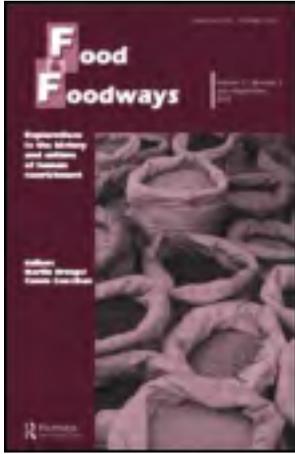


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My Umbilical Cord to Goa: Food, Colonialism and Transnational Goan Life Experiences

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My Umbilical Cord to Goa: Food, Colonialism and Transnational Goan Life Experiences

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This article explores the domestic consumption practices of five Goan Catholic Brahmin families throughout their long migration experience in the twentieth century. It discusses the potentialities of an analysis anchored in ordinary domestic material culture and consumption in general, and in food in particular, for the discussion of their specific trajectories in Goa, Mozambique and Portugal. I argue that food preparation and consumption, along with other everyday practices, played a significant role in structuring relations with the context of origin. This central role consists of establishing a coherent link between present and past, as well as between the various locations inhabited, whilst displaying a distinctive habitus profoundly marked by colonialism and migration.

“Traditional Goan cuisine is exquisite and time consuming”¹

Goa represents a unique instance of Portuguese colonial history. In contrast to what has happened in other parts of the world (Africa and South America), Portuguese colonial policy in this territory favoured, from the beginning, religious interests at the expense of economic ones. The establishment of Goa as “capital of a Christian Empire” (Thomaz 1998: 253) subjected its people, perhaps as in no other case of Portuguese colonialism, to a strict process of religious conversion. Carried out by the Jesuits, this particular policy contributed powerfully to the implementation of a “Portuguese way of being” that was necessarily adapted to local idiosyncrasies, and which persists to this day. The main goal of this article is to explore how food can contribute to unfolding/revealing some of the unique aspects of the cultural identity that resulted from this colonization strategy in the framework of a long history of transnational migration.

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To achieve this goal, I will draw on ethnographic data gathered during four years of fieldwork (2002–2006) with five Goan families, all of whom belong to the (majority) group of the Goan population that converted to Catholicism in the sixteenth century. All families shared a common past—at least three generations of life in colonial Mozambique, followed by a forced exodus to Portugal after Mozambique's independence in 1975. The colonization of Mozambique started relatively late (significant waves of migration did not take place until the 1960s), and families with long colonial experience currently living in the Lisbon metropolitan area constitute a clear minority among the almost one million returnees from all the Portuguese African former colonies. Thus, there was a limited pool from which to select case study families. Families were chosen according to the snowball sample method. Their small number is also related to the methodological approach taken, which consisted of a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1991) in Lisbon (Portugal) and Maputo (Mozambique), conducted in the past and present homes of the families studied. The ethnography was complemented by a significant number of unstructured interviews with friends, family members, neighbours and other subjects who shared the families' transnational trajectory.

The families were selected to fit into the objective of the broader research project—to allow an understanding of Goan elites in relation to the European colonial elite. The research focused on elite groups because these are the least studied by Portuguese academics. Because of this focus, families were selected taking into account their economic, social and cultural capitals (Bourdieu 1979) upon arrival at the colony. All of the families selected belonged to the elite Brahman caste, which have high levels of cultural capital in particular. This is closely related to the fact that they have had a high level of regular contact with the European colonial elite, both in the past and in the present, in a range of contexts including neighbourhoods, schools and churches. It became clear that this regular contact was the basis of close relationships between the Goan elite and the European colonial elite. Exploration of the nature and significance of these contacts for Goan elite families enabled exploration of Goan elite representations of categories of "Us" and "Other", both in Mozambique and in Portugal.

The broad aim of the research project on which this article draws was to better understand the daily lives of the non-African colonial elites in Mozambique and how and in what ways decolonization has affected them. The investigation was based on the premise that materiality and domestic consumption practices constitute an important field through which the transnational experiences of these families can be understood, particularly with regard to how they positioned themselves and managed their relationship with Goa, with colonial Mozambican society and, after independence, with Portuguese society. The intersections between material culture and migration processes have, until very recently, been treated by the social sciences as relatively minor. However, and as Coleman and Basu have underlined in the introduction to a thematic issue on migration and material culture of the

journal *Mobilities* (2008), all (human) movements are immersed in materiality, since they necessarily involve processes of expropriation and appropriation, of desire and expectations regarding specific things. Furthermore, movement changes materiality, not only because it entails the transference of objects and practices from one geographic location to another, affecting their uses and users, but also because different movements often result in different migrant materialities (Basu and Coleman 2008), given that identical objects and products may take different meanings and positions depending on the paths they have travelled.

Prioritising consumption and material culture in addressing a domain of analysis as complex as the impacts of transnational migration and colonialism on Goan identities resulted from an exercise taking into account a set of theoretical moves. In the 1980s and the 1990s a series of works played a central part in the consolidation of the fields of study of material culture and consumption's. Bourdieu (1979), Douglas and Isherwood (1979), Appadurai (1986) and Miller (1987) put forward a theoretical framework that, by emphasizing the expressive and constitutive abilities of materiality, described the relationships between people and things as a particular form of social relationship, and validated the theoretical principle of the "active consumer", i.e., the ability of people to strategically appropriate objects in order to produce meanings and to structure certain dimensions of their social lives.

Consumption involves a particular relationship to the things that integrate and circulate through families' everyday experiences. Studying consumption thus implies much more than scrutinising the processes of sorting and acquisition. It also involves analysing what happens when things leave the sphere of the market and enter the private domains of family life. To domesticate, or to appropriate, things constitutes a complex task that is mediated by the specificities of the spatial, historical and cultural context where it occurs, and relates to a creative process of use and reuse of things, whose meanings are often adjusted as a consequence of those same processes (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986, Miller 1998). Moreover, items of consumption also have an important role to play in this process, since they are responsible for the co-production of the contexts they "inhabit" (Silverstone and Hirsch 1994). Objects and subjects work, with different intensities (Miller 2002), towards the materialization of life projects, sentiments, relationships and views on the world held by their owners, jointly contributing to the production of (micro) universes of meaning that are essential to understanding one's place in the world, as opposed to the infinitude of places occupied by others.

