

Politics and Contemporary History in Mozambique: A Set of Epistemological Notes

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1.

Looking at the Contemporary History of Mozambique in the domestic setting, what strikes one, perhaps even more than questionable historiography, is the scarcity of historiography. The reason for such a situation could be sought, at least partially, in the colonial legacy of difficult access of the majority of the population to more than basic education, in particular the virtual absence of Africans in higher education during the colonial days; to this we could also associate the lack of history courses at the university before independence.¹ These factors would act together to create a sort of scarcity of historians and a weak historical tradition, with the consequent lack of substantial historiography.

Of course, from another angle we could add that History as an academic discipline is not fashionable in the current context of neoliberal transformation of the university, where courses seen as prone to assure jobs are the most popular; or that the situation could be the result of government disinvestment in higher education due to financial constraints or ideological neoliberal creed. At least directly, History has been consistently moving away from the 'market'.

Finally, we could minimise the argument of scarcity altogether, appealing to the series of 'informal' historical accounts lately swarming the shelves of the bookshops, mostly written by nationalist veterans and taking the form of biographies or historical testimonies. This would show that – at least outside the university institutional walls – History is doing fine.

However true as this can be, and however neatly it can be brought forward as a context to understand the situation, it falls short of explaining, for example, why forty years after the events the country is still awaiting a first homemade history of its liberation and independence.

Moving inside the boundaries of Contemporary History itself, and without dismissing the above, we could now seek new causes of such scarcity in the sort of crisis of assertive narratives, by a discipline which in the last decades has been under consistent attack particularly by post-colonial theories, facing accusations of authoritarianism, conveying class views or attempting to keep the monopoly of accounts for explaining the past. In our era, the past could no longer be told through 'grand narratives of explanation' and we were condemned to fragments and diversified points of view. By moving from assertiveness to a sort of timidity, the discipline

¹ And, related with it, the fragilities of a Mozambican History trying its first steps with pioneers like Alexandre Lobato, who at least partially focused his work on Mozambique, not anymore as an extension of the history of Portugal but as a centre in itself, seeking new connections such as with the Indian sub-continent, the African East coast or the Southern-African hinterland.

would eschew generalisation or seek other arrangements under the fashionable multi-disciplinary banner.²

In trying to develop a distinct path, the notes that follow evolve around the argument that such scarcity is to an important extent the consequence of the type of neighbourliness relations established after independence between Politics and History.³ In particular, I contend that such relations were shaped by two important factors: on the one hand, the monopoly of explanations of the past held by Politics, and within it by Frelimo, the ruling party and single source of authority in the post-independence period; on the other hand, the centrality of a specific account of the liberation which, codified as a script, became an instrument to legitimise that authority and render it unquestionable. In other words, the Liberation Script came to constitute what Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben after him, would term an 'apparatus'; that is, a strategic discourse located at the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge.⁴

2.

What is here termed the *Liberation Script*⁵ is a coherent and fixed narrative *corpus* made of a sequence of events in a timeline and ordered in a number of broad phases separated by Frelimo Congresses which operate as periodisation marks. Each congress occurs to solve a crisis that was aggravating within each period, and to neutralise the threat that that crisis represented to the nationalist endeavour. The opening of a new phase, only made possible by the resolution of the crisis of the previous one, is consequently a concrete proof of the righteousness of Frelimo analyses and of the efficiency of the answers it came up with.

Thus, succinctly, Frelimo, as a comprehensive Liberation Front, managed to unite several small nationalist organisations formerly conflicting with each other in the diasporic anti-colonial environment, with the objective of achieving the independence of the country. The tensions and crises that characterised such a process culminated in and were settled by the First Frelimo Congress, which consummated the union and established the armed struggle as a strategy for independence in the face of the intransigency of the colonial regime to negotiate power, let alone to hand it

2 This is not to say that History did not 'react' by seeking forms of reinstating the legitimacy of the assertive narrative, with Carlo Ginzburg and others.

