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“Just another African Country”: Socialism, Capitalism and Temporality in Mozambique

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Abstract

In this essay, I examine the legacies of Marx and Lenin for the Indian Ocean nation of Mozambique by tracing nation-building projects from the late colonial period to the present. By combining the insights of Archambault concerning the 'politics of pretense' in Mozambique and arguments concerning the development of a durable set of national dispositions in socialist Guinea by McGovern, I explore the legacies of transformative projects in Mozambique and their contradictions. Mozambican socialism was an ambitious attempt to escape previous colonial practices and build a new kind of durable and all-encompassing form of national belonging. I argue that this attempt was, paradoxically, both successful and something that soon became mired in new forms of political pretense. I then explore the ways in which the legacies of the socialist period have continued to uphold Frelimo's rule. This is evident both symbolically, through the party's influence over what it means to be a 'modern' Mozambican, and materially, through structures of democratic centralism and the interpellation of the party, state and security services. However, the gradual decoupling of utopian ambitions and revolutionary temporalities based on an idea of a messianic future, have sapped the coherence of Frelimo's political project, and the party's hegemony now teeters on precarious foundations.

Keywords: socialism, national dispositions, politics of pretense, nation-building, Frelimo, multiparty capitalism

Introduction

“The hide was being flayed off the still living body of the Revolution so that a new age could slip into it; as for the red, bloody meat, the steaming innards-they were being thrown on to the scrapheap. The new age needed only the hide of the Revolution-and this was being flayed off people who were still alive. Those who slipped into it spoke the language of the Revolution and mimicked its gestures, but their brains, lungs, livers and eyes were utterly different” (Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 2006: 841).

In September of 2002 I was speaking to Tiago, a Mozambican who had recently returned to Maputo, the capital, after six years of studying economics in Brazil. He explained to me how different things were there:

I learned many things in Brazil, I want to teach a course in business techniques. We Mozambicans do not have a selling culture yet, it is a mental holdover from socialism. If someone has a product to sell, they just sit and wait in the expectation that they do not have to do anything, people will come and buy it. Look at the bar we are in, it is in a prime location and it is basically empty. This would never happen in Brazil. However, if I was poor, I would actually rather be here. Poor people in Brazil are better off in a material sense, but here people still have hope that things will get better. I do not think anyone in Brazil thinks like that anymore.

In the years since this conversation, many of the traits Tiago identified amongst his countrymen as we sat in a sleepy bar in the city centre have transformed dramatically (for a detailed discussion of economic changes in Mozambique see Castel-Branco 2014, 2015). While many ‘holdovers’ of a socialist mentality remain, they are far less obvious in the now bustling capital, even if the economic crisis which began in 2014 put the nation’s reputation as an economic ‘success story’ on hold for the foreseeable future. The once ubiquitous political exhortations that covered billboards and the sides of buildings have long been replaced by a cornucopia of advertisements all competing to proclaim the joys of consumerism along streets filled with kiosks, boutiques, restaurants and men in suits loudly having important sounding business conversations on their cellphones. Former champions of socialism have reinvented themselves as members of the new, officially valorized,

“national bourgeoisie”¹ and their paeans to national economic ownership have given way to an almost messianic discourse about the benefits of foreign direct investment. However, roiling discontent marred even in the giddy days of the economic boom (2008-2014). While the chosen few grew even richer and even many members of the middle class became visibly more prosperous, everyday life was characterized by social polarization, an increase in an already profound level of inequality,² resurgent authoritarianism, reoccurring urban riots and, from 2012-2016, tit for tat violence with the Renamo (Mozambique National Resistance) former rebels (now the main opposition party). Even among those who have been the focus of my ethnographic research for close to twenty years, the privileged members of what could be termed a middle class, whose families have been close to the ruling Frelimo party (Mozambique Liberation Front) for decades were increasingly alienated (see Sumich 2016, 2018). Popular anger only grew when the economic crisis amply demonstrated just how shallow the leadership’s optimistic vision of natural resource fueled abundance really was. I have not seen Tiago in years, but I wonder if he still feels the poor in Mozambique continue to have hope that things will get gradually better, for experience has seemed to prove the contrary.

In this essay I trace the not only the legacies of Marx and Lenin for contemporary Mozambique, but how these legacies were shaped by historical relationships growing from Portuguese colonialism and networks that span the wider Indian Ocean world. As mentioned earlier, this essay is based on a long-term ethnographic engagement, encompassing participant observation, interviews and the collection of life histories among a range of people with varying degrees of privilege. It is people such as these who occupy a ruling party connected middle and upper middle stratum of Maputo’s, and to a lesser degree, the northern city of Nampula’s social hierarchy. Building from this engagement, I focus on how particular forms of colonial practices and ideologies played a role in shaping the kind of socialism that was practiced in Mozambique and how this form of socialism shaped the later capitalist project (see Verhoeven’s Introduction to this Special Issue for a broader discussion of such processes).

In her work on contemporary Inhambane in the south of Mozambique, Archambault argues that the dominant form of social life in post-socialist Mozambique is the “politics of pretense”: “I

¹ The national bourgeoisie in Mozambique refers to a capitalist class that is both national, as in Mozambican, and nationalist, as opposed to the Marxist sense of the term.