My decision to privilege the home as ethnographic site has resulted from this theoretical framework. Though studies of contemporary material culture and consumption clearly go beyond the domestic context, the home is one of the most significant sites of inquiry for research in this area. Focusing on the mundane realm of domestic tasks and everyday routines has proved to be pertinent to the depiction of the "disintegration" and "reintegration" moments involved in migration (Appadurai 1990; Rapport and Dawson 1998) – that is,

the processes of unmaking and making again one's home. As Morley (2000) and Rapport and Dawson (1998) point out, migrant homes are, most of the time, sites less subjected to external constraints than more public domains, and, as such, represent productive spaces for the analysis and discussion of the migrants' processes of evaluating, ordering and positioning themselves *via-à-vis* their new setting. Moreover, home is also likely to be a privileged site for the expression of sentiments of loss and for the articulation and management of memories of and relationships with the culture of origin (Marcoux 2001, Miller 2001: 2008).

As the term suggests, research centred on everyday routines clearly privileges the regular activities of families, and directs analysis towards the modalities of interaction and appropriation of things and goods which are fundamental to the stabilisation of the families' domestic projects (Mackay 1997), to the expression of their ideals and aspirations (Clarke 2001) and to the materialization of their memories and networks of belonging (Garvey 2001).

The approach taken worked well in achieving the main objectives of the research. Material culture and everyday consumption practices within past and present homes proved to be fundamental to uncovering very significant aspects of these families' life experiences both in Mozambique and in Portugal, thereby contributing to a more in-depth depiction of Portuguese colonialism. While discussing family recipes and preparing tea in the kitchen, observing fine linen, handicrafts, or the dominant decorative patterns present in the homes, it was possible to collect data that, although centred on things, also helped to clarify significant aspects of collective life, such as the models of inter-ethnic relationships that existed in the colony, dominant discourses about the "metropolis" and Goa, as well as perceptions about the colonial war and the independence process, Portuguese post-revolution society and the present status of Mozambique.

This article addresses only one dimension of the research. It is based on the assumption that, within the general field of material culture and consumption practices that occur at home, food and foodways represent one of the most expressive domains. Though the significance of food in mediating relationships, participating in the constitution of identity repertoires, marking cultural belonging and expressing class, gender or ethnic divisions has been vividly examined within the social sciences (Wilk 2008), there is still much to be discussed about the way in which food, such a stable pillar of identity, operates on the unstable terrain of permanent and intense cultural contacts and exchanges, *i.e.* "the difficult conundrum of stability and change, of borrowing and diffusion" (Wilk 2008: 243), as well as a need for exploration of what its contribution may be in generating more diversity and new cultural, economic and political boundaries. Food was one of the families' favourite themes when talking about their Goan, Mozambican, and Portuguese experiences, with all the members contributing with descriptions, evaluations

and recipes. This arguably gives us a clue to its analytical relevance, which is both expressed through but also transcends the intensity and emotion of the discussions on the subject. Food preparation and consumption at home played a central part in the maintenance of a sense of Goan cultural identity and history through the generations, during the families' colonial experiences and their migrations through Africa and Europe. The role of food in managing and maintaining cultural identity can be clearly seen in the context of the experiences of these families and provides us with a unique way of understanding the particularities that characterized the process of colonization of Goa and the way in which Goan elite families managed the strategic positions which they held in colonial Mozambique and Portugal.

As discussed below, Goa was subjected to a colonial policy substantially different from the policy adopted in other parts of the Portuguese Empire. This affected all social groups, including the Brahmin elites. In this context, and in order to maintain their advantageous position, Brahmins developed a mimetic relationship with the colonial authorities, and what can be described as a detached form of social closeness marked the relationships between Brahmins and the Portuguese authorities in Goa, Africa and, in some senses, in Portugal too. However, this dominant model was at the same time complemented at home, via food and foodways, by the construction and display of a sense of "Goanidade". This, without endangering the Brahmins' public position, generated a fascinating, complex relationship with the culture of origin.

The article is structured in three parts. The first is a brief historical overview of the colonization of Goa, the impact of colonization on Goan culture and the nature of the main flows of migration out of Goa. The second focuses on the domestic routines of the families in Mozambique. It pays special attention to food preparation and consumption and to a discussion of how these can work as positive ways of entering into a better understanding of processes of imperialism and resistance (Wilk 2008). The last part discusses present-day domestic routines of the families in Lisbon, using the analysis of food as means of addressing and discussing the continuities and changes that migration and post-colonialism have generated, in terms of the families' relationship with their Goan heritage.

FROM GOA TO MOZAMBIQUE, AND, LATER, TO PORTUGAL: COLONIALISM, MIGRATION AND DAILY ENCOUNTERS

Although there are reports of migration episodes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century (Gracias 2000: 425) the movements of Goans to Mozambique became more intense. It was in this period that the families which were the subject of the research left Goa. Encouraged by the colonial authorities, and stimulated by

economic difficulties in their territory of origin, these movements coincided with the beginning of the effective occupation of the Portuguese territories in Africa (Thomas 1998; Malheiros 2000; Zamparoni 2000; Sardo 2004).