3 Politics and History (and, later in this text, Memory) are taken here as categories or 'fields' made of their institutional dimensions and practices. From independence on, Politics became a category run by Frelimo, which after its 3rd Congress in 1977 somewhat paradoxically transformed itself into a political party while reinforcing at the same time its monopoly of power; while History would be principally referred to a scholar activity centred at the university.

4 The apparatus (*dispositif* in French) is resumed by Giorgio Agamben as having the following three characteristics: 'a) It is a heterogeneous set that includes virtually anything, linguistic and non-linguistic, under the same heading: discourses, institutions, buildings, laws, police measures, philosophical propositions, and so on. The apparatus itself is the network that is established between these elements; b) The apparatus always has a concrete strategic function and is always located in a power relation; c) As such, it appears at the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge', *What is an Apparatus?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2-3.

5 The Liberation Script, as it is considered here, must not be taken as a mere general idea that includes everything that is referred to by the liberation struggle, but rather as a precise concept that originated in the political sphere that regards a *total historical explanation*, one that, as defined above, is therefore located at the crossroads of power and knowledge. Certainly, and since the liberation saga respected the entire post-independence society (in fact it *founded* the post-independent society in the sense that it was the immediate cause for its emergence), it became part of the new Mozambique, of its culture and art. However, these were ways and forms of *living it or expressing it*, or even, if we want, of seeking to explain it as a total phenomenon but departing from the particular, not the total; in any case, always revealing much more, not about the saga in itself but about the relationship with it. The Liberation Script is of a different order: it is a closed explanation of the total reality, with fixed steps and a fixed conclusion or end. It is in this sense that a sort of 'competition' is established with History.

over to the Mozambicans. In the following phase, some greedy members of these extinct organisations, having lost their former posts and failing to be elected for new ones within the Front, abandoned it to create new splinter groups. Meanwhile, other cadres of the Front, for whom independence was simply about replacing the white colonial regime with a new black one, and who used their privileged positions to take material advantage of the struggle, tried to change the course established by the Congress starting an internal crisis based on the confrontation with the young revolutionary leadership engaged in the liberation war in the interior of the country. This internal conflict would aggravate until 1968, the time when it was formally settled by the Second Frelimo Congress, which defeated the reactionaries, declared the popular prolonged war as their main strategy and formally adopted the revolutionary line.

The unfolding of the popular war freed an ever growing number of territories designated as liberated areas, where everyday life was organised in a revolutionary way that provided a glimpse of how the independent country would look in the future. Working as a tangible piece of the future placed in the past, the liberated areas emerged therefore as a sort of 'fabricated reality' that tested and proved that the Front had the correct solutions to run the country. Meanwhile, military victory and the achievement of independence were the ultimate proof that the revolutionary options were the fair and right ones.

3.

When the Liberation Front came to power in 1975, in the sequence of the military coup in Portugal and the debacle of the colonial regime, it had to face new and enormous challenges. At the regional level, it found itself in a highly hostile environment involving a very aggressive Rhodesian neighbour and the menacing South African apartheid regime. Internally, the challenges consisted of extending control over a state and country emerging from the harsh colonial days and in need of profound transformation. Virtually everything had to be done from scratch. Despite its magnitude, the task was faced with great confidence and optimism. Governing was seen as a continuation of what had been done so successfully during the armed struggle. Although transferred into the city, power was widely opened to centripetal dynamics, heavily influenced by its rural background and down-to-earth attitude. The colonial state was to be dismantled and replaced by a new one with popular foundations. Solutions to problems were to be found in popular wisdom.