² For example, Mozambique’s Gini Coefficient climbed from 45.60 in 2008 to 54.00 in 2014, see <https://knoema.de/atlas/Mosambik/topics/Armut/Einkommensungleichheit/Gini-Koeffizient>

came to understand that, in this postsocialist, postwar society scarred by profound suspicion, it was not so much what I did as how I did it that actually mattered...” (2017:xx). Archambault insightfully describes the ways lived experience for many Mozambicans is shaped by, “regimes of truth that, ..., encourage ambiguation over clarification, and dissimulation over revelation and confrontation” (ibid: 15). In the following, I build upon Archambault’s argument to explore the ways that shifting political forms of pretense and the reactions to them have played a fundamental role in shaping visions of the nation and collective belonging since the late colonial period. I begin with a colonial incarnation of the logic of political pretense, that I argue is best exemplified by the expression *para inglês ver* (for the English to see). Widely thought to date back to the abolition of slavery in Brazil, this meant to publicly and ostentatiously enact a reform that one had no actual intention of carrying out to win breathing space from powerful and meddlesome foreigners. This logic became central to a range of transformative projects that arose during the colonial period (for a similar discussion of the ways in which African client states related to their cold war patrons, see Yordanov’s discussion of Somalia in this volume). While these projects rarely, if ever, came close to achieving their stated goals, they did structure imperial ideology, the social categories and experiences upon which such ideologies rested.

I argue that the socialist period in Mozambique was, in many ways, an ambitious attempt to escape the politics of pretense, a utopian effort to give birth to a society where unjust power could and should be confronted and overthrown, where a regime of truth based on ambiguity, complicity and dissimulation would be destroyed through the construction of the new collective. In this new, more perfect social order, lived experience would flow from “as is”, rather than “as if it were so”. Central to this effort was the creation of an ‘authentic national subject’ as the basis for an all-encompassing state (see Chipkin 2007). Here I combine a discussion of the politics of pretense with the approach developed by McGovern’s work on the revolutionary PDG (Democratic Party of Guinea) regime in Guinea. McGovern argues that despite the brutality of the nation’s charismatic leader, Sékou Touré, he and the PDG managed to create a “set of durable national dispositions... that contributed to a shared sense of national identity” (2017: 28) during the socialist period. These dispositions continued after the collapse of socialism in Guinea, even for those with no personal memory of the revolutionary era (2013, 2017).

A former minister once told me that Mozambique’s somewhat delayed independence was positive in some ways. It allowed the leadership to see what had happened in other African

countries and to learn that liberation, in and of itself, was important, but the struggle had to go further. The leadership felt that too many other African countries had fallen into corrupt authoritarianism, and they were determined to build a new and better society and to avoid the mistakes others had made (8th April 2008). Through this effort to avoid the traps so many others had fallen into, Frelimo came to see capitalism (see Henriksen, quoted in Hall and Young 1997: 66), and by extension socialism less as methods of production than a moral relationship. The *o homem novo* (the new man) was above all, a moral subject, hard-working, obedient, rational, one who was uninterested in petty individualism, but instead strives selflessly for the collective (Vieira, 1977, Zawangoni, 2007). Being a Mozambican was not simply an effect of being born in Mozambique, but rather a moral choice, based on willfully renouncing the dark past of imperialism, obscurantism, patriarchal rural 'feudalism' and any competing ties of kin, village, region or ethnicity, instead dedicating one's self to building a shared national future (see Sumich 2018). The conception of a linear time scale where the population would be transformed into a modernist subject whose horizons extend to the nation itself, transcending regional and ethnic identities, in McGovern's terms, the basis of the Mozambican national disposition that lingered on after the civil war and remain potent even for those with no personal memory of the revolutionary period (see McGovern 2017 for a similar discussion in Guinea). However, while a sense of a distinct and overarching 'Mozambican' identity certainly exists, it is one that is deeply associated with the Frelimo party and fundamentally exclusive of wider forms of identification (see also Cahen 1993). A prime example is that in the provinces the presence of a high-ranking dignitary from the capital will be popularly referred to as '*a nação esta aqui*' (the nation is here) (de Oliveira Cortê 2017).

In a manner similar to that described by Verhoeven for the Horn of Africa (this volume), Frelimo maintains its power by combining various liberal traits, constitutional guarantees, elections, an openness to foreign capital with socialist techniques, such as the interpellation of the party, the state, the security forces, the economy and media, and a hierarchical political structure based on democratic centralism. These techniques, coupled with Frelimo's authorship of what it means to be a national subject allows the party leadership to monopolize what it is to be a 'modern' Mozambican. However, this monopoly is increasingly fragile. While many aspects of the national disposition have lingered into the present, the revolutionary temporality, or the conception of time as an evolutionary, linear scale through which the supposedly atomized population would be forged into a new collective based on an unbreakable moral bond has collapsed. Buck-Morss argues that

