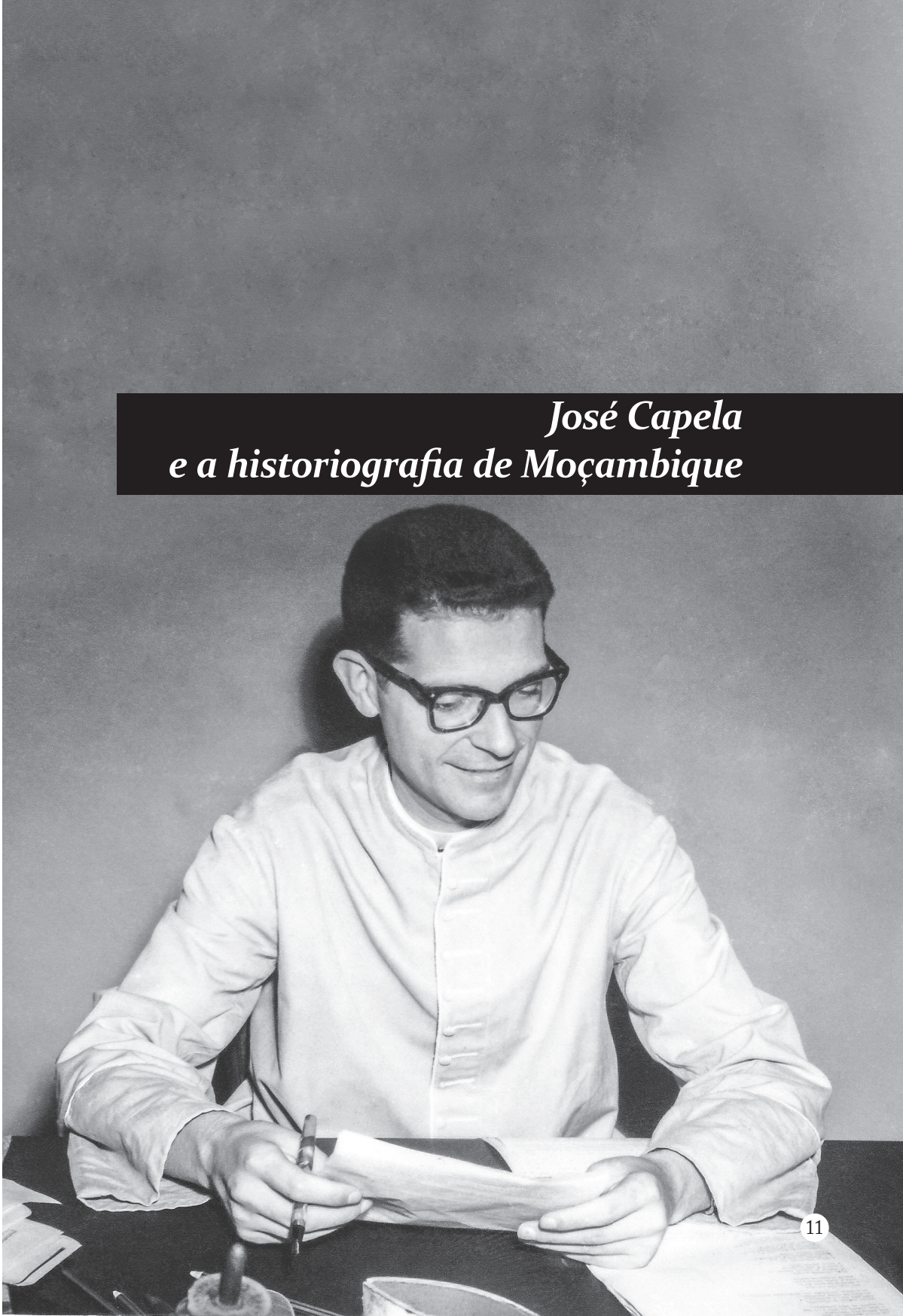
José Capela e a historiografia de Moçambique



Moçambique pelo seu povo Mozambique: Many People, Many Stories. Contested Masculinities & Gendered Perspectives

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José Capela – Journalist/Scholar/Editor/Historian

This paper originated as the *Conferência de Abertura* for the *Conferência Internacional José Capela e a História de Moçambique, 45 Anos depois de O Vinho para o Preto*. It is difficult to think of the last 45 years of Mozambique's history without thinking of José Capela, the pseudonym of journalist, scholar, editor and historian, José Soares Martins. He courageously published important work on Mozambican history before the end of Portugal's censorious New State Regime. He and his flagship press, Afrontamento, were ready to push fresh work out the door immediately after the Coup of the Red Carnations on April 25th 1974 that ended the New State.