References to the presence of Goans in Mozambique are relatively scarce. By contrast with the significant amount of information about colonial society, and indeed about the migration responsible for Goans' presence in many parts of the world, allusions to their presence in colonial Mozambique are rare and most of them are restricted to information about the professional positions members of the group occupied. Nevertheless, from the data available² it is possible to identify three important facts which surface again and again, and which have informed this research. The first is that Goans, especially the Brahmin and Chardó elites converted to Catholicism, occupied a very specific position in the Mozambican social structure, different from other non-European groups. The second fact, closely related to the first, is that this specific position of the Catholic Goans was understood by other social groups as being the result of the privileged relationship the group developed with the colonizer (Bastos 2002), which resulted from social proximity between the two groups. The third fact is that, despite the first two facts, Goans were still seen as "other" in the eyes of the dominant group, the Portuguese themselves (Bastos 2002; Zamparoni 2000). It is important to bear all three of these fundamental facts in mind in tracing the trajectories and positions of Goan families in Mozambique and Portugal.

The Portuguese colonial project in Goa was profoundly shaped by the existence of a specific framework based on a political, administrative and military infrastructure that was directly dependent on an unstable Portuguese minority residing in the territory. This minority lived surrounded by a majority with a deep-rooted hierarchical organization and a solid system of internal power relations, upon which rested the social and cultural balance of the Catholic and Hindu populations in Goa (Sardo 2004). In order to control the territory and consolidate their colonial presence, and partly due to a significant lack of administrative staff and military resources, the Portuguese authorities soon started to seek cooperation with the most influential local groups. Likewise, the local elites saw in this opportunity a way of maintaining their previous privileged positions. The cooperation between the Goan Catholic elites and the Portuguese authorities soon became a permanent reality, establishing the basis for a relational process which, though dictated by the colonisers, was controlled by both parties.

One of the most visible outcomes of this informal agreement was the establishment and living out of a "Portuguese way of life" in Goa. This cultural development began in the sixteenth century and consisted, at first, in the establishment of Catholic seminaries and schools in the territory. Before long these were widely attended by the local converted elites, who preferred them to the traditional Goan educational system. This resulted in the creation of a significant number of local professionals specifically trained

to integrate into the colonial administrative services, as well as to take up socially privileged professions such as medicine, law and teaching. Within the local educated social groups, Portuguese as the usual language rapidly replaced Konkani, the Goan local language, ultimately obliterating the use of Konkani. Also, the population which had converted to Catholicism was encouraged to change their original family names to Portuguese ones (usually the family name of their godparents) and to adopt Portuguese cultural characteristics and succumb to Portuguese influences in a vast array of arenas including music, poetry, cooking and clothing (with one result being that the sari was eventually discarded). The adoption of these features strategically worked as a means of confirming that this group had embraced a “western life style” (Thomaz 1998, Sardo 2004), as well as marking their privileged position in the new social hierarchy.

Colonial policy and the changes that resulted from this eventually resulted in a complex social matrix integrating a diverse set of social categories³ that, by the 19th century, stabilized into three main groups: the Portuguese, “*os portugueses*”, born in Portugal, who tended to return home after a period of time in the colony; the Goans, “*os goeses*”, born in Goa, regardless of their religion; and the so-called Descendants, “*os descendentes*”, made up of individuals of Portuguese descent born in Goa who did not return to Portugal (Sardo 2004). Along with this system of social categorisation, there was of course a parallel classification affecting solely the Goan population, both Catholic and Hindu: the caste system.

Because of the complexity that characterized their context of origin, the Goan presence in Mozambique is, in terms of social composition, very diverse. This can be seen perhaps most clearly in the transposition to the African colony of the caste system of social classification, which gives material form to Goan diversity there. Its significance for the Goan migrants became especially visible in marriage, in the composition of the social networks of the families and in the associative organizations (one for each caste) that were created to protect the specific interests of the Goan migrants. The existence of a clear policy of social demarcation between castes in Mozambique is acknowledged by all those interviewed as part of this research. According to their statements, it permeated all social spheres. As Miss Oliveira, a forty-five year old single woman who was one of the last Goans to abandon Mozambique, said:

There was a club called the Indo-Portuguese Club that was only for Brahmins. Then there was another club that was for the “average” people, which was called the Indo-Portuguese Recreation Club. Sometimes we went there because we liked their festivals, but they were not allowed to attend ours; they could not enter our Club. (...) We had distant relationships with them. No mixing. There weren’t any problems or conflicts, but each lived in his corner.

As is expressed in Miss Oliveira's statement, the Catholic Brahmin families occupied a very specific social space in the colony. Their relationship with other Goans was restricted to families that shared the same social position and, in the words of Miss Oliveira, "the same upbringing and the same valorisation of Portuguese culture". According to Mr. Silva,⁴ a sixty-five-year-old man, a member of the House of Goa,⁵ proximity to the Portuguese lifestyle in the colony was a definite and important fact:

Our family lived in a good neighbourhood. We got along really well with our Portuguese neighbours. Our daily life was very similar to that of other [Portuguese] families. You know, we had a Western upbringing, (...) and we have a good position, good education. (...) In our house the Portuguese language was mandatory, we only read Portuguese authors, Catholicism was lived very intensely and the women never wore the sari.

This privileged position resulted not only, as Mr. Silva states, from the fact that all Brahmin families were fluent in Portuguese, were Catholic, held Portuguese surnames and clearly displayed their access and attachment to "Western" values and ways of life, but also from the fact that their professional training and educational diplomas meant, from the colonial power's point of view, that they were very important to the colony, when compared with the other non-European groups residing in the colony. However, subjects' statements made clear that the position of Goan Brahmin families in Mozambique had complex contours. Another Catholic Brahmin, Mr. Sousa,⁶ called attention to the need to discuss the issue "beyond first appearances".

