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Editors

Cultural Memories

The Geographical Point of View

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Spacing Forgetting: The Birth of the Museum at Fort Jesus, Mombasa, and the Legacies of the Colonization of Memory in Kenya

Denis Linehan and João Sarmento

Cornerstone Geographies

As the cornerstone of colonial expansion into East Africa, and, consequently, as one of the most important public buildings on the continent, Fort Jesus in Mombasa, Kenya, presents many opportunities to investigate the intersection of colonialism, memory, and power. The fort was built in 1594 by the Portuguese to help secure their foothold in East Africa and to provision and protect their expansive trading network in the Indian Ocean. With its caramel-colored rampart of hewn coral looming over the old-town district (Fig. 1) and its modern role as a hub of cultural activity and tourism in the city, the fort is listed by UNESCO as a potential world heritage site. It has a violent past and is shaped by multiple layers of history and memory. Over time it fell under and out of Portuguese control and operated for 300 years as the command center of the Omani Sultanate and, later, the Sultan of Zanzibar (Hinaway, 1970). It also functioned as a prison under the British from the late nineteenth century until a period in the 1950s that paralleled the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya, at which time the fort was converted into a museum. This conversion was funded with the assistance of the Portuguese government, which grasped the opportunity to restore the fort as part of that country's public commemoration of Prince Henry the Navigator, a paramount figure in Portuguese national and imperial identity. This chapter focuses on the transformation of the fort from a prison into a museum, a remarkable moment of colonial authority and anticolonial struggle that involved key figures of the Kenyan anticolonial movement, notably the trade unionist and nationalist politician Tom Mboya, and the leader of the East African Goan League, journalist Pio Gama Pinto.

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Fig. 1 Fort Jesus, Mombasa, 2007. Photograph Authors

Consulting archival sources in Nairobi, Kenya, and Lisbon, Portugal, we recover the history of the birth of the museum and analyze how the alliances, motives, and protests pertaining to the museum's creation were shaped by questions of memory, politics, and colonialism. We read against the grain of the colonialist archive, turning to strategies offered by Edward W. Said, the prominent Palestinian-American literary theorist and culture critic, through contrapuntal critique of historical sources. We broaden his approaches from text to space in an "effort to draw out, extend, and give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present . . . in such works" (Said, 1994, p. 66). The architecture of the museum, like that of other colonial buildings, was put to work to inscribe power and shape the identities and the narratives it projected onto the history of the Kenyan coast. It played havoc with African memory, "initiating new forms of amnesia, nostalgia and false memories" (Mazrui, 2000, p. 87). These histories operated in colonial space and were constructed in "an arc of interests and concerns spanning the hemisphere" (Said, 1994, p. 101). At first glance these events may seem remote from the pressing social and political concerns in contemporary Kenya, but we propose that the memory politics that were at work in Fort Jesus in the mid-twentieth century remain relevant to debates about heritage and memory today. With a steady eye on what Gregory (2004) has defined as the "colonial present," we first consider issues of public memory and politics in contemporary Kenya and then reconstruct the arc of interest and concerns that created the museum in the 1950s. We concentrate on the construction of a colonialist perspective on the cultural landscape, the imperial memory work of the Portuguese, and the contestation of this process when the museum opened.

Memory Work and Disruption

Kenya is a challenging place to think about the cultural geographies of memory. Historical experience there has created a disruptive landscape in which to reflect on the relationships between public memory, the production of knowledge, and cultural self-definition. Public memory in Kenya is volatile; often politicized; and frequently subject to omissions, effacement, and amnesia. Both the legacies of colonialism and the inequitable social and political outcomes of the postcolonial settlement contribute to this volatility. In colonial times many aspects of Kenyan culture and history were systematically framed and subjected to western epistemological codes. Forms of knowledge found particularly in anthropology, archeology, and paleontology coded and categorized the Kenyan people from western perspectives. These forms of knowledge and the representations of land and culture embedded within them acted “as a form of epistemic violence to the extent that it involved immeasurable disruption and erasure of local cultural systems” (Simatei, 2005, p. 85). For that reason Kusimba (1996) has criticized the ways in which anthropologists and historians have “falsified the history of the Swahilis, presenting them as descendants of Asian colonists, [causing] irreversible damage to the community’s perception of itself in relation to other Kenyans” (p. 201). This distortion has been used to legitimate the destruction of Swahili sites and monuments and the systematic misappropriation of sacred Swahili lands. Moreover, postcolonial criticism, despite its impacts in academic circles, has not effectively challenged such colonial modes of knowledge within the region. The ghosts of the colonial episteme, the range of discourses and fields of knowledge that constructed and maintained truth statements about the benefits of colonialism, still pervade many aspects of cultural heritage in Kenya, such as its museum and national monuments, which continue to exhibit an array of imperial traces and gloss over the horrors of colonization and slavery.

Compounding the issues raised by these legacies since independence, the Kenyan state has not actively pursued a coherent and sustained memory-making enterprise of its own as part of a nation-building exercise. Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya, exemplified this approach by instituting an overarching discourse of ‘forgive and forget’ in order to restore Kenya’s international reputation, which had been undermined by negative representations of the Mau Mau revolt during the 1950s. More specifically, his aim was to maintain the commercial and political fabric of a neocolonial state: “It is the future, my friends, that is living and the past that is dead” (Kenyatta, 1964, p. 2). This decision to blot out the past from which independence was forged was probably unique among twentieth century states, for Kenya thereby officially disavowed its political origins. Since that period, Kenya has been diverging rather than integrating in civil and cultural terms: “Kenya has become a cesspool of all genres of political violence that have effectively confined its embryonic democracy to cold storage” (Kagwanja, 2003, p. 25).

In stark contrast to the nation-building orientation of the memory work of various postcolonial states in Asia (see Yeoh, 2002), debates and discussions about the past have often been evaded in Kenya, for engaging in them would disturb the neocolonial status quo and would question the motives of the postcolonial elites.

