

The history of the past Portuguese maritime power has been arousing more and more interest in Poland lately. Yet unfortunately, its understanding is to a broad extent confined to linguistic or cultural studies. Poles discover this world through literature by reading, among others, the Portuguese Nobel Prize winner, José Saramago. However, to make this intellectual journey possible, one must first understand the rich and challenging history of the ancient colonial empire. It is a small country located on the Iberian Peninsula. Since the 15th century, it was the unquestioned organizer and leader of the great overseas expansion, and also the first country in the world to start a colonial policy. The Portuguese managed to explore the farthest reaches of the world in America, Africa and Asia, but over time they became so attached to their colonial territories that many decided to stay there for the rest of their lives. This phenomenon was first noticed in 1642 by the Dutch governor of Indonesian Jakarta, who pointed out that the Portuguese had actually forgotten to return to their homeland. Furthermore, in the nearby Macao, China, the Portuguese, who settled there in the 16th century, continued to cultivate the Portuguese language and culture - even those of them who have never had contact with Europe. This prompted me to think how the colonial overseas identity of the Portuguese Empire was born and maintained until the mid-18th century. This identity will be analyzed in an unconventional manner, combining traditional historiography studies with Social Networking Analysis, which is a modern mathematical and informational tool. Portuguese colonial society will be understood as a network society where its structure is what explains certain behaviors and tendencies, rather than personal characteristics. Despite the fact that the colonial world was a network of connections between individuals, the focus of the research will be shifted from the human to the relationships that connect him or her with other actors. Social networks are understood in this context as a conscious policy of building lasting, intercultural and transcontinental relationships. The expected results will bring an innovative insight into the understanding of the colonial system, in which its outskirts have often played the role of the center. On the one hand, there was the centralized royal administration with its plans and strategists; on the other hand, against all odds, there were conscious individuals living on the margins of colonial societies in America and Africa, trying to build their space within complex transoceanic social networks.