and the decolonisation of mindsets. In this regard, questions arise about Portugal's position within the broader European landscape of decolonising public space.

Keywords

Mouzinho de Albuquerque, colonial memory, Portuguese colonialism, cultural heritage, decolonisation of public space

Mouzinho de Albuquerque: Vestígios de um Culto Colonialista no Espaço Público Português

Resumo

O artigo analisa a persistência de celebrações do colonialismo português inscritas no espaço público português, tomando como foco a figura de Mouzinho de Albuquerque. A partir da toponímia, de práticas museológicas e de repertórios comemorativos, o artigo reflete sobre uma memória em grande parte apagada, mas que, em certos contextos, mantém-se por via de uma gestão seletiva do passado: a celebração é frequentemente preservada sob formas pouco contextualizadas, enquanto a violência da conquista é silenciada ou enquadrada por narrativas justificativas. Entre esses vestígios, destaca-se o meio-busto erguido na Batalha, cuja inauguração, em 1997, parece anacrónica face às orientações contemporâneas da gestão do património cultural. As comemorações realizadas no Mosteiro da Batalha, em 2025, assinalando os 170 anos do nascimento de Mouzinho de Albuquerque, sem nunca mencionar a efeméride dos 130 anos da campanha de África de 1895, que o tornou herói nacional, evidenciam tensões entre os valores fundadores da cidadania democrática, as políticas da memória e as heranças coloniais. Revelam

também como o espaço público pode tornar-se campo de disputa em torno do que se recorda e de como se recorda, oscilando entre um patriotismo de matriz militar e a descolonização das mentalidades. Nesse sentido, levantam-se interrogações sobre o posicionamento português no panorama europeu mais amplo relativo à descolonização do espaço público.

Palavras-chave
Mouzinho de Albuquerque, memória colonial, colonialismo português, património cultural, descolonização do espaço público

1. Introduction

As the decolonisation of public space has emerged as a central debate in Portugal, as in many other countries, the case of Mouzinho de Albuquerque offers an opportunity to question the persistence of colonial symbols in democratic contexts.

The research problem arises from the tension between forgetting, commemoration, and heritage normalisation: how do monuments, museums, place names, and military rituals continue to inscribe a colonial grammar in public space, often naturalised through the language of tribute, tradition, or national memory? More than mere survivals from the past, these devices (Nora, 1984/2001) contribute to the production of regimes of visibility and silence, selecting figures and events (or interpretations of events) that remain available for collective identification, while other historical experiences — notably those of racism, colonial violence and African resistance — are marginalised or omitted. The figure of Mouzinho de Albuquerque, considered less an object of biographical reconstruction than a question of public memory, allows us to examine the Portuguese commemorative landscape as a field of contestation between imperial nostalgia, the difficulty of confronting the colonial past, and the democratic reconfiguration of public memory. It also allows reflection on the construction and erasure of national heroes, and on how the past is used to legitimise political projects within a commemorative field marked by opposing ideological impulses (Traverso, 2005/2020).

This reflection stems from a broader study of the narratives constructed around the emperor Ngungunhane (Gungunhana, in Portuguese spelling) in Portugal and Mozambique, undertaken as part of my PhD in Contemporary History (2024). In this research, I became aware that these two opposing figures, Mouzinho de Albuquerque and Gungunhana, function, to some extent, as the tip of an iceberg: beneath them lies a vast universe of ideologies, imaginaries, identities, and memories that extend throughout the twentieth century. In this regard, this article brings together an analysis of biographical accounts, including those by Noronha (1906) and Fernandes (2010), and critical reflections such as those by Henriques (2020) and Barros (2019), in dialogue with postcolonial studies and Portuguese and international contributions devoted to public memory, monuments, contested heritage and the political uses of urban space. Beyond the literature, this article draws on a critical reading of museological, monumental, and iconographic sources. Specifically, these comprise the tomb in Prazeres Cemetery and

Lisbon's urban toponymy; the Mouzinho de Albuquerque Room at the Military Museum of Lisbon; the Gungunhana Room (or Santa Bárbara Room) at the Military Museum of Bragança; and the bust and toponymy of Batalha, Mouzinho de Albuquerque's birthplace and the venue for the annual Cavalry commemorations.

The deliberate dialectic between metropolitan centres and peripheral urban centres (Bragança and Batalha) offers a broad perspective on how Mouzinho de Albuquerque's memory is disseminated and inscribed across the national territory. By contrast, a more systematic comparison with Mozambican heritage associated with this figure falls outside this article's scope, except as an occasional point of reference, although such a comparison could significantly broaden the discussion. From these perspectives, the article proposes to analyse traces of a colonialist cult not as an exception, but as a symptom of an incomplete process.

2. Biographical Trajectory

Joaquim Augusto Mouzinho de Albuquerque (1855–1902) epitomises, more than any other historical figure, the expansionist phase of Portuguese colonialism in Africa following the Berlin Conference. His significance is not confined to Portugal and Mozambique, but extends to the entirety of what is known as the Third Portuguese Empire (Barros, 2019).

He was born in 1855 at Quinta da Várzea, in Batalha (Leiria), into a family connected to the local nobility. He received the sacraments at the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória and entered the Army School at 16. In 1878, he was promoted to second lieutenant; the following year, he enrolled in the Faculties of Mathematics and Philosophy at the University of Coimbra, but a chronic illness forced him to interrupt his studies. He married a cousin, D. Maria José Mascarenhas de Mendonça Gaivão, in Coimbra (Gaivão, 2008).