Memories of postcolonial injustice, inequity, violence, and abuse are still so strong in Kenya that the principal memory work of the state has been to promote their eradication. The Kenyan human rights lawyer Pheroze Nowrojee argues that “every office holder in Government” has “erased our history and moved to the [aggrandizement] of Presidents and rulers” (Nowrojee, 2002, p. 1). Whereas Nora (1989) contends that there are sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) because the lived environments of memory (*milieux de mémoire*) have dissipated, it arguable that the opposite is quite possibly the case in Kenya. The violence following the 2007 election demonstrates that Kenya is engulfed by the consequence of the memories of unresolved injustices—a political problem that remains unresolved and has impeded the effective operation of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission established in 2008. Together, the colonial and postcolonial conditions have disturbed a coherent version of the past and have thrown the process of public memory-making into turmoil. The dual origins of this condition, in turn, generate their spaces and outcomes, a process that has played into treatments of heritage and culture over the last 2 decades. The vacuum left by these disruptions has been filled by unfettered commercialization of culture, the lack of protection for national heritage (particularly cultural artifacts), an impeded treatment of history, and an unsustained policy of national commemoration.

Many of these conditions intersect at Fort Jesus, and the conditions of memory at work in the place may well be symptomatic of the condition of public memory in many parts of Kenya. Fort Jesus was declared a national monument under the Archaeological and Paleontological Interest Act of 1970, and the Old Town of Mombasa was designated a national monument in 1990. The fort houses a museum, a conservation lab, and an education department and is the nexus of a research program dedicated to the archaeological exploration of the coastal region. The Old Town Conservation Office, which is responsible for an area of roughly 33 ha (81½ acres), is nearby. The fort is open to the public daily from 9:30 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. It can largely be understood as a multifunctional space (see Wazwa, 2006), for its location near the business and commercial center of Mombasa and next to the old town serves many local and regional events: weddings, concerts, art exhibitions, corporate meetings, and social gatherings.

Inside the museum, active intervention in culture is limited and the exhibitions are static. The displays present the results of the archaeological excavations at Fort Jesus (essentially those conducted by British archeologist James Kirkman in the 1950s and 1960s), Gede, Manda, and Ungwana. They also contain donations by colonial collectors and artifacts raised in 1977 from the *Santo António de Tana*, a frigate that sank off the coast of Mombasa in 1697. Visitors walk through these exhibits of rocks, clay, and glass testifying to the cosmopolitan nature of the Swahili Coast, but a number of omissions largely prevent the exhibition from engaging in the dense spaces of struggle that the fort represents. These gaps operate on a number of vectors. For example, the fort must have had a primary stake in the slave trade—slavery was legal in Mombasa up to 1908, when there were over 4,000 slaves in the city—but the museum is silent on the subject. The passageway running down to the sea from the fort that guarded the movement of slaves to waiting ships is

innocuously called “Passage of the Arches” rather than “Passage of No Return,” the name such routes receive at many slave forts in West Africa. The cells and prison buildings were destroyed during the restoration of the fort in the 1950s, so its erstwhile function as a place of detention is downplayed. Nowhere is there any mention that the fort was used to incarcerate political dissidents who campaigned and fought against British colonial rule. To all intents and purposes the fort is a space for forgetting.

In this narrative void tourists sit for fun on the cannons, pose for photographs on the ramparts, and make scenic landscape shots of the harbor, framing the fort as an Oriental ruin. For about €75 (approximately \$120 at 2010 exchange rates), they can take a sunset boat trip in a traditional Arab dhow, followed by a candlelight dinner on the ramparts of the fort. Billed as the Mombasa *Son et Lumière* (sound and light) show, this event converts the fort into a theater and restaurant. Statuesque figures in flowing white Kanzu gowns and kofia caps greet diners with flaming torches; drums beat in the distance, with actors posing as Arab Traders, Portuguese soldiers in sixteenth-century costume, and Omani aristocracy replete with head scarves and ornate Jambiya. The guests, served by waiters dressed as Portuguese naval officers, are treated to a flamboyant, choreographed rendition of the fort’s history staged as a blend of the exotic and the arabesque. Telling something of the fort’s and Mombasa’s turbulent past, it is, in its style and omissions, undeniably interlaced with the legacies of imperialism. The tale excises the role of the British, who controlled Mombasa at the apex of European rule over East Africa and who converted the fort into a prison and then the museum. The past is overly romanticized for the patrons; it is subsumed in an exotic experience that shrouds colonialism in spectacle and nostalgia.

The pageant illustrates some of the dilemmas facing heritage and cultural memory in contemporary Kenya. McMahon (2008) suggests that when performers use the past imaginatively in theatrical productions, the changes they make in representations of race, colonial authority, and the agency of historical subjects relate closely to the way a nation remembers its past. The benign story of the colonial encounter and the framing of the fort and the people of the coast are indicative of the public treatment of colonialism and its ambiguous present in public memory. The present is charged with the legacies of the colonial past, but one of the principle consumers of this history, the western tourist, is spared feelings of guilt and offered instead a stereotyped image and experience of Africa. This cultural framing of the coast is deeply consensual, and given the contribution that tourism makes to the Kenyan economy, it is important to maintaining the *acuna matata* (no problem—be happy) image underpinning Kenya’s international profile as a safe, secure, and trouble-free destination. Over the last decade, this image has been periodically damaged by acts of terror and political instability. The 1998 bombing of the US embassy in Nairobi, the suicide car bomb at the Israeli-owned beachfront Paradise Hotel near Mombasa in 2002, and the civil unrest after the 2007 elections have all undermined the Kenyan tourist industry.