Many of us have bookshelves filled with José Capela's publications. Thanks to Matteo Angius, Maciel Santos and colleagues in Maputo and Porto we now have CDs of his complete works, including many articles and chapters in edited collections (Edições Electrónicas/Centro de Estudos Africanos, Universidade de Porto http://josecapelaemocambique.cei.iscte-iul.pt/pt/sobre-jose-capela/). He authored and edited scores of works that spanned a breadth of topics from the 18th to the 21st centuries. Capela's depth with the complex entanglements of slavery and the slave trades in Portuguese Africa and the Indian Ocean, especially in Zambezia and Central Mozambique, was remarkable. He also had a very strong suit in works of historiography, the press and documentation. The inaugural issue of Jill R. Dias's *Revista International de Estudos Africanos* (1984), carried a classic essay, "Mozambique Historiography Pre-1890," by José Soares Martins and Eduardo Medeiros (Capela, 1996a; Martins, Medeiros, 1984). Those useful, timely and prodigious publications supported generations of new scholarship.

Capela's work anticipated and contributed to key themes in Mozambique's last half century of scholarship: tensions among laborers of all descriptions, capitalist initiatives of all descriptions, the state, the press and, sometimes, what Mozambicans had to say about it all. Scarcely any work on Mozambique in the 21st century does not owe a debt to José Capela. Although his overall production was broad and diverse, this essay builds from his contributions to analysis of the Portuguese colonial era press. He published key documents

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and essays that took on the prolific, feisty labor organization newspapers published in Lisbon and Lourenço Marques from the late 19th century through the Republican period. These papers hold great potential for historians, but navigating them is tricky. Capela's *O Movimento Operário em Lourenço Marques* on Portuguese labor unions and Jill R. Dias's important and still unpublished essay *"Portuguese African Associations in Lisbon and International Pan-Africanism, 1912-1931"* on Pan African groups in Lisbon and the Portuguese empire demonstrate the challenges of working with the press (Capela, 1982; Dias, 1989). Scores of labor and political newspapers emerged and then quickly disappeared; people published under their own name or under pseudonyms; political parties and unions frequently split or changed names for many reasons. It was difficult to keep track of historical actors, figure out how one group was related to another, and sort through the bombast to draw out what might actually have happened, let alone what it meant. Capela and Dias set high standards for reading these sources with care and transparency.

O Movimento Operário em Lourenço Marques explored links and tensions between metropolitan and colonial labor unions and associations. Like many of his works, *O Movimento Operário* is a combination of analysis and summary documentation. It provided a chronology of strike actions, but also an excellent sense of the mercurial nature of labor union leadership, loyalties, jealousies and the power of a single personality. Further it revealed solidarity among white workers through their cooperatives and mutual aid associations. Capela notes the contradictions that racial discrimination and tiered citizenship imposed throughout the era of the *indigenato* – the body of legislation that located the majority population as subjects rather than citizens (Penvenne, 1995; O'Laughlin, 2000). Again, characteristically, Capela left a good deal of analysis for his readers' own judgment. He implicitly invited us to develop his evidence to our own ends. Scores of scholars, including Fátima Mendonça, António Sopa, Fátima Ribeiro, Ilídio Rocha, Aurélio Rocha, Valdemir Zamparoni, Olga Iglésias das Neves and I, embraced that invitation. We built on his work and then on each other's work (Rocha, 1980; Rocha, 2000; Sopa, 1985; Sopa and Ribeiro, 1996; Soares and Zamparoni, 1992; Zamparoni, 1988; Neves, 1989; Neves, 2009; Penvenne, 1989; Penvenne, 1996).

