Utopia Live:
Singing the Mozambican struggle for national liberation[1]

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This article engages a historical reconstruction of the formation of Makonde revolutionary singing in the process of the Mozambican liberation struggle. The history of 'Utopia live' is here entrusted to wartime genres, marked by heteroglossia and the use of metaphor, and referring to moments when the 'space of experience' and the 'horizon of expectation' of the Struggle were still filled with uncertainty and the sense of possibility. Progressively, however, singing expressions were reorganised around socialism's nodes of meaning. Ideological tropes, elaborated by Frelimo's 'courtly' composers, were appropriated in popular singing. The relations between the 'people' and their leaders were made apparent through the organization of the performance space. The main contention of the article is that unofficiality, heteroglossia, metaphor and poetic license, although they feature in genres that have been marked out as 'popular' in academic discourse, are by no means intrinsically 'popular'. Much on the contrary, they are the first victims of populist modes of political actions, that is, of a politics grounded on a concept of 'people'.

A Hummed Agreement

Joana Makai was explaining to us the transformations of Makonde[2] singing traditions, as he had experienced and understood them. June's wind was blowing chilly and dry, up from the lowlands and ravines into the northerly Mozambican town of Mueda, a place spoken of far and wide as a metonym of the Struggle for National Liberation. A thin man in his mid-seventies, endowed with a precise eloquence and a pondering mind, Makai had been a practitioner of *mapiko* masked dancing ever since his coming of age, and was held as an authority on matters of drumming, dancing and singing. We were sitting in the sunny yard of his Muedan house, asking questions: myself and Mali Ya Mungu, friend, field-assistant and himself a *mapiko* dancer and singer, who helped as an interpreter when my grasp of Shimakonde would falter. Makai told us:

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1 A first version of this article was presented at the workshop 'War and the Everyday', organised by Patricia Hayes and Heidi Grunebaum at the Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, on 27 October 2008. A second version was presented at the Anthropology seminar at the University of the Witwatersrand, on the 10 September 2009. I thank Neo Muyanga, Andrew Bank, and Marie-Aude Fouere for their comments; Premesh Lalu for fostering my research in the Programme for the Study of the Humanities in Africa; Estevão Jaime Mpalume and Marcelino Ding'ano for their support in Pemba; Angelina Januário and Fidel Mbalale for help with transcriptions; Rui Assubuji for his photographs; and Jung Ran Forte for her ongoing engagement.

2 I use throughout the paper 'Makonde' not as an ethnonym, but as the name of a language (Shimakonde). So, 'Makonde songs' is a shortcut for 'songs in Shimakonde', and 'Makonde people' a shortcut for Shimakonde-speaking people – although, of course here language and identity complement themselves.

> Long ago (*kala*), it was songs a bit like this… But in the middle times (*pakati-pakati*) it was songs where these masters (*vene*), there, insulted each other. Today, it's songs where we sing what happened. And things that existed, that we see with our eyes. And no insulting, but telling things, things that existed. Like these, these [things] of today. [3]

Makai was proposing a fairly schematic and fairly biased periodisation, where the early-colonial (*kala*) was left empty ('like-this'), the late-colonial (*pakati-pakati*) was reduced to the genre of songs of insult and provocation between rival matrilineages, and the postcolonial (*nelo, ambi*) was filled with the realist singing of 'things that existed'.

Reading uncertainty on my face, Mali Ya Mungu swiftly rendered in Portuguese:

> These songs of today, they sing the way Frelimo's Law is (*como é a lei da Frelimo*). They can sing them amongst themselves, they can sing for the fame of our Party, or of our Government….

A master of the metaphor,[4] Mali has his personal philosophical obsessions – Power and Law, Fame and Shame – and a self-indulgent propensity for neologisms like *cadeirar* ('chairing', to take hold of a political position); *kulya shilambo* (to eat the Nation); *estar fantasiado* ('to be fantasised', the hilarious condition of having drunk too much of a local brew called 'Fantasia'); and the recurrent predicative *é da Lei* ('it is the Law's'). Being acquainted with Mali's philosophical disposition, I was about to ask him to rephrase his translation. Makai, however, who had a grasp of Portuguese, consented to the interpreter's eccentric rendering of his own statement with a long, affirmative humming.

Popular unofficiality?

Strands of Africanist scholarship have, in the last few decades, excavated genres of African popular orality in the search for unofficial, poetic visions of history. Not only oral forms, such as songs and praise poetry, are thought to convey 'maps of experience',[5] 'styles of historiography'[6] or 'historiologies',[7] they are

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3 Joana Makai (Mueda: recorded interview, June 2003). My translation from Shimakonde. One of the anonymous reviewers of this article has asked that I mark out more explicitly my translation strategies. I will not be able to satisfy this demand in this piece, essentially for reasons of space. Some linguistic notes will provide clues for those interested in this aspect. I am also busy preparing a collection of songs in which I try and do justice to their subtleties. The transcription of the original texts in Shimakonde – carried out with all the philological rigour that I could summon – can also provide interesting clues to those who read related regional languages such as Yao, Nyanja, Swahili, Chewa, Shona.

4 'The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars', Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1459 a 5–8, cited in P. Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (London & New York, Routledge, 2003): *viii*.

5 L. Vail & L. White, *Power and the Praise Poem. Southern African Voices in History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991): 40-83, 198-230.

6 D. Coplan, 'History is eaten whole: Consuming tropes in Basotho auriture', *History and Theory*, 32,4: 80-104, and *In The Times of Cannibals* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994).

7 J. Fabian, *Remembering the Present : Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996): 269 and following.

sometimes considered as inherently opposing dominant power, as constitutionally counter-hegemonic. Jack Mapanje, Leroy Vail and Landeg White define the essence of African orature in terms of 'poetic licence': 'the convention that poetic expression is privileged expression, the performer being free to express opinions that would otherwise be in breach of other social conventions'.[8] Similarly, Karin Barber understood African popular culture as marked by unofficiality,[9] and Johannes Fabian as providing fleeting 'moments of freedom' for the oppressed.[10] Mikhail Bakhtin's work on the European medieval carnivalesque[11] has been influential in shaping these views of African orature and popular culture.

Researching the oral traditions of the people that live in the areas where the Mozambican Liberation Struggle was mainly fought, and where Frelimo's revolutionary project was piloted – the mythic 'liberated zones' first freed from colonial rule in the northerly province of Cabo Delgado[12] – one finds a somewhat different picture. Today as in the last forty years, Makonde dances of all kinds and for all occasions – from masquerade to initiation, from funeral to divertissement – showcase songs that revolve around Frelimo's political project and its founding narrative, the Liberation Struggle. These songs are often referred to as 'revolutionary songs' (*dimu dya mapindushi*), or 'political songs' (*dimu dya shiashya*), as opposed to older genres and to more mundane, playful or amorous lyrics. Related to social practices such as State rituals and dance competitions, to a wide reconfiguration of identity, and to a dialectics of generations, contemporary Makonde revolutionary singing is a form of active memory of the Struggle – of 'imparting history' (*kwimyangidya*) or 'intensive reminding' (*kukumbuanga*). However, one would look there in vain for 'lived memories' of the Struggle, for alternatives historiologies or maps of that extraordinary experience of which the Makonde were protagonists. One finds instead a recitation of trite tropes, reproducing the silhouette of the Struggle as in the official history-myth.

This article engages a historical reconstruction of the formation of Makonde 'revolutionary singing', in the process of the liberation struggle.[13] We will encounter wartime genres, marked by heteroglossia and the use of metaphor, referring to moments when the 'space of experience' and the 'horizon of expectation'[14] of the Struggle were still filled with uncertainty and the sense of possibility. Progressively, singing expressions were reorganised around socialism's nodes of meaning. Ideological tropes, elaborated by Frelimo's 'courtly' composers,

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8 Vail & White, *Power and the Praise Poem*: 319.

9 K. Barber, 'Popular arts in Africa', *African Studies Review*, 30, 3 (Sep 1987) and 'Introduction', *Readings in African Popular Culture*, (London: The International African Institute, 1997): 1-12.

10 J. Fabian, *Moments of Freedom : Anthropology and Popular Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998).

11 M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

12 Once a district of the Mozambican Colony, Cabo Delgado is now the northernmost of Mozambique's twelve provinces, bordering with Tanzania on the north and with the Indian Ocean to the East, and situated at about 2,500 km from the capital, Maputo.

13 In this article I present mostly songs that were performed during the war of liberation, from a corpus of around 150 songs. I draw comparative insights from an overall corpus of over a thousand songs in Shimakonde and kiswahili. I have recorded live performances in Cabo Delgado (districts of Muidumbe, Mueda, Nangade, Macomia, Mocimboa da Praia and in the city of Pemba), and retrieved songs at the archives of Radio Moçambique, Maputo and Pemba; ARPAC (*Arquivos do Património Histórico e Cultural*), Maputo, Pemba, Chimoio; audio-visual archives of the *Companhia Nacional de Canto e Dança*, Maputo.

14 See R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Columbia University Press, 2004).

were appropriated in popular singing. The relations between the 'people' and their leaders were made apparent by the 'enactment of power' in the organisation of the performance space.[15]

My main contention is that unofficiality, heteroglossia, metaphor, and poetic licence, although they feature in genres that have been marked out as 'popular' in academic discourse, are by no means intrinsically 'popular'. On the contrary, they might well be the first victims of populist modes of political actions, that is, of a politics grounded on a concept of 'people'.[16]

Frelimo and the people's song

Samora Machel wrote:

A cultura é criada pelo povo
Culture is created by the People
não a cria os artista.
the artists don't create it.
A burguesia não produz arte:
Bourgeoisie doesn't produce art
falta-lhe a terra
it lacks the land
falta-lhe a inspiração.
it lacks inspiration.
O povo inspira-se todos os dias.
The people are inspired every-day.
Vejam os camponeses...
Look at the peasants...
A sua música fala da sua vida,
Their music talks of their life,
da lavoura, das colheitas, da rega.
of tilling, harvesting, watering.
Conta como foi colhido o arroz, a cabaça, a massaroca...
It sings of how rice, pumpkin and ear were harvested...
Quando está a trabalhar, a suar sob o Sol,
Labouring, sweating under the Sun
regando a terra com o seu suor, o camponês canta.
watering the land with his sweat, the peasant sings.
Volta a casa
The peasant comes back home
com um cântaro de agua na cabeça,
with a bucket of water on the head

15 N. wa Thiong'o, 'Enactments of power: The politics of the performance space', *TDR*, 41, 3 (Autumn, 1997): 11-30.
16 It can also be argued that the marking of certain genres as 'popular' in academic discourse is based on the same operation that defines a populist politics. This argument – that I defend elsewhere – is outside of the purview of the present article.

pensa que tem de fazer fogo para cozinhar,
thinks that she has to light a fire to cook
vive a vida e canta a vida.
lives life and sings life.
Nas noites, nas horas de descanso,
During the nights, in the hours of rest,
quando a Lua-cheia o ilumina,
when the Full-Moon lights her,
canta ao seu trabalho, conta as suas penas,
she sings to her work, tells her pains
seus sofrimentos, suas esperanças...
her sufferings, her hopes...
canta a felicidade.
she sings happiness
Canta a dança
Sings dance,
pode ser triste ou alegre,
it can be sad or joyful,
uma referencia à história
a reference to history
ou um episodio quotidiano.
or an episode of the everyday.
Mas, seja como for, tem um significado real.
But, be as it might, it has a real meaning.
Define um inimigo
It defines an enemy
e como lutar contra esse inimigo.
and how to fight against this enemy.