As noted by Kasfir (2004), political history and discomfort are effaced by ubiquitous paintings of idyllic tribal village life, wildlife, and apparently “authentic”

sculpture of native tribe people in souvenir shops and markets. The journey through Kenya is soothed by the aesthetics of safari style, colonial chic, and the self-consciously primitivist décor of the restaurants, bars, and hotels where tourists mix. This stylization of culture has been more recently enhanced though specialized encounters with “locals” that facilitate apparently ethical forms of consumption or contributions to the environment. Gomongo Village, near Mombasa, provides “a slice of life from about ten cultural groups in Kenya which include the Kikuyu, Turkana, Pokot, Maasai, Akamba . . . where tourists get to watch the preparation of food, feed crocodiles and meet witch doctors” (Gomongo Village & Ltd, 2008). These forms of ethnographic spectatorship bear an uncomfortable resemblance to the ways in which Africans were portrayed in the living dioramas of European and American exhibitions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But it is clear that such forms of ethnographic and colonial chic have consolidated as a pattern of western cultural consumption of African heritage. The Swahili coast is increasingly dominated by upmarket hotels whose architectural and interior design not only stylize the apparent mystique of colonial times but also reproduce race relations similar to those of that era. Local people working in these exclusive hotel compounds are often dressed in costumes mimicking those that used to be worn by colonial servants. Embraced inside the legacies of imperial spectatorship, the notion of African heritage within these sites is constantly recycled in popular western representations of Kenyan culture. A notable example is a June 2007 issue of *Vogue*, in which British actress Keira Knightly poses in a series of photographs: one where she wears a flamboyant Yves Saint Laurent dress towering above a group of Masai tribesmen, another where she feeds milk in a bottle to a baby elephant wearing a blanket adorned with a large Louis Vuitton logo, and another where she poses as an Edwardian traveler on the Masai Mara. Like many Westerners drawn to Kenya on safaris, she acts out a colonial fantasy that could have been scripted from the pages of Karen Blixon’s *Out of Africa* (Sykes, 2007).

These apparently benign memories of the colonial period are just a short step from the performance enjoyed by prosperous tourists on the ramparts of Fort Jesus. They also reveal the extent to which the experience of colonialism has been elided and how far Kenya has drifted from the aspiration of early post independence thinking about historical identity and cultural identity. In 1975 the eminence of culture, history, and heritage for national consolidation in Kenya was underlined in a report to UNESCO:

The main objective of government cultural policy is therefore clear. It is the realization of national unity and cohesion and the creation of national pride and sense of identity among our people. Apart from the need to protect and preserve valuable assets, the part played by culture in national consolidation is recognized as one of fundamental significance since culture is the symbol of nationhood, the grassroots from which people spring. (As quoted in Ndeti, 1975, p. 35)

It is tempting to argue that the frustration of this dignified and politically astute aspiration is a symptom of the colonial and postcolonial condition in Kenya, which has conspired to disrupt the production and consumption of national heritage. Consequently, the manner in which these conditions influenced the construction of

public memory at Fort Jesus offers insight into the origins of the legacies that seem to haunt the site today and indicates ways in which people might consider, and possibly contest, the memory of colonialism in Kenya. Close attention to the space of the museum and its memory work can effectively enable the observer to follow the nature of public memory and its forms, transformation, and meanings within civil society. As a western institution created in a colonial regime, museums in Africa are burdened with the politics of colonial memory and challenged by the reconstruction of new identities. The birth of the museum seems like the appropriate place to start with a critical history of the colonial legacies at Fort Jesus.

Colonialist Cultural Landscape and False Memory

After the physical appropriation of land, the process of laying claim to its history and memory by symbolically appropriating the past was a main ingredient of the colonial enterprise (Mudimbe, 1994). During the colonial period, the activities of white Kenyan historians and British archeologists repositioned Fort Jesus at the center of a cultural landscape and thereby constructed a distinctively colonialist understanding of the past. In the late 1920s, mirroring the goals of the Preservation movement in Britain, the colony of Kenya began legally protecting a number of key buildings and archaeological sites—18 monuments and antiquities in all by 1929. The significance of the Indian Ocean coastal region around Mombasa was clear from the beginning. Fifteen of the first protected sites, said to be Portuguese and Arab ruins, were recognized there, whereas just two tribal sacred sites were protected in the early years of the colony (Hart, 2007). During the 1930s and 1940s, Fort Jesus was increasingly identified as an important, but neglected, asset to the burgeoning tourist industry of the coast. In the 1940s and 1950s, the fort was reimagined as an iconic ruin in the middle of a cultural landscape “discovered” by British archaeologists. Under British rule, however, when Fort Jesus operated as a prison, its presence in the heart of the Mombasa, and more especially within sight of the Mombasa Club—the hub of social life for the British colonial set in the city—became increasingly unsatisfactory. From the correspondence in the archive, a strong opinion seems to have emerged in Mombasa that the fort had to become amenable to urban consumption and not “wasted” on disciplining the natives, who could be imprisoned far away from the city. Prominent visitors to Mombasa were sometimes permitted by the prison warden to tour the fort, but hoteliers and schools in the city were often spurned by the prison administration when they attempted to arrange organized visits.¹

Through the efforts of the journalist and broadcaster Edward Rodwell, the fort’s unsatisfactory status remained in the public eye. His *Gedi—The Lost City* (1946) was the first attempt to promote the archaeology of the region. This evocative book drew upon the *Lost World* literary genre and the text was filled with allusions to the mysterious origins and spectral qualities of the ruined city overtaken by the tropical forest: “The natives who live thereabouts talk of ghosts and weird cries in

the night. . . the sinister silence of the city. . . pathways that disappear, trees that burst into flames” (p. 19). Rodwell also made clear that the city had its origins in Arab settlement and deemphasized its indigenous African qualities. He replicated this theme in his 1949 collection of essays entitled *Ivory Apes and Peacocks* (a clear allusion to the biblical story of Queen Sheba and Solomon), which focused on Persian, Arabic, and European incursions into East Africa.

In taking this approach, he was operating inside the colonial episteme constructing memories of an ancient kingdom reputed to have governed East Africa, guided in this case by the myth of Azania. (The Azanian thesis also attracted the backing of another British archaeologist who played a seminal role in the archaeological exploration of Kenya, G. W. B. Huntingford. He identified remnants of the Azanian civilization in his reading of the landscape of stone enclosures, hut circles, tumuli and cairns, earthworks, and irrigation systems; see Huntingford, 1933.) Like many European antiquarians, anthropologists, and archaeologists, Rodwell’s work supported the Hamitic myth as well. Now largely understood as a European historical construct, the Hamites were depicted as a distinct population putatively from either Arabia or Asia and were at that time widely accepted as a historical fact (Dubow, 1995). According to anthropologist C. G. Seligman (1930), for instance, “the history of Africa south of the Sahara is no more than the story of the permeation through the ages, in different degrees and at various times, of the Negroes and the Bushmen by Hamitic blood and culture” (p. 19). Rodwell’s work received wide praise in Mombasa, and it gave voice to a constituency of established Mombasa colonial families and businesses engaged in civic improvement. His work also encouraged the Royal Kenyan National Park to begin formal archaeological excavation of the region.