In 1888, Mouzinho sailed for Mormugão, in Portuguese India, now Mormugao. Two years later, in 1890, he was promoted to captain and sent to Lourenço Marques, now Maputo, in Mozambique. During this period, he met Major Caldas Xavier, who would decisively influence him, particularly in adopting a military solution to conflicts with the Gaza Empire in Mozambique. The throne of this empire was occupied by the celebrated Gungunhana, whose reputation as the "Lion of Gaza" had become established in a context of growing tension between Portugal and England, which would reach its climax with the British Ultimatum of 1890.

The Crown's fear of losing vast African territories intensified to the point that, despite the economic crisis, it was decided to send military contingents between 1894 and 1895, coordinated by António Ennes, a proponent of "pacification" *manu militari* (Ennes, 1898/1945). Meanwhile, Mouzinho returned to Lisbon, awaiting the right opportunity to embark on a patriotic war (Fernandes, 2010). He did not have to wait long. In 1894, the siege of Lourenço Marques by Ronga warriors led by Zixaxa spread panic and provided the *casus belli* for the military campaign against the Gaza Empire. At the end of that same year, 1894, Joaquim Mouzinho de Albuquerque returned to Mozambique commanding a squadron of lancers.

The "pacification" campaign resulted in Portuguese victories at Marracuene against the Ronga *mangas* (battalions), followed by victories at Magul and Coolela (the definitive defeat, preceding the burning of the *kraal* at Manjacaze). Too late, Gungunhana realised that the numerical superiority of the Gaza army was no longer decisive, as it had been in the time of his grandfather Manikusse: in open battle, the traditional crescent-shaped attack proved obsolete in the face of the firepower of Kropatschek rifles and machine guns, firmly positioned at the corners of the square formation (Serra, 1983).

Newly appointed Governor of Gaza, Mouzinho de Albuquerque decided to lead a lightning mission to prevent the defeated king from escaping or reorganising the resistance. On 28 December 1895, according to a report Mouzinho himself wrote, he entered Chaimite with a small contingent of Portuguese soldiers. The village was sacred because it housed the tomb of Manikusse, founder of Gaza, and was protected by royal guards. Before deposing Ngungunhane, Mouzinho ordered the execution by firing squad of the advisers Mahune and Queto, described as "enemies of the Portuguese", to intimidate the remaining subjects (Mouzinho de Albuquerque, 1896).

The Nguni court was imprisoned in the fortress of Lourenço Marques and shipped to Portugal, where authorities paraded its members as trophies through the capital's streets before sending them to their final destinations: the men to Terceira Island (Azores), and the women to São Tomé and Príncipe. A chest was also removed from Chaimite containing 2,072 pounds and 10 shillings in gold; 1,500 Portuguese réis in silver; eight diamonds (three large and five small); pearls ("the number of which cannot be specified"; Mouzinho de Albuquerque, 1896, p. 101–102); seventeen ivory tusks (six large and eleven small); and a ceramic cup bearing the dedication "from Queen Victoria to Gungunhana" (Mouzinho de Albuquerque, 1896).

This episode constitutes one of the high points in the transition between the period that Pélissier (2004) identifies as the "temps des humiliations" (era of humiliations, 1844–1894) and the "temps des centurions" (era of the centurions, 1895–1910), marking a turning point in Portuguese colonial policy as a whole.

In less than a year, the loss of territories in Southern Africa was averted and Portuguese authority restored, both in the region and, more importantly, in the eyes of other European nations. The events at Chaimite established Mouzinho de Albuquerque as a hero. Congratulations for Portugal's military achievements and decorations in recognition of Mouzinho's valour arrived from various parts of Europe (England, Germany, Italy, among others). At this point, Portuguese newspapers celebrated the triumph of the hero of Africa: from the first days of 1896, all attention focused on the glorious conclusion of the Gaza campaign. The press featured images of the colonial hero and the brave expeditionary soldiers in countless engravings, which were reproduced for commercial sale. The expeditionary soldiers who returned to Lisbon on 19 January 1896, together with António Ennes, were received with great pomp and ceremony (Camara, 1896).

Joaquim Mouzinho de Albuquerque, however, did not return to mainland Portugal: he was appointed Royal Governor of the Province of Mozambique and made it his first priority to pursue and attempt to complete the mission of "pacifying" the entire territory

(Mouzinho de Albuquerque, 1897). At the end of 1896, he led a campaign against the Namarrais (including Naguema and Mocutumudo, among the most important leaders) in northern Mozambique, where the terrain was entirely different. He became caught up in guerrilla warfare characterised by ambushes, in which he was wounded (Nhacale & Maluana, 1997). Meanwhile, in Gaza, 1897 witnessed a final surge of resistance led by Maguigwana, Gungunhana's war chief, who was defeated at the Battle of Mukothene and beheaded by Mouzinho de Albuquerque, who ordered the severed head to be displayed to deter further uprisings (Pélissier, 1984/1987). The achievement at Mukothene became the most celebrated in military circles, justifying Mouzinho's posthumous appointment as Patron of the Cavalry, in 1961.

Once the "pacification" mission in Mozambique was declared complete, the governor was finally able to return home in triumph: he was greeted by enthusiastic crowds in Madeira and Porto. However, his glory was short-lived. Although most of the population continued to idolise the "hero of Chaimite", a section of public opinion, particularly the republican wing, regarded him as an autocrat who treated the indigenous African peoples inhumanely (Garção, 1897).