The Goans (In Mozambique) were neither water nor wine. In reality they were very discriminated against. First, they could not join the army. Second they could not enter the hotel Polana.⁷ They gave us all sorts of excuses for not letting us go in. In our school report card we were described as mulatto. We were considered to be third-rate Portuguese. It was very difficult to progress in public functions. And we were insulted in the streets: people called us *canecos*.⁸

Most authors (Thomaz 1998; Malheiros 1996, 2000; Zamparoni 2000; Sardo 2004) who have reflected on the Goan presence in Mozambique have argued that there was successful integration of Goan elite families. All of them point out, as do members of Goan families interviewed, that there was no formal policy of social demarcation separating the Goan Catholic Brahmin elite from the Europeans, as was in place vis-à-vis other non-European groups, in particular the African populations but also including non-Brahmin Goans. The families interviewed shared the same neighbourhoods, schools, churches, parks and beaches with European families. However, and as Mr. Sousa suggests, the same was not true of semi-private spaces such as hotels and social clubs, which is indicative of a significant fact—that the Catholic Brahmin

families' social networks did not include Europeans and vice versa. This becomes apparent in many testimonies, which point not only to the lack of more intimate social interactions, but also of marriage between the two groups. As Mrs Santos, a seventy year old widow, said:

Social interaction between the two groups was very common. They visited our social clubs and we visited theirs. Well, perhaps we did not visit their clubs very often . . . I think that maybe the Portuguese were a bit racist. How many inter-racial marriages were there in Lourenço Marques⁹ at the time?

Caught between the need to confirm their support of the Portuguese colonial "way of life", which necessarily implied a detachment from Goa, and the fact that they were nevertheless perceived as "other" by the colonial elite, the Brahmin families ended up erecting an invisible wall (Rosales 2010) that disconnected them from all non-European communities. This tactic was based both on the maintenance of the mimesis started long before in Goa and on the reinforcement of all the features that guaranteed their closeness to the Portuguese elite, particularly in relation to cultural capital, religion and many daily routines and practices. As a result of this, they found themselves in a problematic situation when the revolution occurred in Mozambique. Migrating to Goa, by then an Indian province, was not an option both for cultural and economic reasons, and staying in Mozambique was considered too dangerous, due to the war. Like most of the European families, the Catholic Brahmin families ended up migrating to Portugal soon after the beginning of the independence process.

The families describe this stage of their lives as particularly difficult. At the beginning things were, according to them, hard, since daily life in Portugal was very different from the colony. As Mrs. Santos said:

Our life suffered a great transformation. In Africa we had a very nice life. We had our jobs and our domestic servants who took care of domestic tasks. Here we had to do everything ourselves. It was very difficult to adjust to the new reality and I cried a lot.

However, and despite all the difficulties inherent in having to reorganize their lives in a new social and political context, all the families describe their integration as successful. As one of Mrs Santos' best friends explained to me, "people adapted well to their new lives. Some whined more than others, but generally all of them were soon adjusted to their new lives". The fact that "the community remained very united" was, according to Mr. Silva, one of the main reasons for their successful integration. In effect, and as had happened in the past, the families have continued up to the present day to invest in maintaining their relationships with other Catholic Goans, and therefore their

social networks are mainly composed of Catholic Brahmin families, many of whose families also have a long history of migration via Africa.

The fact that in Portugal most families ultimately reproduced their social circles from the past did not, however, prevent them from re-evaluating their relationship with Goa. Freed from the rigid framework of social hierarchies imposed by colonialism, the families started to visit Goa, many for the first time, and to reflect on their relationship with their origin through a new lens. Mr. Lopes, a seventy year old man, says:

[In the past] we Goans never referred to our Indian origins. We did not speak Konkani because only the lower castes and the Hindus did. The women did not wear saris because we didn't want the Portuguese to see us as Indians, especially after the Indian invasion of Goa. At the time, to wear a sari would have been a disgrace. It would have meant that we were against the Portuguese authorities.

And Miss Oliveira adds, on this matter:

It's a funny thing. I was born in Mozambique and my parents were born there too. I had never been to Goa, but the first time I visited [in 1992] I felt that, somehow, I was home.

In line with the central argument of this article, food and foodways played a significant part in this process, as they did during the whole long migratory experience of the families. Food contributed to the maintenance of a relatively stable sense of Goan cultural identity and history through the generations and despite all the particularities that marked the families' trajectories over time. In order to depict, discuss and fully comprehend the potential of food to help us to understand the impacts of colonialism and transnational migration on Goan identities, we need to understand the domestic routines of the families in Mozambique, as well as their contemporary food-related practices in Lisbon.

GOAN SCENTS IN AN AFRICAN SETTING—FOOD, FOODWAYS AND THE DISPLAY OF A “SUITABLE” COLONIAL HOME

In Africa, my mother used to prepare Goan food most days. She was an excellent cook and really enjoyed cooking. To be honest, I think that food is my “umbilical cord” to Goa. And I think I can say the same is true for many of my friends. (Mr Silva).

Although the primary objective of the research was not to collect food-centred life histories, it soon became clear that, for members of these families, the preparation and consumption of food held a very significant position in

discourses on domesticity and domestic material culture of the past, and that they constituted a central “voice” for self-expression (Counihan 2008), containing powerful memories, meanings and emotions.

The most striking characteristic of the families’ statements regarding their past African homes is a note of ambivalence, which reflects the patent mimesis (Gosden 2001; Bhabba 2002) resulting from their position in the colonial social structure. When asked about their lives in the colony, their daily domestic routines and the details of their homes, the majority of the subjects immediately argued that there were no significant differences between theirs and the houses of the Portuguese. In fact, and as Mr. Silva carefully explained, “from the outside all (Goan) houses looked like European houses, just like the neighbouring houses” belonging to Portuguese families”. However, their statements about the objects and furniture in the interiors of Goan houses suggest the existence of a particular Goan Brahmin Catholic *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1979) resulting from the intersection of two main cultural references: their linkage to Portuguese ways of life and the maintenance of certain valued and distinctive features of their own Goan cultural heritage.

The families’ relationship with their origin via their domestic material culture during their stay in Mozambique is quite complex. The first significant feature of this relationship is the way in which the presence of Goan objects in their homes is perceived. Even when things classified as Goan were dominant, research participants insisted on declaring that their homes were decorated “European-style”, and that they were “European-style”, just like the homes of their Portuguese neighbours. However, the expression “European-style” seemed to have the ability to accommodate not only objects described as European due to their origin and/or design, but also things with a Goan origin. Such objects seemed to have a quality that was not shared with other objects, and especially not with those with an “African” label,¹⁰ which were regarded by research subjects as “so ordinary that we did not look at them twice”.