the worldview of communism is based on time “...the temporality of the political revolution, which as the locomotive of history’s progress, invested the party with the sovereign power to force mass compliance in history’s name” (ibid:60). Unlike the liberal conception, the communist party-state is not representative of an identity but rather a causal agent active in constructing both the people and the state (Buck-Morss 2002:20, see also Sumich and Bertelsen, In Press). Under socialism, time was Janus faced, on the one hand it was an ally, the laws of history assured eventual victory. However, time was also a brutally demanding taskmaster that had to be relentlessly struggled against to lead the country out of “backwardness”. Although the language of development, of overcoming the past permeates current political discourse, Mozambican capitalism is, in many ways, outside of time. Transformation is now more a memory and the possibility of radical change is relegated to the past. As demonstrated by Nielsen, “At the heart of the nation, however, is no longer a shared ideology that outlines the guiding principles and moral values of the collective. Rather, what unites and binds people together as a collective is the congenital collapse of the ideological project from which the nation was born....an imagined future that disintegrated before it could be implemented” (2017: 147). His description is only too apt, as we shall see in the following, the fading away of the transformative future has been replaced once again by a politics of pretense, a regime of truth based on dissimulation and ambiguity that both sustains Frelimo’s hegemony and simultaneously undermines it.

Socialist Dispositions

Portugal’s 500-year empire had a tumultuous history, where periods of expansion and contraction, consolidation and decay were accompanied by a range of political, economic and ideological justifications. During Portugal’s final imperial incarnation, the quasi-fascist *Estado Novo* (1932-1974), these historical developments coalesced around an ideology known as *lusotropicalismo*. The central claim of which was that, unlike the racist rule of other colonial powers, Portugal was uniquely endowed with the ability to reign over Africans in harmony and advance their level of civilization (Freyre 1961; Newitt 1981). A key factor in the colonial civilizing mission was the practice of *assimilação* (assimilation), perhaps the clearest example of the logic of *para inglês ver*.³ *Assimilação* (which only ever encompassed around 1% of the population), was claimed as the

³ The colonial category of *assimilação* preceded the New State and *lusotropicalismo* was still being invoked after *assimilação* was abolished in the early 1960s. The two concepts are part of a wider ideological evolution, as opposed to a specific legislative package.

grand result of Portugal's civilizing mission, where a colonial subject could be made the legal equal of a colonial settler if they had demonstrated certain criteria, such as displaying 'European manners', making a break with 'heathen backwardness' and having their application approved by the state (Mondlane 1969). Despite its rhetoric of colonial uplift, the introduction of *assimilação* largely managed to close avenues of social mobility that had been available to previous local privileged classes while tightening Portugal's grip, transforming formerly self-confident indigenous elites into low level functionaries of the colonial administration (Penvenne 1989, Newitt 1995, Sumich 2018). Being an *assimilado* entailed benefits, such as exemption from forced labor, ability to work in the bureaucracy, increased access to education and the ability to reside in parts of the city that were relatively better-provisioned than what the vast majority was subjected to. These benefits though were offset by the connotations of servile collaboration on the one hand, and the fact that legal equality was a fiction; one could always be reduced to a state of abject humiliation at the whim of a white settler.⁴ Many people from *assimilado* families that I know still speak with great bitterness about the spot checks Portuguese officials used to make at people's homes to make sure they spoke Portuguese with their family and used a knife and fork when they ate. *Assimilação* was the colonial politics of pretense *par excellence*, where what on the surface was a was loudly proclaimed as an invitation into European civilization as an equal was often experienced as a never-ending insult. It did result in lasting, if completely unintended political change, as many of Frelimo's initial political leadership came from southern, *assimilado* backgrounds.

Portuguese repression made it exceedingly difficult for any kind of dissident to organize within Mozambique, but many nationalist organizations were formed in exile. The major groups coalesced into Frelimo, and the party declared the beginning of the war for National Liberation from its base in socialist Tanzania as it was clear that the *Estado Novo* would never consent to losing its colonies unless forced to do so through violence. In 1975, after ten long years of armed struggle and brutal internal conflicts, Frelimo declared independence and embarked upon their plans to build a brave new world (Hall and Young 1997). While the utopian goal of Mozambican socialism was the creation of something radically new, this vision was also shaped by the *assimilado* background of much of the Frelimo political leadership as of *lusotropicalismo* fueled

⁴ For an in-depth discussion concerning the social role of *assimilados* see Penvenne 1989 and Sumich 2018.

the party leadership's revolutionary vision combined with the more modernist aspects of Marxist thought (Schubert 2017; Sumich 2018).

While Frelimo's original leadership was drawn from a relatively wide range of Mozambique's ethnic and racial spectrum, including Portuguese, Mulattos, Indians and Blacks, many came from relatively privileged backgrounds based on employment in the colonial state. This may account for the lingering influence of ideas associated with *lusotropicalismo*, as much of the leadership came from social backgrounds that were the most exposed to them. To name just a few examples, the nationalist icon Raúl Honwana was a colonial civil servant and the father of Luis Bernardo Honwana (Minister of Culture under Frelimo), João Honwana (Commander of the Air Force under Frelimo), Fernando Honwana (aid to the first President, Samora Machel) and Gita Honwana (appointed by Frelimo to be one of Mozambique's first female judges). Joaquim Chissano's (former Foreign Minister and later President of Mozambique) father was translator for the colonial civil service. Marcelino Dos Santos' (former vice-President of Frelimo) father worked for the national railways under the colonial state. There were, of course, exceptions. Samora Machel's father was a prosperous peasant and most of his family were involved in migrant labor to South Africa. His father's land was confiscated by the state though and during the colonial period Samora Machel worked in the capital as a nurse. Magid Osman, the former Minister of Finance, came from an Indian merchant family also based in the capital. Some of the more privileged members of the Frelimo leadership were also able to study abroad, in Portugal and Europe more generally. There they came in contact with members of the Portuguese communist party and were exposed to censored reading materials, such as Fanon, Guevara, Ho Chi Minh, Lenin, Mao and Marx (for further discussion see Sumich 2018).