This poem appeared in a booklet presenting the triumphal celebration of the First National Festival of Popular Dance in 1978 – a crucial moment (probably the zenith) of Frelimo's project of transformation of 'traditional culture' into revolutionary expressions.[17] Three ideological nodes define the text: the opposition between bourgeois degenerate art and the culture of the People; the romantic depiction of the latter as rooted in the everyday of agricultural labour, in sweat and seasons, and the conception of culture as instrumental in a revolutionary fight against a political Enemy. The poem subtly obliterates the distinction between description and prescription: the songs of the socialist People (*o povo*), of the peasants (*camponeses*), are what they are because all that is otherwise does not belong to the People, but to the (bourgeois) Enemy.

The silent agreement over the history of Makonde singing between Makai and Mali Ya Mungu exposes the same 'zone of indistinction'[18] between the fac-

17 *Programa do Primeiro Festival de Dança Popular* (Maputo: Gabinete do Primeiro Festival de Dança Popular, 1979).
18 The expression is Giorgio Agamben's, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998): 4 and *passim*.

tual and the normative. Singing *now* 'what happened, the things that existed and that we saw with our eyes' is one and the same with 'singing Frelimo's Law […] for the fame of the Party'. This collapsing of experience and law, ideology and intimacy, memory and memorialisation, the State and the body, is a marking feature of all Utopian, totalitarian projects, and more generally of the modern political itself.[19]

In Mozambique, the Utopian indistinction was condensed in the formula of the 'New Man'.[20] Five hundred years of slavery and colonialism adulterated all that was good about 'traditional' African society – so the story went – bringing about an insoluble complicity between 'obscurantism' and 'oppression': hence the necessity of making a 'clean slate' of all social institutions, working to the creation of persons and mentalities revolutionary and *new*.[21]

The ideology of the New Man was Frelimo's declination of a politics of populism.[22] Ernesto Laclau argues that 'the construction of the people' is the quintessential political act, and that consequently the question of populism is at the core of politics.[23] A politics of populism arises when a multiplicity of singular demands are articulated in an 'equivalential chain' through an act of naming. The name that establishes a collective political identity – Laclau draws here on the Lacanian concept of the 'nodal point' or 'quilting point' (*point de capiton*) – is an empty signifier. 'People', 'workers', etc. are not understandable as having a substantial meaning, but simply as the signifiers that hold together a political identity. The act of 'quilting' a political identity around 'the people' creates an irremediable fracture in society. As soon as the People are named, an Enemy arises. The creation of a political identity – quilted around the naming of a People and the emergence of a fracture defining an Enemy – is eminently libidinal: the process is invested with massive psychic energies.[24] The function of charismatic leadership in populism is related to this libidinal investment: the Leader is the incarnation of the empty signifier: '[…] the symbolic unification of the group around an individuality […] is inherent to the formation of a "people".'[25]

And indeed, in Frelimo ideology two symbolic figures oversee the paradoxical process of creating new men out of old ones.[26] The Leader, who has

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19 One could argue, the other way round, that political modernity has fabricated the short-lived illusion of the separation between the private and the public, the body and the political, captured by the elusive idea of the 'civil society' – an illusion dramatically dispelled not only by totalitarianism, but by the biopolitical turn in contemporary democracies.

20 'It is not difficult to see how all radical revolutionary projects, Khmer Rouge included, rely on this same fantasy of a radical annihilation of tradition and of the creation *ex nihilo* of a new (sublime) Man, delivered from the corruption of previous history', S. Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment As a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991, 2008 2nd ed.): 261.

21 'The question is, for the *comrades of Utopia*, of making a blank slate of the past, of de-traditionalising colonialism and de-colonizing tradition', C. Serra, *Novos Combates pela Mentalidade Sociologica* (Maputo: Livrária Universitária, 1997 *Futures Past*): 97, my translation.

22 The understanding of Frelimo's politics as one of populism was the major insight of Christian Geffray's path-breaking (and misunderstood) research on the roots of the Mozambican civil war, see C. Geffray, *La Cause des Armes au Mozambique: Anthropologie d'une guerre civile* (Paris: Karthala, 1990), and also 'Fragments d'un discours du pouvoir (1975-1985)', *Politique Africaine*, 29 (1988): 71-85.

23 E. Laclau. *Critique of Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

24 Laclau, here follows Freud in postulating that 'the social bond is a libidinal one', *Critique: x*. He also draws on Slavoj Žižek's early work on the libidinal dynamics of totalitarianism, see *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989).

25 Laclau, *Critique*: 100.

26 See 'How to extract the People from within the people', in Žižek, *For They Know Not*: 261-263.

already undergone the transformation, attests to its possibility. The Enemy – who embodies all that is to be erased – serves as a reminder of the need for struggle, a justification for failure, and a scapegoat.[27] Both the Leader and the Enemy are defined in relation to their capacity to act.[28] The Leader is an allegory of perfect agency, of transparent self-mastery. The Enemy's agency is lacking (the lazy) or ill-addressed (the weaver of subterfuge).

Launched as a slogan at the onset of Independence (1975),[29] the 'New Man' was given mythical consistency through historical reference to the 'Armed Struggle of National Liberation' (*Luta Armada de Libertação Nacional*) fought against Portuguese colonialism (1964–1974). The Struggle provided an array of significant tropes for the work of the social imagination. The Leader embodied the qualities of the heroes who fought colonialism; the Enemy those of the cowards and traitors detected and summarily dispatched by the vigilant guerrillas. Following Rancière, Benedita Basto argues, in her study of the literary formation of the Mozambican Nation, that Utopia is a desire for adequacy between discourse and a place that can be pointed: look, there.[30] The 'liberated zones' (*zonas libertadas*) were the pointed cradle of Frelimo's Utopia, where the coincidence of discourse and place was to be achieved. Forged there by the mayhem and discipline of war and by a new mode of life based on collective production, militarised settlement and modernist education, the 'vanguards of the Revolution' – soldiers, People and pupils of the liberated zones – would stand as an example for the Nation to come. If the discourse of the New Man has long been abandoned in Mozambique, the history-myth of the Struggle has continued to live a life of its own, reproduced in a variety of expressive forms across the social spectrum: literature, photography, architecture, dance, theatre, visual arts – and song.

Hush down your drums

In the apogee of Portuguese colonial rule (1930–1962),[31] song and dance traditions in Northern Mozambique were complex and diverse. Drums – a 'drum' (*ing'oma, ikoma, ngoma,* etc.) being the widespread metonym for a song-cum-dance[32] genre – featured at the core of all aspects of social life, from the ritual, to the mundane and the political. Far from being spontaneously collective, most 'drums' functioned as groups, often under the patronage of an individual – wealthy, powerful or passionate. Drum groups chose their members, rehearsed,

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27 For Claude Lefort the Enemy in totalitarian political systems is understood as a sickness in the 'political body'. See, 'The Image of the body and totalitarianism', in *The Political Forms of Modern Society* (London: Polity Press, 1986):292-306.

28 For agency as the core 'imaginary structure' of nationalism, see P. Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa: Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008):16-18, 219-222.

29 The founding text is considered S. Vieira, 'O homem novo é um processo', *Tempo* (1978): 398, 27-38.

30 Basto, *A Guerra das Escritas. Literatura, Nação e Teoria Pós-Colonial em Moçambique* (Lisboa: Vendaval, 2006): 65. This is based on a reading of J. Rancière, *Courts Voyages au Pays du Peuple* (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

31 The northern parts of Mozambique were administered by chartered companies until the late 1920s. In Mozambican historiography, the end of charters and the campaign of forced cotton production (1938) promoted by Salazar are taken as watersheds of a new era of colonial domination, which extended until the formation of Frelimo in 1962. See for instance, aa. vv., *História de Moçambique, vol II. Moçambique no áuge do colonialismo, 1930-1961* 2 ed. (Maputo: Livraria Universitária, 1999).

32 The two go together. A 'drum' is called a 'drum' event when it features no drumming: for instance when singing is accompanied by rattles or other musical instruments. Often the name 'drum' refers also to initiation.

invented new songs and choreographies and engaged in extensive artistic competitions.[33] The relationship of singular genres with occasions, generations, and gender was fairly liquid. Connected by centuries of exchanges and transformations and shaped by influences as vast as the Indian Ocean world, 'drumming' traditions fell into ethno-linguistic partitions, quite porous but stylistically connoted in a system of mutual recognition.[34]

The colonial State and its functionaries were not indifferent to the call of the drum, to its exotic and primitive appeal. 'Imperial spectacles' inevitably featured a region's most famous drums, dragged *volens nolens* to dance for the reign's glory. [35] National and religious holidays as well as the visit of leaders and personalities became regular occasions for the performance of drums, the more so the closer colonialism's institutions of power.

Songs' poetic idioms played on a wide gamut of registers: codified ritual refrains, proverbial wisdom, elliptic and evocative couplets, self-celebratory exclamations (such as the songs of insult that Makai was referring to) and elaborated individual verse. All these could be summoned to articulate critical visions of history and society, of the kind that Jack Mapanje, Landeg White and Leroy Vail put under the aegis of an aesthetics of 'poetic licence'.[36] The colonial master could barely listen to these voices. When it managed to, and found the content displeasing, the consequences could be dire.[37]

Nationalist unrest came to the northerly district of Cabo Delgado as the flood fills the lowland. In 1963, the leadership of the newly-founded Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) in Dar-es-Salaam judged that the Mueda plateau was to be the battlefield of a war waged against the Portuguese. Not only was it in the finest strategic position to support a guerrilla war backed from Tanzania, close as it was to the border, and covered in dense bush thickets. Mueda's people had shown a remarkable degree of 'nationalist consciousness', firstly in the dramatic episode of the 1960 revolt, then in transiting *en masse* from an 'ethnic-based' organisation to Frelimo.[38] The Portuguese were equally worried about insurgency in the area, which they kept under close scrutiny. The first shot of the Liberation Struggle (1964) found most of the Makonde already dispersed in the bush, as the proverbial water in which the fish would thrive.

Drums are heard far and wide, and detectability through sound was one luxury that the 'people' supporting the war effort could not afford. In the branches

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33 There is a wide literature on competitive dance in East Africa, from Terence Ranger's classic study to more recent appraisals. For an overview, see F. D. Gunderson and G F. Barz, eds, *Mashindano!: Competitive Music Performance in East Africa* (Dar-Es-Salaam, Mkuki na Nyota, 2000); and R. K. Gearheart 'Ngoma memories: A history of competitive music and dance performance on the Kenya coast' Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1998.

34 For instance, the Mapiko masquerades that so closely define the ethnic identity of the Makonde were widely taught to Makua people in the forties and fifties, especially in the area of the Messalo River.

35 See A. Apter, 'On imperial spectacle. The dialectics of seeing in colonial Nigeria', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 44 (Jul 2002): 564-596. For a philosophical exploration of the connection between power and its ceremonial apparatus, see G. Agamben, *Il Regno e la Gloria: Per Una Genealogia Teologica dell'Economia e del Governo* (Firenze: Neri Pozza, 2007).

36 Vail & White, *Power and the Praise Poem*: 319.

37 Thus, in 1961 Paulo Juankali from Shitunda, one of the great masters of song of Mapiko masquerades, was arrested because a *sipaio* could understand his complex narrative referring to the Mueda massacre and nationalist ferment.

38 For the engagement of the Makonde with Frelimo, see amongst others Y. Adam, 'Mueda, 1917-1990: Resistência, colonialismo, libertação e desenvolvimento', *Arquivo, Boletim do Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique,* 14 (1993): 4-102, and M. Cahen 'The Mueda case and Maconde political ethnicity: Some notes on a work in progress', *Africana Studia*, 2, (1999): 29-46.

and localities under Frelimo's control – precarious huts in remote lowlands, with the constant threat of incursions, and the creeping suspicion of treachery – all drums had to shut up and be vigilant, waiting for better times to come to raise their voices.