Around this time, a report published in the *Annaes da Marinha* (Annals of the Navy) by Navy Officer Soares de Andréa (1918), began circulating in republican newspapers. The report denounced the capture at Chaimite as a staged event and described the cold-blooded execution of the prisoners Queto and Mahune, among other reprehensible acts, as a war crime; the issue became an arena of confrontation between monarchists and republicans. Mouzinho's most dangerous enemies, however, were at court and among the ministers, who ostracised him because of his excessive popularity (Quintinha & Toscano, 1830/1930). Because of disagreements over the administration of the Province of Mozambique (the governor sought a loan to implement structural reforms), Mouzinho resigned as Royal Governor and accepted King D. Carlos I's request to become tutor to the heir to the throne, D. Luís Filipe, Duke of Bragança. Several biographers agree that court intrigues proved more insidious than life in the bush (Fernandes, 2010). With the turn of the century came the farewells of the leading figures of the African war: in 1901, the death of António Ennes, followed a few months later by Mouzinho de Albuquerque's alleged suicide, which deeply moved the country and prompted the declaration of national mourning[1] (Noronha, 1906). On the afternoon of 8 January 1902, his lifeless body was found inside a carriage on the road to Laranjeiras, in Lisbon, with two pistol shots to the head. His legend, however, would endure, particularly with the advent of the Estado Novo.

3. Memory and Memorials of a Colonialist Cult

Mouzinho's memory rose and fell. With the establishment of the Republic, he gradually lost the great fame he had enjoyed during the monarchical period. The book *A Derrocada do Império Vátua e Mouzinho de Albuquerque* (The Downfall of the Vátua Empire and Mouzinho de Albuquerque; Quintinha & Toscano, 1830/1930) revived and cemented this story.

[1] Theories suggesting political assassination continue to circulate (Gaivão, 2008).

Drawing on this essay, the Estado Novo, from the early 1930s onwards, incorporated Mouzinho de Albuquerque into the pantheon of "heroes of the Empire", mobilising him to politically educate the population and legitimise the continuation of the colonial project. His figure fitted perfectly into an official narrative that required clear, virile and disciplinarian examples: the soldier who risks his life for the homeland, the commander who acts without hesitation, the Portuguese man who "brings civilisation" to territories represented as spaces of disorder (Henriques, 2020).

By selecting Mouzinho, the regime chose a symbol that linked militarism, imperialism, and the civilising mission in a single moral lesson. In both, literary and iconographic representations, the slender Mouzinho's physical appearance reflected his moral virtues and stood in dramatic contrast to his nemesis, the "fat" Gungunhana, a symbol of savagery (Henriques, 2020).

From the 1930s onwards, Gungunhana's capture by Mouzinho de Albuquerque was promoted by the regime as a cornerstone of propaganda, particularly emphasised in Mozambique but used throughout the colonial empire (Barros, 2019). It was useful for educating new generations in patriotism, bravery, and racial supremacy. Estado Novo propaganda tended to transform the colonial campaign into a civilisational epic, presenting violence as a historical necessity and domination as destiny (Alexandre, 1996).

Within this framework, racial inequality did not need to be explicitly stated in stark terms to operate; it was enough to reproduce the hierarchical grammar of "civilising" versus "subjugating", in which the colonised appeared as a child to be guided and the coloniser as a natural guardian.

In this respect, Mouzinho's commemoration formed part of the glorification of various colonial agents, celebrated as heroes for having contributed, in the face of numerous dangers, to "opening up" Africa and bringing the light of European civilisation — understood as superior — to those lands of darkness (Urrutia, 2000/2001). This was nothing unusual in the European spirit of the age: a trend common to all colonial powers, which turned "colonisers" and "explorers" into heroes; in the Portuguese case, Capelo, Ivens and Serpa Pinto (Mudimbe, 1988).

As Achebe (1977) observes, "Africa is to Europe as the picture is to Dorian Gray — a carrier onto whom the master unloads his physical and moral deformities so that he may go forward, erect and immaculate" (p. 19). Portugal's exceptional position within the European landscape lies in the combination of the prolonged persistence of the imperial myth and the speed of decolonisation, triggered not by a planned colonial transition but by a revolution in mainland Portugal.

Mouzinho shared the patriotic fervour directed against African "savage hordes" that characterised other colonial heroes, such as the veteran English General Charles George Gordon, as well as an inflexible idealism in the face of *realpolitik*. It is no coincidence that the oil painting by Colonel Morais Carvalho, still on display in the Mouzinho de Albuquerque Room at the Military Museum of Lisbon — "O Aprisionamento de Gungunhana em Chaimite" (The Capture of Gungunhana at Chaimite; 1958) — bears certain parallels, in terms of symbolism inspired by concepts of racial hierarchy and colonial

heroism, with George William Joy's painting "General Gordon's Last Stand" (1893, held at Leeds City Art Gallery in the United Kingdom). In this work, Gordon stands stoically at the top of a staircase, pistol in hand, confronting the final, chaotic assault by the natives; similarly, surrounded by a multitude of Nguni warriors, Mouzinho points his gleaming sword towards the shadow where Gungunhana stands, at the fatal moment before deposing him in front of his people and forcing him to sit on the ground (Vilhena, 1999).