This social background combined with the anti-colonial intellectual currents of the time doubtlessly influenced the kind of socialist society Frelimo tried to build. For the Frelimo leadership, Marxism in Mozambique, much like that in China and Cuba (see Cheng 2009), largely ignored Marx's focus on objective economic conditions and the overriding importance of the means of production. Socialism in Mozambique was instead focused efforts to create a particular kind of social subject predicated on a moral relationship. Therefore, to build the nation, the party first had to create national citizens. As mentioned previously, the goals of Mozambican socialism were to abolish the past through a grand project of social engineering. The cultural transformation of the populace into the 'rational', modernist new man was supposedly the precondition for

progress, which would ultimately lead to the “end of exploitation of man by man” (Hall and Young 1997: 89).

Shortly after independence, the new man became the master symbol of socialism. It would be the basis for a socialist national disposition, shedding the ‘backwards’ ways of the past and becoming paragons of the virtues the party championed which would be extended to the entire population as a necessary precondition of ‘development’ (Zawangoni 2007). The new man was the universalizing promise that formed the moral and ideological bedrock of Frelimo’s domination. For those who were the closest to this political project, the normative underpinnings of the new man demonstrated how exercises of power that were frequently brutal could also be seen as socially transformative (see Verdery, 2014, for a discussion of similar processes in Romania). For the committed, the revolution offered a path to usher in profoundly transformative change. A former high-ranking Frelimo cadre told me, that shortly after liberation, the president, Samora Machel, mentioned him as an example of the new man.⁵ The cadre asked Samora, “But how can I be the new man, I am an *assimilado*”. To which Machel replied, “You fought and lived with us during the struggle. You are not an *assimilado*, you were” (March 2008, London). For the cadre, such statements not only demonstrated the essential ‘rightness’ of the revolution, but his personal journey from *assimilado* to *homem novo* was also a mirror for the way in which the nation would be transformed from a humiliated, colonial backwater to a fully equal member in the family of nations. Being a new man though, a true Mozambican was not a fixed status that could be eternally claimed, instead it was a process through which one had to continually dedicated one’s self through hard work and a renunciation of the pre-revolutionary past. Evaristo recalled that in the early independence period he struggled to overcome the party’s suspicion of him, he was from an *assimilado* family in Maputo and therefore thought to be subject to colonial decadence. Through his hard work and the fact, he was highly educated, he managed to rise up the party ranks. His father though was not so lucky. He was called to a public meeting where Samora Machel berated the ‘collaborators of colonialism’ and a picture declaring him an ‘enemy of the people’ was prominently placed in his old place of work (2019, August, Maputo).

While socialism was, in practice, deeply intertwined with Mozambican nationalism, it also had a profoundly cosmopolitan character. Mozambique drew on influences from Portugal, the

⁵ Samora Machel Mozambique’s first president and ruled from 1975 until his assassination in 1986. He remains a socialist icon today.

USSR, Tanzania, Algeria, Guinea, India and China. Frelimo shared experiences with closely aligned movements such as the ANC (South Africa), Fretilin (East Timor), the MPLA (Angola) and ZANU (Zimbabwe), and Mozambique was the beneficiary of numerous technicians and experts to address a desperate shortage in skills, comprising officials from across the socialist world and political sympathizers from the West. These various influences coalesced into what Donham calls a “Marxist Modern” (1999). Much like Chandra’s description (this volume) of the way rural areas in China were incorporated into the revolution, the Mozambican countryside was to be the site of a vast modernizing program overseen by a small but determined elite. Herding villagers into communal villages and having them work on large communal or state farms would not only facilitate the provision of services but would also discipline and ‘rationalize’ the peasantry, allowing the party to ‘finally’ realize the nation’s potential. For the converted, this vision was deeply attractive. As one man, remembering the early days of the revolution, told me, “Yes, enthusiasm during the early revolutionary period was very high, even if it was not very realistic. I remember people talking excitedly about Machel’s declaration that Mozambique would overcome underdevelopment in a decade. Machel based this on the fact that Mozambique was supposed to achieve a 17.5% annual growth rate. Of course, there was no way this could have ever happened, but cadres were excited. They really believed it and they were already planning for the future this would bring” (2003 June, Maputo).