Thus, both Goan and European objects were seen as broadly “European-style”. Within the broader category of “European-style”, subjects distinguished “Goan objects” from “European objects”. “European objects” included a wide range of things from furniture to decorative pieces, clothing and china, and for these the quality “European” prevailed above all else. However, the same was not true of the objects described as “Goan”, even though they too were considered to be “European-style”. With these objects, the subjects’ testimonies were more precise; different categories of objects were portrayed in specific ways and their biographies carefully explained. This was particularly true of objects directly associated with the families’ homes in Goa. It was also true of religious objects such as crosses, figures of Catholic saints, reliquaries and other items associated with the Catholic faith; in other words, not only objects from Goa had this “marked” quality.

The same was true of objects related to particular sets of practices associated with Goa, including Goan music such as the *mandós*, a distinctive musical genre only performed by the Brahmin caste.

Like music and family heirlooms, Goan food practices were, for these families, the focus of special attention in their description and categorization of these. However, and by contrast with objects or other practices, members of the families did not classify Goan food and food practices as in any way “European”. On the contrary, food and foodways were, for most families, an exception in the context of their regular domestic material culture, being always described as “typical”, “authentic” or “original” Goan.

Discussion of food always began with a description of its preparation. Though emerging as central in both male and female discourses, food preparation was seen by all families as a feminine task. Therefore, and even though most of the women made clear that cooking was not a mandatory domestic activity for them in Mozambique—since they had African domestic staff—food preparation was always mentioned as a central focus of their daily routines, especially after marriage. As Mrs. Oliveira said:

It was not the ladies' responsibility to do the housework. Girls were not trained for that, since they were particularly encouraged to study. But then, when we married, we did not know how to do anything. However, I taught my servants how to do everything. I was especially concerned with teaching them how to make Goan food, according to how my mother and my mother-in-law taught me. You know, with regard to food my husband is “all very Goan”.

Domestic servants were in charge of preparing most family meals. However, all the women said that, since it was their responsibility to teach their servants how to prepare Goan food properly, they themselves necessarily had to have all the skills and knowledge, which the preparation of Goan food requires. Learning to prepare Goan food was always described as a long process of acquiring competence, since it often involves a complex set of procedures including cutting up, grinding and/or chopping a wide variety of ingredients, which are then subjected to different cooking times and methods. Therefore, even if Goan women did not have to prepare their families' daily meals, food and especially Goan food preparation was highly valued by all of them. As Counihan found in her research among a group of women of the San Luis Valley in Colorado (Counihan 2008), I found that Goan working women also had great respect for cooking, as a domestic task, and it was very important to them that their servants were proficient in all housework, in general, and in cooking, in particular. As Mrs. Oliveira explained:

We taught them [the servants], and they prepared everything. They learned very well and were very skilful. Especially in everything

concerning Goan culinary tradition. You know, Goan food is very complex and sophisticated. It involves a lot of procedures and ingredients and it really is amazing how well they could prepare it, just as if we were in Goa!

In discussing his ethnographic research in Greece and Illinois, Sutton (2005) notes that cooking provides an original object of analysis in that its products are, in some sense, produced and consumed in the home nearly simultaneously. However, and even if the production of food is often described as a “skilled process” (Sutton, 2005: 88), food consumption also implies specific competencies, especially in relation to taste and smell. After revealing to me the processes of Goan food production, the families focused their attention on the processes of learning and teaching others how to appreciate and value Goan food. According to women, the two processes usually occurred simultaneously, once they became adult. Mrs. Branco, a seventy-year-old widow, cousin of Mr. Silva explained that:

When I was a child I did not appreciate Goan food. It was too spicy. Only when I married, and had to learn how to prepare it, did I start to like it.

Teaching and learning how to appreciate Goan food was described as domestic practices, which involved the active participation of older women:

My mother taught me some things, but also my mother-in-law, my older female friends and even my aunts back in Goa, who sent me their recipes and secret family procedures. Now it is my turn to teach my daughter-in-law, who is Portuguese, how to prepare our food and how to prize it. (Mrs. Lopes)

Hence, the transmission of specific skills necessary to the production and consumption of food seems to involve, as Sutton suggests following Ingold and Connerton, more than the application of mechanical force to objects. It implies “a mobilization of the mind/body within an environment of ‘objects’ which ‘afford’ different possibilities” (Sutton 2005: 91), that cannot be summarized in and transmitted by a set of rules, but must rather be learned through the engagement of a novice with a skilled practitioner.

The importance of mastering the preparation of Goan food is reinforced by the importance it held in moments of sociability. The dominant discourses about family gatherings and other festive occasions showed that, independently of the cultural background of the guests present and of the nature of the event, formal and family celebratory meals consisted exclusively of Goan food:

On festive days it was unthinkable not to prepare proper Goan food. Our patrimony is so rich and exquisite that there were lots and lots of recipes

to prepare, all mandatory: *pullau*¹¹ rice, *sarpatel*,¹² *bebinca*,¹³ *balvá*,¹⁴ that my mother knew how to bake so well and I do too. You need to mix wheat semolina, almonds, coconut milk and sugar. It's so light and perfect! It's all covered with almonds! In fact, I think we do have the most extraordinary food patrimony and on festive days it was mandatory. (Mrs Santos).

It was in relation to food that members of the families first clearly stated, in discussing their colonial experiences, that in Mozambique they had a distinct background from that of their Portuguese neighbours, a background that was valued and therefore reproduced at home. Food played a significant part in establishing their cultural distinctness as Goans, not only via the regular production and consumption of Goan dishes, but also, and even more importantly, through its valorisation vis-à-vis Portuguese culinary traditions. Although “European” or “Portuguese” foods were also occasionally eaten in all homes, the tastes and smells of Goan cuisine were, without doubt, those most celebrated, evidencing the importance of food in the management of the families' relation to Goa. Its significance was further emphasized when compared with the ambiguity and vagueness of what members of the families said about other aspects of material culture and domestic consumption.