Rodwell was hardly alone in either his efforts or his interests. In 1948, British archaeologist James Kirkman was made the Warden of Gedi National Park, an appointment that was to have profound impact on the archaeology of the coast. His energy and a later visit to Mombasa by Princess Elizabeth II—an event that resulted in the construction of faux elephant tusk archways over what is now Moi Avenue in the city center—increased politicking about the status of the fort with some success. The Kenyan Legislative Council instructed the prison department to build (using prison labor) a new jail in Mtwapa to which the inmates at Fort Jesus could be transferred, and in 1951 the Council appropriated £10,000 for the restoration of the fort.

Kirkman was highly productive, keeping up a steady stream of excavations, reports, and international publications in journals such as *Antiquaries Journal*, *Current Anthropology*, and *Oriental Art*. He also ensured the legal protection of almost 40 new monuments on the coast between 1954 and 1959. After the excavation at Gedi, he completed work on other major sites along the Kenyan coast, including Takwa, Ungwana, and Mnarani. Through this work he denied the integrity of Swahili culture, consistently stating that the notable settlements in the region had their origins in earlier waves of Asiatic and Arab colonization. Kirkman (1964) claimed that “the historical monuments of East Africa belong not to the Africans but to the Arabs and Arabised Persians mixed in blood with the African but in culture utterly apart from the Africans who surrounded them” (p. 1). Without the

influence of Islamic artisans, he added, the “coast would have remained a land of mud or grass huts like the rest of tropical Africa” (p. 19). To him, “Islamic as well as Christian art is descended from the adult, rational arts of the classical world or the equally mature art of Persia” (p. 51)—the clear implication being that African art was childlike, immature, and irrational.

Kirkman thus perpetuated a European myth that civilization came from outside Africa. His reports on leading sites tended to ignore the history and culture of local people and concentrated almost entirely on shoring up his hypothesis about the diffusion of Arab and Asian influence through the coastal areas, supporting, in turn, a historical narrative about the imagined country of Azania (Kirkman, 1960). He directed more attention to the architectural features of particular buildings or individual Chinese porcelain plates than to local tribes. His portrayal of Gedi made only the barest allusions to slavery; the settlements he discovered were portrayed in a vacuum; and his texts were riddled with Eurocentric and colonial bias, such as the term *cannibal* describing the sixteenth-century tribe that conquered the port of Kilwa.

With the creation of the British Institute of Eastern Africa in 1960, Kirkman’s archaeological projects did much to lay claim to the land. They illustrate how the construction of historical narrative intersected with claims to knowledge about nature, place, and heritage, which were essential to maintaining the colonial gaze over the Kenyan landscape. Kirkman’s work, to quote Gregory (2004), was as much about “making other people’s geographies as it was about making other people’s histories” (p. 11). Eventually living on the grounds of Fort Jesus, Kirkman pursued a scientific practice that was alien to local culture. It helped create a colonial edifice in the form of a museum, inside a colonial fortress, to present a colonial view of the coast, an account that accorded local African cultures only limited space. In this way Kirkman contributed to the construction of a knowledge regime that resonated strongly with the identity politics of the British colonial elite, whose way of conceiving the landscape diverged strongly from the values of the people working and living on the land. In representing the histories of the coast as non-African, and in establishing an imagined geography of invasion, diffusion, and improvement, Kirkman’s archaeology acted as an instrument of colonial administration by providing the colonial mission with claims to truth and promoting specific colonialist ideas of history and racial superiority. In short, Kirkman epitomized the observations made by the historian Basil Davidson (1959):

Africans, in this view, had never evolved civilizations of their own; if they possessed a history, it could be scarcely worth the telling. And this belief that Africans had lived in universal chaos or stagnation until the coming of Europeans seemed not only to find its justification in a thousand tales of savage misery and benighted ignorance; it was also, of course, exceedingly convenient in high imperial times. For it could be argued (and it was; indeed, it still is) that these peoples, history-less, were naturally inferior or else they were “children who had still to grow up”; in either case they were manifestly in need of government by others who had grown up. (p. ix)

This perversion of the relationship between history, knowledge, and place creates an unstable arena for the construction of memory. Kirkman constructed the heritage

of the coast in a biased fashion. On the basis of that knowledge, the British could conceive of themselves as the latest and most powerful invader to civilize the coast, whose condition, had it been left to the indigenous tribes, would in the colonialist view would have remained backward and primitive. One of the governors of Kenya, Sir Philip Mitchell, reassured himself that “until about 500 years ago East Africa had probably been uninhabited . . . [b]etween the stone implements of some 30,000 years ago and Dr. Livingstone there is nothing . . . Nothing at all of African Africa: not a ruin, nor a tomb, nor an inscription; indeed not even a legend supporting anything resembling tribal history for more than a few generations” (P. Mitchell, as quoted in Sutton, 2006, p. 300).

Building a Museum and Celebrating an Empire

If the memory work of the British guaranteed the European’s claim to the land and constructed a colonialist view of the cultural landscape that surrounded Fort Jesus, the involvement of the Portuguese, who funded the restoration of the site through the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, reinforced the European claim to Africa. In a remarkable convergence of colonial enterprises, the Portuguese enrolled Fort Jesus in their plans to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the death of Prince Henry the Navigator in 1960. They had begun planning for the Henry the Navigator celebration in 1956, but the Portuguese state had already been orchestrating various commemorations and other events for decades to promote the construction of the imperial nation. While the rest of Europe descended into war, Portugal celebrated its empire in the Portuguese World Exhibition in 1940. With the *Padrão dos Descobrimentos*, inaugurated in that year in Lisbon (and replaced by a permanent monument in 1960), the regime appropriated Henry the Navigator as the national hero, a figure who “contributed decisively to give the relations between European and non-Europeans, whites and colored people, a path singularly Luso-Christian (G. Freyre, as quoted in Léonard, 1999, p. 42).