If military ascendancy put the Front in a position where it did not have to negotiate power, its historical itinerary conferred it the legitimacy for such move. In such a context, the Liberation Script, as a narration of that itinerary done by the entity most entitled to do so, the Front itself, proved to be a powerful instrument not only for legitimising the regime in political terms but also to granting it a sort of *navigation chart* to run the country. In fact, the experience gathered during the victorious liberation struggle, based on the solutions brought about by the Front, was the best guarantee of continued success, and therefore should illuminate the way at present. The experience told in the Liberation Script became therefore the reference for achieving the unity of all Mozambicans.

The efficiency of the Liberation Script as an apparatus that granted the regime its legitimacy and unquestionable character depended on the clarity and straightforwardness of the *corpus*, so that it could reach the masses and keep its vigour as a

dictum; in other words, its efficiency depended on its simplicity. And simplicity was assured in particular by its linear unfolding on the basis of binary oppositions: fair versus unfair, nationalist versus colonial, revolutionary versus reactionary, modern versus traditional, military versus civil, rural versus urban and so on. Progress depended on the victory of the first element over the second inside each pair. Some of these pairs were present throughout the entire struggle (nationalist versus colonial, for example), while others emerged as characterising main phases (hence, the first phase witnessed unity versus division; the second, revolutionaries versus reactionaries, etc.). On the other hand, besides structuring the Script, this binary reasoning had spill-over effects that helped to strengthen the regime in symbolical terms, for example as the triumph of the rural over the urban or of revolutionary modernity over traditional reactionary culture.

Besides the formal role referred to above, the Liberation Script had also the very important one of circumscribing and defining an experience that distinguished the revolutionary from the common subject – in other words, the one that had participated in the liberation struggle from the one holding merely a colonial experience. The revolutionary was the one who had lived the events inscribed in the Script and could tell about them, while the others, while being the majority, blended the suffering under the colonial regime with vices acquired through contact with it. Cities in particular were places charged with extreme colonial vices, described in this period as dens of *pides* (agents of the fascist political police) and prostitutes.

Two ways of acquiring such experience are worth mentioning here: one is the *narração de sofrimento* ('narration of suffering') through which an applicant should submit before the collective his life experience under the colonial rule, a sort of 'proof of suffering' as part of the procedure to join the revolutionary ranks; the other, in the transition period immediately before independence, was the appointment of relevant militants deprived of revolutionary experience for short internments in the guerrilla camps in order to acquire revolutionary experience. Both seem interesting ways of establishing a common revolutionary experience out of the individual colonial one, and procedures to standardise the experience narrated by the Script.

In brief, the country was, at independence, a space of plural experiences. As the liberated areas showed the future, the experience inscribed in the Liberation Script was the experience everybody should aim to have had and the one that should become the experience of all. The Liberation Script was the map that showed how the canon of relevant experience was to migrate from the colonial setting to the revolutionary one of the liberation areas.

4.

The 1977 Third Frelimo Congress, in transforming the Front into a Marxist-Leninist party, in a political context of what was termed 'a single-party democracy', reinforced unity and strengthened the unquestionable character of the regime. It disciplined a transition that had been thus far less organised than enthusiastic, as if after the celebration feast it was necessary to go back to everyday life in an orderly way. Economy, as well as Politics, became highly centralised in the party. If with independence the rural had invaded the urban, now the opposite was about to happen, with the new order irradiating from the city capital Maputo to the provinces and the rural areas. The mountain was now the adequate metaphor to illustrate the new order of things,

with 'the Nation' (the leadership) on top and 'the Locality' at the bottom. It became common to say 'I am going up to the nation', or 'these orders will go down to the locality'. If formerly knowledge was to be found spread in the rural areas, now it was concentrated in the city and specifically within the Vanguard Party. Re-education camps, which were to receive and re-educate the scum that the city rejected in order to become cleaner and purer, were established nowhere else than deep in the rural areas (the bush regaining its former strength, after the liberated areas). The environment became heavily influenced by Soviet-style aesthetics, with pyramids and stars and military uniforms and rigid hierarchies. The leader on top, followed by the Political Bureau, the Central Committee, the party structures down to the local level, and finally by society at large. Time was also severely disciplined, with five-year plans; a Prospective Indicative Plan conceived to bring development within a ten-year period; and even a plan to resettle in communal villages, in a time span of ten years, the rural population of the entire country. Again, this serves as a clear-cut metaphor of the victory of the urban over the rural.

