

**João Loureiro, *Memórias de Lourenço Marques: uma
visão do passado da cidade de Maputo***

Lisbon, Maisimagem, 2003, 127 p.

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- 1 For those who frequent the internet there is alleged to be a site called postaisultramar.com.pt which tells of João Loureiro's eleven thousand postcards which photographically span the Portuguese empire from the final days of the last Saxe-Coburg king through to the insurrection of the army captains and the subsequent decolonisation of 1975. Samples of this visual record have already been published dealing with Luanda City, with Mozambique Island, with the Atlantic archipelagos, even with little Guinea. Now Loureiro has brought out a volume of photographs, each telling a story, each with a minimal explanatory caption, on the late-colonial railway port of Maputo, then known to Mozambicans and their South African clients as Lourenço Marques. One of the first pictures shows an electric streetcar cruising past the rickshaws down Prince Miguel Avenue which (after the revolution of 1910) became October the Fifth Avenue and (after the revolution of 1974) changed again to Patrice Lumumba Avenue. In 1904 the trams reached the ocean shore on which the massive shanks of the Polana Hotel were raised to serve as residence for generations of spies, revolutionaries and secret agents. The trams continued to serve the city's people until 1936.
- 2 At the other end of the town the Transvaal railway arrived in 1894 and by 1910 the temporary goods sheds had been replaced by a massive monumental passenger station

and the square fronting the edifice had been named in honour of Mac Mahon, the French veteran of the Crimean War who caused much fluttering in the imperial dovecotes by deciding that Delagoa Bay should be Lusitanian rather than Britannic. Another highly ornate building which celebrated the rise of Lourenço Marques to city status was a mosque topped at each corner with triple-decker minarets and lit by single-arched and double-arched fan windows. The mosque was frequented by the Indian merchant community while the Chinese had their own pagoda just off what is to-day Samora Machel Avenue. An even more interesting postcard features the Wesleyan Methodist chapel, the Presbyterian Swiss mission church, and a small snap of Lourenço Marques' apparently newly-built synagogue as it appeared in 1929 with a square-columned frontage and a rose window. It raises interesting questions as to who built a synagogue on Portuguese soil and who frequented it.

- 3 By the 1960s Lourenço Marques had become the exotic lure for South Africans wishing to escape the puritanistic strictures of the Dutch Reformed Church and the fanatical ideologies of apartheid. A poster of 1965 makes so bold as to picture a beach damsel in a bikini at a time when the metropolitan beaches of Portugal often required even gentlemen to wear full, two-piece, swim suits providing cover not only for the torso but also for the arms. Such bold advertising drew attention not only to "golden mornings" on the beach but in one of Loureiro's 1940s posters also hinted at "silver nights" with the lace-trimmed silhouette of a slim female figure.

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