



ANTONIO SALAZAR STATUE

Maputo, Mozambique

25.9737, 32.5729



Image by Paulo Pires Teixeira via Vitor de Sousa

Executive Summary

A life-sized bronze statue of Portuguese dictator António de Oliveira Salazar (b. 1889-1970) currently stands in the courtyard of the National Library in Maputo, Mozambique. Its move to this location in 2002 is part of an eventful prior itinerary, charted below by drawing on various sources while acknowledging the presence of certain gaps in the data. The statue can be seen as part of a political project of the Portuguese *Estado Novo* (New State) enacted via public monuments. Its history and present setting relate to the tensions inherent in the relationship between this project and Mozambican anti- and post-colonial reality.

Introduction

This case study concerns a life-sized bronze statue of Portuguese dictator António de Oliveira Salazar (b. 1889-1970) in Maputo, Mozambique. This statue of Salazar depicts him in academic garb and was originally erected in front of the Liceu Salazar to replace a nearly identical stone statue that was reportedly bombed in the 1960s. The statue currently resides in the National Library of Mozambique courtyard, where employees park their cars, facing a wall and a broken drainpipe. The placement of one of Mozambique's most notorious colonial historical figures has reportedly been a target of jokes over the years, drawing on the connection between facing a wall as punishment and anti-colonial sentiment in Mozambique.

Background

Portuguese Colonization and Salazarism

This monument is intended to commemorate Portuguese dictator António de Oliveira Salazar (b. 1889-1970), one of the key leaders of the authoritarian government known as *Estado Novo* (New State), an authoritarian government instituted by a military coup on the 28th of May 1926.¹ Salazar's role in the New State began as Minister of Finance in 1926 and went on to include his participation in office as Minister of the Colonies in 1930 and as Prime Minister from 1932 to 1968. It is possible to observe the impact of Salazar in both the metropolis and the colonies during this period, making him a significant historical character in Portugal and Mozambique - one of controversial nature considering his domestic rulership constituted a dictatorship, which projected itself abroad in the form of similarly authoritarian colonial rule. In 1930, the Acto Colonial (Colonial Act) promulgated a new administrative phase for colonial administration and Salazar's political project. This act formalised Portugal's aim of creating an economic organisation across the metropolis and colonised territories subordinated to the nation's unity. It also established an ideological basis for colonial rule and intervention by explicitly stating the following:

It is of the Portuguese Nation's organic essence to perform the historical function of possessing and colonising ultramarine domains and civilise the populations that in them may reside, exerting also the moral influence assigned to it by the Padroado do Oriente (Patronage of the Orient).²

As such, Salazar's rule was connected to a firm grip on colonised territories and on ideologies of assimilation that proposed that Portugal exert influence and control of the colonies in both

¹ Britannica, "Antonio de Oliveira Salazar".

² Porto Editora, "Ato colonial 1930," *Infopédia* (Porto: Porto Editora).

economic and moral terms.³

The statue of Salazar can be seen in connection to the idea of 'civilising' or exerting moral influence over the colonies. As Gerbert Verheij recalls, the New State, aware of the potential art held as a political instrument via the monumentalisation of 'heroes' and events in public spaces, was a significant patron and promoter of the production of public sculpture for the old colonies, mostly at the hands of artists from the colonial metropolis.⁴ The Portuguese state's understanding of monuments as testimonies of the 'generosity of the Nation' and their use as tools of propaganda and legitimisation of a historical right to conquest motivated the creation of the *Comissão dos Monumentos e Relíquias Históricas* (Commission for Monuments and Historical Relics) in 1943. This commission aimed not only to safeguard the Portuguese patrimony in Mozambique but to reinforce the legitimacy of colonial administration by investigating, classifying, conserving and restoring monuments erected by the Portuguese since the arrival of Vasco da Gama in Mozambique in 1498.⁵ As Verheij argues, the symbolic character of the removal of statues is intensified in light of the instrumentalisation of art by the New State. As such, the contentiousness of Salazar's monumental presence in Mozambique is intimately related to how this was an imposition of colonial rule, which the independent nation has sought to break away from since its independence in 1975.

Salazar's many statues

While some details of the history of this statue are missing, it is possible to piece together a possible narrative in connection to an earlier statue of Salazar. This earlier monument was made out of stone by Portuguese artist Francisco Franco de Sousa and stood outside the Liceu Salazar. At the centre of the courtyard of one of Mozambique's largest high schools, Salazar's figure is represented in academic garb, emphasising his status as Doctor at the University of Coimbra. This characterisation relates to the aforementioned issues of propaganda and indoctrination by the Portuguese state, which included a focus on education in the colonies as a means to realise the goals of assimilation and the 'civilising mission'. It was a usual representation of Salazar, associated with the statesman's iconography at the hands of Francisco Franco, who produced a 'master portrait' of the dictator that was meant to reflect 'academic dignity', moral and intellectual prestige, which would be the model for many statues, in stone and bronze, in both Portugal and Mozambique.⁶

³ Ibid.

⁴ Gerbert Verheij, "Monumentos coloniais em tempos pós-coloniais. A estatuária de Lourenço Marques," 2014.

⁵ Vera Mariz, "A Salvaguarda dos monumentos portugueses em Moçambique (1943-1974)," *Congresso Internacional Saber Tropical em Moçambique: História, Memória e Ciência* (Lisbon, October 2012).

⁶ Teresa Campos dos Santos, "O Escultor Francisco Franco: entre o modernismo e a construção da imagem da ditadura de António Oliveira Salazar," *Revista de História da Arte e Arqueologia* (nº16, 2011), 101.