Of course, in such a context the relationship between Politics and the Liberation Script, and also, to a great extent, the content of the latter (the balance between its stresses and silences) had both to change substantially. The Liberation Script became more rigid and its utility was now not really to show the path to the future but rather to certify who was entitled to legitimately run Politics under its name. In other words, from representing a navigation chart that oriented the efforts of the country, the Liberation Script was transformed into a *carte blanche* that could cover all the options, rigid to the extreme but at the same time highly adaptable to all purposes.

Besides the referred simplicity and straightforwardness, two main characteristics assured now the efficiency of the Script. Firstly, it had to be flexible in order to permit adaptation to the ever changing context, and therefore to keep its capacity for responding in different circumstances; and secondly, it had to be sealed or armoured in order to remain safeguarded from external 'non-qualified' interpretation that could erode its logics and induce contradiction amongst its internal elements.

These two characteristics were intimately intertwined. Flexibility was, of course, not new. It had its remote origin in the old revolutionary Maoist principle of concrete responses to concrete challenges. But what really assured it after independence was mainly the fact that the Liberation Script was not actually written but *told*. By being oral, the Script was able to maintain its adaptability throughout the years, based on the management of its stresses and silences or, if we want, on the keeping of a constant core *corpus* but with margins that could slightly change to respond to the ever shifting day-to-day challenges.⁶

Of course, the fact that the Script was told, not written, highlighted and brought greater sensitivity to the question of who was entitled to tell it; in other words, who were the ones that, as modern griots, were to manage the shifting content of the Script, including its emphases and silences. If formerly, when the Script was open, it served the victory of the liberation experience in its competition with the colonial, right now holding a liberation experience became insufficient. The Liberation Script

⁶ Strictly speaking, there were a few seminal texts that underpinned the Liberation Script, some non-authored and issued by the Department of Ideological Work but mostly as written records of speeches delivered by President Samora Machel in major rallies (interestingly, texts that kept an oral flavour). In any case, and even if appealing to historical examples, by their fragmentary nature they were intended to configure political principles and policy decisions, rather than being meant as rigorous historical accounts.

was built and sealed, and consequently holding the experience of the struggle would not add anything to it *per se*. The issue, now, was not anymore limited to holding experience, but rather about who was to manage the Script. And the new entitlement derived from the Party ranks and discipline. The centre of gravity had moved from the revolutionary past to the political present and its hierarchy.

5.

From the point of view of Politics, there was nothing useful that History as a discipline could add to the Liberation Script, besides perhaps an academic aura that in those days did not seem very necessary. On the contrary, even if moved by the best intentions, as was the case, History could have a highly counterproductive impact by bringing complexity to what was simple in the first place and should remain simple. The flexibility of the Script would be affected since the written text is the basic support of the historical operation. Moreover, the process of fabrication would move away from teleology and political concern to move toward suspicious revision and debate. And finally, this interference would be individually authored and would emanate from academic practice instead of the disciplined political ranks. This means that the normal functioning of History could entail a dangerous, even if involuntary, challenge to basic principles and authority.

Both Politics and History held ethical concerns. However, while the ones of Politics referred to an idea of social order and political mission – in other words were politically driven – the ethics of History derived mainly from its own method and epistemological concerns. This means that the historical operation would look for sources without any hierarchical compunction and irrespective of political orientation, including the most reserved or sensitive; and that it would seek to apply to them its own validation methodologies, including the contradictory procedure.