Expectations of something different from complete precariousness, though, were to be deluded soon, as it turned out that – despite all reassurances – the war was there to last:

Chaime Nimande kwa-Ntumbati
The chairman Nimande from Ntumbati
Sema nkutano rojino
He calls an assembly at the locality
Mwezi uja wa-uhuru
'The coming month we will have independence!'
Kumbe wazee wa-uwongo
It turns out elders can lie[39]

New Maize in Old Rattles

Ngwimbanga muda
I sing the times
Moda ya maduvano
The mode of nowadays
Ye ye ye
Ye ye ye!
Ngoda aunavini' vila
Don't dance ngoda just like this
Bila shaleko
Without a sentinel
Nsheme nkutano
We call a meeting
Mumpigi' Lingambwanda
We test Lingambwanda
Lingambwanda wena, kapalaleshe
Lingambwanda, go and spy
Ukaigwa vajunganga
If you hear noises
Nawika dao
Don't come like this
Ing'ondo
[This is] war[40]

39 *Magita* song, Samuel Mandia (Mueda: recording session, July 2008). 'This chairman really existed', recounted Samuel Mandia, laughing. 'He used to chair the branch of Ntumbati. And he would do meetings and tell us that the Portuguese would soon surrender and concede independence'.

40 *Ngoda* song, Americo Nampindo's group, (Myangalewa: recording session, September 2004).

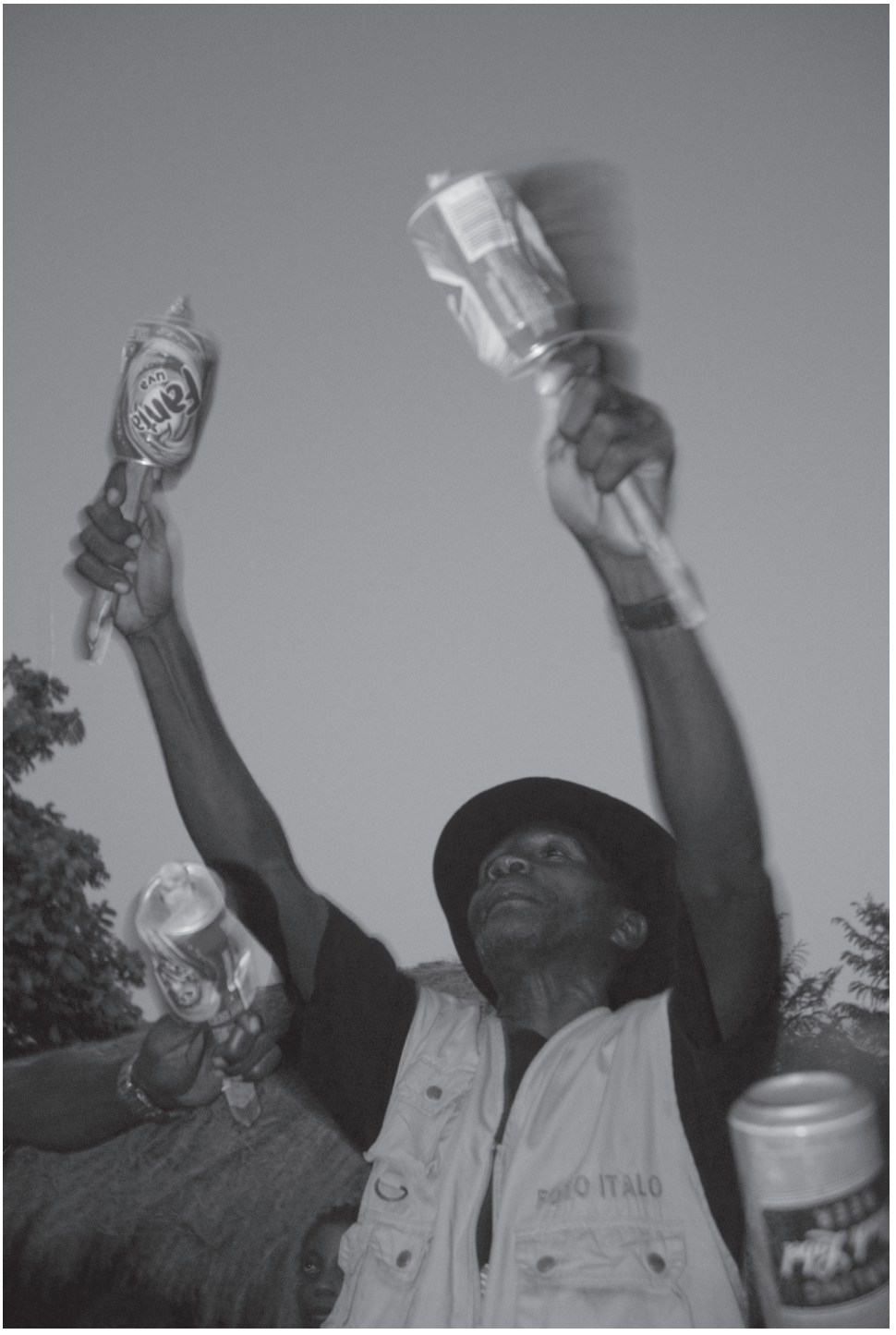

Figure 1: Américo Nampindo plays ngoda (Rui Assubuji)

Sung to the rhythm of rattles made with used cans and filled with dried maize (*ngoda*, the commonest food of foot soldiers), and taking its name therefrom, *ngoda* was the first new drum of the war years, invented – so it is said – by the soldier Lingondo. A circular dance, it drew on the ancient and widespread drum *nkala*, also incorporating songs from various genres. The singing style resembled the so-called *nge-nge-nge* funerary singing, in which two people intone descending pentatonic scales in a sort of fugue, punctuated by euphonic syllables (*nge, ndiyo)*.

Celebrating the 'times' (*muda*, Kiswahili) or the 'mode' (*moda*, Portuguese) – the two words being made indistinguishable – of 'nowadays' (*maduvano*), *ngoda* songs fiddled with old and obscure tunes. Just one new word makes the difference:

Nge nge nge
Nge nge nge
Shina-Nkulaba
The manner of Kulaba's sons
Nandenga vatwale vadyoko
Nandenga, carries away the children
Vaende kupemba
He takes them to Pemba
Vakako' madengo aishama
He makes them work for the Party
Nae nalimanyia
He knows better[41]

Nandenga, the tall terrifying spirit who carries away those disoriented in the bush – a kind of Makonde bogeyman, that is – was first used as a metaphor for colonial forced cotton production. 'He makes them work the cotton (*vakako' madengo ampamba*)' was the first version of the song. When cotton becomes the Party, is the slippage simply incongruous or inoffensive?

Just like Nandenga, the new characters of the transformed war landscape are fantastic apparitions on a blue sky – the Portuguese Major passes above, the guerrilla crawls below:

Pita muwa
He passes above
Manjolo
The major
Andyuka navalola vadyoko vake
He goes and sees his boys
Avante avante
Avante! Avante! [Forward, Port.]

41 *Ngoda* song (Nampanya: recording sessions, December 2004 and April 2009).

Tuvanu mwanda
We people go!
Mwaa lilove lyautangwele alivé mana
Because the words that you spoke made no sense[42]

Amongst the small formulas (*nge*, *njomba*, *mama*) that embroil the main textual line, a new word slips in: the 'empty signifier' of political action: *tuve-nentete,* we-the-People.

Anthems of Liberation

In the meantime, another new 'drum' had appeared in Mueda: *likulutu*, military training. Youth began to 'dance the training' (*kuvina likulutu*) inside the country: with wooden weapons, and obeying the cacophony of commands of trainers of various nationalities, each teaching the basic military instructors in their respective languages (Kiswahili, English, Chinese, Arabic…) Some of the guerrillas would be selected for training abroad, all transiting through Frelimo's camps in southern Tanganyika.

In these military spaces, musicians educated in choral singing in missions (especially the Protestant missions) put their skills to the service of the cause, composing an array of new songs for the Struggle: party anthems, marching tunes, inspirational melodies. Different to other struggle-song traditions (like the Chimurenga from Zimbabwe), local imagery and musical traditions made their way only marginally in the architecture of Frelimo anthems: in a turn of a phrase, in a peculiar rhythmic syncope, in certain melodic passages, in the structure of call and response.[43] Pentatonic harmonic-melodic patterns and polyrhythm were dislodged in favour of tonal four-part harmonies and regular rhythms. The overall influence of mission imagery was considerable.

Nationalist ideology seeped through, in direct or subtle ways. Jorge Zaaqueu Nhassemu, one of the four major literate composers of Frelimo anthems,[44] educated in Inhambane's missions, remembers composing his first political song, *Frelimo avante na Guerra* ('Frelimo, on with the War'), 'sitting under a shadow' at Kaporo, the border between Malawi and Tanzania, while waiting for his documents. Arriving in Dar-es-Salaam, the lyrics of the song had to be slightly changed to fit the ideological requirements of the movement. The war was not against the Portuguese, he was told, but against Salazar, and he should modify his

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42 *Ngoda* song (Namakule: recording session, January 2005).

43 For a comparative glance, see A. J. C. Pongweni. 'The Chimurenga songs of the Zimbabwean war of liberation', in K. Barber, ed., *Readings in African Popular Culture* (Indiana University Press, 1997): 63-72, esp. 66, T. Turino *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago University Press, 2000), D. Coplan and B. Jules-Rosette '"Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika": Stories of an African anthem' in *Composing Apartheid. Music for and Against Apartheid,* G. Olwage ed. (Wits University Press, 2008), Bringman, Inge. 'Singing In the bush. MPLA songs during the war for independence in south-east Angola (1966-1975), (Köln : Rüdiger Köppe, 2001) and the motion picture *Amandla!: A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony* (Lions Gate Film, 2002).

44 The three others were Simão Tiburcio Lindalandolo, Calisto Mijigo and Abílio Filipe Awendila. They had passed away at the time of my fieldwork (2002 on). I interviewed Zaaqueu in February 2005 in his house in Pemba. Recordings of his songs are kept at the ARPAC in Maputo. Zaaqueu is also the author of collections of poems. Another important literate composer that I worked with in Pemba is Manuel Gondola, with whom I had the privilege of playing in a short-lived band (2002).

lyrics accordingly. 'After that first time', Zaaqueu commented to me, 'I learned the lesson, and I didn't have to change any other song.'

Overall, the composition of anthems was part and parcel of the movement of literary effervescence that took place between Dar-es-Salaam and the war front, resulting in the publication of various gazettes and newspapers, such as *25 de Setembro, Os Heroicos,* etc. More than direct control, it was a 'vocabulary of ready-made ideas'[45] that shaped the consistency of the 'popular voice' of guerrillas. The proliferation of watchwords (nationalist, revolutionary) works to the utopian indistinction of things and names, with a certain suffocating effect: 'To the progressive construction of this dictionary corresponds a decrease in the publication of life stories (reports of combat, of fleeing, testimony of colonial experiences), of stories and poems. Actually, the majority of the poems were written during the first years of the Struggle.'[46]

Party and military anthems, produced in a peculiar journey from the church to the camp, squarely occupy today's sound-scape of Liberation. *Canções da Luta Armada de Libertação Nacional* ('Songs from the War of National Liberation') is the recurring title of compilations of songs – triumphal then, nostalgic now – as well as defining the shape of an ideological programme of aural memory. From *Frelimo Aina Mwisho* (Frelimo is infinite) to *Nelo Ni Liduva* (Today is the day, mourning Josina Machel's death), from *Salazar Vai Embora* (Salazar go away!) to *Exaltemos Mondlane* (Let's exalt Mondlane): deeply inscribed in the militant's heart and soul, these melodies can be imagined as the soundtrack to the Museum of the Revolution in Maputo, accompanying, say, black-and-white clichés of Samora Machel crossing the Rovuma River in the company of the Chinese, of a youthful Mondlane watching the turbid sun as it sets over Mozambique's Liberated Zones.