The Portuguese colonial presence in Goa affected many dimensions of the territory's cultural and social life, including the nature of the food, which was subsequently taken to Mozambique as pure “Goan”. According to Thomaz (2004:17–18), Goan cuisine in Mozambique results from a complex mixing of Indian influences, especially in relation to food preparation and cooking techniques, tools and processes, the use of a large variety of spices (see Figure 1) and the numerous sauces involved in most recipes; and direct and indirect Portuguese influences, the most important being the introduction of beef and pork into their diets, the use of animal blood in recipes, and the preparation and consumption of fermented beverages. Whilst aware of these influences, and in particular of the Portuguese ones, members of the families nevertheless stated that their food was Goan, not European, though they were accepted that it had aspects of European cuisine within it. This contrasts with other aspects of everyday life, where the “Goan” was effectively subsumed under the category “European-style”. Mr. Silva referred to this in a way that elucidates this point quite well:

We, the Goans, we know how to give a Goan flavour to all Portuguese meals. And we always did this. Those (Portuguese) meals become much better after “we worked them”. The adaptations we have made of traditional Portuguese cooking traditions! They are really extraordinary.

These processes of meaningful revision—“working” Portuguese food to “Goanize” it, in effect—were almost always carried out by using spices, the key ingredients in—in the families' words—“translating” the taste of the



FIGURE 1 Red pepper planted on the patio in Lisbon (Color figure available online).

Portuguese food to make it “proper food”: “for example, a typical Portuguese *feijoada*¹⁵ when cooked with a Goan (hot) *chouriço*¹⁶ gets a fantastic taste! And a *dobrada*¹⁷ too! A Goan *dobrada* is an amazing thing!”, as one subject put it. Such adjustments were constant, varied and employed with meat, fish and vegetables. All food was subjected to these adjustments, with only three major exceptions: dried cod, sardines and grilled chicken. These three foods, all strongly marked as “Portuguese” foods, were eaten without being “Goanized”. They were, however, clearly devalued when compared with Goan food and were usually described as “normal food”¹⁸, “children’s food” or “fast food”.

This point becomes even more evident in relation to an aspect of colonial Mozambican popular culture, the habit of cooking curry¹⁹ for lunch on Sundays. This practice is, one of the most central—possibly *the* most central—food topics for all the families interviewed during research. Curry was identified as a key element of all colonial Mozambicans’ collective identity. Although curry was prepared with different ingredients by the different groups—Europeans used crab and lobster, Goans tended to prefer meat and crab, and the local populations prepared it with dried shrimp, the least expensive ingredient—the fact is that all families agree that during the colonial period “on Sunday, you could sense the smell of curry in every street of Lourenço Marques.”²⁰ It was one of the few things that brought everybody together”.

Although there is a lively discussion still going on concerning who holds responsibility for the introduction of curry, the Mozambican ‘national food’,²¹ into the territory, all of the families I interviewed claimed it for the Goans. Again contradicting the dominant note about their proximity to the colonial elites, most families stated that:

Regarding curry, it was they [the Portuguese] who imitated us. But they [the Portuguese] did not know how to cook it. They used a powder, a mix of spices that they used to buy in an Indian store. They did not know how to prepare it like we do. My wife prepares the spice at home. She buys all the ingredients and makes it! But they [the Portuguese] bought that stuff and thought that they were cooking curry! (Mr. Silva).

“GOA IS FASHIONABLE IN PORTUGAL!”—CONFIRMING THE VALUE OF GOAN FOOD AND FOODWAYS

Migrating from Mozambique to Portugal was, as mentioned earlier, a defining moment in the lives of all of the families. Most of them have been living in the same house since they settled in Lisbon, which in their opinion proves that the choices made upon arrival were right: as one subject said, “we chose this house because of its location (very central) and the number of rooms, we needed at least three bedrooms—one for us, one for the boys, and one for the girls. It was a bit expensive at the time, but it was the right choice!” Most homes are decorated in a classical style,²² which is, I was told, very like the houses from their past. A considerable proportion of the furniture and decorative objects came from Mozambique, which contributes to strengthening the sense of continuity of style the families expressed. It is interesting to note that these objects, i.e. the ones that migrated with the families, are now classified as “Mozambican”. “Mozambican” things necessarily comprise a broad category of objects, materials, origins and design-styles, most of them responsible for the production of the “European-style homes” in the colony. Again, as in the past, Goan objects brought from Mozambique are special. These remain in a different category of things, regardless of how and when they entered the life of the families. They are diverse, ranging from art, tapestries and furniture, to baskets, kitchen tools and spices. Some of these things have been with the families since they left Goa for the first time, many were sent to the families by relatives when they were based in Mozambique, and many were acquired or brought from Goa on trips the families have recently made to the former territory. As Miss Oliveira said:

Since I arrived in Portugal, I’ve visited Goa eight times. My husband has lots of inherited assets there. One day, not long after we arrived in Lisbon, we thought that it was a pity to have all those lands and great houses there, all abandoned, and because we needed the money we started to go there to sell and bring the money over here. And we also brought objects from our home. All our children have gone to Goa with their Portuguese wives and husbands and all of them were very surprised when they visited the family’s great house for the first time. They could not believe that we had all those things back in Goa! Our properties are quite impressive!

