

# BOOK REVIEW

**Joanna T. Tague. *Displaced Mozambicans in Postcolonial Tanzania: Refugee Power, Mobility, Education and Rural Development*.** London: Routledge, 2019, xii + 204 pp. List of Figures. List of Abbreviations. Index. \$49.60. Paper. ISBN: 978-0367732080.

*Displaced Mozambicans in Postcolonial Tanzania: Refugee Power, Mobility, Education and Rural Development* by Joanna Tague places African mobility and the agency of refugees and political exiles at the center of what the author calls “decolonization’s inherent messiness” (2) in the 1960s. It is a study of Mozambican communities in postcolonial Tanzania and the ways in which they harnessed the economic and educational opportunities rendered by their displacement. This monograph joins a growing body of scholarship that views refugee status and displacement not as a problem to be solved but as a heap of possibilities which the dislocated harnessed to their own advantage. In the fractured time of the Cold War, the very category of refugee was not fixed, but fluid and open for negotiation and appropriation. Mobility, argues Tague, is power.

Chapter One introduces the book and states the main arguments. One claim is that displacement, mobility, and educational aspirations are an important facet in the history of African decolonization. The other is that, in the convoluted years of the Cold War and African decolonization, there was power in displacement and exile. The author hints that “displacement proved empowering and generative—rather than solely destructive and debilitating—during decolonization” (8). Agency is key to this claim. Mozambicans who voluntarily or involuntarily migrated to Tanzania in the 1960s, argues the author, recreated home on their own terms. Transcending fixed categorizations as refugees and political exiles—which international bodies such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees were quick to employ—displaced Mozambicans in Tanzania found niches of opportunity to negotiate their status and create a new “sense of community.”

Chapter Two traces the life story of Eduardo Mondlane, the founding president of Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), and his wife Janet. At the center of the narrative is the couple’s efforts to recreate home in exile and to establish networks to further the education of other exiles and

refugees. Education, argues the author, was an “antidote to Portuguese colonial rule” (24) and the “root cause” of exile in Mozambique (34). This chapter is heavily reliant on Robert Faris’ “superb” biography of Mondlane, and it is unclear what it adds to the rich body of scholarship on the nationalist leader.

Chapter Three charts the results of Mondlane and Janet’s educational efforts in Dar es Salaam. It argues that while education advanced the liberation politics of FRELIMO, it also created rifts within the party and tensions between political leaders and students (who opposed the requirement for military participation as part of their education). There is a considerable body of historical work on FRELIMO’s educational efforts in Tanzania and their consequences. Although the author cites a few studies, we are left with no historiographical engagement with them and no clear point as to what this study adds to the larger body of scholarship on this rather well-explored aspect of FRELIMO history.

Chapter Four takes us to the debates between the Tanzanian government, FRELIMO, and the UNHCR and other refugee agencies regarding the definition of refugee and who was entitled to such status. Chapter Five looks at the creation by the Tanzanian government of four refugee settlements for displaced Mozambicans and the ways in which these settlements were integrated into the *ujamaa* villagization scheme. The author argues that these settlements provided the blueprint for Tanzania’s development policy as they became a “relatively successful example of rural development” (160). These are two well-argued chapters with very instructive illustrations. Chapter Five is particularly noteworthy because it offers an alternative narrative of the villagization scheme away from the dominant, state-centered perspectives on the subject. It also shows the degree to which the histories of postcolonial Tanzania and the various nationalist movements the country hosted were intertwined beyond liberation politics.

Despite the author’s attempt, the various threads that the book presents as belonging to one argumentative arch do not feel quite connected. Perhaps this is due to the author’s choice to open the book with the trial and detention of the painter Malangatana. It is not clear why the case of Malangatana should be the opening story, if the painter did not leave Mozambique and therefore never became a refugee or even a victim of displacement during the period under analysis in this book. Moreover, displacement as an analytical arc makes it difficult to distinguish those who were forced to migrate to Tanzania and those who voluntarily made the journey from Mozambique to join the liberation movement. Did displacement mean the same thing to Eduardo Mondlane and his wife Janet (who exchanged a comfortable middle-class life in the US to lead the struggle for Mozambique from Dar es Salaam) and the mass of peasants who fled the violence of Portuguese counterinsurgency campaigns in northern Mozambique and settled in the rural areas of southern Tanzania? What is the difference between a refugee and a political exile? The notion of mobility as power—which is central to the author’s perceptive rendering of refugees’ agency—and the overall backbone of Mozambique’s

decolonization is overstated. The author claims, for example, that the Portuguese incarcerated members of the Mozambican nationalist intelligentsia “as a way of rendering their physical bodies immobile” (2). While incarceration is indeed a means of immobilizing individuals, African mobility in and of itself did not pose a threat to the Portuguese. The threat came from the conspiratorial activities in preparation for and support of the anti-colonial struggle in which the Mozambican intelligentsia was engaged.

Therefore, incarceration served many other goals than simply rendering African nationalists immobile. Incarceration was a punitive measure for what, under Portuguese colonial law, was criminal activity. It was also a counter-insurgency measure which allowed Portuguese authorities to gather intelligence on anti-colonial networks inside Mozambique.

The wealth of archival sources consulted for this work is admirable. Tague followed the commendable lesson that “histories of decolonization have no single archive” (24). She gathered her source material from three continents (Africa, Europe, and America), four countries and several cities. The rich illustrations in Chapters Four and Five are a testament to Tague’s hard work. Given that many displaced Mozambicans in Tanzania returned to Mozambique after 1975, and many of the key players in this story are still active in Mozambique, one wonders why Tague did not conduct any research in Mozambique. An interview with José Craveirinha Jr., for example, would have corrected her confusing him with his uncle and namesake, the poet José Craveirinha and *de facto* President of the *Associação Africana* (4). While the poet was detained like most of Lourenço Marques’ based nationalists, he did not flee to Tanzania. Like Malangatana, he remained in Mozambique until the end of the liberation struggle, only traveling to Dar es Salaam in 1974 in preparation for FRELIMO’s takeover from the departing Portuguese.

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