

official notification of his appointment arrived. Everyone looked forward to the coming term. But at the end of December Sococe had still not returned from the two-week holiday he had given himself, and it was not until the new year that we learned of his death at the hands of terrorists on a road south of Nampula.

Why Not Sing in Makua

The history of the Mozambican school is the history of the war which has devastated it. Yet there is another, more difficult, story to tell, that is the personal histories of all the people who make up the educational system and their significance for change and development. The story I have in mind involves an account of four aspects of contemporary Mozambican history: colonialism, traditional society, town life and revolution.

Teachers' Day will soon be here and the boarding school students are rehearsing. The blond English teacher from Europe has just come up with a suggestion which, after some initial doubts, is enthusiastically espoused: the ensemble will go round the old 'native' quarter on the island and perform at each district assembly point. So, under the Headmaster's supervision, they are busily polishing up their repertoire of songs from the armed struggle. Many are beautiful, at once rhythmical and melodious. All of them are written for several parts; most of the lyrics are in Portuguese. During one of the pauses, while the pupils are larking about someone breaks into a local song in Makua. The others join in. The tempo picks up and before long the whole room is rocking. The music is punctuated with footstamping, whistling and laughter. The words, from the little I can understand, are on the bawdy side. It is a sort of ballad in which the lead singer is allowed to improvise a good deal between the choruses which everyone seems to enjoy so much.

When it is over I suggest enthusiastically that there should be a few songs like that in their repertoire. The pupils giggle and glance awkwardly at the Headmaster. It's an 'up-country' song, they tell me, what the country people sing. After a short discussion I realize that neither they nor the Headmaster think it is the sort of song that should be included. It is popular, yes, but only among simpler folk. It does not show the people's good side. One must by all means respect popular culture, but this ... this is not culture! Everyone is looking for the real reason. The Muslims on the island – in effect the entire population – wouldn't approve of such a song, they insist. I give way: of course we can't let the pupils go round

singing a song that will bring shame on the whole school, especially not on Teachers' Day.

The situation was complicated, to say the least. One factor was the Headmaster. He had attended the 'liceu', a State grammar school, which made him one of the very few Blacks to go on from mission school to the State-run colonial education system – a system reserved primarily for Whites.

The years of humiliation in the white masters' school had marked him deeply. On the one hand, he carried the painful experience of what daily submission to the White Man's Culture entails: mortification, inadequacy, survival through adaptation. On the other hand, he still cherished a deep admiration for things European, and for the 'culture' which he had in spite of everything attempted – not without success – to make his own. By the same token, he despised the peasant society he had left behind. For him, this conflict of interests was a living dilemma. Above all, he seemed to have adopted a belief in the kind of hierarchical system he had himself lived under during his school days.

In my eyes he epitomized one of the many problems facing the Mozambican Revolution. He seemed to see the school's problems – and himself – from a colonial standpoint. In his mouth, the political language used by the Party and Ministry to define the school's goals turned into rhetoric of the kind one was trained to in colonial times. Although he really had nothing to say, he would talk at great length at parents' and teachers' meetings, oblivious of the deepening silence and growing sense of oppression around him. This was his chance to display the brilliant rhetorical skills so highly valued by the colonial educational establishment, but at which he was probably never quite as good as the White students.

For him 'the people' were an abstraction. He regarded country children with suspicion. It was easy to dissociate himself from their songs, particularly if it could be done in the people's name. How representative he was I do not know. Neither the Party nor the provincial directorate in Nampula were happy with him.

This aspect of Mozambican history lives on in the teaching profession. The kindest of teachers has only to enter the classroom to be transformed into a martinet – simply because this was the role of all authority under colonialism. Strict discipline was also resorted to by new, inexperienced teachers who did not yet know how to organize their classes.

The colonial heritage is perhaps most strongly evident in people's relationship to the Portuguese language. There is widespread admiration for any rhetorical, abstract, grammatical use of the language, which is, if anything, reinforced by many teachers' deficient command of Portuguese. How much of

this new approaches in teacher-training will be able to change is an open question. Some of the new teachers I met at my school were able to support innovations in the curriculum, while others quickly adapted themselves – as teachers here at home normally do – to the existing school traditions. A particular difficulty in finding new teaching approaches was many teachers' inadequate knowledge of the material. The country's enforced poverty was an additional obstacle: the shortage of books outside Maputo made it hard for even the most ambitious teacher to improve himself.