While some reports state that the sculpture was present from the moment of the inauguration of the Liceu in 1952 (Verheij), photographs of the statue in 1961 show a plaque dating from 1958, which reads: 'Antonio Salazar: homage by Moçambique's youth at the 30th anniversary of his entrance into the government of the nation (27/04/1958)'. Pictures of the Liceu also reveal a change in the statue in the courtyard between 1961 and 1964.⁷ The history of this change is unclear. Verheij argues that the stone sculpture of Salazar was destroyed with explosives around 1962/3 by a group that opposed the leader's regime and replaced with a bronze copy the following year.⁸

History of the Contestation

Mozambican independence and public monuments

Mozambique's treatment of colonial monuments and legacies after independence has been analysed by Vitor de Sousa, who argues there were two main phases to this process.⁹ The first phase began before Mozambique's independence (25th June 1975). In this period, colonial statues were mostly demolished, many of them damaged, and other symbols of colonial rule, such as street names, were also changed. This phenomenon is connected to the Portuguese Carnation Revolution of the 25th of April 1974, which represented the Estado Novo fall and included the takedown of public monuments as political statements. A relevant example in connection to this case study is a statue of Salazar in his place of birth, Santa Comba Dão, Portugal. Also made by Francisco Franco de Sousa and erected in the Justice Palace square in 1965, it was decapitated in 1975 and targeted by explosives again in 1978.¹⁰ There is here, therefore, a link between the anti-fascist sentiment of the Portuguese revolution that stood against Salazarism, and the anti-colonial sentiment in Mozambique.

Returning to Sousa's scheme, in the following phase, the Mozambican Government aimed to retain and display previous statuary, preserving the memory of colonisation in a recontextualised manner. An example is the statue honouring Mouzinho de Albuquerque, a Portuguese cavalry officer, which was transferred from the heart of the city to the Fortaleza de Maputo (Maputo Fortress). As Sousa describes it, the Maputo Fortress has become a place devoted to showing the memory of Mozambique's colonial period, notably in recontextualised form and decolonised, in the

⁷ Harrison Forman, American Geographical Society Library.

⁸ Gerbert Verheij, "Monumentos coloniais em tempos pós-coloniais. A estatuária de Lourenço Marques," 2014, 39.

⁹ Vitor de Sousa, "Memory as an interculturality booster in Maputo, through the preservation of the colonial statuary," *Comunicação e Sociedade* (special vol., 2019), pp. 269-286.

¹⁰ Marta Leite Ferreira, "Dois anos depois, Santa Comba Dão não sabe o que fazer com estátuas de Salazar," *Observador*, December 13, 2019.

author's opinion.¹¹ Some accounts argue that the Mozambican state's involvement in handling 'official' colonial heritage, including the concentration and care of statues and paintings with support of the Portuguese state, is the case only in Maputo and differs in the rest of Mozambique.¹²

Decision-Making Processes

The decision to reconfigure such a statue, in terms of location or direction, should be placed in the larger politics around memorialisation in Mozambique for better insight. To that end, some researchers claim that the production of national memory is current in postcolonial Mozambique, with the active involvement of the Mozambican state and local elites. This production is partially based on the restoration and promotion of heritage sites. In this process, the Mozambican postcolonial state employs, in addition to commemorations, heritage legislation, education policy, and other related actions to ensure the achievement of its goals. Monuments, memorials, and historical sites in Mozambique are protected by the Law of Cultural Protection, known in cultural heritage jargon in Mozambique as *Lei 10/88* - Law no. 10/88.¹³ Celso Inguane argues that in Mozambique, action on heritage sites and objects often takes precedence over legal and political framework; a procedure encouraged by discourses by Mozambican politicians and public servants.

According to news articles informed by Joel das Neves Tembe, former director of the national archives, the statue was moved to its current location after a flooding of the National Archive in Maputo in 2002.¹⁴ Tembe states that it was not his intention to punish Salazar by having him face a wall but to protect him from the elements. Regarding intentionality, Mozambican ex-president Joaquim Chissano said: 'This may not have been on purpose, putting him facing a wall, but history should not be forgotten'.¹⁵ Intentional or not, the particular placement of Salazar's statue has been a noticeable feature in Mozambique's post-colonial decisions regarding colonial statuary.

According to news articles, the Mozambican government wants to move the statue to an old fort in Maputo where other colonial relics are stored, presumably the Maputo Fortress.¹⁶ However, this has not been carried out.

It seems that the current position of the statue facing a wall in the parking lot has been uncontested and can perhaps be seen as a form of reflection and humorous comment on the place

¹¹ Vitor de Sousa, "Memory as an interculturality booster in Maputo, through the preservation of the colonial statuary," *Comunicação e Sociedade* (special vol., 2019), 279.

¹² José Flávio Pimentel Teixeira, "A estátua de Salazar em Maputo".

¹³ Negotiating Social Memory in Postcolonial Mozambique: the Case of Heritage Sites in Mandhlakazi District Celso Azarias Inguane

¹⁴ Jane Flanagan, "Mozambique puts colonial past in the naughty corner," *Times*, June 5, 2021.

¹⁵ TVI24, "Salazar virado para a parede, 'de castigo' em Maputo," April 24, 2014.

¹⁶ Jane Flanagan, "Mozambique puts colonial past in the naughty corner," *Times*, June 5, 2021.

of the colonial past and its previous heroes in the present reality of post-independence Mozambique.

Summary and Conclusions

At the same time, it is helpful to reiterate that the debate around the presence of historically significant statues in a public location points to the politics of heritage in the Mozambican postcolonial state, in addition to commemorations; heritage legislation, education policy, and other related actions also reflect the underlying rationale of looking at its past. However, It is possible to state here that while the continuous presence of the object in a public location may elicit new responses, the present panorama indicates the arguably humiliating placement of Salazar's statue and the subversion of his intentions constitute a resolution for this issue.

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