Throughout the decades of dictatorship, Mouzinho was commemorated in various ways: he featured prominently in colonial exhibitions and school textbooks, and monographs, illustrated biographies and sculptures were dedicated to him. He was also portrayed in films such as *Chaimite*, directed by Jorge Brum do Canto (1953; Cinemateca Portuguesa, n.d.; Filmes Antigos e Raros, 2025), and on postage stamps and banknotes (20 escudos, 1940; 1,000 escudos issued by the Banco Ultramarino de Moçambique, 1953). This construction of Mouzinho de Albuquerque as a hero helped produce a lasting effect of memorial "naturalisation" (Barthes, 1957). By repeatedly presenting Mouzinho in school, commemorative, and institutional repertoires, often without countervailing perspectives, the Estado Novo consolidated a public memory in which colonialism appeared as destiny and virtue rather than conflict and violence. The regime also glorified Mouzinho de Albuquerque's wife, Maria José Mascarenhas de Mendonça Gaivão Mouzinho de Albuquerque, who ran a hospital in Chibuto, Gaza, as an example of a pious woman and a coloniser who treated others humanely. Chibuto Hospital was named "D. Maria José Mouzinho de Albuquerque" until Mozambique gained independence on 25 June 1975, and, even today, a small street of Rua da Junqueira in Lisbon, opposite Egas Moniz Hospital, formerly the Hospital do Ultramar (Overseas Hospital), bears her name (Ferreira & Vieira, 1985).

It is commonly understood that, among all forms of commemoration, monuments are the most enduring and best able to withstand the passage of time. Nevertheless, their meaning often changes profoundly when a political regime changes. This is the case with the monuments erected at the sites of the battles of the 1895–1897 campaign: until 1975, they served as votive altars to the Portuguese colonial endeavour, but with Mozambique's national independence, the tables turned. The revolutionaries first targeted emblems of colonial propaganda, as shown by the toppling of the equestrian statue of Mouzinho de Albuquerque in Maputo and the destruction of the memorial pillars at Magul and Mukhotene. The physical destruction of the oppressor's most representative symbols commonly marks regime change (Bevan, 2006). In this case, however, these same historical events were later recognised as indispensable to the Mozambican people. Replacing the colonialist narrative of conquest inscribed in public space played a fundamental role in post-independence nation-building (Inguane, 2007).

Mouzinho de Albuquerque's mausoleum in Chaimite met a different fate. In the early twentieth century, a small monument commemorating Mouzinho de Albuquerque's achievement was built on the site of the tomb of Manikusse, founder of the Gaza Empire and Gungunhana's grandfather. As early as August 1928, colonial newspapers were calling for the construction of a more representative monument: "in the centre of the village

of Chibuto, in the square named after Mousinho de Albuquerque, there is a crude monument which, in its humility and poverty, in its simplicity, tells us that it should be grand, with the kind of grandeur expressed through love and patriotism" (Oliveira, 1928, p. 1).

For the Estado Novo's propaganda, however, it was essential to erect a mausoleum that would glorify Chaimite as an example of courage, patriotism, and authoritarianism, values the Portuguese fascist regime emphasised. On 28 December 1940, an imposing mausoleum approximately eight metres high was therefore inaugurated to immortalise Mouzinho de Albuquerque, "the knight of the Grail", as he was described in the inaugural speech (Vacha & Vene, 2024). Curiously, in 1975, after Mozambique's independence, the image of Mouzinho was removed from the mausoleum and replaced with that of Gungunhana, the last emperor of Gaza, who had been imprisoned there. Such re-significations recur in postcolonial contexts, and Mozambique is no exception: rather than simply erasing the traces of a traumatic past, the aim is to recognise and accept its historical complexity (Igreja, 2008).

With the outbreak of the colonial war, Mouzinho de Albuquerque's figure and the achievement at Chaimite once again came to the fore as sources of inspiration and motivation for combat, becoming a point of reference throughout Portuguese Africa. In 1961, he was appointed Patron of the Cavalry.

> In 1961, when the Minister of the Army was Brigadier Mário José Pereira da Silva, His Excellency was pleased, by order issued on 22 May following a proposal submitted by the Directorate of the Cavalry Branch, to designate Joaquim Augusto Mousinho de Albuquerque, hero of Chaimite, as Patron of the Cavalry Branch and to establish the glorious date of 21 July, the anniversary of the Battle of Macontene, as Cavalry Day. (Ordem do Exército n.º 6, I.ª série, 1961, Determinação n.º 7)

Years later, in another striking narrative reversal, the Chaimite armoured vehicle — expected to shape the war's course on the three fronts against the liberation movements in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau — became a symbol of the Carnation Revolution (Rodrigues, 2020).

4. "Sit Down!"

The commemorative trajectory of Mouzinho de Albuquerque's figure reflects an unfinished process of critical reflection on the colonial past and a distancing from the myths the Estado Novo constructed and disseminated. In the course of the research that led to my doctoral thesis on narratives surrounding the figure of Ngungunhane, I was able to establish that, after 25 April 1974, Mouzinho's figure was largely forgotten in Portugal, surviving only through his commemoration as Patron of the Cavalry and occasional references, mainly associated with a certain imperial nostalgia (Vacha, 2024). However, some representations remain significant.

Among these, the audiovisual sphere offers one notable example: the film *Aqui d'El Rei!* (Help! The King!, 1991), directed by António-Pedro Vasconcelos, which was later

adapted into a television miniseries and screened at the *Cannes Film Festival*. The film portrays a country in crisis and the campaigns in Africa; Mouzinho de Albuquerque (played by José Mário Branco) is a secondary character, but his figure looms like a shadow, as it did in the historical period depicted. In the plot, Mouzinho is the mythologised mentor to the young Lieutenant Nuno Lorena, played by Arnaud Giovaninetti (Torres, 1992).

