

BOOK REVIEW

Marta Vilar Rosales. *Things of the House: Material Culture and Migration from Post-Colonial Mozambique to Portugal*. Translated by Marta Vilar Rosales, Richard Wall, and Lisa Senecal. New York: Berghahn Books, 2023. xii + 184 pp. 15 illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$120.00/£89.00. Hardback. ISBN: 978-1-80073-954-3.

One way to look at people's lives is to study the material objects and associated behaviors present in those lives. Marta Vilar Rosales uses this approach to analyze the history of ten families in colonial Mozambique and Portugal in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Five families were of "European (mostly Portuguese)" (42) origin and five originated from Goa (Portuguese colony in India). The Goan families were Christian Brahmins, and interesting observations on the caste system are provided. The ten families migrated to Portugal after the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in 1974, which resulted in the end of the colonial situation in Mozambique. The book is a welcome addition to our knowledge of social life in late-colonial Mozambique, specifically concerning Goans. Fieldwork was carried out in the period 2002–06, resulting first in the publication of the research results in Portuguese in 2015 (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais). The present volume is an English translation thereof in the series "European Anthropology in Translation" of Berghahn and the Society for the Anthropology of Europe—a laudable initiative.

The book sets itself the task to investigate the ways people's homes expose the family's journeys and positioning in colonial Mozambique, in relation to their original identity, life in Mozambique and the present situation in Portugal (10). While some objects were moved to Portugal, and many habits continued, with the distance in space and time many of the data had to be retrieved from the interviewees' memory. However, the author succeeds very well in presenting to the reader answers concerning the task settings.


The main text consists of an introduction, six numbered chapters, and a conclusion. A foreword is provided by Caroline Brettell. Chapter One presents the theoretical considerations underlying the book concerning material culture, migration, and cultural identity. Chapter Two rehearses historical topics of Portuguese colonialism and decolonization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with some attention to the Mozambican situation. Chapter Three describes backgrounds of migration to and living in Mozambique by Portuguese and Goans, especially the ten families studied. Chapter Four gives specifics of domestic life, where the employment of domestic African staff was normal in both groups of families. Decoration and food are also described, where African influence appears to have been very little, in contrast with European and Asian influences. Ironically, at the end of the colonial period, consumption of art

produced by Africans became more normal. Chapter Five describes the migration to Portugal after the Carnation Revolution of 1974 and Chapter Six life after settling there, with comparisons made with life in colonial Mozambique.

Organized in this way, the argument flows very naturally from the general considerations in the beginning to the experiences of the studied families across time. The book very fortunately presents ample quotations at some length of interview material. However, the quotations are not specified as to the interviewees, making the information detached from the people who produced them. If anonymity was to be preserved, working with codes or general descriptions might have been possible. In any case, the quotations and analyses do give the reader a good insight into the families' experiences and the nostalgia for a past world.

Chapter Two, on historical backgrounds, might have been more elaborate. Features known from the literature like *prazos* (hereditary settlement schemes) and influential people of Asian origin, including one notorious Goan (Manuel António de Sousa), are not mentioned. Neither is the postindependence campaign known as “20/24” or “24/20,” in which a number of people were told to leave the country within 24 hours with at most 20 kg baggage. Mozambique specialists will know such backgrounds, but readers less familiar with Mozambican history (presumably many of those targeted by the English translation) may miss relevant associations. In the case of 20/24 the omission may directly affect matters of interpretation: the families' migrations to Portugal are described as “forced” (1, 164), but it appears that they, while motivated by (for those families) adverse conditions, were not “forced” in the same sense as with the 20/24 campaign. It is stated that “[t]here is less information available on migrants from China” (36), but there exists quite a bit, and at least Medeiros's work could have been mentioned. The introduction gives the impression that “this version of the manuscript” (1) fifteen years after completion of the initial research project would contain many updates, but with few exceptions this hardly appears from the chapters, at least concerning the literature.

Overall, however, the book gives a satisfactory resolution to the mentioned task settings. While many domestic objects were left behind in Mozambique, a number of objects were in fact taken along and play some role in maintaining memorial ties with Mozambique. Interestingly, for the Portuguese families, African art objects seem to have greater significance in Portugal than they had in Mozambique. Social networks with fellow migrants from Mozambique are continued in Portugal. Culinary repertoire is preserved and even reinvigorated, including in the case of the Portuguese families, the “Sunday curry” as specifically a colonial product. Recommended reading for those interested in Mozambican colonial history and aspects of multi-generational accumulated migration.

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