Moçambique, nossa terra bendita
Mozambique, our blessed land
Hoje luta pela liberdade
Today fights for freedom
Nos queremos a nossa liberdade
We want our freedom
Unidade a todo o pais
Unity in the whole country
E o sangue do povo triunfante
And the blood of the triumphing People
Vencera o regime Salazar
Will win Salazar's regime
A Frelimo sairá vitoriosa
Frelimo will be victorious
Nesta luta pela liberdade

45 'Dicionário de ideias feitas', in Basto, *A Guerra das Escritas:* 176-185.
46 *A Guerra das Escritas:* 185.

In this struggle for freedom.
A sagrada bandeira da Frelimo
Frelimo's sacred flag
Flutuara nas nossas fortalezas
Will wave in our fortresses[47]

Old wood for new zithers

Raimundu baba wetu tunkukujugwa
Raimundo, father we ask you
Utupe lusa wetu tuje' likumbi
Give us the order to launch puberty rites
Vanung'unu vetu wetu kukangapalanga
Our little brothers are getting old
Utupe lusa wetu tuje' likumbi
Give us the order to launch puberty rites[48]

After a moment of consideration, both political and of practical opportunity, it was clear that puberty rituals were to be celebrated even in the precarious war conditions. No noisy *mapiko* masked dancing could mark the entrance and coming out of rituals, as it had been customary. But carving skills were put to other good uses. Adding to the traditional board-zithers *ibangu*[49] a big resonance chamber, sculpted in the same wood that *mapiko* masks are made of, and one or two strings, they could be made to resemble 'real' guitars. A new fingering technique was devised in order to play on these instruments (now also called *magita* or *magalantoni*)[50] the fancy rhythms from the northern coast, especially rumba, twist, and cha-cha-cha.[51] *Magalantoni* became extremely popular in the first years of war (1964–1967), a 'must' of initiations, funeral ceremonies and all the partying permitted by the situation. Twists (*matwisti*) brought to athletic extremes were in the highest fashion: 'They would bend their heads backward to touch the floor… some broke their backs and died right there!' recounted *magita* master Samuel Mandia with a laugh.[52]

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47 This is Zaaqueu's. He sang it for me, but the song is well known and it appeared in booklets and collections.
48 *Magita* song, Samuel Mandia (Mueda: recording session, 2008). 'Raimundo' refers to Pashinuapa, an important Makonde Frelimo leader.
49 This is the local name of a musical instrument played in East Africa, especially in Tanzania (*kipango*), Mozambique (also *bangu, bancu, iwaya,* etc.) and Malawi (*bangwe*), that ethnomusicologists call 'board-zither'. It is made of a wooden board, on which a long wire is stretched, in such a way as to produce five, six or seven strings. It is strummed or fingered. The instrument underwent a major 'modernisation' on a regional scale already in the late 40s, when many musicians adopted playing styles inspired by guitars. See G. Kubik, 'Neo-traditional popular music in Africa since 1945', *Popular Music*, 1 (1981): 83-104. The American 'banjo' (or at least its name) could be a descendent of this instrument.
50 A Kenyan genealogy has been suggested for the latter name.
51 See the photograph in Kubick 'Neo-traditional': 88.
52 Samuel Mandia (Mueda, recording session, January 2005). During this recording session with Samuel Mandia, probably the greatest master of *magita*, I learned for the first time about the existence of the *magita* wartime genre. After playing a couple of more recent songs, he came up with one or two oldies. He then told me that they were part of a genre sung during the war, which no one would play anymore. I was later able to locate four more performers of *magita* songs: two that I actually pursued (in Shinda and Litembo), and two that I met by chance (in Mapate and Nshinga). Many told me that they had played the instrument, but had then forgotten everything.



Figure 2: Lina Ndilivaliva with his *magalantoni* (Rui Assubuji)





Figure 3a and 3b: Fiel Liloko, master of *magita* (Rui Assubuji)

Despite the presence of the enemy, travelling and exchanges were as intense as ever: underground commerce, smuggling of weapons across the border, going back and forth to Tanzania for training. Displacements were not a prerogative of soldiers. 'People' when travelling had to notify the nearest Frelimo branch that could assign them to any non-strictly military task, such as the transport of war material, or delivering a message. The *Magalantoni* would be carried along. The fashion spread following the footsteps, creating new communities of song and new horizons of artistic fame.

The famous Lingondo, creator of *ngoda*, is irreverently depicted in a *matwisti* as he seizes the occasion of a military displacement to exhibit his dancing prowess:

Lingondo kumbambwe
Lingondo at Mwambe [Macomia]
Vandimpukuza
They kicked him out
Vankupushidya: nkala wako aumanykenge
They kicked him out: your *nkala* is not famous [good enough]
Lingondo kumwambe
Lingondo at Mwambe
Ankuja na dyoni
He came back shameful[53]

Magalantoni lyrics moved away from the obscure proverbial idioms that defined *ngoda*. More than any other wartime genre, they captured the war's everyday. Mixing of languages, a feature of migrant songs since late colonialism, was pervasive. The exotic word was culled, savoured and bent into the vernacular. No vocabulary of ready-made ideas here!

Instead of having the general experience of the war wrought into Frelimo's 'courtly' symbolic net, a discrete item of military life, the warehouse, the only word in Portuguese in the song, is absorbed in the vernacular, and the experience of the institution is intertwined with the soldier's ordinary:

Mboko aninguluma
A tick bit me
Aninguluma kumagashini
It bit me in the warehouse
Ngulinga kushapokela
I tried and pulled it out
Ujeje kuleka popo
Its head stuck there
Aninguluma kumagashini
It bit me in the warehouse[54]

53 Samuel Mandia, *ibid*.
54 Samuel Mandia, recording session (Mueda, July 2008).

On a hypnotic and melancholic melody and a slightly syncopated rhythm, elements of daily military life revolve as if in dance. The base, the communal cleaning (*limpeza,* practice of the socialist life in the liberated areas), the chief, the call, the collective 'doing'. All words are foreign, but the trace of the vernacular suffuses the song – in the conjugation of a Kiswahili verb and in overall phonetic distortion – alluding to the integration of new worlds of practice and value into domains of intimacy and feeling:

Luli tupanye limpeza
In [base] Lurio, let's [make] clean
Chefe do campo andisema
The camp chief called:
Luli tupanye limpeza
'In Lurio, let's [make] clean'[55]

Marching and miracles

Mwenu madyoko mukulumwiki' ambi
You, kids that grew up now
Wetu nelo tunammyimyangidya
Today we remind-you-the-history
Patushitenda ing'ondo yetu 'kuno ku-Moshambiki
Of when we were doing our war, here in Mozambique

Patushitenda ing'ondo yetu
When we were doing our war
Tuvenentete tundipata tabu
We-the-People, we suffered
Yakuwena shilo na mui a-materiale
Walking day and night with [war] materials

Tushindapangana kupagwa mashepi
We organised ourselves, to have chiefs
Mwatupita kulamulanila
That went around commanding
Tushindawika kubalabala ku-kutenda ing'ondo[56]
We went to the roads to make war

As we have seen, the war was sustained by the movement of people and soldiers. Many personal stories of affiliation with Frelimo began with amazing journeys: hundreds of kilometres through thick bushes, marshes, hills and rivers, fleeing from a village and joining the guerrillas across the border. War was

55 Samuel Mandia, *ibid*.
56 Fiel Liloko (Shinda: recording session, August 2008).

superimposed on the cognitive geography of Cabo Delgado, as the military partition of the province into four sectors became the common way of referring to its spaces.[57] Intense movement was of course not a novelty: from ancient trade caravans to migrant labour, the history of the region was written largely by foot.

The long marches of the People carrying materials, and the complementary long marches of the leaders visiting the war zones, become the most iconic trope of the Struggle, immortalised in clichés and songs. In military anthems, displacement forebodes the encounter with death. Marching is evoked through rhythm:

Marere, Marere
Marere, Marere
Tumekwenda kumbati, Marere
We went to the combat to Marere
Tumerudi salama Marere
We returned safely from Marere
O-o Marere
O-o Marere

Nachingwea, Nachingwea
Nachingwea, Nachingwea
Tumekwenda masomo Nachingwea
We went to study/learn to Nachingwea
Tumerudi salama Nachingwea
We returned safely from Nachingwea[58]
O-o Nachingwea
O-o Nachingwea

A *ngoda* song, on a descending pentatonic melody, conjures some of the same tropes (marching, materials, war) in the temporality of a bone-chilling vocative:

Lipililile kaka lipililile
Withstand, withstand-in-silence
Kuka nakuja vinakubyaa
Back and forth, it will kill you
Vyombo
Materials

Mwambula kukuleka
Left alone in Mwambula

57 The first sector ran from the Rovuma to the Mueda-Mocimboa road; the second until the Messalo river; the third until Montepuez; the fourth up to the Lurio River.

58 Studying is as dangerous an activity as combat. The relationship between the two – the question of students going to the front, and the politicisation of education – were harshly debated during of the 1968-9 crisis (see further).

Vandakubyaa
They will kill you
Ing'ondo
[That's] war [59]

Economy, elegance and elusiveness are qualities in high esteem in Makonde orature. Things are evoked here, never said. Long marches are 'back and forth'. Materials (spelled here in the vernacular, not yet in the Portuguese 'tropified' form) and war are brought together through parallelism and assonance. The leaving behind of the foot-soldier is conjugated in an astute impersonal infinitive (*kukuleka*). The enemy is evoked in a slight change of a prefix in another parallelism: it is not things that kill (vi-), but people (va-). The verb *kupililila* (reflexive here) inscribes the suffering of War into the familiar experience of puberty rites of passage: to withstand-in-silence is what *vali* learn to do when faced with the painful tests of initiation. Is it so?

While the song *can* be understood as relating to marches and suffering, it originally referred to a woman who had many men in different places.[60] The 'equipment' killing her was love rather than war-related. Men left her behind in Mwambula because of venereal diseases. Mentioning 'war' at the end of the song functioned as a reminder of the general context in which these events occurred.

War and travelling opened up possibilities for the encounter with 'the miraculous' – in Shimakonde a common metaphor for sexual promiscuity.[61] This *magita* song articulates the link quite explicitly:

Biti Nkwemba
Miss Nkwemba
Mwali biti Nkwemba
That girl, Miss Nkwemba
Biti Nkwemba lilaja sana
Miss Nkwemba is such a whore

Malidya mwanda
She went and travelled
Mwanda ku-Nampula
Travelled to Nampula
Andikadyana na camarada
To meet a comrade

Nandanga sema:
Nandanga called:
'Manemba mulole mambo
'You boys come and see these things

59 *Ngoda* (Nampanya: recording session, December 2004).
60 So the authors explained to me during an interview (Nampanya, March 2009). I wrote the commentary to the song before that, and I believe it still stands. This testifies to the potential polysemy of the song.
61 *Kulava*, a miracle; *kulavalava*, having many lovers.