Time does not appear to affect the status of Goan objects or the relationship of the families with Goan things. Most of these objects, regardless of when they have entered into their lives, occupy visible positions in the rooms they inhabit and are described as very significant objects, especially the ones displayed in the most public rooms of the home such as the entrance halls and the living rooms. When questioned about the reasons behind this explicit visibility, Mrs. Silva explained that after the revolution, Goans started to reassess their relationship with origin: "People started to visit Goa more often. And maybe because here we are middle class, we started to treasure more what our families have or had there. More and more people are now proud to be Goan and I would even say that Goa has come into fashion now in Portugal!" This openness regarding Goa and Goan culture, which has affected the domestic material culture of the home, took on a particular form in relation to food and foodways. Food has provided an important source of continuity with the past in the Portuguese context. As Mrs. Branco said:

I continue to cook it because I love Goan food. And all my children love it too. And I'm very careful with its preparation. I don't like fake things! I try to prepare everything according to my mother's recipes. In fact, I would love to edit a cookbook with my mother's recipes and mine. Once my daughter-in-law told me that she wanted to learn how to cook. She is Portuguese. But she soon gave up. She could not imagine the hard work it takes.

According to many testimonies, Goan cuisine continues to be fundamental for the families, just as it was in Mozambique. People refer to it emphatically and, as in the example above mentioned, stress the fact that Portuguese people value, appreciate and actively try to appropriate it. The importance of Goan food is also emphasised at key moments such as just after giving birth. As Mrs. Oliveira said:

The *balvã*²³ is very good, and my mother had a great recipe. I also learned how to prepare it. My mother used to make it when my sister, my sisters-in-law, and I had babies. It was mandatory because tradition said it was good for milk production. And mother prepared it all the time. Now I don't make it anymore because my hands do not have the necessary strength, but I've made it many times in the past, for all my daughters and also for my daughters-in-law, who are Portuguese. I used to make it at home and took it to their homes. And they've always eaten it, even my Portuguese daughters-in-law. One of them still makes it from time to time. She really likes it!

If the significance of Goan food remains undisputed, there is, however, a difference compared to the past in terms of the frequency with which it is prepared. Unlike in Mozambique, Goan food in Portugal is mainly

prepared for special occasions such as Christmas and New Year, birthdays, christenings, and festive family occasions, and not much on a daily basis. This change is justified as follows:

In Mozambique the servants did everything. Sure, we supervised, but they were responsible for all the cutting up, the chopping, the cleaning. And they went shopping. From time to time I would go shopping myself, but when I arrived home I beeped and they would come to get the bags. Here we have to do everything ourselves. We were not used to that, but there was no choice. And Goan food is very difficult to prepare and very time consuming. I always say that there is no doubt that our grandmothers did not have much to do, otherwise they would not have invented such complicated recipes! (Mrs. Silva).

Since the majority of the women work or worked outside the home and are also responsible for the preparation of everyday family meals (as well as the majority of other domestic tasks), Goan food has acquired a new role as a primarily festive food, without, however, significantly altering its already important status. Its preparation, especially if made ‘without cheating’, is admired and valued (see Figures 2 and 3), though some women confess that there is no harm in small concessions: “do not tell my husband, but now I use the food processor to grind the spices instead of the *vân*²⁴” (Mrs. Silva).

We are getting old! So now sometimes we choose to get together in restaurants instead of at home. Always Goan restaurants, of course! And, for example, at Christmas there is this typical pudding that is called



FIGURE 2 Hand coconut grater as used in Mozambique, displayed in a house in Lisbon (Color figure available online).



FIGURE 3 Goan rice baskets decorating a kitchen in Lisbon (Color figure available online).

“cake”. Almost everybody has “cake” at home. It’s a kind of English pudding, but it’s different. It’s made with dried fruit and candied fruit, but also includes other ingredients. Now there are some ladies who still bake it at home but I don’t. I order it because it is very difficult to bake! (Mrs. Santos).

Bought or home made, Goan food remains a key feature of domestic materiality. It is still mostly through its production and consumption that new family members, whether children or Portuguese spouses, learn to value “Goan tastes” and, with them, Goan patrimony and cultural identity. This heritage, in the proud words of Mr. Silva, is now “at last acknowledged and respected by many Europeans”.

CONCLUSION

Colonialism and migration are core parts of Goan contemporary history and culture. They have laid the groundwork for some of the most distinctive dimensions of the territory’s collective life for centuries, affecting its institutions, but also the ways of being and belonging of those who have migrated and of those who have stayed. Based on this general assumption, I have aimed to explore and understand how a group of five families whose ancestors left Goa long ago have produced and reproduced their cultural identity in the different contexts in which they have lived. Drawing on their depictions of their past and present domestic consumption practices in general, and food in particular, I have followed the families’ trajectories from Goa to colonial Mozambique and afterwards to Portugal and I have discussed their

strategies for the maintenance of a sense of Goan cultural identity despite migration and colonialism.

The focus on food which I have developed here has proved to be productive in understanding the way in which the subjects of my research perceive their identity. Food—in common, in fact, with other seemingly insignificant domestic things—is an important source of data to allow us to explore the multifaceted complexities of transnational migrations. Food-related practices hold a remarkably expressive potential, arguably greater than all other daily practices. Moreover, food is highly mobile, easily carried from one place to another and, as these ethnographic results suggest, able to subvert and gradually alter rigid colonial policies. For this reason it represents a potential avenue towards understanding complex issues around cultural change and transnational cultural flow—“how the seemingly insurmountable boundaries between each group’s unique dietary practices can be maintained while diets, recipes, and cuisines are in a constant flux” (Wilk 2008: 308).

Catholic Brahmin Goan migrations to colonial Portuguese African territories were characterized by a particular challenge—to occupy a position relatively close to the colonial elites (and therefore detached from all other non European groups) without actually belonging to those elites. This latter aim made a virtue of a necessity, in fact, since the Europeans did not want to fully assimilate with the Goans. According to the families interviewed, they managed this demanding situation through reinforcing many of their distinctive collective identity features (especially those who maintained their proximity to the Portuguese) and, at the same time, adjusting others to the specificities of life in the Colony. Within this framework, Goan food, and to some extent also music and oral family stories, gained a particularly significant role in the materialization of the Goan side of their cultural identity. This emphasis on food continued in the context of the migration to Portugal. Despite the differences between the two contexts, Goan food continues to be a key element in the families’ reproduction and display of their ‘*goanidade*’—their Goan-ness. In Portugal, there has, however, been a shift in the way families currently cope with their gastronomic patrimony. Goans seem to have become more aware that they use goods to their own social ends, that is, in Wilk’s (2008: 314) words, they seem to ‘have acquired the distance necessary to view goods as tools to be manipulated rather than signs to be accepted or rejected’.