For the students in the song ensemble, however, the problem of the folk song was quite a different one.

The expansion of the school system in Mozambique is a mammoth social project. In the countryside it involves the introduction of an institution the community has had no experience of, at least not in the same form. Teaching takes place in Portuguese, the national language, but one which few children speak. But there is another kind of knowledge children must first learn: the fact that schools exist at all, that there are timetables to be kept. They must master the difficult art of waiting, of controlling one's body and of sitting still. Almost all of the country children in the boarding home belong to the traditional society. They carry it inside them and yet have cut themselves off from it.

The boarders were good enough scholastically to go up from primary to secondary school and were again selected in the 6th grade to go on successively to the 7th, 8th and 9th grades. They were the school's children. During the last three or four years they had lived at different boarding homes and only visited their families in the holidays. They had had more political education than the other pupils. They were the school's elite corps. The song and dance ensembles as well as most of the other organized activities were the product of their work and initiative. Their political education taught them a certain respect for the peasant society they came from while it instilled in them a critical view of its basic principles – its tribal loyalties, discriminating sexual attitudes and its religious practices. It was a difficult balancing act; the children were perfectly familiar with the traditional society's hierarchical structure and conservatism and were well aware that its values could not readily be translated into modern terms. They knew that what a person valued and respected there might well be frowned on, if not proscribed, in the modern society they were entering. Perhaps the girls felt the conflict more deeply: every term a number would disappear as they reached marriagable age. Among these was Arlinda, one of the ablest students I have known. Although she never told anyone, she

must have known for a long time about the marriage that had been arranged for her. She was 14 when she left.

These pupils had also come into contact with a school and an urban society that in practice looked down on peasant societies as primitive and barbaric. People on Ilha were always ready with a jibe about rough up-country bumpkins. Many of them had servant boys brought down from the bush. They were often overworked and addressed with simple commands as if incapable of understanding anything else. They were kept under constant supervision because of their alleged unreliability. Thanks to their political awareness the boarders were able to keep a certain distance to the civilized world's disparagement of peasant culture. It was not so easy when they had to face the same problem at school, in forms that were much harder to dismiss. In the teaching all serious reference to traditional Mozambican society is normally effectively repressed. Anything from that society which a pupil takes into the classroom is considered a failing, something stupid, barbaric or vulgar. If they do not sit at their desks properly, their peasant manners are to blame. If they make a mistake in counting, they will be told that they are too backward to learn.

It is above all in the teaching of Portuguese that civilization confronts barbarism. It was not uncommon for teachers to mock their pupils – and their own – mother tongue. In effect the students were motivated to learn Portuguese by an implicit and often explicit negation of their language, Makua. This was not just an educational problem (it would, of course, have been much better if the Portuguese teachers had been able to proceed from a knowledge of the structure of the native African language); it was also a social and political one. The process of mastering Portuguese was itself an apprenticeship in contempt for the culture they were born in. It is not surprising, then, that when I asked them to tell me how something was said in Makua, or to describe the peasant life they knew so well, my requests were met with guilty and embarrassed laughter.

This problematic relationship with peasant society is a function of its proximity. The romantic and romanticizing 'return' of middle class Sweden to a 'peasant culture' is of course impossible in any society where such a culture is more than a just a veneer – where it is a living, organizing process, responsible for a considerable segment of a nation's social life. The question here is how to step beyond the boundaries of traditional society and what price must be paid by those who do for their passage into modern life. If the withdrawal from peasant society is accompanied by de-culturalization pure and simple, this will only serve to give more force to the dream of an

urban middle-class existence. This was a question we were able to raise with Party people and public officials, who were not unaware of the problem they were facing: how to transcend the traditional culture without constricting it.

The boarders were doubtful when it was suggested that they might perform songs from their own part of the country before the townspeople.

Large secondary schools like those on Ilha de Moçambique and in Nampula belong incontestably to the urban world. The teachers are the best educated and have the longest experience of city life. The children of merchants, officials and small businessmen comprise by far the largest group of pupils.

These children are easily recognizable. They speak Portuguese at home. They have plenty of clothes and change them often. Their families understand the importance of education and are ambitious on their behalf. Since the children do comparatively well at school these hopes are often repaid.

