

which is also a tricky and controversial concept that warranted more explanation and discussion. Mendy begins by describing Cabral as a “charismatic leader” (9), and repeats this on the book’s back cover. But we are not told much about what is meant by charisma, nor how Cabral was charismatic.

Sometimes the genealogy of charisma is traced through the work of German sociologist Max Weber (also raising questions about disentangling the concept from Weber’s racism, elitism, imperialism, sexism, and interpretation of Rudolph Sohm). Rather differently, the late Cedric Robinson, the now influential scholar of the Black Radical Tradition, was of course very interested and informed by Cabral (and dialectics), and also wrote at length about charisma in a quite different way in his 1974 Stanford PhD dissertation. For Robinson, charisma should be understood in terms of leaders’ and followers’ “relationship of liberation, not domination” (as Erica Edwards clarifies further in her foreword to Cedric Robinson, *The Terms of Order: Political Science and the Myth of Leadership* [2016], ix–xxviii).

Weber’s key writings were translated into English and gained popularity in the then tight knit good old (white) boys club of Western sociology, politics, and African studies around the first wave of post–World War II decolonization, and charisma was soon applied as a lens to understand African nationalist movements, political parties (revolutionary and otherwise), and leaders (e.g., David Apter, “The Gold Coast in Transition: A Case Study of Political Institutional Transfer,”

PhD diss., Princeton University [1954]). This led unfortunately to a rather personalist, culturalist top-down view (discounting material circumstances, legitimate grievances, women, subaltern viewpoints, etc.) which still shapes how scholars, media, people, and Western publics view African countries (ask Trevor Noah).

The present danger in (re-)emphasizing charismatic leadership is that we attribute the destiny of African countries to the political will of a few “self-serving leaders” (205), rather than understanding the complex messy state-society dynamics and hence strategic areas for action, which I think was part of Cabral’s main dialectical preoccupation.

There are a few other minor issues—for example, there is some uncertainty and controversy about the origins of the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola that goes unmentioned (21). While the book spends some pages in the beginning giving early background on Cabral, it generally stops after his assassination (though there are a few contemporary connections throughout the text). It would have been nice to briefly situate Cabral in relation to the trajectory of Guinea Bissau since the 1970s.

Nonetheless, Mendy’s concise text is unique and is a useful way to bring wider engagement with Cabral, including the three neglected dimensions just described. For anyone who may develop an interest in Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, and Cabral, Mendy’s book rewards its readers.

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ALLEN ISAACMAN and BARBARA ISAACMAN. *Mozambique’s Samora Machel: A Life Cut Short*. (Ohio Short Histories of Africa.) Athens: Ohio University Press, 2020. Pp. 258. Paper \$17.95.

Allen and Barbara Isaacman, both prolific scholars of Mozambique, have written a fine book on Samora Moisés Machel, Mozambique’s first president. The book comes in the wake of a recent flurry of popular and academic attention lavished on this political figure. Samora’s—as all Mozambicans call him—revival emerged in the 1990s with Mozambique’s *abertura* to capitalism. Samora’s rebirth comes at a moment of intellectual and political disillusionment with the collapse of socialism as well as the recent increase of poverty and stark social inequalities in postsocialist Mozambique.

The Isaacmans’ biography of Samora fits perfectly into this nostalgic fever. The authors appear divided between their old loyalty toward FRELIMO, the liberation movement headed by Samora, and their disillusionment with what the party represents today. This tension makes the book interesting as it moves between

strands of “patriotic history,” a term used and criticized by the Isaacmans, and a critical analysis of Samora’s rule. The book is divided into nine chapters organized chronologically, from the colonial to the postindependence period. The first two chapters provide an overview of Samora’s childhood and early adult life working as a nurse. At the time, life was hard for Black Mozambicans because racism, forced labor, and professional discrimination was the norm. Samora’s formative years were shaped not only by these colonial conditions but also by his sense of pride in his rural ancestry and African culture. His peers knew him as a rebellious, but at other times flamboyant, bohemian, and a womanizer (53). The tone in these first chapters remains wedded to the teleological official history. Thus, while chapter 1 has as its subtitle “The Making of an Insurgent,” chapter 2 is called “The Making of a Freedom Fighter.”