Frelimo’s revolution with its utopian ambitions fueled the passions of its cadres. The new order provided previously unheard paths of social mobility for the young, women, those who were previously marginalized and anyone with any education whatsoever. Social mobility though soon came to be balanced by growing political rigidity and utopian goals became mired in political ritual and routine. The nickname for Frelimo was *abaixo com* (‘down with’) due to the long lists of social ills: imperialism, capitalism and obscurantism, would be ceremonially chanted at rallies which drew the mandated response of ‘down with’ from the crowd. Allegiance was demonstrated through the adoption of a specific socialist vocabulary, chanting at rallies, stopping in the middle of the street to salute the flag as it was raised, attendance at party meetings. However, since all these activities were mandatory, to greater or lesser degrees, it was never clear who was a true believer and what was merely the pretense of an opportunist or ‘internal’ enemy, a dilemma that caused growing paranoia from a party leadership feeling increasingly besieged from within and without.

From 1977, the party faced a growing military challenge by rebels who were originally trained by white-minority ruled Rhodesia and later funded by Apartheid South Africa, but who found a social base among those opposed to Frelimo's social engineering, especially in the center and the north of country. With the military situation deteriorating and the nation teetering towards economic collapse, the party's reliance on coercion grew. Flogging, which has been banned as a symbol of colonial barbarism, was reintroduced, revolutionary troikas were empowered to dispense summary justice, and firing squads disposed of 'enemies of the people' (Machava, 2011). Frelimo dramatically undermined its urban support through 'Operation Production'; anyone who could not prove that they had official urban residence (or simply forgot their papers at home) could be rounded up by the army and sent to the distant Niassa province to 'build cities in the bush' (Buur 2010). Between 30,000 and 50,000 people fell prey to Operation Production, many of whom were dumped in unhabituated areas in Niassa with no tools or rations, and death was a sadly common result. While socialism was a desperate attempt to escape the colonial politics of pretense, to create a social reality based on 'as is', rather than 'as if it were so' a new, if inverted, form soon took its place. As socialism deteriorated into a set of forms and rituals, loyalty continued to be demonstrated through the public display of officially mandated social forms and behaviors. However, these public rituals were completely divorced from private life as nepotism, economies of favors, pilfering, absenteeism, theft of state property, dealings on the black market, and/or other forms of corruption often became the only way to ensure survival (see also Buur 2010).

Although certain measures, such as Operation Production, targeted urbanites, the cities were generally sites of relative privilege and security in comparison to the war-torn rural areas. While the monthly rations that were provided to every urbanite may have been scant, at least there were rations. Frelimo had originally championed a Maoist, peasant-based revolution. The goal though, was not to free peasants as they actually were, but to shape them into something completely different. The previously mentioned attack on the economic basis of the peasantry through communal villages and state farms was accompanied with an ideological assault to wipe out what was called 'obscurantism', the various supposed superstitions and aspects of 'rural feudalism' which kept the population in a state of abjection and ignorance. The party's attempts to abolish aspects of 'traditional culture' such as witchcraft, traditional healing, *lobolo* (bride wealth), polygamy, traditional leadership, 'tribalism', and various religious practices floundered not only because they were 'culturally insensitive' (which indeed they were), but also because, outside

certain groups of the population like educated urbanites, Frelimo could not offer a particularly coherent replacement (Lubkemann 2008, Sumich 2018). For much of Mozambique's population, especially peasants, the benefits of the promised socialist new order never seemed to be coming. The final blow was the civil war (1977-1992), which destroyed many of the signs of progress, especially in health and education, that Frelimo had made. The revolution was based on the promise of being the midwife to a future of equality and prosperity, but the utopian ambitions that aroused fevered commitment were brought crashing back to earth as the country lay in smoking ruins.

Increasingly, the roles between Frelimo and the Renamo rebels began to shift. Renamo initially began as a group backed by neighboring white minorities regimes that crafted a 'neo-traditional' ideology making use of traditional leaders (who had been abolished by Frelimo) and spirit mediums calls to ethnicity. In many ways they appeared as a binary opposite to Frelimo's modernism. However, analysis of captured Renamo documents undertaken by Cahen (2018) brings to light the ways in which Renamo adopted Frelimo's political techniques, forms of organization and even slogans, such as the socialist slogan '*a luta continua*' (the struggle continues) in their efforts to win over the local population. Frelimo commanders, on the other hand, also began adopting the techniques of Renamo, abandoning their war on obscurantism to consult with diviners in order to increase their military effectiveness. Peasants, tired of being caught between the conflicting demands of warring factions, built miniature communal villages that they pretended to inhabit whenever a Frelimo dignitary passed through (Wilson 1992). Goals of transformation receded and the party, contrary to its early goals, embraced the politics of pretense as the fact one still bothered to put on a display sufficed as proof of loyalty.

Socialist Legacies, Capitalists Means

Following the death of Samora Machel in 1986, socialism limped on in form but its underlying meaning and utopian promise for a future completely different from the present had been hollowed out. Throughout the rural areas, especially in the center and the north, where reactions towards Frelimo's social engineering were often ambivalent, revolutionary temporality suffered a mortal blow. The promised shining future never came, while the past stalked the countryside as embodied by the unquiet ghosts of civil war, famine and disease (for a full discussion see Igreja 2019). Generally, at least for those I have worked with, the eventual abandonment of socialism in 1990 followed by the peace agreement in 1992 were accompanied by a gradual reawakening of a