When children from the countryside came to Ilha de Moçambique they were reminded of their peasant background. When children from Ilha travelled to Nampula they were conscious in their turn of their own small-town origins. In Nampula the dreams were of Maputo. Of course the keenest to go were the children of better-off families. During the holidays some actually did get to fly the thousand mile journey to the capital. Later they could regale their wide-eyed friends with details of the latest fashions and stories about all the parties they had gone to.

For many of these families education was one of various strategies for establishing a permanent urban base with its material advantages and the possibility of a modern lifestyle. Education meant work in the cities and the chance of further studies in Maputo. That was its object. The countryside stood for everything they did not want in life: backwardness, scarcity, rusticity and boredom.

Mozambique is better equipped to deal with this sort of problems than most African countries – not least the capitalist ones. The public administration still possesses the political will to revolutionize and develop the country as a whole, rather than simply cater to the interests of the more affluent sections of the community. The political and administrative apparatus has not, as in other countries, become a part of the petty and/or rich bourgeoisie and can still aspire to something more than economic and political subordination to the wealthy nations.

The importance attached to the boarding schools is an expression of that political will. The passage of boarding students from a peasant to a modern society embodies the fourth aspect of contemporary

Mozambican history as it unfolds in the schools: revolution. The revolutionary dream – which lived so strongly in people like Baltazar and Sococe – is about an altogether different sort of modernity for today's schoolchildren. In fact, many of the boarding students did not aspire to the delights and advantages of city life. They, too, were prepared to spend their future lives helping people other than themselves and their families, not out of a spirit of sacrifice, but because they had not learned to regard school simply as a means of personal advancement.

The Mozambican school, as a trustee of the revolutionary movement, seeks to preserve not only its impetus but also its traditions. It harks back to its legendary beginnings in the first schools of the liberated areas in the North at the time of the struggle. It proudly bears the ideals of democracy in education and the combination of practical and theoretical work in the curriculum. There are also reminders of that history in the school's organization: provisions for class councils, class meetings at which the pupils can discuss and criticize the teaching, study units where the teachers of a given group of subjects map out the coming week's lessons together, and arrangements by which teachers can visit their colleagues' classes and support one another in various ways. There are also rules about open meetings between the school management, teachers and ancillary staff where problems affecting the school as a whole can be aired, and there are instructions for organizing and involving students in production.

In practice, this revolutionary aspect leads a mostly rhetorical existence in speeches, meetings and documents. It seldom reaches the classroom. Some of its outer forms – a sterile formalism combined with calls for discipline and strong leadership – are frequently made use of to dress up outworn, doctrinaire classroom techniques. Some seek analogies with the educational practices of the Eastern bloc countries, a direction which many from other educational traditions do not find congenial.

When this revolutionary history hardens into rhetoric, existing only in words, teachers and students learn to mistrust it. When it lives – which it does still, albeit uncertainly – in the administration, the schools, and in many of the people who work and learn in them, it constitutes a social force able to counteract the other modernizing tendencies within the Mozambican educational system.