Chapter 3 delves into FRELIMO's internal bitter saga (1962–70). It opens with Samora's exit from Mozambique in 1963 and his arrival in Tanzania to join FRELIMO, which had been founded a year earlier. It describes Samora's successful rise to power. The Isaacmans claim that FRELIMO's inner conflicts, framed by the official script as the struggle of two lines—"reactionaries" and "revolutionaries"—is reductive. For them, "the cleaves were multiple": over race (against white, mixed race, and Goan-descent Mozambicans), regionalism, tribalism, and different visions of an independent Mozambique (68). In chapter 4, we are drawn into FRELIMO's armed struggle and the establishment of the "liberated zones" with its schooling, health system, and collective production. As a military commander, Samora faced four challenges: the guerrilla's lack of personnel and weaponry, the mobilization of the peasantry, the incorporation of women, and the racial tensions within the movement (91). The chapter ends with the 1974 peace agreement with the Portuguese, a settlement that the Isaacmans argue left room for a postwar anti-FRELIMO insurgency (111).

The second half of the book considers the postcolonial period. In chapter 5, we see Samora busy destroying the colonial state apparatus, establishing a revolutionary judicial system, and building a nonracial nation, set next to his challenges reconstituting his own family (he had children with three different women). The Isaacmans critically discuss Samora's early rule, the infamous "re-education camps," FRELIMO's obsession with the "enemies of the revolution," and the construction of the utopian "New Man." They find fault with the mismanagement of the state economy by Samora and his comrades as well as the problematic efforts to modernize the countryside, where a majority of Mozambicans still lived and worked.

Chapter 6 focuses on the specificities of Samora's Marxism and its uneven application to FRELIMO's revolutionary government. Samora stressed the importance of local context over abstract theorization. The authors critically examine Samora's conception of class enemies, Frelimo's misconception of the cities, and the instauration of the death penalty. Chapter 7 emphasizes the resulting incongruities between the promises of the socialist experiments and the concrete realities of Mozambican people. Most of these discrepancies were influenced by three related policies: the retreat from socialism, *operação produção*, and the peace accord with South Africa necessitated by the apartheid government's backing of anti-FRELIMO rebels. Chapter 8 deals with Samora's death in a still mysterious plane crash. Al-

though the Isaacmans do not definitively pin the blame on South Africa, they draw on work at the South African History Archive to cast a good deal of suspicion. The use of that material makes this chapter exciting to read.

The concluding chapter focuses on the present condition of Mozambique after the collapse of the socialist project and the transformation of FRELIMO into a party that endorses—and benefits from—neoliberal capitalism. We are drawn now into two different political contexts: Joaquim Chissano's presidency (1986–2005) and his politics of forgetting both socialism and Samora, and President Armando Guebuza's rule (2005–15), which remembered Samora without socialism. Thus, the postsocialist period is marked by a dialectics of presence and absence of Samora. On the one hand, there was a deliberate strategy to erase Samora and socialism to lend legitimacy to the new ideology of the market economy and capitalism. On the other, there is an ongoing "remembering from below" from ordinary people disillusioned with postrevolutionary Mozambique (204).