In 2005, the Military Museum of Lisbon hosted the meeting "Sit Down!", which brought together two sisters said to be descendants of Gungunhana and a first cousin once removed of Mouzinho de Albuquerque, who had no direct descendants. This meeting echoed the rhetoric of "benevolent" colonialism, drawing on Gilberto Freyre's theory of Lusotropicalism (Castelo, 2011). On the one hand, the initiative suggests a willingness to begin decolonising the collection; on the other, it presents the events as a justification offered by the Portuguese side, imbued with Lusotropicalism, the narrative the Estado Novo adopted from the mid-1950s onward. The meeting's reconciliatory aims contrast with its paternalistic tone, which at times recalls Lusotropicalist positions, particularly regarding the supposed distinctiveness of the Portuguese approach to colonialism. The phrase "Sit Down!", chosen as the title of the ceremony's report, together with the reproduction of the paintings, leaves little room for interpretation.

Indeed, the Military Museum of Lisbon, in the Mouzinho de Albuquerque Room, and the Military Museum of Bragança, in the Gungunhana Room, reiterate the Estado Novo rhetoric of glorifying Mouzinho de Albuquerque, displaying numerous objects celebrating the events of the 1895 African campaigns, without contextualisation or interpretations that might enable a decolonised perspective.

In particular, the "elephant" in the Mouzinho de Albuquerque Room at the Military Museum of Lisbon is, in fact, a horse: a preparatory plaster model for a famous equestrian statue. Simões de Almeida made the plaster model, which served as the model for the colossal equestrian statue in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo). Beside the pedestal, a text recounts the story of Mike, the horse ridden by the cavalry captain. The captions do not mention that the statue was toppled on the eve of independence. The toppling of Mouzinho's statue in the main square of the city's "white" area, the cement city, became an iconic image of the regime change. The statue was dismantled along with the reliefs depicting battles (including the capture) and was subsequently displayed in the courtyard of Maputo Fortress. Today, in Mozambique, it remains a symbolic object for group photographs, including wedding photographs, and also serves as a starting point for artistic interventions[2].

Mouzinho de Albuquerque is also prominently displayed in the Military Museum of Bragança, in the keep of the medieval castle. On the tower's top floor, visitors encounter the Gungunhana Room (or Santa Bárbara Room). Alongside the famous trousers (supposedly enormous, a caricature-like representation of the captured enemy and, more generally, of Africans), the room contains iconography in various forms: period photographs, newspaper clippings, weapons, and illustrations of Mouzinho de Albuquerque.

[2] Works such as "Decapture Ngungunhane Protected by the Queens of the Gaza Empire", by Titos Pelembe, propose a digital intervention in which the faces of the colonisers in the bas-reliefs and statues preserved in the courtyard of Maputo Fortress are digitally torn away (Pelembe, 2026).

It also contains a miscellany of masks and objects from various African cultures, whose analysis falls outside the scope of the present discussion. Mouzinho's conspicuous presence in the room stems from the fact that members of the Bragança contingent, belonging to the 3rd Light Infantry Battalion and then stationed at Bragança Castle, took part in the capture of Gungunhana at Chaimite[3].

In general, this historical figure is often presented in neutral terms, erasing or downplaying his violent dimension. An example can be found in an article in the Portuguese capital's cultural listings about António Marcos de Andrade, the current director of the Military Museum of Lisbon. Discussing the new collections, the article states that they make it possible to learn about "all the Portuguese explorers of Mouzinho's generation" (Pereira, 2026, p. 36).

Finally, his figure resurfaces here and there in political discourse. On 11 February 2016, the far-right weekly *O Diabo* published the celebratory article "Mouzinho, Herói em Chaimite" (2016). A month later, on 9 March 2016, in his inaugural address as President of the Portuguese Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa made one of his first appeals to the Armed Forces by invoking Mouzinho de Albuquerque's words, taken from writings dating from his time as tutor to Prince D. Luís Filipe de Bragança. In a 1898 letter to the prince, Mouzinho de Albuquerque wrote that "this Kingdom is the work of soldiers", and the newly elected President used this expression to characterise the country and reinforce the Armed Forces' role in Portugal (Falcão, 2016). This paid tribute to the Army's foundational role in the 25 April Revolution and the consolidation of democracy in Portugal, but also acknowledged the large number of former colonial war combatants for whom Mouzinho remains an important symbolic figure.

5. Mouzinho de Albuquerque and Chaimite in Portuguese Public Space

Joaquim Mouzinho de Albuquerque remains highly visible in the country's odonymy — the branch of toponymy concerned with the names of streets, avenues, squares and other thoroughfares. To cite just two examples: in Lisbon, an avenue bears his name (Figure 1); in the Penha de França neighbourhood, an area where many streets and avenues commemorate senior military officers involved in the so-called pacification campaigns in Africa; in Porto, there is Praça de Mouzinho de Albuquerque, commonly known as Rotunda da Boavista, where the Monumento aos Heróis das Guerras Peninsulares (Monument to the Heroes of the Peninsular Wars) stands[4]. This demonstrates that public space, in terms of odonymy, has never been fully decolonised (Leitão, 2016). This persistence remains inscribed at various levels, as the recent expansion of the Lisbon Metro made evident. According to the published plan, the new Violet Line will include a station named Heróis de Chaimite (Chaimite Heroes), reviving the name of the square in Odivelas where it will be located.

