

**Domingos, Nuno**  
**FOOTBALL AND COLONIALISM: *Body and Popular Culture in Urban Mozambique***  
**African Studies Quarterly**  
**Vol. 18, Issue 1**  
**September 2018**

Nuno Domingos' *Football and Colonialism* represents a comprehensive look at the growth of football in urban Lourenço Marques (now Maputo). Domingos does a good job combining a comprehensive historical study—benefiting from archival work—with anthropological methods supplementing historical findings by interspersing interviews conducted with former footballers in both Mozambique and Portugal throughout the narrative in order to provide a detailed image of how football shaped the colonial experience in urban Mozambique.

Domingos's well-researched text reminds the reader at the outset that “despite being the object of surveillance and political co-option by state institutions, religious and economic actors, sports associations promoted practices and consumptions, mobilized people and enabled urban encounters and, in some cases, were even converted into sites of organized resistance” (p. 9). Throughout the book, Domingos shows the various ways that indigenous and mestizo residents of suburban Lourenço Marques used football to create connections, both reproducing—and transforming—the colonial system (p. 18).

The book opens with a few historical chapters on the development of football in suburban and urban Lourenço Marques, emphasizing that the sport organized itself according to the logic of colonial structures while also creating new urban identities. In the middle portions of the book, Domingos shows how football was influenced by local characteristics, and local traditions—like witchcraft and faith healing—were introduced to the colonial urban environment through football. In the latter portions of the book, Domingos goes on to show just how football created a space where locals could form an identity as well as make connections with the wider world, allowing for an escape from the constraints of the colonial system while offering a chance to integrate with the modern international system. Specifically, this meant (in some cases) abandoning the local style of play and adopting the rationalized, “modern” style of football, affording opportunities for some local players—including the famous Eusebio—to make their mark on European and indeed world football.

The utility of *Football and Colonialism* lies in its ability to show how, for the residents of colonial Lourenço Marques, football was much more than just a tool for colonial social control (as was the case in the metropole under Salazar). Instead, football provided a social and cultural context within which connections could be made in the urban area. These connections offered opportunities for integration with wider (non-indigenous) structures without completely legitimizing the status quo. These connections also—notably—did not descend into a wider struggle and violence between colonizers and colonized. Instead, Domingos stresses the ongoing give-and-take between indigenous and

colonial cultures within the colonial system, using football as the lens through which to view this interaction.

Football offered residents of suburban Lourenço Marques opportunities to develop connections among themselves (including opportunities for education), opportunities to develop connections with “downtown” (where the majority of Portuguese settlers and Europeans lived), and opportunities to develop connections with the metropole (by following metropolitan teams like SL Benfica or Sporting Lisbon). Interestingly, the connections Domingos refers to also include connections with indigenous culture. Throughout, Domingos points out how football played a role in developing a unique sense of morals in suburban Lourenço Marques while also providing opportunities for the integration of witchcraft practices and vovo into football. Domingos’ narrative presents these indigenous connections provided by football as unique responses to the modernizing processes driven by Portuguese colonialism (p. 151). This is in stark contrast to the homogenizing effects of modern football in the current era that seek to impose the logic of rationalized neoliberalism on the world’s game at the expense of local cultures.

Domingos’ unique amalgamation of historical and anthropological approaches allows for an in-depth study of the social role of football in a colonial context, but it does not allow the reader to forget that they are reading a historical work. Indeed, a little more emphasis on the anthropological side—and ethnographic methods in particular—would have made Domingos’ analysis a little more engaging as bringing out the human voice of participants could have livened up the prose. Still, Nuno Domingos’ *Football and Colonialism* offers amazing insight into football in colonial Mozambique and represents a very important addition to the academic literature on football. As a well-researched work that integrates sociological and anthropological theory seamlessly into the historical narrative, it will also be of immense value to students of African history, colonial history, urban studies, as well as to those with an interest in popular culture and sports more generally.