The Isaacmans promise to "raise new questions" (36) about Samora and his legacy. Does the book accomplish this? While most of what they say about Samora is not new, intertwining the president's personal and public life is compelling. The Isaacmans bring new readings of Mozambique's modern history and Samora's legacy, including criticizing Samora's "patriarchal tendencies" and the absence of woman in the government (144). They also address the tensions, dissent, and power struggles within the regime, themes seldom discussed in Mozambican scholarship. There are, however, some unsubstantiated passages in the book. For example, the affirmation of a "cynical ploy by Samora's former rival [Armando Guebuza] to increase his popularity and reinforce his legitimacy as a nationalist leader" (201). Unfortunately, the book lacks any critical reflection on the role of researchers' complicity and consent to the failed socialist policies and Samora's autocratic rule. Scholars like the Isaacmans were there, aiding the building of the socialist utopia. In that sense, they helped legitimize FRELIMO's flawed hegemonic project.

Notwithstanding these minor caveats, this is an all-encompassing book that covers the major events in Mozambique's modern history. I would recommend this book to all scholars of Mozambique, but especially university students who are entering the field. It will enable them to have an overview of Mozambique's modern history through the social and political life of Samora.

Allen e Barbara Isaacman, estudiosos prolíficos de Moçambique, escreveram um excelente livro sobre Samora Moisés Machel, o primeiro presidente de

Moçambique. O livro surge na esteira de uma recente onda de atenção popular e académica dedicada a esta figura política. O renascimento de Samora-como todos os

moçambicanos o chamam-surgiu em meados dos anos 1990 no rescaldo da abertura de Moçambique ao capitalismo. Ocorre também como um dos sintomas da desilusão intelectual e popular pelo colapso da utopia socialista e do aumento da pobreza e desigualdades sociais. A biografia de Samora se encaixa perfeitamente nessa febre nostálgica. Os autores parecem divididos entre a sua antiga lealdade para com a FRELIMO, o movimento de libertação liderado por Samora, e o seu desencanto com o que o partido representa hoje. Essa tensão torna o livro interessante à medida que se move entre a história patriótica e uma análise crítica da governação de Samora.

O livro está estruturado em nove capítulos organizados cronologicamente do período colonial ao pós-independência. Os primeiros dois capítulos fornecem uma visão geral da infância de Samora e do início da sua vida adulta quando trabalhava como enfermeiro. Naquela época, a vida era difícil para a maioria negra pois o racismo, a discriminação e o trabalho precário eram a norma. Os anos de formação de Samora foram moldados não apenas por essa socialização colonial, mas também pelo senso de orgulho pessoal que ele tinha por sua ancestralidade rural e pela cultura africana. Era conhecido por seus pares como um jovem rebelde, mas garboso, boêmio e até mulherengo (53). O tom da escrita nesses primeiros capítulos mantém-se atrelado à lógica da história oficial teleológica. Por exemplo, enquanto o capítulo 1 tem como subtítulo “A formação de um insurgente,” o capítulo 2 intitula-se “A formação de um lutador pela liberdade.”

O Capítulo 3 analisa as lutas intestinas da FRELIMO (1962–70). Começa, no entanto, por descrever a fuga de Samora da colônia em 1963 e a sua chegada ao solo tanzaniano para se juntar à FRELIMO. Allen e Barbara narram detalhadamente a ascensão bem-sucedida de Samora ao poder. É então no núcleo duro deste capítulo, onde os Isaacmans argumentam que os conflitos internos da FRELIMO, conceptualizados pela narrativa oficial como a luta de duas linhas—“reacionários” e “revolucionários”— são demasiado redutores. Para eles, “as clivagens eram múltiplas” e começaram logo após a fundação do movimento. Envolveram, por exemplo quezílias sobre a “raça” (contra os brancos, mestiços e moçambicanos de ascendência goesa), sobre “regionalismo,” “tribalismo” e “diferentes visões de um Moçambique independente” (68). No capítulo 4, somos arremessados para a luta armada da FRELIMO e o estabelecimento das primeiras “zonas libertadas,” uma espécie de proto-estado com um sistema contra-hegemónico de educação, saúde e produção colectiva. Como comandante militar, Samora enfrentou quatro desafios: a falta de pessoal e armamento da guerrilha, a mobilização do campesinato, a incorporação das mulheres e as tensões raciais no movimento (91). O capítulo termina discutindo os preparativos para a independência nacional sobretudo a assinatura dos acordos de Lusaka de 1974 com o novo governo saído do golpe de estado em Portugal. Os

autores argumentam que estes encontros da transferência de poder criaram o espaço para o surgimento da insurgência anti-FRELIMO do pós-guerra (111).