Mulole mambo amaduvano'
These things of nowadays'

Marching went together with hunger. The restricted areas of war harvested little. Many survived off wild tubers, fruits, whatever. 'We were living of potatoes' (*tushindanama mandumbwe*), reminds a latter song. Hunger and walking are approached here with satire rather than lament:

Ku-Nshongwe Biti Nalyanga
In Nshongwe, Miss Nalyanga
Andiva lii limo
She stole one egg
Andyukanavo kushu
And she fled far with it
Shilambo shaku-Memba
In the country of Memba

Bandita anditangola
Bendita said:
'Namwana lii leka
'Lady, leave the egg
Andatangola mwene
The owner will protest
Panyuma, ndya' Simão'
Back here, Simão's wife'[62]

Animals also had their part in travelling. In a remote hunting field, far from all human settlements, a mysterious house-rat appears. What is it doing there? Pointing out an old witch does not seem to dispel the eeriness of the miracle (*makango*):

Manemba nimkumanya vipitile kala
Boys, I tell you of a thing that happened a long time ago
Ulumba wake Tamashi wetu tundyona makango
In Tomas' [remote] hunting field we saw a miracle
Tundyaka vyako vitatu wetu tushamananga
We hunted three fields, then we called everyone
Tunshamanila: 'lingundu wetu tundinkanyola
We called: 'We hit a house-rat
Apa pamimbilo'
Here at the crossroads'

Tundyumbala mwina nandi tunnambela fundi
We met under a tree and we looked for an expert

62 Samuel Mandia, *ibid.*

Tundimpata mzee Madumba audya yangele
We found the elder Madumba, the diviner
Aninshashatanga olya wantaja nkanywa
He cut chewing tobacco
Pamo na nula yake
Together with his medicine

Njetu kannila maputa
And our friend accused an old lady
Kannila maputa
Accused an old lady

The house-rat, though, might have its own motives to follow the guerrillas deep down in the bushes, as in this widespread *ngoda* song:

Tummwita tuvoe nkaloni
We are many to refuse the colonizer
Wetu tundimmwita njungu nkaloni
We refused the White colonizer
Lingundu nkoko kutuwatika
And the house-rat followed us
Tuvanu kutukuta kwinjia mumwitu
We ran away, entered in the bushes
Lingundu nkoko kutulandola
And the house-rat came looking for us
Lingondo tukammudya:
And when we asked the house-rat, [it replied]:
'Mwaa wankaloni nintamwa
'Because I refuse the colonizer
Shilambo moshambiki ainogweleka'
Who embitters the country of Mozambique

Two Coats

'As you know. We come back from the military base and we put on a different coat (*likoti*).' Americo Nampindo replied with this metaphor to my question on whether he had sung both *ngoda* and military anthems during the war.[63]

The 'coats' he referred to are the soldier's (*mashudado*) and the People's (*venentete, povo*). The two groups were involved in different activities and occupied different spaces, being subjected to differing degrees to the apparatuses of the socialist State-to-be. People carried materials[64] and lived on the outskirts of the military. Soldiers were shaped by the training and education provided in camps and bases.

63 A. Nampindo (Myangalewa: interview, April 2009).
64 People were often defined metonymically as 'carriers of material' (*vamateriali*).

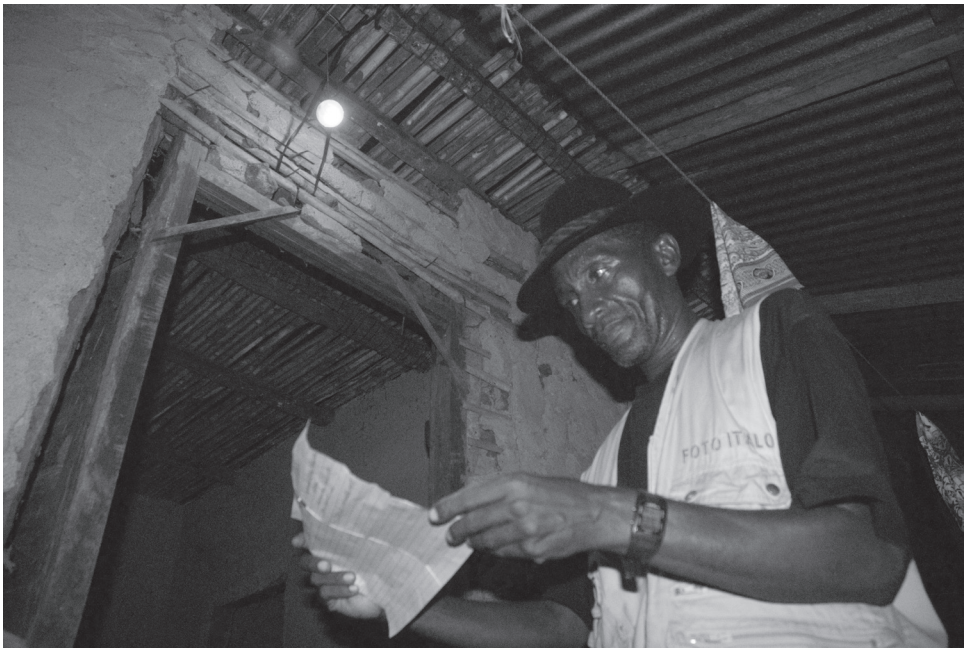

Figure 4: Americo Nampindo trying to remember a song, Myangalewa 2009 (Rui Assubuji)

A partition between the two groups' cultures was put in place, which cut through the organisation of the performance space and practices of education. Soldier's anthems were performed in spaces and situations connoted with officialdom: marches, flag-raising and generally in the camps and bases. People's songs – such as *ngoda* or *magita* – were danced 'out there', in the branches and localities, in moments of informal gathering. When celebrating a recurrence, they were invited to step on the podium to represent the essence of the People under the gaze of the Leader.

Songs differed in content and form between the two groups. The heteroglossia so characteristic of migrant songs was forbidden in soldiers' songs. African languages were accepted and encouraged, but not the confusing and polysemic intermingling of languages and forms. Being 'correct' did apply to grammar, as well as to the political line.

Songs could, of course, move from one space to the other. The farewell addressed to the beloved or the family was a common *magita* theme:

Nangu mwanda-e malikola vangu
I go, my parents
Ipemi yangu makono
AKM[65] in my hands

65 The Kalashnikov AK49.

Mwanda natenda ing'ondo
I go and make war
Na vanang'o' mwangu
With my elders

Nangu nikapela aivé shinu
And if I die, it doesn't matter
Ninkuvaleka vana, mwenu malikola
I leave my children to you, my family
Vana mungushungile
Take care of my children
Muvatumidye vauke kushikola
Send them to school
Vakamanye kushomya
So that they learn to read[66]

The same kind of song, stripped of all sentiment, articulated around one or two founding tropes (the People, Liberation), and rearranged by a soldier to a more martial tone, could become a semi-official anthem:

Nangu mwanda kwing'ondo
I go to war
Na Ikemi yangu mmakono
AKM in my hands
Ibalabala za ku–Shindano
On the road of Chindano
Nikapé nangu njomba 'nadiva
If I die, my [maternal] uncle will replace me

Nangu mwanda ndapela
I go to die
Palidi lyavenentete
In the name [lit. voice] of the People
Liduva lyakupé nangu
The day I die
Shilambo shetu wetu 'ndyambola
Our land we will free[67]

Nampindo's metaphor of the coat expresses an idea of subjectivity as an articulation of surface, which appears both in common sense, and in contemporaries theories of the subject which – taking inspiration from the philosophy of Nietzsche – refuse the idea of 'depth' or 'inwardness'.[68]

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66 *Magita* song, Fiel Liloko (Shinda: recording session, August 2008).
67 *Magita* song, Samuel Mandia (Mueda: recording session, January 2005).
68 See C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 111-199.

The question is not just one of academic blabber. A film documentary produced in South Africa, just before the 1994 elections and ominously titled 'What they sing', stirred up paranoia around the lyrics of Liberation Struggle songs.[69] Calling attention to the exhortations to violence in three or four MK tunes, the anonymous voice comments: they sing 'from the depths of their hearts'.

Songs do offer easy ways into imagining collective subjects. A crowd sings a song. Is it expressing the crowd's inner essence, channelling its feelings? Is a song a minimal common denominator that fuses all the singing voices into a collective Voice? Is this not what anthropologists (and historians) presuppose when they read songs in order to construct cultures? Are songs a window into interiority? Are they really sung from the depth of one's heart? Or is song something more fleeting, an effect of surface? Do songs create a fleeting fusion between the coat and the nameless nakedness that hides behind, the illusion of depth and identity? When songs rekindle memories, do they shape the present on past emotions? Does the feeling that one pours into the songs of others testify to the human capacity for empathy and identification?

Songs articulate in a special way the ineffable with text; individuality with community; the singularity of experience with historical *longue durée*; memory with *stimmung*. The point of Nampindo's metaphor is that we do not mistake the coat for the self. And that we look at songs more as mirrors than as windows.

Let a song itself remind us of how easily one takes a coat for an essence. Tellingly, it is a song that was excerpted from the learning space of initiation rituals, a secret made public in uncertain times of war:

Utangadika nambala, nyedi yó mamene
You refuse [to eat] a slug but you chew snails
Shipilipili sho nnunge
You can spice it up with peri-peri
Kanji, likola limo
But it's one and the same family

Limanya sana shamumamanela inyedi
Know the reason why, why you eat snails
Mwaa walikoti lyagwete
It's because of the coat it wears
Kanji likola limo
But it's one and the same family[70]

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69 South Africa's political space in relation to liberation struggle songs seems to be partitioned between paranoia and nostalgia. The case of *umshini wam* ('bring me my machine gun'), the struggle-song deployed as an anthem by president Jacob Zuma and later by xenophobic crowds, is a case in point. Critics of Zuma have seen the song (and its subsequent usage) as a menacing symptom of latent violence. Supporters understand the song as a reference to the noble history of the Struggle. See L. Gunner, 'Jacob Zuma, the social body and the unruly power of song', *African Affairs,* 108 (430), 2009: 27-48.

70 *Magita* song, Fiel Liloko (Nshinda: recording session, August 2008). Incidentally, this song that I recorded and offered to the provincial station of Radio Mozambique was a (local) hit. It presented its audience with a groove – that of wartime *magita* – that sounded fresh because it had been forgotten.

Heroism and betrayal

The year of 1968 brought crisis and upheaval in the heart of Frelimo. The facts are well known: a student revolt at the Frelimo School in Dar-es-Salaam, the assassination of Eduardo Mondlane, the death of various main guerrillas, and an internal struggle for power between two factions, leading to the crowning of Samora Machel as leader of the movement in 1970.

The interpretations of the 1968–9 crisis diverge along either side of the political divide. The open letter written by Frelimo vice-president Uria Simango (*Gloomy situation in Frelimo*) synthesised the core of Frelimo's moral crisis as one of summary executions. Frelimo's power clique disposed of political adversaries by stirring up crowds in the war zones, who would eagerly stone to death anyone who was pointed to as a traitor or a counter-revolutionary. Frelimo dismissed the letter as the voice of counter-revolution itself, expelled Simango and many others from the movement, and managed to crush the dissension. The crisis was then described as a fight between a conservative and a revolutionary line. For the losers, and those that would later take inspiration from them (Renamo), it was one between pluralism and totalitarianism.

It was only after this tormented transition that Frelimo openly embraced Leninism. The violent inscription of Utopia on the People living in the liberated zones also began during the crisis, and after the expulsion of Lázaro Nkavandame, former provincial governor of Cabo Delgado. As one interviewee said to historian Yusuf Adam, 'after 1968, we all became like soldiers'.[71]

One who is familiar with the moral geography of Makonde plateau knows the names and locations of the abandoned villages (*madembe*) where popular executions were carried out. They stand near to each Frelimo base, branch or settlement, as a reminder of a political process 'quilted' around the ritual killing of the Enemy.[72]

Of *Frelimo Aina Mwisho*, the great Frelimo anthem in Shimakonde, most party militants remember only the title line, meaning: 'Frelimo is endless'. The song, recorded by the Women's Detachment Choir, however, goes on:

> *Simango reaccionário*
> Simango is a reactionary
> *Nkavandame anditukuta*
> Nkavandame fled
> *Joana reaccionária*
> Joana is a reactionary
>
> The list of reactionaries continues, mentioning 18 names in the space of 3'48".

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71 Y. Adam, 'Mueda, 1917: Resistência, colonialismo, libertação e desenvolvimento', *Arquivo. Boletim do Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique*, 14 (1993): 51.

72 I have elaborated this point in my 'The war of lions: Witch-hunts, occult idioms and post-socialism in Northern Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* (March 2009), 35 (1): 155-174.

