

African Memories

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Domestic consumption practices, colonialism and transcontinental migration experiences of a group of Portuguese and Goan families.

This project aims the study of the domestic consumption practices of a restrict group of families of Portuguese and Goan origins that share a common biographical past: an inter-generational lived experience in Mozambique (during the colonial period) and a forced migration out of Africa to Portugal and Brazil after de Mozambican independence. Theoretically, the research intends the development of an approach that allows the integration of material culture and consumption studies to the discussion of a significant phenomenon that had a critical impact on the Portuguese recent social history – the forced migration of diverse social groups out of the Portuguese former African colonies.

The consumption practices within the home are being studied bearing in mind a triple mediation: the present context of integration (Portugal, Brazil), the shared past context of integration (Colonial Mozambique) and the past context of origin (Portugal, Goa). This triple mediation is key to the establishment of a comparative approach that allows to highlight both the uniqueness and the similarities of the families' "African Memories", the strategies developed towards the assertion of their shared past and the role played by the Mozambican colonial context, being a cultural resource, on their present identities.

The projects structure is based on two main interrogation guiding lines: to determine the relevance and implications of the inter-generational passage of Portuguese and Goan families through Mozambique in their present consumption practices; to assess the ways objects are used as a resource in the display of their specific identities. The consumption areas being studied are: furnishing and decoration, food habits, music, literature, arts and recreational practices. We are making use of ethnographic observation to explore the patterns and options of family consumption within the home, the negotiation processes involved in the establishment of consumption practices, as well as the particular cultural biography of the objects pointed as closely related to the family history and migration background. With the objective of contextualizing the families' specific trajectories we also discuss: their family history (since they first left Portugal and Goa); their social, economic and geographical trajectories in Mozambique; their particular experience of forced migration out of Mozambique; the reasons presiding the decision making of establishing Portugal and Brazil as their present contexts of integration; the connections maintained, or not, with Mozambique after departure; the connections maintained with their context of origin (Portugal (to the Portuguese families currently living in Brazil) and Goa).