dampened future orientation. In this case, the promise of a far more modest, but still noticeably better, future through democratic capitalism. The end of the war was a dramatic improvement, however other developments were ominous. Under successive structural adjustment programs, entire industries were largely abandoned, thousands of industrial jobs were lost and salaries in the nation's largest employer, the bureaucracy, were cut as staff was reduced. Those who benefitted most visibly from the transition, the national bourgeoisie, were primarily restricted to high-ranking party members, their families and associates amidst profound poverty and deepening inequality (Castel-Branco, et al. 2001; Pitcher, 2002, Sumich 2018). Frelimo itself also became a major economic actor, both through partnerships with multinationals and in its own right, keeping important segments of the economy within the 'Frelimo family' by allowing trusted party members to take control of newly privatized economic concerns (Pitcher, 2002). The Frelimo leadership has invested considerable energy in downplaying and/or strategically erasing aspects of the socialist period that would now be in direct contradiction with the current practices of power. However, the official silence is continually undermined by the centrality of the memories of the early independence period and the civil war in projects of legitimation and political conflict (see Igreja 2008). Outside of the halls of power, urban workers undermine official silence and use the symbols, slogans and tropes of socialism to express their discontent with the new order (Pitcher 2006). The legacies of socialist era forms of personhood and nation also continue to shape the present for members of the urban middle class as well.

Some years ago, a friend of mine in Maputo was telling me about attending a service for a new evangelical church, one that specialized in fighting witchcraft. A friend had told him about the services, where reformed witches testified to the congregation of how they made deals with Satan to access magical helicopters that took them to Europe at night and gained mastery over various other forms of sorcery and he wanted to hear about it. I asked him what he thought, and he replied; "It was interesting, but the thing I really do not like is that they take money from the poor". I asked him if this would have been allowed in the socialist period and he replied:

No, it would have been called obscurantism. But things are different now. It is good that things have changed, but the old way was also right for the time. Many things had to be dealt with and changed to create a spirit of national unity. That is what makes Mozambique so much different from many of the other countries in the region, here we have some sort of national unity beyond and above ethnicity,

religion and race. In this respect this is Frelimo's greatest achievement, despite all of the problems that continue to exist (April 2009, Maputo).

Such attitudes are frequently expressed among the Frelimo-connected middle class of Maputo. They can be heard in dismissive statements about the existence of witchcraft, regressive, supposed 'African' gender relations, the peasantry in general or ideas about ethnicity. As middle-class woman, Varyna, told me, "I was in Kenya and someone asked me what tribe I belong to. Can you believe that? Here I am in Nairobi, it looks really nice, tall buildings and everything and someone is asking me this. I mean we have problems here, but at least we are beyond things like that, like tribalism" (October 2016, Maputo). For the privileged, elements of the socialist national disposition, the new man, suffuse their identity as 'modern' Mozambicans, with its distaste for 'obscurantism', superstition and sub-national forms of belonging. However, the achievement of this cherished 'modernity' rests on uncertain foundations, liable to crumble away at any moment. While Frelimo deserves considerable credit for the creation of a wider national identity and has been stunningly successful in shaping what it means to be a 'modern' Mozambican, these forms of universal identification have been achieved through deeply exclusionary politics. Such exclusionary positions have only become more entrenched as the idea of the 'authentic national subject' has been gradually decoupled from a utopian sense of revolutionary time that promised the eventual encompassment, willing or otherwise, of all the nation's inhabitants. The slow death of the utopian drive, which began in the socialist period, gradually ceded space for a new form of the politics of pretense that became dominant under multiparty capitalism. Not only was there no real attempt to build a society based on 'as is', but for many I know it did not even appear that anyone was trying to build a credible 'as if it were so' or what exactly this would be. This can be seen through examples spanning the spectrum from the hypocrisies of high politics to the mundane of day-to-day existence. The legacies of socialism continue to shape the ideal of what a modern Mozambican is, demonstrated by the stances taken above. However, this ideal is often most relevant in its absence, the ways it is contravened in quotidian life, which is an enduring focus of gossip and self-recriminations. As Varyna once told me when I asked why she thought so many educated Mozambicans who, in her words "should know better", fell short of the modernist ideal, she shrugged and said, "We blacks are two hundred years behind" (January 2003, Maputo).

Such symbolic doubts also surface in the political practices of the new era. Despite the new focus on private investment, consumerism and the 'free' market, it was not always to create a firm

linear distinction between socialism and capitalism, instead both were characterized by practices and ideas that tended to blend into each other (see also Sumich, 2018, West, 1997). The difficulty in differentiation is compounded by the fact that the same party and many of the same people were in charge in both periods. Frelimo cadres still address each other as 'comrade', and no rally would be complete without shouting '*a luta continua*' and giving the raised fist salute. Although the party's power and presence has waxed and waned in the capitalist period, Frelimo is still synonymous with the state, and its structures are deeply intertwined with the security services, the judiciary, the media and the economy. While allegiance is still demonstrated by adapting valorized social forms and cultural behaviors, unlike previous eras, it is no longer so clear what exactly these are, how they would be put into practice and what the meaning is. The revolutionary temporality that provided a moral basis and narrative coherence has faded away. Thus attempts to combine the old and the new have caused much confusion as many cadres are unsure which direction they are supposed to be leading the country in or what exactly the new system is.