Both Politics and History had truth as paradigm, but in their operation the respective truths were articulated with distinct categories. While the Script was based in a truth that distinguished good from evil and had to function in the present, again being supported by teleological foundations, the truth in History was associated with what supposedly had *de facto* happened and why. Consequently, from the point of view of Politics, good and evil (revolutionary versus reactionary) could be dangerously reduced to the mere motivation of the actors in the given process. The intuition of all this surely weighted in the reservations nurtured by Politics, since it entailed cracking the armoured coating of the Liberation Script.⁷

After independence, the cost of a good relationship between Politics and History was therefore that the latter kept its focus away from the liberation process, close to more remote colonial issues and geography. Certainly History had all the motives, including ethical, to be on the side of nationalism. However, the way to express that proximity and alignment was at the same time the biggest threat to the Liberation Script: writing down the saga and debating it.⁸

7 Of course, we could add to this the suspicions raised by the colonial background of institutional History, which until independence had been based on the colonial elite.

8 Early 1980s attempts to approach the liberation period from an historical point of view were drastically discouraged by the authorities.

6.

The civil war impacted this environment in a somewhat complex way. On the one hand, it contributed to stiffening the regime under a regional context where conflict with the apartheid regime was reaching a sort of climax. In such rigidity was included the reinforcement of the barriers that assured the inexpungability of the Liberation Script. But on the other hand, the somewhat contested environment which was created by the war undoubtedly brought signs of erosion to it. The first element to be damaged, both symbolically and literally, was the principle of unity. Despite the argument of the war as an external aggression, which was mostly true, the undeniable fact revealed by the war was that for growing parts of the Mozambican society the Liberation Script was not unquestionable. And, although no one dared to question the anti-colonial foundation of the struggle (not even Renamo in its more aggressive discourses) everything that followed was now at stake, including the issue of unity. Although the questioning was not detailed and systematic, it confronted the Script since the First Frelimo Congress, accepting Eduardo Mondlane as the father of the nation but refusing everything else. Figures whipped out from history in the early days were now re-emerging as heroes deserving a place in the Pantheon, like Uria Simango, or in flesh and blood, like Phaniel Mahluza, former leader of Coremo now integrating Renamo ranks. After all, perhaps the issue of unity had not been settled in the early days. And of course, the phases that followed in the Script were a matter of total disagreement, with Renamo radically refusing the Revolution, for that making use of the Cold War rhetoric of fighting communism, but also targeting specifically the Liberation Script.

In the meantime, developments like the 1984 Nkomati Non-Aggression Pact seriously affected the mechanics of functioning of the Liberation Script. In a few words, the Pact stated that South Africa would end the support to Renamo in exchange for the withdrawal of Mozambican support to the ANC. Certainly there is a strong argument that the Pact was an act of survival in the face of the difficult military, economic and humanitarian situation. However, it is also undeniable that it represented a blow to the contents and mechanics of the Liberation Script. For the first time, the teleological principle of the fair always winning did not manifest; the binary conflict was not settled by the victory of the revolutionary forces but by a pact – in fact, by a stall. The Pact proved that a formerly infallible itinerary was now doomed to include setbacks. Victory was not a given. Or, put in a different way, for the first time reality could not be explained by the logics of the Script.

7.

It was perhaps more than a coincidence, a true sign of times, that in 1986 a first direct and systematic challenge to the Script (and perhaps the only one so far) was made from the point of view of History as a discipline (although not necessarily framed as such by the authors), in the form of an article written by Aquino de Bragança and Jacques Depelchin.⁹ And it is interesting that the challenge was launched in two

⁹ Originally published as A. de Bragança and J. Depelchin, 'Da idealização da FRELIMO à compreensão da história de Moçambique', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 5/6 (1986), 29-52. I use here the English version, 'From the Idealization of Frelimo to the Understanding of the Recent History of Mozambique', *African Journal of Political Economy*, 1, (1986), 162-180.