A segunda metade do livro se detém no período pós-colonial. No capítulo 5, numa combinação inusitada, os autores apresentam-nos um Samora, simultaneamente, ocupado no “escangalhamento” do estado colonial, na construção de um sistema judicial revolucionário, de uma nação não racial, e mesmo assim, atarefado a reagrupar a sua própria família no palácio presidencial (os Isaacmans nos dizem que ele teve filhos com três mulheres diferentes). Neste capítulo, são discutidos também a governação de Samora, os infames “campos de reeducação,” a obsessão da FRELIMO com os “inimigos da revolução,” e a construção do utópico “Homem Novo.” Os Isaacmans criticam Samora e os seus camaradas pela má gestão da economia estatal, pelo falhanço da “modernização do campo” onde a maioria dos moçambicanos ainda vivia e trabalhava.

O Capítulo 6 prossegue com o dissecamento da governação ‘revolucionária’ da FRELIMO. Discute a sua transformação em partido político e a visão de Samora sobre o marxismo. Samora enfatizava, por exemplo, a importância do contexto local sobre a teorização abstracta. Os autores examinam criticamente a concepção de Samora sobre os “inimigos de classe,” o preconceito da Frelimo em relação às cidades, e a instauração da pena de morte. O Capítulo 7 traz à superfície as discrepâncias existentes entre a promessa messiânica do socialismo e o dia-a-dia da população. Grande parte dessas divergências foram influenciadas, na óptica dos Isaacmans, por três políticas entrelaçadas: o recuo do socialismo, a “operação produção” e os acordos de *Nkomati*. O Capítulo 8 trata da trágica morte de Samora em um ainda misterioso acidente de avião. Embora os Isaacmans não atribuam a culpa definitivamente à África do Sul, eles escavam os arquivos históricos sul-africanos para lançar muitas suspeitas ao regime do apartheid. O uso desse material torna a leitura do capítulo aprazível.

O último capítulo concentra-se no Moçambique pós-Samora, na dissolução da ideologia marxista-leninista da Frelimo e sua metamorfose num partido político que reverencia o capitalismo. Somos agora arrebatados para dois contextos políticos distintos. Primeiro, a presidência de Joaquim Chissano (1986–2005) e sua estratégia de esquecimento deliberado do socialismo e de Samora. Segundo, o governo do presidente Armando Guebuza (2005–15), que procura ao mesmo tempo resgatar Samora, e silenciar os seus ideais socialistas. O período pós-socialista é assim marcado por uma dialéctica de presença e ausência de Samora. Estas estratégias institucionais de esquecimento e lembrança, foram grandemente influenciadas também pela insatisfação popular com o governo do dia, acabando assim por desembocar no resgate de Samora e seus ideais. Como afirmaram os Isaacmans é a “lembrança dos debaixo”

de pessoas comuns desiludidas com o Moçambique pós-revolucionário (204).

Os Isaacmans prometem “levantar novas questões” sobre Samora e seu legado (36) Embora a maior parte do que eles dizem sobre ele não seja nova, entrelaçar a vida pessoal e pública do presidente é interessante. O livro traz novas leituras da história moderna de Moçambique e do legado de Samora, incluindo críticas às “tendências patriarcais” de Samora e à ausência de mulheres no governo (144). Eles também abordam as tensões, dissidências e lutas pelo poder dentro do regime, temas raramente discutidos na historiografia local. Existem, no entanto, algumas passagens infundadas no livro. Por exemplo, a afirmação de uma “manobra cínica do ex-rival de Samora [Armando Guebuza] para aumentar a sua popularidade e reforçar a sua legitimidade como líder nacionalista” (201). Infelizmente, o livro carece também de uma introspeção crítica sobre

a cumplicidade e consentimento espontâneo dos intelectuais da universidade às políticas socialistas fracasadas, e ao governo autocrático de Samora. Estudiosos como os Isaacmans *estiveram lá*, auxiliando na construção da utopia socialista *made in Mozambique*. Nesse sentido, eles ajudaram intelectualmente a cimentar e legitimar o projeto hegemônico da FRELIMO.