[3] Gungunhana Room, audio guide, Military Museum of Bragança.

[4] At the end of the nineteenth century, Lisbon's central square was named after Mouzinho de Albuquerque before becoming Praça Duque de Saldanha (Aurélio, 2015).



Figure 1. *Rua Mouzinho de Albuquerque, Oeiras Historic Centre*

Credits. Andrea Vacha (2026)

Monumental traces also appear in public space. In Portimão, Algarve, a tile panel depicts Chaimite as one of the 10 stages considered foundational to the Portuguese Empire (Vacha, 2021). The historic Pérola de Chaimite (Pearl of Chaimite) tea house has remained at the same location, under the same name, since 1938, on Avenida da República in Lisbon (Lojas com História, n.d.). Also in the capital, the façade of the building at 74 Rua das Trinas bears a commemorative plaque — dated 1935 — identifying the house where the "hero of Chaimite, one of the most brilliant Portuguese military figures and one of the most notable colonial administrators" lived (Figure 2). These survive the Estado Novo's pervasive ideological work and the deification of Mouzinho as an *ante litteram* prototype of the Salazarist soldier, persisting as intentional memorial devices, though now largely ignored (Choay, 2009/2011).



Figure 2. *Commemorative plaque on the façade of the house where Mouzinho de Albuquerque lived, 74 Rua das Trinas, Lisbon*

Credits. Andrea Vacha (2026)

Mouzinho de Albuquerque is one of the illustrious deceased buried in Prazeres Cemetery in Lisbon, where he was interred in 1902 (Figure 3). In 1936, the Estado Novo authorities organised a commemorative procession to his tomb, where they laid a bronze palm in tribute to his memory (Barros, 2019). They unveiled a commemorative plaque at the tomb to mark the 75th anniversary of his death, bearing the epitaph: "homage from the people of Batalha to the 75th anniversary of the death of Mouzinho de Albuquerque. 8 January 1977". More recently, a plaque bearing a QR code was installed, linking to the Portuguese Army's website, where the biography of the Patron of the Cavalry can be found (https://www.exercito.pt/pt/quem-somos/simbolos-e-tradicao/arma-de-cavalaria).

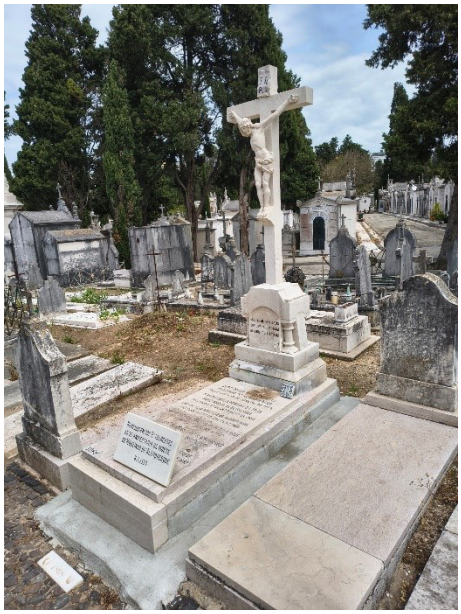


Figure 3. *Mouzinho de Albuquerque's tomb, Prazeres Cemetery, Lisbon*
Credits. Andrea Vacha (2026)

In Batalha, in the district of Leiria, the municipal art exhibition gallery, as well as the central square — which also lends its name to a nursery school and a primary school — is named after Mouzinho de Albuquerque. It is housed in the historic seventeenth-century building that also bears his name (Sistema de Informação para o Património Arquitectónico, n.d.). In August 1937, authorities solemnly unveiled a commemorative plaque on the building's façade. Adorned with a bas-relief of a bunch of flowers and a sword, it bears the inscription: "Mouzinho de Albuquerque Square. The Hero was baptised in the church of this town's Monastery".

In this context, the most symbolic object is the half-bust of Mouzinho de Albuquerque erected in the square of the Monastery of Batalha (Santa Maria da Vitória). It was created by Fernando Belo, who had already sculpted other monuments in Batalha, including the Monumento ao Soldado (Monument to the Soldier; 1991), made of limestone, which shares stylistic and thematic similarities with the half-bust. Entitled Homenagem aos Militares Mortos nas Guerras de França (1914–1918) e África (1961–1974) [Homage to the Military Personnel Who Died in the Wars of France (1914–1918) and Africa (1961–1974)],

the monument commemorates soldiers from the parish of São Mamede who died for their country.

The Mouzinho monument measures 320 cm in total: the bust is 140 cm high and the pedestal 180 cm, made of concrete faced with limestone. The pedestal bears the phrase "courage and selflessness are always great and noble". Two slightly taller concrete pillars flank it, bearing several commemorative plaques that honour Mouzinho de Albuquerque and date from different years. The representation of Mouzinho de Albuquerque, marked by classical austerity, nevertheless appears neutral: he is depicted with his hands crossed, without a sword, riding a horse, or any reference to Gungunhana's capture at Chaimite or the pitched battle at Mukhotene against Maguiguana.