This confusion can be seen by the response from a party cadre in the northern city of Nampula when I asked her about the transition from socialism to capitalism. She replied; "We are still socialists, our internal organization remains socialist, but we are socialists who have come to terms with globalization. During the socialist period the government determined the prices, but now nobody knows what the prices will be tomorrow, it is very expensive. There are still subsidized goods and food for veterans of the liberation struggle and things like that, but now we have entered a globalized environment there is really little we can do economically" (June 2008). Therefore, for her, socialism still existed as a form and an ideal to be cherished, but it was also an ideal that was, outside of a few symbolic gestures whose importance was derived largely from symbolism rather than substance, impossible to put into practice. Another cadre who was a colleague of the woman above felt the difference between the old system and the new resides in the mentality of the people. "The major challenge of the transition was to change the mentality of the people, something that they are slowly getting used to. You see in socialism the government gives to the people and in capitalism the people give to the government" (July 2008, Nampula). Many in Mozambique are well aware of these seeming contradictions between the pretense of capitalist liberal democracy and the legacy of socialism. As a Mozambican academic who is an opposition supporter told me,

“it is a bit silly to speak about liberalization really. The state still controls the primary means of production, the land.⁶ Basically what we have is a proto-fascist state” (May 2009, Maputo).

The pretense, though, of an all-powerful state is offset in practice though by administrative confusion. For the cadres actually tasked with constructing the new system, it is rarely clear what exactly is wanted, by whom, or how one should go about it. In many ways mid-level cadres, especially those who joined the party in the socialist period are betwixt and between. In July of 2008 I was speaking to Senhor Cabrito, a provincial official in the northern province of Nampula. He explained that his role was to coordinate between workers, industry and the state, finance businesses, increase production and create a harmonious and centralized structure that incorporated all these groups, but that in practice these efforts were hopelessly contradictory. “The problem though, is that many of the party leaders have a knee-jerk reaction to support workers no matter what, regardless of the cost or the circumstances. They do not really do this because they necessarily agree with the workers, but because they think this is something they have to be seen to do and that this is what Frelimo is supposed to stand for. It makes it difficult to work with foreign investors”. Frelimo’s pretense of unceasing commitment to workers appeared far more uncertain to officials of the Organization of Mozambican Workers (OTM), the former Frelimo-run union during the socialist period. The OTM is now officially independent, but it is still closely aligned with the party and it largely retains the role of channeling what benefits still exist to workers and passing their complaints to higher authorities rather than directly confronting employers or, more importantly, the state.

According to Senhor Cabrito, his primary duties are to, “deal with contract problems. Our goal is to create unity of production and spell out to each side what are their rights and what are their obligations”. How this would be achieved in practice though was uncertain. As a colleague of Senhor Cabrito responded with a laugh when I asked him if under capitalism the laws still tend to favor workers or if they now favor employers. “the thing about laws is they do not favor anyone, it’s like the laws of nature, whoever survives is favored” (June 2008, Nampula). The adoption of capitalism has allowed the formerly socialist elite to accumulate tremendous wealth and the party now has the resources to entrench itself far more deeply than ever would have been possible in the socialist period. However, this additional capability has been accompanied by incoherence. While

⁶ During the socialist period land was nationalised, but it was never redistributed, nor was it privatized after the fall of socialism. While citizens have surface rights, all land in Mozambique ultimately belongs to the state.

the colonial period and the late socialist period were mired in the politics of pretense, at least it was clear what the pretense was. Currently, it is increasingly hard to know what exactly one should pretend to be, for whom one should do so and how exactly one should do it.

As Archambault has so incisively argued, while the post-socialist era may be characterised by brutal inequality, widespread discontent, a lack of opportunities and pervasive suspicion, this does not necessarily breed outright resistance as much as evasion and dissimulation (2017). However, even seeming acts of resistance also can follow this same logic. Although the current incarnation politics of pretense demonstrates the hollowness of Frelimo's project and its growing incoherence, the regime limps on through shared complicity (see also Schubert 2016 for a discussion of similar processes in Angola). This complicity can also be a technology of rule (see Nielsen 2017). In 2019 Walter, a long-time party member, was telling me that he had enough, as the party no longer stood for anything in his opinion, there was no reason to be a member of it. He then launched into a brutal critique concerning corruption and secret, illegal debts undertaken by high-ranking figures (July 24, 2019 Maputo). I later ran into a mutual friend, Varnya, when I told her my surprise that Walter had left the party, she simply laughed.

How can he leave the party? You know his family? He goes home to the party every night; with the family he comes from leaving is not really a possibility. He may not pay his party dues, but he will not renounce them or go against them. I mean there are certain subjects that one is allowed to criticize, corruption and the secret debts, that is fine as long as you avoid more controversial ones. My father is the same way, he made a big show of leaving the party, but he is still in bed with them and he still benefits from being connected to them (Maputo, July 26th 2019).

In the late colonial period, the politics of pretense was perhaps exemplified by *assimilação*, where legal proclamations of privilege and equality were intertwined with relentless humiliation. Under socialism, a utopian attempt to radically transform society degenerated into mindlessly mouthing meaningless slogans under the threat of violence. While the animating aspects of both colonialism and socialism have lingered on into the current period, then have been accompanied by growing incoherence. As the moral basis of the national disposition, the idea of an overarching Mozambicanness has been decoupled from any sort of realistic time frame, even acts of resistance can shape a lived experience based on complicity.