From this official version, a verse was cut that indexes the practical usages of the song:

Ukabanga vandakuduma
If you're wicked, they will punish you

To the rhythm of this secret verse, counter-revolutionaries and reactionaries were flogged or stoned during and after the Struggle.[73]

It is not with shame, but with self-confident pride, that Makonde contemporary political singing recalls these acts of popular lynching against counter-revolutionaries. A source of embarrassment for today's politicians, the abundance of these songs is like the symptom that refuses to be repressed:

Shiashya shani shamutendile mapelelimo
What kind of politics did you do, you of Frelimo?
Akumwing'a sheu Lasharo jó Nkavandame
Of giving a chair to Lazaro, that guy, Nkavandame?
Tuvenintete vamoshambiki
We-the-People of Mozambique
Tulinkunjugwa Lazaro Nkavandame
We want him for us, Lazaro Nkavandame
Tukampata Lazaro jó tundantannola
If we take him, Lazaro, we are going to stone him
Kenga Manduzi tundintannola
Like Manduzi, we stoned him
Lidembe kuna-Buluna
At the old village of *kuna-Buluna*[74]

When wearing 'the other coat', and certainly before 1968, people were more tolerant of small acts of treason:

Njasi
Jacinth
Shyuventude wakuna-Nyoka
Youth of *kuna-Nyoka* [the name of a Frelimo branch]
Wandimandaka wakamate watoto
They sent him to catch the kids
Watoto watoto washule
Kids, school-kids

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73 It also appears that both Nkavandame and Simango were burned alive to the sound of the song, in a Frelimo re-education camp.

74 *Mapiko* song, Nandindi group (Mwambula: recording session, March 2005). Nkavandame had long been dead when the song was composed. Mandusi, a local *sipaio*, was stoned in 1974 near the village of Miteda, and thence stood as the epitomic figure of popular lynching. *Kuna-Buluna* was one of the *mademb*e were people would be killed.

Njasi kati-kati amekimbia
Jacinth, in the middle of the way, he fled
Kimbilia ibulanji yakunanyoka
He fled to the branch of *kuna-nyoka*
Njasi
Jacinth!
Wé, minipu wé Njasi
Hey, what about trust, Jacinth?[75]

The mythology of Heroes (*vanshambelo*) was also reinforced after the 1969 crisis, with the many deaths of major guerrillas and of course of Eduardo Chivambo:

Mondlane
Mondlane
Wakubyaite wako
Those who killed you
Vanu vamalambi
These people are scoundrels

Twala
Take
Makalatashi lao
Your posters
Andika
Write
Lina lya-Mondlane
The name of Mondlane
Andika
Write
Lina lya-maimyo
The name of History[76]

With the other coat on, the People celebrated heroism in verses less iconic and more ironic. The anti-aerial gun was the key weapon of the war in its second phase, when the Portuguese dropped bombs (sometimes napalm) from aeroplanes and helicopters. Luis Namajeu's deeds are told in a grotesquely vernacularised Portuguese:[77]

75 *Magita* song, Samuel Mandia (Mueda: recording session, January 2005).
76 *Mapiko* song, Omba (Mueda: live recording, June 2003).
77 The singers were of course conscious of the grotesqueness, of the vernacularisation, and of the fun. Some of them were reticent of singing these old songs in bad Portuguese – but all found them amusing.

Luis Namajeu
Luis Namajeu
Quando abre pogo
When he opens fire
Caramba caramba caramba
Caramba caramba caramba
Nossa terra pica allumado
Our land is done for

Luis Namajeu
Luis Namajeu
Pega arma anterea
Takes an anti-aerial weapon
Caramba caramba caramba
Caramba caramba caramba
Nossa terra pica alumado
Our land is done for[78]

Virgilio Mbati's more modest heroism, somewhat like Jacob Zuma's, has to do with grabbing a machine gun:

Vilijili Mbati wakuwidumbi
Virgil Mbati of Muidumbe
Animpoka ntadola muleno
He grabbed a machine-gun from a Portuguese
Manjolo ashindalila namene
The Major cried a lot
Aningupoka kamalada ntadola
'A comrade stole my machine-gun!'[79]

Culture, a weapon of combat

Song and dance were not much on the minds of Frelimo leaders during the first years of the war. There were more urgent matters to be attended to: military organisation, setting up an educational and health network in the liberated zones, and internal conflict. After the radicalisation of 1969, culture came on the agenda, with frank Leninist connotations. A series of cultural seminars was organised between 1969 and 1973 with the objective of elaborating political directives.

78 *Magita* song, Samuel Mandia (Mueda: recording session, January 2005).
79 *Magita* song, Trovingi Rosario (Nshinga: recording session, August 2004).

Culture, that is, had to become a weapon of combat, part and parcel of Frelimo's educational system.[80]

The 'problem' posed by traditional African expression was understood, firstly, as one of form versus content and, secondly, as one of tribalism. From the formal point of view, singing and dancing were not only unharmful, but could be used to further military unity: 'In song and dance we solved various problems. When we sing or dance, gestures and words are uniformed. This is the question of discipline.'[81] If the content of traditional dance had been irremediably corrupted by colonial capitalism, regeneration was, in due course, in the revolutionary process. The normative and the descriptive are collapsed in the Utopian indistinction: what culture *must be* is what it is *already becoming*:

> At night in the liberated areas the people of the villages gather by the fire and sing and dance in complete freedom, as in the time before the arrival of the Portuguese. The old people tell the children about the crimes the Portuguese practised against the people, when they occupied that territory. They tell them about episodes in the liberation struggle, the courage of our guerrillas.[82]

The binaries imposed by revolutionary commitment and the doctrine of the Enemy translates into a literary project of elimination of the 'metaphorical residue' in art and literature. Thus, in a programmatic Frelimo text on poetry, Craveirinha's poem 'Eu sou carvão' ('I am coal') becomes true (in a materialistic dialectical sense) only when the figural language is converted into reality by warfare: 'the words become true in a literal sense: the African has become the fire which is burning his former master. There is no metaphorical residue left between the fire of poetry and the fire of the grenades and mortars used against the enemy.'[83]

The acceptance of each morsel of 'cultural practice' into the Nation was conditioned to the negation of its particularistic character:

> Today a new culture is being developed based on traditional forms with a new content dictated by our new reality. […] Culture plays an important role in the reinforcement of national unity. The dances which are performed today in the liberated regions are no longer dances of Cabo Delgado, or Tete or Niassa. The militants from other regions there

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80 I ground my reconstruction of Frelimo's ideology and policies on education and culture on Basto, *A Guerra da Escritas*, C. Siliya *Ensaio sobre a cultura em Moçambique* (Maputo: CEGRAF 1996), M. B. Gomes, *Educação Moçambicana. História de Um Processo. 1962-1984* (Maputo: Livraria Universitária da UEM, 1999), B. Mazula *Educação, Cultura e Ideologia em Moçambique 1975-1985* (Porto: Afrontamento, 1995), on a number of Frelimo programmatic documents from 1971-1983 and on a few interviews conducted with grassroots implementers of Frelimo's cultural policies in Pemba and Muidumbe. For more detail on documents and interviews, see my doctoral dissertation, 'Masques en transformation*:* Les performances mapiko des Makonde (Mozambique). Historicité, création et revolution' (Paris: EHESS, 2008): 298-299, 496.

81 *Documento final do 1° Seminário Cultural*. See also Basto *A Guerra*: 128-129.

82 Message from the Central Committee to the Mozambican People', *Mozambique Revolution*, spec. no. (Sep 25, 1967): 5.

83 'The role of poetry in the Mozambican revolution', in *Mozambique Revolution* 38 (March-April 1969): 17. Basto analyses this text as Frelimo's foundational statement in production of a literary canon, *A Guerra:* 68-92. I am largely indebted to her insightful reading.

bring their way of living, their dances, their songs, and from this a new culture, national in its form and revolutionary in content, is born.[84]

The 'liberated regions' function here as a fantasy-screen alluding to popular spontaneity. Actually, the experiment of fusing together various 'popular dances' to build a national identity was planned and piloted in Frelimo's military bases, and especially at the central training camp in Tanzania, Nachingwea. The new regenerated dances (with revolutionary content and open ethnic participation) were showcased in the famous 'concerts' that were held at Nachingwea every Saturday afternoon; or on national holidays at the bases in Mozambique, where under certain precautions, drums could be struck at their full power. 'Popular dances' were thus inscribed into ceremonials of power, inspired by fascist-Leninist spectacles,[85] and not very different from their colonial counterparts. Their spatial and temporal organisation represented the new political order: the Leader's speech, the military parade, and on the podium the People's culture.

Choirs and guitar groups were the favoured musical expressions of soldiers, presented on Nachingwea's stage side by side with 'popular dances'. Partly drawing from the experience of the *magalantoni*, that many soldiers had sung when wearing 'the other coat', guitar groups were musically influenced by Tanzanian and Congolese styles (rumba and jazz). In their youth, influential Frelimo leaders took part in these guitars bands.

The lyrics, however, were written 'respecting the watchwords of the party. We were doing propaganda and political work, presenting the correct revolutionary line.'

'And you didn't sing love songs?'

'Ah, that thing of *nakupenda nakupenda* (I love you), that was there… there with the People. They sang it. We sang serious, revolutionary songs.'[86]

Nakupenda

'Love poems without an explicit revolutionary content are condemnable,' one of Frelimo's first documents on culture bluntly stated.[87]

But people – as I came to know – sang about love, at least when they had the right coat on.

Distance and death rhyme with desire, as we all know. All wars have had their tunes of desperate affection. Leaving home exposes one to loss, forgetfulness, betrayal:

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84 'Shaping the political line', *Mozambique Revolution,* 51 (April-June 1972): 22. The title of the section is 'mental scars'.

85 Mussolini and Lenin exerted a reciprocal influence in inventing the modern spectacle of mass power, constructed around the military parade, the synchronic performances of the new social organisations (fascist youth, etc.), the speech of the Leader, and the showcasing of symbols of 'popular authenticity' (peasant women, dances, etc.). See, amongst others, S. Falasca Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Spectacles of mass power had a specific fortune and vernacularisation in Africa.

86 Manuel Gondola (Pemba: interview, April 2009).

87 *Documento final do 1° Seminário Cultural, reunido de 30 de Dezembro de 1971 a 21 de Janeiro de 1972* (photocopy), see also Basto, *A Guerra*: 130, and 'What is the Mozambican Culture', in *Mozambique Revolution* 50 (January-March 1972): 50.



Figure 5: Muidumbe Jazz was a famous local guitar group in the late 1970s. Luis Paulo Lipashule 'Junta', at the doorpost, oversees the progress of the group that he has recently revived, Muidumbe, 2009 (Rui Assubuji).

Dada Maria-e aunalile
Sister Maria-e, don't you cry
Nungu akalota t undakadyana
If God wants, we'll meet again
Ata kwa-wenda lombwa, dada Maria
Even if you'll get married, sister Maria
Aunangulivalive, nangu ni mujo
Don't forget me, me, your friend
Kumbukila-e manamilo letu
Remember our way of life
Mwatushinamila maduva panyuma
How we used to live in the old days[88]

The influence of foreign urban music and its languages was important in the upsurge of this wartime sentimentalism. Not by chance, desire was spelled in (vernacularised) Kiswahili*:*

Nishalau
I had forgotten
Uko kwetu Makonde
Here, our Makonde lands

88 *Magita* song, Fiel Liloko (Shinda: recording session, August 2008).