Ironically, just as the Portuguese Prime Minister António de Oliveira Salazar, never set foot in Africa or in any of the overseas provinces, Henry the Navigator never participated in any of the adventurous maritime voyages for which he is renowned. Nevertheless, the Portuguese saw the 500th anniversary of Henry’s death as a critical moment at which to assert their sense of nationhood and, more critically, to affirm Portugal’s imperial identity, which was increasingly coming under siege by anticolonial liberation movements in Africa and Asia. Between 1956 and 1961, over twenty new African states became independent, with three of them—Senegal, Congo and Tanganyika (Tanzania since 1964)—bordering on the Portuguese territories. For the Portuguese state the celebration was therefore not just a “simple manifestation of historical nostalgia,” but an “act of faith in the destinies of the motherland, deemed necessary at this time of incertitude in the world’s life” (Ramos, 2005, p. 192).

Meanwhile, the British had been pursuing their own ideas about self-representation. Almost a decade earlier Governor Mitchell had concurred with

proposals regarding the regeneration of the fort made to him from Mombasa and had given his support to the local representative on the Kenyan Legislative Council, C. G. Usher. To avoid competing with the Corydon Museum in Nairobi, the Governor had advised against the construction of an aquarium. What was needed, in Mitchell's opinion, was a museum "to represent the history, art and culture in its widest aspects on the Coastal areas, and including its ramification to the Persian Gulf, Karachi, Bombay, Europe, America and what-have-you."² He nominated Kirkman to lead the transformation of the fort.

However, the concerns of the colony quickly shifted to the Mau Mau uprising when a state of emergency was declared by Mitchell's successor as governor, Evelyn Baring, in October 1952. Soon the colony had neither the funds nor the political will to proceed with the fort's restoration, and the Legislative Council's £10,000 grant from the previous year was rescinded. The idea of a museum quickly lost support, especially because the prison at Fort Jesus played an important role in maintaining the security and judicial control of the coastal region during the Mau Mau period. Although the facility's proximity to an urban population kept it out of the colony's infamous "pipeline" of prison camps used to suppress the Mau Mau uprising, 75 individuals on remand, 287 prisoners serving sentences, and 80 others were still languishing there in May 1957—five years after the initial overtures for its restoration.³ Fort Jesus at that time was also being used to detain psychiatric patients. Baring suggested to the Ministry of Defense that it assist in the evacuation of the fort by constructing A-frame structures to house prisoners at the maximum security prison at Shimo la Tewa, north of the city.

By this stage the Mau Mau rebellion had been brought under control at huge cost to life and liberty, and in 1958 the Kenyan government declared Fort Jesus a historical monument. Plans for the fort's restoration were given a new lease on life when it was established that the Gulbenkian Foundation was prepared to fund the restoration. According to a memorandum prepared by Baring, Louis S. B. Leakey, the palaeontologist and director of the Corydon Museum in Nairobi, informed him that Gulbenkian's was offering £1,000 for a library and a "research place," and a possible further £30,000 if the fort were evacuated.⁴ Baring telegraphed Pedro Theotónio Pereira—the Portuguese ambassador in London and the administrator of the Gulbenkian Foundation in the 1950s—acknowledging his help and expressing "joy that it will be possible to renew and preserve a fascinating relic of the connection of this port of Africa with the famous Portuguese navigators of the past."⁵ (Kirkman later learned that Pereira had masterminded the whole arrangement through the British Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd.⁶)

The restoration of the fort was overseen by the Fort Jesus Advisory Committee, chaired by none other than Edward Rodwell. The committee membership consisted entirely of Mombasa's administrative elite, including one representative of the city's Goan community whose colonial connection to Portugal, as outlined below, was to become central to the commemoration of Prince Henry the Navigator planned for 1960. There were no Africans on the committee, and the archive does not mention their involvement in this restoration, save as laborers, night watchmen, or

gatekeepers. The committee decided that the fort should be restored as closely as possible to its original construction of 1593. In other words, the principle alterations made during the Omani occupation were to be erased and the fort reinstated as an example of early modern European military fortification. However, in a decision playing as much on wistful longing for the past as on diplomatic niceties, it was agreed that the “old customs which had been handed over with the Fort should be preserved . . . [;] the Sultan flag should continue to fly; a gun should be fired at the beginning and at the end of Ramadan and advice should be sought from the Provincial Administrator concerning the blowing of a horn when a ship was sighted.”⁷ As the work progressed, the committee also decided that the “prison period was of [little] interest.”⁸ Consequently, the prison store, the prison hospital building, and the walls around the women’s jail were all demolished.⁹ Almost a year later, the minutes of a meeting of the same committee reveal that it was found impossible to adapt any prison cells as public lavatories or ticket office and that these buildings, too, were neglected in the restoration.

“Outdoing Mr. Khrushchev”: Protesting Imperial Memory Work

Upon the restoration of the fort, Pereira, by then vice president of Portugal, arrived in Kenya for a six-day official visit from October 27 to November 2, 1960, at the invitation of the new colonial governor, Patrick Renison. Pereira’s itinerary was divided between two days in Nairobi, where he visited Goan Institutions and had several official meetings, and four days in the Coast Province where he opened the museum at Fort Jesus in Mombasa, met with representatives of Goan Institutions, and unveiled the Vasco da Gama memorial in Malindi, a coastal town 120 km (75½ miles) north of Mombasa. Although not anticipated when the agreement was concluded in the 1958, the realpolitik of decolonization and the emerging set of rules unfolding in the postcolonial world by time the Portuguese delegation arrived in the late 1960s encouraged the Kenya’s colonial administrator to defuse any potential for controversy. On January 15, 1960, with Tom Mboya heading the Kenyan delegation, Kenya’s timetable for independence was agreed upon at the Lancaster House Conference in London. The funding and the decision to invite Pereira to the opening ceremony in Mombasa set in motion various diplomatic negotiations and preparations that in themselves offer insights into the political sensitivities of the period. For example, Governor Renison was advised that Pereira should not receive representatives of the Goan community while he was staying at the Governor’s Mansion, for the “Indians may be inclined to protest.”¹⁰

Similarly, it was decided during the preparation of Pereira’s visit to Fort Jesus not to invite the governors of Uganda and Tanganyika. Felix Dias, the Portuguese consul in Kenya, had pressed for these invitations, arguing that the event was very significant for Portugal and the Portuguese community in Kenya and should be accorded the highest honors. However, a note from the Governor’s Office to the Provincial Commissioner of the Coast Province, John Pinney, advised Pinney to downplay

the event, noting sardonically that “the Portuguese are addicted to the panoply of glory and would be inclined to make more of the occasion than we would.”¹¹ Most likely aware of the political sensitivities around the visit, Pinney, vetoed Dias’s proposal. Another blow to Dias was a decision by Renison not to accompany Pereira to the coast, even though the latter was a guest of the government of Kenya. The governor’s exact motivations are not recorded, but it is likely that he was anticipating that Pereira’s presence was liable to generate dissention both internally with the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and externally with India, neither of which he was keen to arouse given the decolonization talks and international diplomacy taking place at the time. The colonial administration in Nairobi was right to be concerned about the Portuguese visit; politically speaking, it had the potential to open a Pandora’s Box. Africa had entered an intense phase of political change, and Lisbon’s trenchant opposition to decolonization made Portugal a frequent target of anticolonial protest.