Não obstante estas pequenas advertências, este é um livro abrangente que cobre os principais eventos da história moderna de Moçambique. Recomendo a todos os estudiosos de Moçambique, mas especialmente aos estudantes universitários que estão entrando na área. Irá permitir-lhes ter uma visão geral da história moderna de Moçambique através da vida social e política de Samora, um personagem inconfundível na história de Moçambique e da África Austral.

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SUE ONSLOW and MARTIN PLAUT. *Robert Mugabe*. (Ohio Short Histories of Africa.) Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018. Pp. 208. Paper \$14.95.

Robert Gabriel Mugabe, longtime leader of the southern African nation of Zimbabwe, died on September 6, 2019, at the age of ninety-five, a year after being deposed from power. He left no autobiography or authorized biography. After an initial collected volume of speeches and interviews was published in 1983—soon after he had come to power—no additional compilations of his letters, essays, or policy reflections were produced. In contrast, a virtual industry promulgates sources on the political evolution of Nelson Mandela, Mugabe’s contemporary to the south; there are published letters about Mandela’s published letters. But Mugabe went to his grave maintaining virtual radio silence about his life. Other than a fair number of journalistic political interviews collected on YouTube, Mugabe’s views on the trajectories of his own personal, political, and professional conduct were never expressed.

While there is little by Mugabe, there is a cacophony of sources about him. Many are breathlessly outraged condemnations of the state violence that was unleashed on a comparatively small number of white farmers after 2000, often accompanied by photos of violent African mobs threatening white women behind locked farm gates, babes in arms and plucky Jack Russell terriers at their feet—images that played into the worst traditions of Mau Mau—ist hysteria. Mugabe always had fierce critics: Rhodesians decrying his early socialism, Britons criticizing his intransigence, Zimbabweans angered at his intolerance of real and perceived political opposition and quick abandonment of a genuinely long-term redistributive economic strategy. After a decade of silence there was finally exposure and condemnation of

the Mugabe government’s massacres of villagers in the southern province of Matabeleland in the 1980s. On the other hand, Mugabe also attracted supporters elsewhere on the African continent who welcomed his anti-colonial rhetoric, which paradoxically grew more defiant and strident even as formal colonialism itself receded into the pages of history.

Into this fray comes Sue Onslow and Martin Plaut’s biography in the Ohio Short Histories of Africa series. The book was published a year after Mugabe was deposed from power and a year before he died. As with the other books in this series, this is a “brief but lively” and affordable introduction to an aspect of African history where there is a fair amount of both popular interest and academic production. Onslow and Plaut, fixtures in the British academic and journalist ranks on southern Africa, have achieved a readable volume that tries very hard to come to grips with three things about Mugabe: controversy, complexity, and contradiction.

Controversy is inevitable in transitions from colonial to postcolonial rule. Who benefits? Who decides? Who suffers as power is passed from one community to another? Onslow and Plaut’s first chapter tries to set the scene of the competing views about Mugabe: As Southern Rhodesia became Rhodesia and then Zimbabwe, had Mugabe always been a gangster-like figure, or had he merely evolved into one? Had the hero of the anticolonial liberation struggle ever really been heroic, or was it all simply the periodically seductive performance of yet another “African despot” (13)? They decline to answer this question definitively but do suggest that time was his Achilles heel—the thirty-seven years he spent doggedly