Conclusion: Revolutionary Time, Capitalist Temporality

Since at least the late colonial period, a variety of influences, spanning the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese empire, the southern African region, the socialist world and the Bretton Woods economic regime, have shaped Mozambique's delicate dance between ambitious projects of transformation and the contradictions they have given rise to. Building upon and extending Archambault's (2017) concept of the politics of pretense and McGovern's (2013, 2017) insights concerning the building of durable national dispositions under socialism, I have traced the legacies of Marx and Lenin for this Indian Ocean nation. The colonial state's attempt to legitimize itself through the ideology of *lusotropicalismo* was a prime example of the logic of *para inglês ver*, where grand proclamations of reform were largely for external consumption and they rested upon a social structure dedicated to subjugation. Although the social category of *assimilados* predated *lusotropicalismo*, the existence of the group would arguably be the major argument for the ideology, even if such an argument would be fatally undermined by the blatant hypocrisy of this project. The social category of *assimilados* was abolished nearly 60 years ago, but it remains a term of abuse and shame. Descendants from *assimilado* families who were born in the 1980s are still regularly insulted by their peers for their family histories and distinctive *assimilado* markers such as Portuguese last names.

Socialism in Mozambique was, in many ways, a grand attempt to escape the colonial politics of pretense, often led by former *assimilados*, and to build something real, durable and encompassing in its place. In some ways this endeavor was a striking success and many of the major narrative tropes of the revolutionary period continue to play a central role in understanding what it means to be a Mozambican today. However, efforts to dramatically transform the nation and create an authentic national subject fell prey to its own utopian ambitions in combination with wider geopolitical factors such as the cold war and the confrontation with Apartheid South Africa. In such a context, efforts to live up to the officially valorized ideal became increasingly difficult and a new form of pretense, how public loyalty to officially valorized tropes and forms of behavior had to be privately repudiated if one wanted to survive (Buur 2010). While the legacies of what McGovern (2013, 2017) termed the socialist construction of a set durable national dispositions lives on, it is often difficult now to square the elements that continue to elicit admiration, such as a sense of identity beyond that of region and ethnicity, with what one now knows was the cost. A friend of mine was horrified to discover that her cherished childhood memories of bucolic summers

spent on her grandfather's farm, actually took place in a re-education camp. What she thought was pleasant afternoons with friendly farm workers was in fact terrified prisoners who lavished her with attention as her grandfather held their lives in his hands.

Much like the former minister mentioned earlier, a Frelimo cadre once told me his commitment to the party stemmed from his ambition to do something other African states had failed to do, not only to win independence, but to build a better world, something unrecognizable to what had come before. Unlike the minister though, he admitted that he was now close to despair. "After all the hopes and dreams, years of struggle and hardship, now we are just another African country" (August 2004, Maputo). In their influential discussion of African socialism, Pitcher and Askew pose a set of questions, "In the political and economic configurations existing in Africa today, are there memories of socialism? Do these memories coexist with the neo-liberal principles that many governments espouse, or are they in contradistinction to them? Are memories collective or individual?" (2006: 5). In this essay, and as seen by the comment above, I have tried to discuss some of the ways in which Mozambique could provide, at least preliminary answers to some of these questions. For those I have worked with, and as Pitcher (2006) demonstrates among urban workers as well, memories of socialism do survive and can coexist with current neo-liberal forms of governance. In a similar manner to Verhoeven's (this volume) argument for African liberation movements more generally, and Yordanov's description of Siad Barre's Somalia (this volume), Frelimo employs a wide array of socialist techniques, such as the structures of democratic centralism and the interpellation of the party, state and security services, to retain power under multiparty capitalism.

Yet socialism was not restricted solely to technologies of rule, it was principally a moral claim, the promise of justice and a better world, the herald of the dawning utopia. As Pitcher and Askew point out, the memories of promised utopias also linger on and resurface in both official discourse and personal reflection (ibid: 9). Here you have a clear contradiction with neoliberalism, as utopia is no longer a promise for the future, but the memories of a past that never was (Nielsen 2017). The gradual decoupling of any sort of political project of transformation from this sense of revolutionary temporality, a soon to be realized future totally different from the present, has seriously undermined the moral basis of Frelimo's rule (For a wider discussion see Verhoeven's Introduction to this Special Issue). While the political relaxation that followed the abandonment of socialism is widely appreciated, power trumps fine phrases concerning the inalienable rights of

man, and the primary promise for the majority is poverty without end. Currently, Mozambique appears to be trapped in an era of eternal crisis. Endemic political dysfunction, political upheaval, resurgent violence, deaths of iconic leaders and vast corruption scandals that threaten to tip the country into outright insolvency will now be joined by a pandemic the consequences of which for public health and the global economy can only be guessed at this stage. In the introductory quote of this essay, Grossman speaks of the ways in which people steal the trappings of the revolution, slip into its skin, while subverting its promise. Arguably, in Mozambique this process has gone even farther. While the skin of the revolution remains, even if stretched to the breaking point, it is not clear who, if anyone, has slipped into it now.

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