Beyond emphasising the role of food in the production and materialization of a coherent and original project of being and belonging, the ethnography presented here enunciates other points worth mentioning. The first relates to the centrality of food in discourses about the past. As I have discussed, food was intensely described by the families and, unlike other domestic practices, this was with accuracy and detail. In *Remembrance of Repasts*, Sutton (2001: 6) argues that the “ability of food to generate

subjective commentary and encode powerful meanings would seemingly make it ideal to wed to the topic of memory". Though this research did not have memory as its primary focus, and consequently cannot contribute directly to Sutton's interesting suggestion, this suggestion proved accurate in the context of this research. The arguments presented by Marte (2007: 261–2) when addressing the ways food serves as a "ground body-place-memory in the way immigrants live and re-imagine their cultural histories in consecutive 'homes', manifesting their movements through (...) countries" are also very relevant. Goan families do tend to rely on food, and on the evocation of its smells, tastes and appearances, to go back in time, not only to Africa, but also to Goa.

The second point brought out by the ethnography relates to the families' expression of their relationship with Goa. According to the families' testimonies, in Mozambique Catholic Brahmin Goan homes resembled Portuguese homes, not only because of their location, but also due to the fact that their decoration and management were in accordance with a "Portuguese way of life" and were decorated according to a "European style". However, this statement—which came across as dominant—was nevertheless contradicted by behaviour vis-à-vis certain objects ('Goan' objects), music and, in particular, food produced and consumed in the home. Goan food, properly prepared according to the families' recipes, was served both on everyday meals and festive occasions in Mozambique. Despite the fact that it was "hidden away" in the home, the display of this non-European identity feature is of great significance, defying, as it does, the dominant trend towards the integration and naturalization of a "Portuguese domesticity". As did the women who were part of Counihan's (2008: 356) research in Southern Colorado, Goan men and women seem to challenge subordination and strive for agency through food, evidencing an ability to acknowledge and operate within (demeaning and disempowering) structures and ideologies, while generating alternative forms to resist domination.

Colonial hierarchies have usually been firmly controlled by an elite which has tended to combine political, economic and cultural power and which, as Wilk (2008) describes in relation to colonial Belizean society, have managed and censored flows of goods and information and controlled the boundaries between social groups through many forms of class and racial discrimination. Goan families responded to a situation of this kind by strategically displaying a Portuguese habitus and maintaining a "proper" Portuguese home in Africa. At the same time, they maintained a distinct identity, their *goanidade*—their "Goan-ness"—in the home, particularly through food. The positive evaluation of Goan cuisine and its careful maintenance right up to the present day, fulfilling the role of cultural "umbilical cord" – as one of the subjects spontaneously and significantly defined it – constitutes a remarkable response to cultural domination.

NOTES

1. Preface of *Sabor de Goa*, A cookbook edited by Maria Fernanda N. C. Sousa and Inês Gonçalves, Lisboa, Assírio & Alvim.
2. Malheiros (1996; 2000), Gracias (2000); Zamparoni (2000).
3. One of the most significant original features of Goan colonial society is the fact that it included a large and heterogeneous set of social categories, deriving from massive conversion to Catholicism combined with the existence of the previous social structure. The complex scheme of social categorization resulting from the integration of these two principles went through various stages and designations during the long colonial period, but its dominant principle was that it consisted of two main groups: the Catholic Portuguese, born in the “metropolis”, and the Indians, a group formed by all non-Catholic (Hindu and Muslim) populations with no European descent. The social spaces “in between” were occupied by other categories, namely the Portuguese born in India, the descendants of mixed marriages and the Indian population converted to Catholicism.
4. Pseudonym.
5. A Goan Association in Lisbon.
6. Pseudonym.
7. One of the oldest and finest hotels in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique.
8. Word used in Mozambique to designate Christian Indians. It had a pejorative connotation. Its origin is uncertain.
9. The name of the capital of Mozambique before Independence.
10. This evaluation was not explicitly depreciative, but it was always clear that these “African objects”—as they were always described by the families—belonged to a different category which was of lesser significance.
11. Rice cooked with almonds, raisins, fried onion and chicken.
12. A traditional Christmas Goan recipe: pork meat cooked with animals’ blood, strongly spiced with black pepper, ginger, red pepper, cumin, tamarind and Indian saffron.
13. A cake made of eggs, sugar, flour, butter and coconut.
14. A dessert made with semolina and ghee (clarified butter from the milk of a buffalo or a cow).
15. Bean stew, a popular dish usually cooked with red beans, sausages and pork.
16. *Chouriço* is deep red pork sausage links made from pork, vinegar, chili, garlic, ginger, cumin, turmeric and other spices, and are extremely hot, spicy and flavorful.
17. Another popular bean stew, usually prepared with white beans, sausage and hog casings.
18. The category “normal food” includes, according to the subjects, a restrict number of recipes such as grilled chicken with white rice and vegetables and boiled fish with potatoes, carrots and broccoli, which are very popular in most Portuguese homes, not only because they are easy to prepare, but also because all members of the family (children included) can eat them.
19. For Mozambicans, curry means the sauce or liquid that comes with rice or maize porridge. There are many ways to prepare it. The most common varieties use chicken, crab, dried shrimp, or vegetables. The sauce ingredients are dried and crushed raw peanuts, salt, onion, grated coconut and tomato.
20. The former designation for Maputo.
21. Most subjects used the expression “national food” to describe curry during the colonial period.
22. Mainly decorated with period furniture.
23. A dessert made with semolina and ghee (clarified butter from the milk of a buffalo or a cow).
24. Goan mortar stone.

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