One of the key areas where this vexing political question was to become apparent was the Goan community, whose diasporic identity and anxiety about its future in Africa were caught up in the political transformations and decolonization of the continent, which the British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan had famously termed the “winds of change” (MacMillan, 1960, p. 286). As Boxer and Azevedo (1962) point out, Goa’s historical connections with the East African Coast run deep, especially in Mombasa. The Goan migrated to East Africa during the construction of the Uganda Railway at the turn of the twentieth century. But India’s independence in 1948, the increasing pressure on Portugal to leave its “occupied” territories (Goa, Daman, and Diu), Portugal’s rigid position under Salazar, and the rising nationalist movements in East Africa all contributed to escalating tension and uncertainty within the Goan community in Kenya, circumstances that encouraged them to reassert their relationship to Portugal. Reflecting the rift in Goa itself, Kenya’s Goan community was divided into supporters of the Portuguese, as represented in several associations that Pereira visited in Nairobi and Mombasa (the Goan Institute, the Railway Goan Institute, the Goan Cymkhana, Santa Cruz Club, the Goan Taylor Society, the Goans Overseas Association, and the Goan Community), and people intent on seeing the cause of Kenyan decolonization succeed (the East African Goan League led by Pia Gama Pinto). The one group was eager to attend most events and become involved in the celebrations by organizing such things as dinners, visits to the local associations and Goan schools, and a local soccer tournament (the Henry the Navigator Football Cup, which raised money for the Vasco da Gama Memorial Fund). Nairobi Newspapers such as the *Mombasa Times*, the *East African Standard*, the *Sunday Post*, and especially *The Goan Voice* were used to promote Pereira’s visit, boost the importance of Portugal, and underscore the significance and integration of the Goan community. This section of the Goan population sought Portuguese support and reassurance from Pereira’s visit, especially because the future of the Asian community in Kenya was perceived to be in jeopardy. Members of the Goan community in the other group protested the visit, partly to criticize unceasing Portuguese colonization in India and partly to forge closer association with African nationalists and the cause for Kenyan decolonization.

Throughout the 1950s Pio Gama Pinto had been involved in the independence movement as a trade unionist and as a journalist promoting the cause for Kenyan liberation. As a young student in India, he had campaigned for the liberation of Goa, assisting in the activities of the Goa National Congress, but when faced with the possibility of deportation to the concentration camp of Tarrafal on Cape Verde, he returned to Kenya. In 1954, after his participation in Mau Mau-related activities in Nairobi, he was interned under special emergency powers during Operation Anvil, first briefly in Fort Jesus and then for three years in the Takwa Special Detention camp on Manda Island (Nowrojee, 2007). At that time, it was one of the severest and most isolated of the colonial concentration camps and was reserved for the hard-core Mau Mau (Elkins, 2005). When released in 1957, Pinto recuperated and soon went to work as a political organizer, using his skills as a journalist to write pamphlets, campaign materials, and letters to the press. He eventually established the KANU newspaper *Sauti Ya KANU*.

In statements made through the East African Goan League in the weeks before the official opening of Fort Jesus, Pio reiterated his opposition to Pereira's visit and contested the statement prepared by the Goan Overseas Association that "Goans look to Portugal as their Fatherland" ("Goans look," 1960). On Pereira's arrival the East African Goan League presented an open letter to Pereira complaining that the Portuguese government had failed to recognize the basic human dignity and rights of its colonial subjects. Pio argued that, in response to the "legitimate human urge of the indigenous peoples to free themselves from alien domination[.]. . . the Metropolitan government appeared to have turned a deaf ear and has resorted to repressive measures to sustain its authority" ("Pereira flies," 1960). Pio was supported by the small Asian Kenyan Freedom Party, which was broadly aligned with KANU and which condemned the invitation extended to Pereira, whom they regarded as a representative of what they called a fascist regime ("Portugal leader's visit," 1960). After this publication, a series of letters in the *East African Standard* condemned Pio's East African Goan League as unrepresentative and praised the fact that "the Portuguese world is an independent nation and not an empire" (Mascarenhas, 1960). One writer was so appalled that he suggested that Mr. Pio Gama Pinto had "outdone Mr. Khrushchev in leveling charges against the Portuguese Government" (Nunes, 1960). The *East African Standard* published just one letter supporting Pio's campaign, arguing that Pereira represented "a regime detested the world over" (Carvalho, 1960).

More significantly, Pio worked with Tom Mboya on a series of statement about Pereira's visit. At this stage Mboya was one of the most prominent figures in the KANU party. He also had a growing profile internationally and participating in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. In 1958 he and Julius Nyerere founded the Pan-African Freedom Movement for East and Central Africa. In response to Pereira's visit, Mboya condemned the labor conditions in the Portuguese colonies, which he likened to slavery. He argued that Portuguese colonial subjects were stripped of their dignity and that they lived in conditions worse than those under apartheid South Africa.