Kuja bondeni kulima samba
I go to the lowlands to work a *chamba* [field]
Kina dada wote tulime samba
You, sister, let's work a *chamba*
Samba landise tupate mali
A *chamba* of bananas, to make some money
Filomena, dada Filomena
Filomena, sister Filomena
Filomena nakupenda
Filomena, sister, I love you[89]

Not only is the soldier worried about leaving behind a wife to the seductions of his friends. War sucks up the better years of one's life, those blessed with fecundity. The lack of means does not enable one to satisfy the desires of modern girls:

Wako njomba aunatangadike namene
Hey, uncle don't be angry
Si nangu mwiu ndalomba
I am going to marry, really!
Nindivakodya vatatavao
I met their [the girls'] fathers
Vapakanila kushi doni:
And they were discussing, like this:
'Tundivadoba kuvashumila dinguvo
'We are tired of buying them cloths
Ava vali vasasa nimpomo'
These girls of nowadays it's worse'

Love invaded wartime songs, not only because of distance and fashion. Frelimo aimed at the radical transformation of gender and power relationships. The law of socialism had to substitute for custom. Affection was an angle to discuss these new forms of 'moral subjectivation':[90] the shaping of a relationship between an individual and the Law, the interiorisation of a norm into one's daily practice.

Namwita vaninshema
They called Namwita (I-will-refuse)
Vaninshema valikola
Her family called her
Pakulota vantamedye
To make her move [in order to marry]

89 *Ngoda* song, Samuel Mandia (Mueda: recording session, January 2009).
90 M. Foucault *L'Histoire de la Sexualité II: L'Usage des Plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984): 33-45.

Namwita akandipinga
Namwita shook her head
Vandigombana sana pakummwita mwana njomba
They fought hard when she refused her [maternal] uncle's son

Namwita maduvano
Namwita these days
Ankwikala gweka yake
Sits all by herself
Pakunshunga sherikali
The government is taking care of her
Valikola vaninjaa
Her familiars abandoned her
Shitadidye vakanjae
What made them abandon her?
Vandigombana sana pakummwita mwana njomba
They fought hard when she refused her uncle's son

Kaka Namwita kutikinanga disharia
Namwita's brother doesn't know the laws
Disharia dyashinyakala dindinyata
The laws of old are ugly
Numbuwo mwanao a-njomba wako kunshema ndyao
Your sister, the daughter of your maternal uncle, you call her 'my wife'
Munkukowa
You are doing wrong

The war brought changes in gender relations that had little to do with socialism's intended effects. When moral subjectivation goes all wrong, when appearances betray the eye and the heart, when the weekly routine starts with the wrong foot, the exotic names of socialism's institutions turn into sites of shame and exposure:

Ava vali ni vali
These girls, these girls
Amunavone kwalala
Don't see them [as] beautiful
Amunavone kunyeta
Don't see them [as] fatty
Vandyalibika kasende
They are broke by gonorrhoea

Jumatatu 'kawika
When Monday comes

Kutwalananga shipinga
You take all your group
Kulangalela indila
And you lead the path
Kushipitali Zambézia
To the Zambézia hospital[91]

Was Frelimo's prohibition of love songs just expressing the critique of bourgeois subjectivity (a pointless exercise in rural Mozambique, one must note)? Or was it suggesting that real true passions were to be devoted solely to the cause of the People: love the Leader and hate the Enemy?

Manemba malalanga
My boys, hush
Nangu nitangashidye shinkutandeke
I tell you what happened
Mwaka Sabini Na Tatu
In the year 1973
Nangu nindijugwa nkongwe kwangwitikila
I asked a woman, and she answered me [yes]

Ninditwala mwanda
I picked up and go
Mpaka ndawika kwetu ku-likola
Until I arrived at our place, at the family
Nindinkodya njomba
I met my maternal uncle
Njomba, ngupa mia mbili ndikalombwe
'Uncle, give me 1,000 [escudos] to marry'

Nangu ndipuwanga
I rejoiced:
Njomba andingupa mali, apa nindalomba
'My uncle gave me the bride-price, I will marry'
Kanji angulombile
But I didn't marry
Kwoda yamalamulo ashilikali
Because of an order of the government[92]

91 Samuel Mandia, (Mueda: recording session July 2008).
92 *Magita* song, Fiel Liloko (Shinda: recording session, August 2009).

Ariaga and teleology

Nakulailila mwenu menentete
Now, as a farewell, you People [I say]:
Tenda ing'ondo na ntima wou
Make war with this same heart
Patime panatime akuno Moshambike tundapata Uhuru
It might take time, in Mozambique we will receive Independence

Kuma Rovuma mpaka ku-Maputo
From the Rovuma to the Maputo
Tuvenentete tundyuka na igwana
We, the People, we have come together
Tunditenda ing'ondo ya myaka kumi mpaka tundyambola
We made the Ten-Year-War, until we liberated[93]

The Struggle had two major, long lasting ideological legacies. One, as we have seen, is the idea of 'the People'. The second was a concept of teleology. Based on a secularisation of Judeo-Christian time, a teleological reading of history is at the core of what we call modernity. It is also a central concept of revolution, where victory and socialism are synonymous and inevitable. This concept of history as a meaningful and progressive order was absent from Makonde singing (and cosmology) before 1960.

The dramatic events of 1971 provided a tangible ground for a vision of victorious teleology. In that year, the Portuguese struck back at Frelimo with an operation that was intended to wipe out the military bases of the movement, and bring all 'natives' back under control. Code-named 'Gordian Knot' (*Nó Górdio*), the operation set out to 'comb the bushes' with might and violence, accompanied by propaganda falling from the skies and filling the ether.[94] General Kaulza de Arriaga, who had learnt his lessons in Vietnam, was in command. Gordian Knot brought sufferings and disruption. Chains of command were broken. Bases abandoned. Guerrilla groups hit independently, with the only objective of surviving and bringing losses to the enemy. Lament and menace seemed the appropriate voice:

D'Aliyaga malidya mwanda wende kwenu
Arriaga, leave and go to your own country
Venintete vandikudoba kukubyaa Ariaga
The People are tired of killing you, Arriaga
Myadi vyako ku-Moçambique ivé matanda loe
In Mozambique, your blood is like lagoons
Liyaga
Arriaga[95]

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93 Fiel Liloko, (Shinda recording session: Moçimboa da Praia, January 2008).
94 See H. G. West, *Kupilikula. Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique* (Chicaco: University of Chicago Press, 2005): 145-147.
95 *Ngoda* song, Americo Nampindo (Myangalewa: recording session, August 2004).

Gordian Knot turned out to be a disaster. The expenditure on the operation was huge. Frelimo resisted. Arriaga went back with his tail between his legs. This defeat of the colonial army was the first major readable sign of a historical teleology, and the symbolic matrix of all successes to come. The inevitable victory of the future resembles the victory already harvested in the past:

Paidi' Lyaga tuvenentete kuva
When Arriaga came, We-the-People we suffered
Makapatela muwa dikatapila pai
Helicopters up, caterpillars down
Vapita valimanga dibalabala dya-ing'ondo
Going around digging the roads of war
Tuvenente anditukodya tuvenneo
But he found Us-the-People ready
Tunditenda ing'ondo mpaka Aliaga andyuka kwao
We did the war until he went home
Tukava wetu shimbili shinduymanga
As for ourselves, we got famous[96]

War was no longer the setting for topical singing. Struggle became the subject matter of historically oriented compositions, called 'songs of reminding' (*dimu dya kwimyangidya*). The verb '*kwimya'* means (something like) 'to tell a story in order to remember it'. Its durative-causative form '*kwimyangidya'*[97] thus means: 'to remind (intensively, repeatedly) a history that should be remembered'. *Maimyo*, a noun derived from *kwimya,* is usually simply translated as 'history', but conveys the same notion of 'history to be reminded'. 'History' (*maimyo*), that is, celebrating/reminding the deeds of the Struggle, was to constitute the new thematic core of Makonde political singing.

After the successful resistance to Gordian Knot, Frelimo tightened its grip over the liberated zones. The Portuguese seemed weaker, the guerrillas stronger, and the helicopters farther away. The veil of silence over drums was finally lifted. Dances came back to Makonde country with their intrinsic loudness. The two 'drums' that had protagonised the years of silence – *ngoda*-rattles and *magita*-zithers – were replaced with powered versions. *Ngoda* was transformed into *limbondo*, a drummed circular dance where people dress in tatters, wear animal-fur backpacks and violently shake axes or scythes. Although some of the old songs 'transited' into the new versions, most of those that referred to the experience of the war were abandoned. Morality was a thread that passed onto *limbondo*:

Kwiva kundinyata
Stealing is ugly [bad]

96 *Magita* song, Fiel Liloko (Shinda: recording session, August 2008).
97 Formed by the apposition of a durative verbal extension [-ang-] and a causative [-dya-].



Figure 6: Samuel Mandia and his group, Mueda 2009 (Rui Assubuji)

Twa' shipula kummwing'a mwene
Take the knife and give it [back] to the owner
Liduva lya vakwona vene
The day that the owners see you
Kwiva kundapwateka
Stealing will hurt
Kwiva amunavalele
Don't get used to stealing! [98]

Zithers such as *magita* and *magalantoni* were all but abandoned. Many people went on to play home-made electric guitars (also called *magita*). People's groups imitated the 'correct' political style of soldiers, while also continuing to sing love songs. Their 'history' sometimes sounded empty:

Manemba mwangu nelo ninammanyia
My boys, today I tell you
Mauvilo atupati' mwing'ondo
How we suffered during the war
Vitendo vyoe vyatutandeke wetu
The many things that happened to us

98 *Limbondo* song, Cinco Ramos (Mapate: recording session, July 2004).

Mumyaka kumi vya twike' mwing'ondo
In the 10 years that we passed in war[99]

A few masters of the zither, such as Samuel Mandia and Fiel Liloko, continued to cultivate the instrument after 1971, and eventually after Independence. The wartime songs that they recalled for me, and that play the lion's part in this piece – good music that you, reader, are unable to listen to, and this paper, alas, was unable to sing – were already a foregone repertoire in 1974. Liloko turned then to 'songs of reminding'. Mandia devised a way to play a genre of social critique (called *bwarabwà*) on the zither, for which he is known today. The old wartime tunes were not requested or appreciated anymore, although one or two could occasionally be slipped in during a performance. Of all the 'drums' that resounded with renewed vigour in the liberated zones, two especially carried the flag of 'revolution', and broadcast the new idiom of political singing: *mapiko* masquerades (particularly of the kind practised by the generation that made the war) and the militarised dance *nnonje*.

Tropes of utopia

In the attempt to locate a Shimakonde speaker in the Cape Town migrant underworld, I was faced with a striking instance of the power of song. One candidate, a young man, was introduced to me. Walking and chatting around the streets of Observatory, he told me his story. He was born in Mozambique, but his family had fled the country during the civil war and took refuge in Tanzania. His linguistic competence in Shimakonde was consequently very basic. I was unable to employ him. 'Why are you looking for a Makonde, anyway?' he asked me. 'To help me translate songs. There are many words that I don't know.' 'Aah! Songs…', he said 'like', and started humming:

Nelo ni liduva
Today is the day
Lyakulila
Of crying
Lyatukumbukila Josina Machel
When we remember Josina Machel

I took up the song where his memory faltered:

Nae ashindava
She was
Nanangaledi
The leader

99 *Magita* song, Muidumbe Jazz (Mwambula: recording session, April 2009).

Wavakongwe
Of the women
Vamoshambicana
The Mozambican [women]

'How do you know it?' he asked me. 'This is a song that I was taught in the secrets of initiation, there in Tanzania…'

After Gordian Knot, 'cultural activities' increasingly took place in the schools, on the model of those organised in the military camps. Pupils would learn choral songs mostly, and a few selected popular dances. As Frelimo educational centres (*centros pilotos*) were placed in the proximity of a military base, to defend the children from possible incursions, school pupils grew up with soldiers, and were subjected to military rules, routines and ceremonials. Choral songs were taken only partly from the military repertoire: a whole range of educational songs were composed to instil revolutionary values, historical memory and political consciousness. The texts were structured around a trite recitation of ideological formulas, dates, and names of heroes and leaders.