Translation from Swedish Stuart Sheild

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TANZANIA

ZAMBIA

MALAWI

ZIMBÁBWE

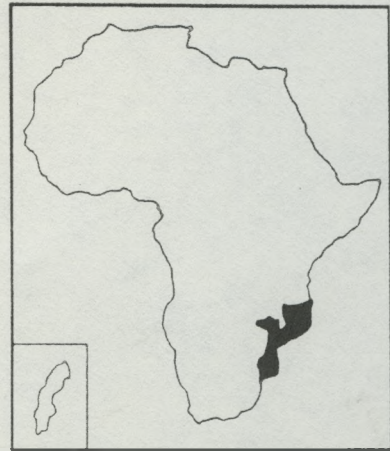
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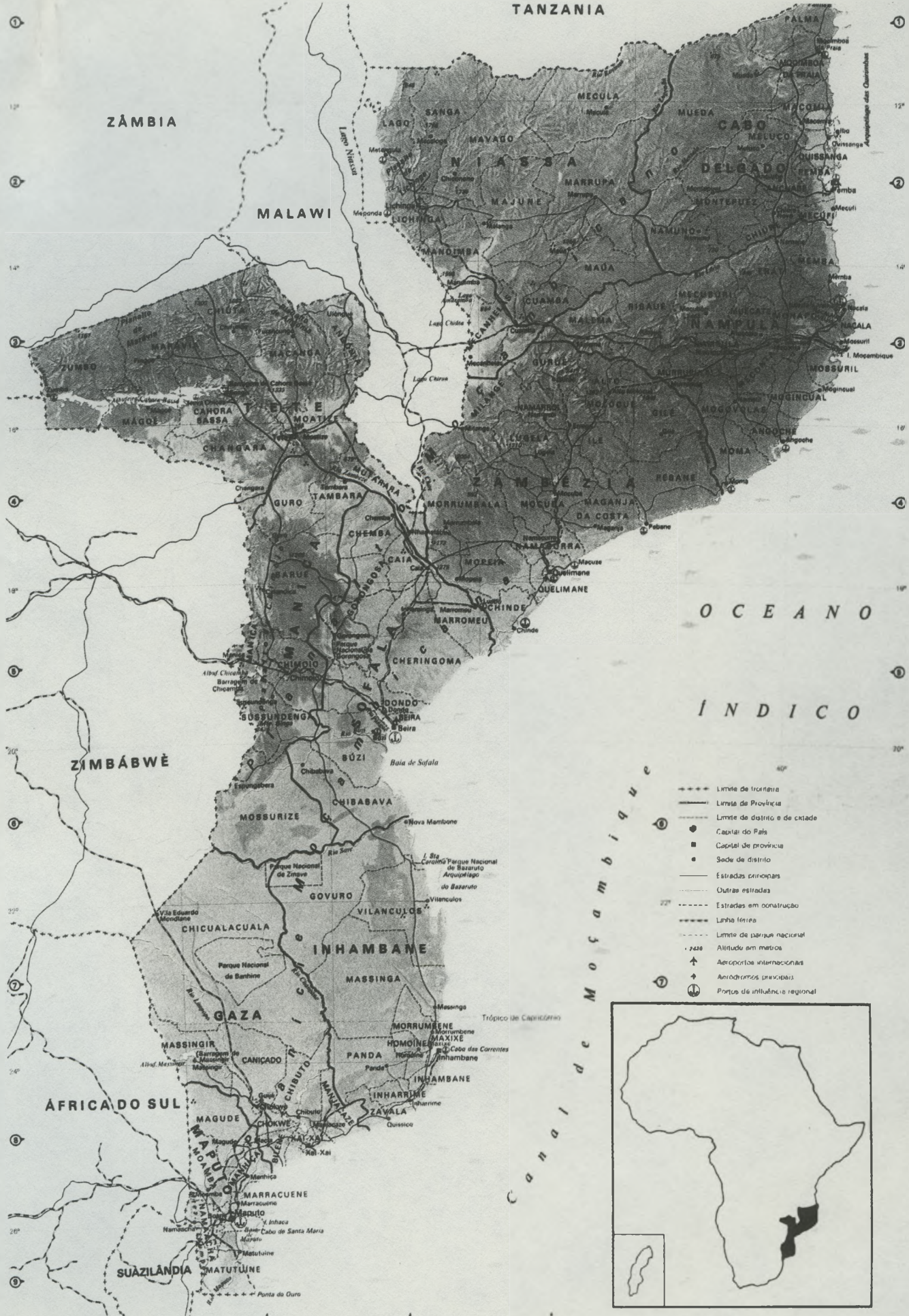
SUÁZILÂNDIA

OCEANO ÍNDICO

Canal de Moçambique

- Limite de fronteira
- Limite de Província
- Limite de distrito e de cidade
- Capital do País
- Capital de província
- Sede de distrito
- Estradas principais
- Outras estradas
- Estradas em construção
- Linha férrea
- Limite de parque nacional
- 2430 Altitude em metros
- ✈ Aeroporto internacional
- ✈ Aeroporto principal
- ⚓ Portos de influência regional





TANZANIA

ZAMBIA

MALAWI

ZIMBÁBWE

ÁFRICA DO SUL

SUÁZILÂNDIA

OCEANO

INDICO

Canal de Moçambique

- ++++ Limite de fronteira
- Limite de Província
- Limite de distrito e de cidade
- Capital do País
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- Sede de distrito
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- Outras estradas
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- 2400 Altitude em metros
- ✈ Aeroportos internacionais
- ⚓ Anádrotes principais
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