Clearly, such statements by Pio and Mboya were aimed at the nostalgic narrative about Portugal and its navigators as enacted at Fort Jesus, supported by Kirkman,

and widely propagated by the Portuguese embassy. This media target was sizeable. Throughout 1960 numerous articles about Prince Henry, the celebrations of his 500th anniversary, Vasco da Gama, and the Portuguese impact on Africa appeared in the Kenyan press. And in June 1960 the Mombasa Town Planning Committee created Prince Henry Drive in the city ("Mombasa road names," 1960). The run-up to the autumn visit by Pereira also offered ample opportunity to cast Portugal in a positive light, with the press carrying dignified portraits of the diplomat and glowing accounts of the benefits of Portuguese civilization in Africa. In March, the Goan press published a report on the official visit to Portugal by the President of Brazil, Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira, including one noteworthy photograph of Pereira with the Pope John XXIII, taken on Pereira's way home after a "triumphal visit to Goa and Pakistan" ("His Holiness," 1960). In an article on a November banquet honoring Pereira, Dias praised Portugal for its "great contribution in bringing together the various races and creeds in the world" ("Portugal helped unity," 1960). Two months later Rodwell (1961) promoted the Portuguese celebration, arguing that Kenyan participation "would be a pleasant and polite gesture" (n.p.). In March, Kirkman (1961) also published a long tribute to Henry the Navigator in the *Kenya Weekly News*.

In challenging this colonial memory work, both Pio and Mboya drew directly on Davidson (1955), whose anticolonial text republished parts of a document—a devastating report on Portugal's African colonies—that had been secretly prepared by the Portuguese Inspector General of Colonies, Henrique Galvão. Mboya also raised the possibility of strike action in the port of Mombasa. This strike was a serious threat given the previous decade's history of labor unrest, which had prompted the colonial administration to commission the *Mombasa Social Survey*, a report on the economic and labor conditions of the city (see Rodwell, 1958). Moreover, Mboya had been instrumental in resolving a major dispute in the port in 1955 and was a key figure in the organization of the Dockworkers Union in Mombasa and the Kenyan Federation of Labour (Cooper, 1987). In 1960 Mboya also sanctioned physical protest against Pereira's visit and instigated both a public boycott of the public celebrations by Kenyans and a political boycott of private events to which African members of the Kenyan Legislative Council had been invited. Two Kenyan ministers who had recently been appointed to that body boycotted accordingly. The *Daily Nation* reported that six people had been arrested outside the Nairobi Goan Institute on October 27 after they had rushed at Pereira's car as it approached the institute ("Pereira flies," 1960). On the following day three more people were arrested for protesting at the Goan school ("Ginger Group," 1960).

The Portuguese daily *Diário de Notícias* predictably made light of these incidents and highlighted the vivid show of loyalty by the 1,500 Goan residents in the capital and the 500 schoolchildren who joined in the celebration. The coverage minimized the protest by "eight blacks exhibiting upside down banners" ("1500 Goeses," 1960). All the while, Pereira took every opportunity to tell journalists how the situation in the Portuguese overseas provinces was under control, stating, for example, "so far the situation within Portuguese territories is completely calm" and acknowledging "only minor incidents" ("All quiet," 1960). However, the protests persisted despite the highly polished media campaign to support the visit. At a political rally

in Nakuru, Pereira's visit was condemned as a "danger to our freedom" ("Pereira petition," 1960). Action continued in Mombasa, where KANU applied for a license to hold a public meeting to exercise their right to protest the opening of the fort. The request was denied by the district commissioner, but one of the regional organizers of KANU's youth wing, Peter Lungatso, is reported to have "warned Africans to stay away from the celebration," instructing people to "keep off the streets when he [Pereira] passes" and adding that failure to do so would result in "their being regarded as 'the greatest enemy' of the African community" ("Gingers call off," 1960). Meanwhile, the Indian delegation in Kenya expressed their dissatisfaction more diplomatically. The Indian Trade Commissioner, Mr. V. V. Dev, requested the Mombasa city council to make certain that all Indian flags be lowered in the city on the occasion of Pereira's visit ("Indian flags," 1960).

"The Panoply of Glory": The Birth of the Museum

Against the background of these protests, Pereira inspected the Guard of Honour mounted by the Royal East African navy and thereafter solemnly entered Fort Jesus in Mombasa on October 29, 1960, as the Bamburi Band played the national anthems of Portugal, Zanzibar, and Britain. The Portuguese had lost the fort to the Omani more than 230 years before (November 26, 1729), but because of the financial support from the Portuguese Gulbenkian Foundation, it was the Portuguese vice prime minister who unveiled a plaque to declare the opening of the Fort Jesus museum. Representatives of the Sultan of Zanzibar were also present, as were the key figures of the colonial heritage administration: L. S. B. Leakey, Mervyn Cowie, the director of the Royal National Parks of Kenya; and, of course, Kirkman, the Warden of Fort Jesus and of Coastal Historical Sites. After the speeches, Kirkman took Pereira on a private tour of the museum.¹² The strike at the port had been called off, an unrelated dispute concerning pay for clerks at the Port having been resolved in the days before the visit. But newspapers did report that few "Africans" were seen at the celebration, suggesting that the boycott of the commemoration was successful. It is recorded also that another anticolonial protest was attempted that morning but that it was suppressed on Makupa road,¹³ demonstrating that the police state created to suppress the Mau Mau rebellion took protests to Pereira's visit in stride.

Throughout these celebrations the Portuguese, like the British, took every opportunity to tell their history in very particular ways. Not only did they distort the harsh reality of conditions in Angola and Mozambique, they also used the opening of the Fort Jesus museum, among subsequent events, to present a wholly nostalgic portrayal of Portuguese history on the coast. At the local Goan school, the school principal, Mr. Ildefonso de Souza, was awarded the medal of the Portuguese Navy. Pereira also donated to the school a "dream book[,] . . . a lovely large volume bound in red with gold lettering on the cover containing some of the best maps made by the Portuguese since the early sixteenth century—entitled *Henry the Navigator*" ("Malindi Memorial," 1960). Later that day, Pereira decorated Kirkman, Rodwell,

Fig. 2 The Vasco Da Gama Memorial, 1960. “It is symbolic of the spirit of discovery, and a motif of a mast and full sail are set in the surrounding pool of water. The sail is decorated with the Red Cross of the Order of Christ.” From “Malindi Memorial Is Unveiled,” October 31, 1960, *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), p. 5. Permission Nation Media Group Kenya

and Dias with the Order of Prince Henry the Navigator, an honor specially created in 1960 to mark the 500th anniversary of the prince's death.