distinct, although intimately intertwined dimensions, the first being over methodological concerns and the second about the relationship with the (then) current reality, in other words about the Script as an apparatus. The separation of the armed struggle from the history of Mozambique (a necessary step to build the apparatus) was questioned,¹⁰ what I considered above as the separation of the liberation experience of the ones who did the armed struggle from the mass of holders of colonial experience, the majority of the Mozambicans. The authors consider furthermore that

One of the most fundamental problems of the existing history of Frelimo comes not only from the somewhat triumphalistic form in which this history is approached, but above all, from the unquestionable manner in which its historical knowledge is used. The fact that the armed struggle resulted in independence in 1975 reinforced the view of the correctness of the armed struggle thereby leading to an implicit and silent consensus concerning the real causes of the victory of independence.¹¹

[Therefore] it is necessary to raise new questions. Still, these must be posed in a manner which encourages the study of the history of Frelimo, not as an unchangeable text but as a contradictory process inserted in the social and national struggle of Mozambique.¹²

Clearly, History, which had kept a discrete and silent demeanour until then, had a lot to say both about the content of the Script and about how it was being used as an apparatus. And the open environment that emerged as a consequence of the end of the civil war and the Peace Accord that followed permitted one to look at such a task with great optimism.

8.

The environment created by the Peace Accord favoured the unpacking of the Liberation Script in more than one way. In general terms, the Accord ended the war period stressing much more the elements of forgiving and forgetting than the ones of remembering, determining liabilities or settling accounts. The present seemed to be counting much more than the past in the lives of the ones tired of war, and political 'behaviour' and rhetoric had to take that into account. Moreover, according to the new democratic rule, at least in theoretical terms, the source for political legitimacy was to be transferred from the history of liberation to the electoral process. From then on, it seemed, the most important arguments for democratic scrutiny would be based on concrete aspects of current life included in party programmes, much more than on historical roles performed according to disputable accounts. Such a context would probably dictate the end of the Liberation Script as an apparatus, or at least entail its profound transformation.

10 They wrote: "The phase preceding the foundation of Frelimo is considered as belonging to a different phase altogether, neatly separated from that of the armed struggle. We are not questioning the validity of a history of the armed struggle, what we are questioning is whether producing the history of the armed struggle directed by Frelimo, permits, automatically, an understanding of the process at the level of the country as a whole." Bragança and Depelchin, 'From the Idealization of Frelimo', 167. In a way, perhaps this sounded as a warning that the history of Frelimo should not be seen as bigger than the history of Mozambique.

11 *Ibid.*, 165.

12 *Ibid.*, 164.

The transformation would take place around a certain number of issues. In the first place, in becoming less central and therefore less sensitive, the apparatus and all the aspects related to it would suffer an important dedramatisation. And, by being gradually less dramatic, the Liberation Script would end up losing its unquestionable nature, becoming a contested area open to the intervention of memory, individual or public, and of academic history as well. For that, sources, oral and archival, kept both by Frelimo and the Historical Archives would be made available.

Incidentally, on the 26th of the same month in which the Peace Accord was signed, the Decree 33/92 was issued, legislating the System of National Archives. Its Article 11 stated that, some specific restriction determinations safeguarded, it would have 'Permitted public access to the documents held by the Historical Archives of Mozambique having elapsed 30 years after their issuance, unless: a) some confidentiality restrictions are determined by the evaluation process, and while they last; b) the documents are being technically processed'. Contemporary History was finally finding greater space of manoeuvre, raw material that permitted its operation, besides of course the very important oral and written testimonies, was about to be made available.

Surprisingly, or maybe not, developments took a different course since the political forces were not prepared to give up relying on the old apparatus to legitimise and strengthen their power. The Liberation Script became therefore a central matter of political dispute.¹³ As a consequence, not only did it not lose its centrality; it was also *recuperated* by Frelimo as an asset in the democratic contest to the extent that the organisation claimed to be its one and only heir.