In the final years of the war (possibly 1973), the dance *makwaela* became the elective cultural activity for pupils in Frelimo schools. This is a southern Mozambican variant of a region-wide modality of choral singing, *makwaya* (from the English 'choir'), where European four-part harmony is fused with local musical practices such as 'responsorial organisation, dense overlapping, and variation of individual parts […], more relaxed vocal timbres, a more spontaneous approach to vocal exclamations and other sounds.'[100] Its origins in migrant labour (especially from southern Mozambique to South Africa) gave it the right credentials for a revolutionary dance. Simple and rhythmical, it appeared ideal for schools and ideological work. In the years after independence *makwaela* become the national school-dance, and one of the major forms of transmission of the Party's slogans. Hundreds of tapes of *makwaela* songs were recorded in the Frelimo pilot schools in a national campaign between 1976 and 1978.

Makwaela also became the main form of dance taught to Makonde boys and girls at initiation rituals, and the one that they would present to the village at the initiates' coming-out. The slogans and formulas of the Party were considered to be the central values instilled in the men- and women-to-be:[101]

Povo Moçambicano
Mozambican People
Na marcha para Liberdade
In the march for Freedom
Da economia nacional
Of the national economy
Devemos centralizar (nos avanços) a produção
We must centralize (in the advancements) the production

100 T. Turino, *Nationalists,* 125.
101 See Israel, '"Kummwangalela guebuza." The Mozambican general elections of 2004 in Muidumbe' *Lusotopie,* 13(2): 113.

Base da Economia Nacional
Base of the national economy
Devemos sincronizar (nos avanços) a produção
We must synchronise (in the advancements) the production
Base da Economia Nacional
Base of the national economy
Revolução Moçambicana
Mozambican Revolution
E o futuro de Moçambique Independente
Is the future of Independent Mozambique
E' a produção
Is production
Congresso da Frelimo
The Frelimo congress
Reúne e traça planos
Meets and traces plans
Para o avanço
For the advancement
Da producção
Of the production[102]

Pier Paolo Pasolini, elaborating on a much older construct of romantic philology, uses the metaphor of falling down (*precipitare*) to describe the movement of descent of aesthetic forms from courtly poetry into popular oral poetry – the verticality of the metaphor indexes relations of power.[103] Pasolini shows how figures of style and consolidated literary formulas elaborated by courtly poets (especially in Sicily in the thirteenth century) were appropriated by the popular poets in the form of fragments, endowed with a certain stiffness and resilience, like foreign bodies captured in a process of mineral sedimentation. There, they would thrive and survive for centuries, protected by the courtly aura embedded in their formal composition. Similarly, ideological formulas elaborated in Frelimo's 'courtly' music, composed under direct ideological control, 'fell' or 'trickled down' into the popular dances that were enlisted in the project of the Nation, in the form of fragments, and into the texture of consolidated forms of composition. And there they stuck, as ready-made tropes of a new stereotyped vocabulary.

Domination (*kutawala*), servitude (*utumwa*), colonial taxes (*ukoti*), forced labour (*shibalo*), the lamentation (*tundipata tabu*), the ten years (*myaka kumi*) of war (*ing'ondo*), the carrying of military materials (*materiale,* Pt.), the leaders (*machepi*), the organisation (*kupangana*), understanding (*igwana*), unity (*upamo*), the long walking (*kuwena shilo na mui*), the blood spilled (*myadi*), the geographical metonym of national unity (*kuma Rovuma mpaka ku-Maputo*), the

102 *Makwaela* school choir, *centro piloto* of Nangade (RM Archives: Maputo).
103 P. P. Pasolini 'Introduzione' in *Canzoniere Italiano. Antologia della Poesia Popolare* 2 ed. P. P. Pasolini, ed. (Milano: Garzanti, 2006): 38.

quasi-messianic expectation (*patime panatime*), the roads (*ibalabala*), heart/courage (*ntima*), the invocations to the leaders (*mwenu manang'olo*), perseverance (*kukanyilidya*), the Party (*ishama*), the rejoicing (*kupuwa*), the expelling of the colonialists (*kuusha*), the recitation of dates (*italee*) … And of course We-the-People (*tuvenentete*)[104], revolution (*mapindushi*), independence (*Uhuru*), and liberation (*kwambola*).[105]

Fanon arranges in a (dialectical) scale the forms of anti-colonial and nationalist literature, from the inarticulate 'lament', to the politically conscious 'protest', to the 'watchword', informed by the nationalist ideology of the Liberation Party.[106] When watchwords from Frelimo courtly literature began to trickle down into Makonde orature, articulate expressions of political 'protest' disappeared therefrom. Lament itself was produced as a codified trope. *Kulila kwatulila* – we cry and we cry – for colonialism, oppression, the deaths of leaders (and more recently for absolute poverty, AIDS, etc.). Metaphor, irony and complexity were the victims of this process of tropification. Song production in Shimakonde – the one that Makai was describing – registers a sharp, almost quantitative decrease of rhetorical strategies such as metaphor, ellipsis and idiophones in coincidence with the peak of Frelimo's Utopian project, and in the genres that were mostly involved in the Struggle, and a sudden reappearance of these linguistic devices in subsequent genres.

From a rhythmical point of view, nationalised 'popular dances' often maintained the aspect that they had before the Revolution. Visual imagery referring to the Party was massively introduced: flags, images, tissues and masks depicting leaders, weapons such as AKM, grenades, bazookas …[107] A number of genres were most neatly identified with nationalism and the Party, and benefited from increased prestige and popularity. Other genres of dances and songs simply disappeared as they did not conform to the ideological requirements of the Party. This is the case with the 'songs of provocations' that Makai refers to as the songs of 'middle-times' (roughly, late colonialism), where dance groups of different lineages exalted and insulted each other, often resulting in violent confrontations. Far from being the predominant genre of the late-colonial Makonde song production, these songs found their *raison d'être* in the schismogenetic logic of precolonial Makonde segmentary society, embedded in the disruptive networks of the slave trade. When the Party explicitly prohibited them as a form of 'tribalism', they swiftly vanished, only to resurface years later as electoral songs in the times of the multi-party system.[108]

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104 On the peculiarity of the word People in Shimakonde, meaning 'people from foreign settlements', see my '"Kummwangalela"': 122.

105 The reader can amuse herself in identifying the one post-independence piece included in this article (divided in two different paragraphs), by observing the density of such tropes. The list of tropes here is based on the analysis of around 300 political post-independence songs in Shimakonde, and comparison with an equivalent number of pre-independence songs of different genres, and from occasional listening of many more.

106 F Fanon, 'On national culture', in *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, 2004): 145-181.

107 Thus, a bewildered spectator of the II Festival of Popular Dance (Pemba, 2002) asked me why, in all the Makonde dances, guns and bazookas featured so prominently, in a celebration whose motto was 'for a culture of peace and unity'.

108 For electoral songs, see my '"Kummwangalela guebuza"': 120-121.

Revolution and popular culture

Tuvalole vala
Look at those
Muvaimbanga dimu dyabwarabwà
You, who sing *bwarabwà* songs
Muvé nadyoni
You are shameful
Kanji wetu twigilila
But us, listen to us
Wetu kwimbanga dimu dyamapindushi
We sing revolutionary songs
Kanji wetu twigilila
But us, listen to us[109]

The New Man – the perfect coincidence between place and discourse, the transformation of the 'people' into the People – was an unachieved and unachieavable project. What the Liberation Struggle *did* achieve, with regard to Makonde drumming expressions, was to absorb them into a hierarchical ideological space, marked by a specific organisation of the performance space, and sustained by coercive forms of power.

The endeavour of 'extracting the People from the people' needs an elite who guarantees the transformation,[110] produces the discourse defining what belongs to the People and what does not, and wields the means to repress or annihilate what falls in the latter group. 'Popular culture' is the result of this operation: the violent positioning of a set of cultural idioms into a hierarchical space of elite vs. people, where the former draw their legitimacy on possessing the key to what the latter is (the elites are elites because they know what the People are/will be, and because they can shape it into form, like a tree, by cutting useless branches). Frelimo's elites did not just claim the privilege of interpreting 'popular discourse', as all forms of populism (or anti-populism, for that matter) do.[111] They defined the very conditions of its existence and visibility. On the podium of the 1978 Festival, as previously in Nachingwea and elevated to the dignity of symbols of the Nation by a complacent elite, were danced the 'popular expressions' that conformed to the vision of the Revolution produced by the elites themselves.

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109 *Nge-nge-nge* song (Mbwide: recording session, July 2004).

110 'By conceiving of himself as an agency through which the People gives birth to itself, the Leader assumes the role of a *deputy from (of) the future*; he acts as a medium through which the future, not yet existing People organises its own conception', Žižek, *For They Know Not*: 262.

111 This is the contradiction from which fierce critics of populism like Bourdieu do not escape, see 'Did you say popular', in P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991): 90-102. One thing is to say that the 'popular' is a pole of a hierarchical field (the Gramscian position), to reveal the hypocrisy of elites in appropriating popular language as a distinguished subversion, or the complex gender dynamics at work in underclass sociolinguistics. Another is to construct all 'popular' expressions as a mere function of socio-economic determinations. The latter theoretical move foregoes the *possibility* that meaningful and creative expression might happen in de-valorised, even impoverished, languages. As Rancière has rightly observed, by arrogating the right to representation, the 'Sociologist King' once more condemns the poor to silence or grunting – or to take up the language of sociology. See *The Philosopher and His Poor* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).



Figure 7: 'These songs of today, they sing Frelimo's Law', translated Mario Matias 'Mali Ya Mungu', master of metaphor, Muidumbe 2009 (Jung Ran Forte)

Gramsci defined 'popular culture' (folklore) as embedded in a structure of class, articulated around a 'common sense', mostly religious, and characterised by the incorporation of scientific discourse produced by the elites in the form of fragment.[112] Similarly, the idiom of 'Makonde revolutionary singing' (*dimu dya mapindushi*) coalesced like a clastic rock around inert fragments of Frelimo's discourse of scientific socialism: watchwords, dates, events, names, actions, tropes. The temporality of teleology (the vanquished past as the matrix for the future to come) was the major compositional mode adopted from Frelimo's 'courtly' productions.

The fragments of Frelimo's 'dictionary of ready-made ideas' took such an authoritative position not simply because of coercion, but by way of a collective libidinal investment in the project of the People. This amounted, in Mueda, to taking up the name that one has been given, to assuming onto oneself the prestigious myth-history of the Struggle. We-the-people (*tuvenentete*) and 'the liberators' (*tundyambola*) are the subjects responding to this interpellation. Taking up new songs of 'reminding' (*kwinyangidya*) and forgetting old wartime genres was part of the response.

The absorption of Makonde singing into the hierarchical ideological space of 'popular culture'; the 'trickling down' of the formulas of socialism in the

112 Far from the postcolonial celebration of the fragment, Gramsci believed that the fragmentarity of folklore was an impediment to the formation of class consciousness, and insisted on the role of the intellectuals in coagulating 'common sense' around a project of political hegemony. See *Folclore e Senso Comune* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1982).

form of inert fragments, leading to the ossification of metaphor and the tropification of living memory; the investment of libidinal energies in the signifier of 'the People', and its ideological nodes, the Leader and the Enemy: these are the provisional conclusions of this study on the historical formation of the idiom of Makonde revolutionary singing.

Today, fragments of Frelimo's dictionary float freely in Makonde orature, disconnected from the political process in which they were once powerfully meaningful. Although the reduction of metaphor was one of the declared aims of Frelimo's monologic populism, new and different genres keep emerging in Makonde orature, besides and beyond 'revolutionary songs'. Poetic licence still cracks up spaces between words and things; irony and the carnivalesque work out their parts. Masters of metaphor continue to be born.