The heroic sentiments represented in these gestures were reinforced soon afterward in Malindi with the unveiling of the Vasco da Gama monument, originally conceived by Dias and Rodwell (Fig. 2). The monument was funded by monies raised within the Goan community and designed by the Tanzanian architect Anthony B. Almeida, of Goan origins. Eliding any reference to the Kenyan people, Provisional Commissioner John Pinney stated that the memorial would be a symbol of friendship not just between Britain and Portugal, but “between English people and Portuguese nationals here in the Coast Province” (“Mr Dias,” 1960). In Portugal, the *Diário de Notícias* (1960a) noted that “this was further evidence of the profound loyalty of Goese to the motherland, as well as to the duty that the Portuguese government has in giving national solidarity full support to the community in Kenya” (pp. 1–2).

In its official version, the Vasco da Gama monument depicts a sailing ship trimmed down to its elemental form: the mast, the sail, and the sea. As Brussels (2005) observes, Almeida later argued that the monument could also be seen as an abstract representation of a sword. According to Brussels, this interpretation suggests that Almeida aimed to subvert the ambitions of the Portuguese to memorialize Vasco da Gama as a hero, for the monument could also act as a metaphor for “a history of

oppression, exploitation, and slavery” (p. 119). Whatever the effectiveness of this interpretation, which cannot be substantiated from the discourse around its opening, the monument lies in near ruin today, forgotten by many in a neglected location in Malindi. As a response to the aims of original colonial commemoration and as a suitable rebuke to the preservation of colonial myths at Fort Jesus, it is the derelict state of this memorial that is perhaps more authentic and critical than Almeida’s post rationalization of it.

Orbits and Legacies

After leaving Kenya, Pereira toured Mozambique, Angola, São Tomé, and Guinea, arriving back in Portugal on November 18, 1960. On arrival in Lisbon, he informed the press: “Do you want to know what the Portuguese from Africa think? They are united and determined around the homeland flag” (Diário de Notícias, 1960b). For the British, too, the restoration of the fort saw to it that key colonial issues were addressed. It allowed them to pursue an imperial archaeology that made the colonial government of Kenya appear to be more progressive than it actually was. In the context of the Mau Mau revolt, it enabled a certain normalization of the colonial enterprise. This portrayal of Kenya starkly contrasted the coverage of brutality that enraged the Middle-England opinion from the late 1950s onwards, notably after the murder of detainees by colonial forces in the Hola concentration camp (Anderson, 2004). The barbarism of the colony could be partly washed away by the new fort and its museum. In the subsequent months, according to the Minister of Tourism, the future of the coast was bright. The advent of air travel, he argued, would enable coastal resorts like Malindi to become the “new Miami” (“Send girls,” 1960).

These events illustrate that the restoration of Fort Jesus facilitated a convergence of two colonial enterprises that, despite their diverging strategies for the future of European colonization in Africa, manipulated, for their mutual benefit, the histories and memories of this site and its surrounding landscape. More broadly, we have commented on legacies of colonial knowledge about the political condition of public memory in Kenya, drawing upon postcolonial theory to recover the marginalized voices of the oppressed and the excluded. Close attention to the birth of the museum at Fort Jesus and its memory work has provided key insights into the politics of public memory and its forms, transformations, and meaning in colonial society. The recovery of these events is also important for understanding the orbit of colonial memory work that still afflicts the consumption of the past and of heritage both at this site and throughout Kenya.

Yet, despite the vast range of postcolonial criticism and ample scholarship that have recast the history of the coast (see Kusimba, 1999; Mazrui, 2002; Middleton, 2003; Wilding, 1987), the ghosts of the colonial episteme remain embedded in the fort. Although selected along with Mount Kenya as a national icon to be featured in school children’s textbooks after independence, Fort Jesus, like most national monuments in Kenya, still mutes the story of colonization. The contemporary condition

of memory enacted in the museum partly duplicates the process of forgetting and ensuring a particular form of consensual and regulated fiction first performed by the Portuguese at Fort Jesus in 1960. Our hope is that the history of the resistance to the restoration of the fort and the Portuguese diplomatic visit outlined in this chapter can serve as a platform for elaborating an alternative narrative at the site. This expectation takes on an extra dimension when it is remembered that the two key figures in the protest—Pio Gama Pinto and Tom Mboya—were both assassinated in the period after independence by still unidentified elements of the postcolonial regime lead by Kenyatta. As argued by Nowrojee (2002), the political significance of memory remains a potent force, for remembering acts of resistance in Kenyan history—such as those that occurred at the birth of the museum at Fort Jesus—“assures us that self-respect and dignity are possible in periods of oppression. It demonstrates the vulnerability of tyranny; it is an example against oppression” (p. 1).

Notes

1. Preservation of ancient ruins and visits to Fort Jesus, National Kenyan Archives (NKA), CA 17/79.
2. Letter to Hon. C. G. Usher from Sir Philip Mitchell, September 22, 1951, NKA, GH 10 20.
3. Memorandum to the Ministry of Defense from Evelyn Baring May 21, 1957, NKA, GH 10 20.
4. Memorandum to Ministry of Defense from Evelyn Baring, May 21, 1957, NKA, GH 14 24.
5. Telegram to Pedro Theotónio Pereira from Evelyn Baring, June 4, 1958, NKA, GH 28 19.
6. Letter from Alfred Vincent (Chairman of the Royal National Parks) to Evelyn Baring (Governor of Kenya), May 27, 1958, NKA, GH 26 17.
7. Minutes of a meeting of the Fort Jesus Advisory Committee, File 28(19), December 15, 1958, NKA, GA 3/1/2b.
8. Minutes of a meeting of the Fort Jesus Advisory Committee, File 28(19), December 15, 1958, NKA, GA 3/1/2b.
9. Fort Jesus National Park, Warden's quarterly report, June 30, 1960, NKA, NPK 16/12.
10. Letter from Roman Rostowsky to John Pinney, September 29, 1960, NKA, NPK 16/12.
11. Letter from Roman Rostowsky to John Pinney, September 29, 1960, NKA, NPK 16/12 2.
12. Itinerary of His Excellency Dr. [Pedro Theotónio] Pereira, NKA, GH 31/1.
13. Letter from District Commissioner John Pinney to the governor Patrick Renison, November 2, 1960, NKA, GH 31/55.

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