However, the now completely distinct context demanded a different exploration of the Script in terms of stresses and silences. The first and most important step was keeping ownership over the apparatus while making sure that the opposition was kept out of it, on grounds of having been not more than a proxy force in the Rhodesian and South African aggression, deprived therefore of any roots in the liberation past, or if figuring there, as performing the role of traitor and loser.

In claiming the ownership of the Liberation Script, Frelimo was right to a great extent, in the sense that the actors that had led the liberation struggle were the very ones leading Frelimo as a party after independence. However, in political terms this argument demanded a twist that brought to the reasoning of this process important misunderstandings and vulnerabilities. While the Liberation Front had a national scope, a party by definition only represents a fraction of the political spectre, made of the ones that voluntarily join it. If during the single-party system the reasoning could still hold to an extent, since the adoption of the 1990 democratic constitution, which accommodated the multiparty system, such argument showed important ambiguities and even obscurities. In the event of belonging alternatively to a single party or the entire nation, the Script should have remained with the latter.

But, as it was trying to highlight these ownership aspects, Frelimo also had others that had to be referred to a growing silence, as was the case in particular, but not

13 The opposition forces sought to preserve the figure of Eduardo Mondlane as the father of the nation, challenging at the same time all the rest, charged as an anti-democratic communist deviation taken by Frelimo under the leadership of Samora Machel. Some of their heroes were the reprobates of the Frelimo narrative, Uria Simango in particular. However, the opposition footprint on the Liberation Script was so light that it moved on to try to establish an apparatus of her own, also comprised of stresses and silences, highlighting the fact of having brought democracy to the country and silencing its role in the brutality of the war, for example. The exploration of this line is outside the scope of this text.

exclusively, with the socialist content of the old Script, that was now uncomfortable to keep since it openly contradicted the party's neoliberal agenda in-the-making. In brief, what was now necessary was a Liberation Script just in form, without the old socialist content.

9.

Memory made its formal introduction late in this process, after the 1992 Peace Accord, when testimony books started to appear in the bookstores, mainly authored by Frelimo veterans, both from 'the interior' and from the armed struggle. Of unequal quality, they also served unequal purposes, from the conventional ones for writing memories to the ones of 'establishing the truth', dealing with the past in several ways, demonstrating political loyalty or reaffirming individual itineraries in the political geography and market.

With the introduction of this new category in the equation, the picture got even more complex since Memory immediately establishes a tension of a new kind, particularly with Politics, and to a lesser extent with History.

The tension between Memory and Politics was not immediately discernible. While a lot of research still needs to be done for understanding the contours of such dynamics, we can frame the issue in the following way: Memory of course exists from the beginning, but was formerly *disciplined* by the Liberation Script, or at least submitted to the conveniences of the Script. This means that although always present, Memory reverberated in much narrower circles and even when gaining certain notoriety never challenged the Script at its core. However, when this kind of publication flourished, things started to change. While on the surface the testimonies appeared to corroborate and even strengthen the Liberation Script, in fact they were confronting it at least in some important instances: in being written, they affected the flexibility referred to above, fixing and dating the interpretations; moreover, they emerged as 'decentralised' initiatives, with contents that frequently exposed interpretative contradictions amongst each other or directly with the Script. In the end, the diversity of accounts, describing individual itineraries and serving individual and often conflicting purposes, started affecting the cohesion of the Script, reinstating tensions that are unavoidable in real life.¹⁴

Memory also established a tension with History. In fact, it appeared to the common sense as very legitimately replacing History, or at least minimising the lack of it. For the public, the role of History is not to debate and 'produce' the past but to unequivocally establish the truth about it. And, of course, the ones that lived and experienced the events were seen as the most entitled to tell how things happened, and to establish once and for all, the truth. In a way, these accounts threatened to replace History as academic production. Much more captivating, in particular because of the more dramatic and emotional environment they could create, memories had perhaps as their only weakness their more fragmentary character when the task was about explaining more comprehensive processes to the larger public.