Perhaps the most important fact is that this monument does not date from the dictatorship but from 1997, 23 years after the end of colonialism, a time when erecting a monument to a colonial hero appears anachronistic and at odds with the founding values of the democratic State. Although the Armed Forces Movement's slogan during the Carnation Revolution was based on the three Ds — democratisation, development and decolonisation — the third dimension, decolonisation, was understood primarily in institutional, political and military terms, without translating into a change in mindsets or an effective decolonisation of public space (Cardina, 2023). The continued presence of monuments such as the Monumento ao Esforço Colonizador Português (Monument to the Portuguese Colonising Effort) in Porto, inaugurated at the *I Exposição Colonial Portuguesa* (First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition) in 1934 and relocated to Praça do Império (Empire Square) in 1984, illustrates this situation[5] (Matos, 2021). Yet the erection of a statue to a symbol of colonialism, even one whose aesthetic treatment was softened, should have prompted questions and controversy. This, however, never happened. This raises broader questions: if, from April 1974 onwards, Portuguese public space was largely reconfigured by removing fascist symbols and references, why was there no equivalent process of symbolic decolonisation?

In the case of the statue of Mouzinho in Batalha (Figure 4), the decision to intervene so conspicuously in a space such as the square of the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, a monument protected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization since 1989, is also open to question. In monumentalisation, location is not a minor detail but a primary element. According to Rao (2025), although a statue is silent, it communicates through its inscriptions and the interpretations it elicits; however, its place decisively shapes how it is seen and understood. The surrounding space is not merely a backdrop: it actively shapes the statue's meaning by shaping the relationship between the figure represented, the memory it preserves, and the public that interprets it. According to Rao (2025), this constitutes a vehicle for immortality.

[5] The obelisk, designed by Sousa Caldas and Ensign Alberto Ponce, is supported by six sculptures depicting the principal figures of Portuguese colonialism: the missionary, the merchant, the soldier, the farmer, the woman and the doctor.



Figure 4. *Commemorative bust of Mouzinho de Albuquerque (1997) in Batalha, by João Belo Credits.* Tworlds Productions (2018)

Today, this monument engages, albeit virtually, with other landmarks commemorating Chaimite history, foremost among them the equestrian statue now held at Maputo Fortress. If we compare that statue's representation, or the bas-reliefs on its pedestal, with the 1997 bust, the latter shows a much less belligerent pose and expression. The half-bust's austere, more neutral aesthetic thus reflects deliberate choices that, to some extent, align with a postcolonial society. In other words, this involves a choice to silence certain features glorified by the regime, particularly those associated with violence — a dimension that, as Fanon (1961) reminds us, is constitutive of the colonial system. Something similar appears in the statue dedicated to the heroes of the Overseas War in Coimbra, overtly paternalistic, though it dates from 1971 (Cardina, 2023).

The monuments also correspond to Gungunhana, Mouzinho's arch-enemy, whose capture brought him notoriety. Interestingly, in 1997, a half-bust of the Gaza emperor was erected in the main square of Manjacaze, in Mozambique's Gaza Province. On Portuguese soil, a half-bust of Gungunhana was unveiled on Terceira Island in 2022, in tribute to the exiles and political prisoners sent there, as part of the commemorations marking the 125th anniversary of his exile. The work replaces biography with a list of persecuted people dating back to the sixteenth century and depicts the king, wearing insignia of Nguni nobility, as a symbol of exile.

6. Serving as Mouzinho

The Batalha bust serves as the commemorative focal point for the celebration of the Portuguese Cavalry, of which Mouzinho is the patron. Its location reflects not only the honouree's origins but also a broader homage to the Army.

It stands in the square in front of the monastery chapel, where the Túmulo do Soldado Desconhecido (Tomb of the Unknown Soldier) is located. This space can be defined as a "site of memory", in accordance with Nora's (1989) classic understanding

of the concept. Nora argues that the acceleration of historical events in France (in a process analogous to that observed in other European countries) encouraged the search for places and occasions in which memory could be crystallised, such as archives, libraries and museums: spaces capable of keeping memory alive when it ceased to operate as a spontaneous social practice. In this sense, Mouzinho de Albuquerque's presence in the square in front of Batalha Monastery can be read in the light of what Nora (1989) calls a form of "commemorative vigilance": a continuous effort to preserve and monumentally reinscribe memory, precisely in a context in which it no longer circulates as a living tradition but as selected and institutionalised heritage.

In this square in Batalha, the Cavalry branch of the Army pays homage to its patron each year. These tributes, however, did not begin in 1961, the year Mouzinho was appointed patron of the branch, but date back to the 1930s. They were recorded in footage produced by the Secretariado da Propaganda Nacional (National Propaganda Secretariat) under the direction of Salazar Diniz, which remains available today (Viriatosmilitaria, 2016).

The 2025 commemorations, however, were particularly grandiose and highlighted the enduring bond between the Army and the Church within the sacred space of Batalha Monastery. To mark the 170th anniversary of Mouzinho de Albuquerque's birth, a three-day celebration was organised by Batalha Municipal Council and the Portuguese Army. According to the official programme, "on 15 July, at 6 pm, the lecture 'The Life and Deeds of Mouzinho de Albuquerque' took place at Batalha Municipal Auditorium, marking the beginning of the tributes to the military hero". The Batalha Tourist Office also mounted an exhibition on Mouzinho de Albuquerque for the occasion, featuring military objects and iconographic materials.

The programme continued on 19 July with the opening of an exhibition showcasing the Cavalry branch's resources, equipment and activities; the launch and presentation of publications by Portuguese Army Cavalry units; and a concert by the Portuguese Army Light Orchestra, open to the public. The commemorations culminated the following day with a requiem Mass for Mouzinho de Albuquerque at the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, broadcast live on television. The solemn ceremony was followed by a parade in the monastery square, involving detachments from the 2nd Lancers Regiment, the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, the Cavalry Barracks and the 6th Cavalry Regiment. At the end, the authorities paid tribute to Mouzinho's half-bust by laying a wreath; for the occasion, the monument was decorated with a red carpet and coats of arms.