¹⁴ The most notorious case to date has been the challenging by a prominent veteran of Alberto Chipande's claim to be the author of the 'first shot' against the colonial authorities. This challenging, while not being of enormous consequence, has nonetheless an important symbolic value, since this event is considered in the Liberation Script as the one that inaugurated the armed struggle.

But the relationship between the two is mixed since in general terms Memory evidently brings very positive dynamics. Written memories, taken as sources, clearly feed the historical operation, widening prospects and enriching debates. Further on the negative side, however, written memories somewhat may reduce even further the space for the collection of oral testimonies already threatened by these 40 years that mediate between today and the events, as well as ease away the pressure that has to be kept in place for the opening of the archives.

In general terms, Memory was producing before Politics an effect quite similar to the one that could potentially be produced by History: bringing complexity and debate to the Script, weakening its unquestionable character and affecting the efficiency of the apparatus.¹⁵ This is why Memory will always be a matter of discomfort for Politics.

10.

It was argued above that the recent past of nationalist struggle against colonialism was elaborated after independence as an apparatus which I termed the Liberation Script, having the aim of assuring the continuity and legitimisation of the victorious regime. Made of a fixed core, the Script aggregated shifting elements which permitted the adaptation to a reality in permanent change, in particular in the sequence of the transformation of the Liberation Front into Frelimo as a party. Deeply eroded by the civil war, the apparatus had further motives to change with the adoption of a democratic constitution, the 1992 Peace Accord and again with the profound transformation of Frelimo in the sequence of the adoption of its neoliberal agenda. For a while, the gradual replacement of the Liberation Script by democratic rule as the source for legitimate power seemed inevitable. However, Frelimo has shown great reluctance in discarding the apparatus, fearing that it would entail the end of its prominence.¹⁶ And, as the current political and economic agenda openly contradicts the socialist content of the apparatus, the option seems to be re-armouring the Script so that the shape can be used without the inconveniences of the content. In other words, a profound mismatch currently exists between what the Liberation Script effectively conveys and what it is intended to serve.

In such a context, History, as a scholarly discipline, still represents a disturbing factor for the Liberation Script, for old and new reasons. The latter have to do with a still very difficult democratic transition where political competition is enveloped by a militaristic rhetoric. In such a context, the fact that the labour of History cannot be measured in terms of political allegiance but rather by its rigour and critical paradigm, and that this is weighted not outside but within the discipline, in relation to its methods, procedures and standards, is seen by Politics as a highly mistrustful sign of independence. A clear sign of that mistrust is that, against what is prescribed by the law, the archives remain closed.

And yet, History could be of great value to the democratic process. It could help to show that it is not just the future that is open to a myriad of possibilities. The

¹⁵ Of course, much of the arguments used for Memory could also apply to another fundamental category emerging with the Peace Accord, which was independent Media.

¹⁶ Deprived of the 'historical argument', Frelimo would be hardly distinguishable from the political opposition, particularly in terms of its socio-economic agenda, clearly neoliberal and removed for the old social ethics.

past, permanently open to revisit, is nothing like a fixed, closed, definitive and one-dimensional artefact; it is an open work under permanent repair. In this sense, it has to be retrieved not as a navigation chart, not as a *carte blanche*; not as a political weapon but for what it really is: a past to be shared by all. In helping to create the proper distance that should always exist between the present and the past, reducing it to proportions that can be handled by society, something Politics is still not prepared to do and Memory simply cannot do,¹⁷ History as a discipline certainly has a role. But for that it has to conquer more space of freedom and manoeuvre.

17 Incapable of creating the distance, more emotional, Memory tends to go along with Politics in keeping, and at times exacerbating the dramatic charge of the past. And in any case, Memory, at least as publicly divulged material, can always, and probably is being 're-disciplined' within Frelimo instances.