In the news report "Welcoming Like Abraham, Serving Like Mouzinho: Cavalry Celebrates the Hero's 170th Anniversary with Mass at Batalha Monastery", Bishop Sérgio Dinis drew on an Old Testament psalm to address the challenges of contemporary immigration and the need to welcome foreigners (Ordinariato Castrense, 2025). He concluded his homily by saying rules were necessary and pointing to the Cavalry corps and its patron as a model for putting that welcome into practice.

This is a suggestive narrative, though historically debatable, given that Mouzinho repeatedly showed a marked tendency to disobey orders from his superiors, both as a Cavalry captain and as a provincial governor. He led the capture of the Gaza court at

Chaimite in defiance of the colonial government's directives, which had already deemed the emperor's power definitively collapsed (Mouzinho de Albuquerque, 1896). Similarly, his difficulty accepting ministerial guidance and decisions as Governor of the Province ultimately led to his dismissal and removal from the political sphere (Fernandes, 2010).

It is also worth noting that 2025 marked other anniversaries that went unmentioned in the programmes and official speeches associated with the Batalha commemorations: the 130th anniversary of the African campaign in Mozambique and Gungunhana's capture at Chaimite (1895).

7. Conclusions

After 1974, Mouzinho ceased to occupy a central place in the public pantheon. However, he did not disappear entirely; rather, he receded into a residual presence. His occasional re-emergence in institutional and media contexts, together with the persistence of material and toponymic traces (avenues, squares, plaques, public facilities and panels), suggests that the symbolic decolonisation of public space has been, at the very least, partial, as the evidence analysed here demonstrates.

Indeed, after 25 April, most of the country largely consigned Mouzinho to oblivion. Nevertheless, his presence was neither removed nor critically recontextualised, pointing instead to continuity — or, at the very least, an absence of rupture — in how imperial memory remains embedded in the urban landscape.

In this respect, the traces of the cult of Mouzinho de Albuquerque reveal the incomplete decolonisation of public memory frameworks. This is all the more significant because "decolonise", alongside "democratise" and "develop", was one of the three "Ds" the Armed Forces Movement associated with the April Revolution. In contrast with post-independence Mozambique, what can be observed in Portugal is not merely the survival of names, but the maintenance of a state of legibility: these references are presented as part of the heritage landscape's normality.

The Batalha example is particularly revealing because of Mouzinho de Albuquerque's repeated presence in public space and, above all, the half-bust erected in 1997. The choice of an apparently neutral, relatively non-belligerent representation shows how the "unsaid" can function as a memorial device. By explicitly avoiding colonial conflict and the violence associated with the figure, it becomes possible to reintroduce him without friction, in the form of a depoliticised tribute.

Although confined to the military and municipal spheres, the commemorations marking the 170th anniversary of Mouzinho de Albuquerque's birth, held at Batalha Monastery, a site of national memory, reinforce his image as a model of selflessness and service to the nation. They thus preserve the essence of the secular cult that, under the Estado Novo, turned the Cavalry captain into a central propaganda figure, without articulating its underlying assumptions. Through museum exhibitions, exemplary discourses, and monumental inscriptions at the heart of heritage sites, these traces are normalised, effectively prolonging this continuity. The lack of consistency in the approaches and

political guidelines adopted across European countries in the decolonisation of public space is therefore evident. Given the persistence of this and other colonialist myths within the heritage landscape, Portugal diverges from the approaches taken by Belgium and the Netherlands, aligning itself instead — with different underlying justifications — with the lack of clear positioning characteristic of colonial amnesia in countries such as Italy.

In conclusion, this analysis aims to contribute to future research on this historical figure, potentially through metabiographical approaches, as well as to the study of the discrepancies between the memorial heritage associated with Mouzinho de Albuquerque in Portugal and in Mozambique. Ultimately, the imaginary surrounding Mouzinho de Albuquerque and his memory raises questions that extend beyond this article. Nevertheless, it allows us to ask which past Portugal chooses to preserve, which silences it continues to reproduce, and what forms of historical citizenship it fosters in the present.

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Biographical Note

Andrea Vacha was born in Turin (Italy) on 18 June 1984. He completed a Master's degree in Sociology at the Università degli Studi di Torino in 2009. In 2014, he spent a year working in Chibuto (Mozambique). In 2022, he was a visiting student at the Pedagogical University of Maputo and ARPAC – Socio-Cultural Research Institute. He earned a PhD in Contemporary History in 2025 for his thesis, *Era uma Vez Mundugaz: Narrativas da Figura do Rei Ngungunhane em Moçambique e em Portugal (1890–2024)* [Once Upon a Time, Mundugaz: Narratives of the Figure of King Ngungunhane in Mozambique and Portugal (1890–2024)]. He is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, NOVA University Lisbon (Portugal), as part of the project *SMS — Shared Memories of Solidarity. An Oral and Visual History (Portugal, 1960–1974)*. His main research interests include memory studies, heritage, oral history, African history and postcolonial studies. He has two daughters, Alessia and Olimpia.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7942-4927

Email: avacha@fcsh.unl.pt

Address: Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Av. Berna, 26 C, 1069–061 – Lisboa, Portugal

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