José Capela had an excellent nose for important and neglected issues in Mozambican history, and his work on the colonial press anticipated many interests of the 21st century academy. First, in 1932, on the 10th anniversary of the death of Mozambican journalist João dos Santos Albasini, Karel Pott, who was at the time a famed Mozambican lawyer, journalist and director of Albasini's newspaper, *Brado Africano,* wrote: *"The history of Albasini's life has yet to be written and his magnificent articles in Defense of Law, Reason and Justice have yet to be compiled"* (Braga-Pinto and Mendonça, 2012, 412-413). In 1996, Capela responded to Pott's challenge by publishing and framing Albasini's hard-hitting essays on the Portuguese alcohol trade in Mozambique – essays Albasini wrote under one of several pseudonyms, *João das Regras*. Capela also echoed Pott's call for a deeper investment in Albasini's life and legacy: *"Mozambique owes João Albasini a published critical analysis of his journalistic essays... [because they] capture a critical period in [Mozambique's] history in all of its excitement"* (Capela, 1996; Soares and Zamparoni, 1992). My work on Albasini's life and legacy was inspired by precisely that conviction – Albasini captured some of what was distinct and hopeful in the narrow window of early twentieth century Mozambique (Penvenne, 1989; Penvenne, 1996).

In 2014 César Braga-Pinto and Fátima Mendonça's book, *João Albasini e as Luzes de Nwandzengele: Jornalismo e Política em Moçambique, 1908-1922,* took us a long way toward the goals set forth by Pott and Capela (Braga-Pinto and Mendona, 2012). In *Luzes de Nwandzengele* they published the articles in *O Africano* and *O Brado Africano* signed by

Albasini, but they intend to complete a further collection of the articles Albasini signed in all of his pseudonyms. Mendonça and Braga-Pinto framed Albasini's signed work with both a textured history of Mozambique's press and with attention to the intellectual currents that shaped him. Capela's standards, his inspiration and imagination are at play in these innovative works.

Capela's works on Portuguese colonial policies, capitalism, and the role that alcohol played in Mozambique's socio-economic and political history remain standards: *O Vinho Para o Preto; A Burguesia Mercantil do Porto; O Imposto de Palhota e a Introdução do Modo de Produção Capitalista* and *O Álcool na Colonização do Sul do Save*. It is important to place these efforts in time. In light of the difficulty of using Portuguese and Mozambican archives and libraries in the 1970s, his contribution of primary source material should not be underestimated. These works opened fertile terrain for those interested in the strategies and financial underpinnings of the turn of the twentieth century colonial period, particularly in southern Mozambique. They revealed the strong ties among Portugal's wine merchants, Lisbon's colonial priorities, the Lourenço Marques municipality's licensing and policing policies, and the municipality and colony's need for revenues. Then, of course, there was the question of the toll alcohol took on worker health both in cities and in the countryside, where it could be part of a plantation worker's daily rations. Cheap wine in this period was often cheaper and more accessible than potable water. Capela was attentive to all aspects.

Dignity, Vernacular History, Everyday Life & "Writing Upwards"

The May 2017 Porto conference in honor of José Capela sensibly chose *O Vinho para o Preto* as its anchor. The book is indeed "vintage" Capela – including documents, narrative and statistical information. I greatly appreciate *O Vinho para o Preto*, and have used in many of my works, but I chose instead to focus on *Moçambique pelo seu Povo* (Capela, 1971). The first edition of *Moçambique Pelo seu Povo* came out in 1971, so it was actually published before *O Vinho para o Preto (*1973). Whether *Moçambique pelo seu Povo* was or was not Capela's first book, I chose it because its empirical data and spirit inspired and continues to inspire my research (Penvenne, 1993, 1995,1996, 2015).

First and most importantly, *Moçambique pelo seu Povo* confirmed my enduring sense that José Soares Martins truly was an exceptional man. I first explore how *Moçambique pelo seu Povo* came to be compiled and published, and Capela's strategy for editing the text. I briefly sample from the letters to convey a sense of the writing and writers, and then explore the letters in light of contemporary themes of historical interpretation: so-called vernacular histories, genres of *"writing upwards,"* considerations of African newspapers and their publics, discourses for evolving social identities, concepts of social capital, issues of everyday life and finally quests for gendered perspectives (Lyons, 2015; Peterson and Macola, 2009; Peterson, 2004; Adebanwi, 2017; Peterson et al., 2016). The essay simply suggests the book's many possibilities across these areas.

Capela: *Moçambique pelo seu Povo*

Shortly after he arrived in Beira from Porto in 1956, journalist José Soares Martins partnered with the *Centro Africana de Manica e Sofala* to provide financial support for the *Centro's* weekly newspaper, *Voz Africana* (1962). Soares Martins was interested in Mozambique, Mozambicans, their history and their interpretations. As he recounts in the introduction to the 3rd edition of *Moçambique pelo seu Povo* he realized that *Diário de Moçambique,*

the main Beira newspaper where he worked, seldom reflected the lived experiences of Mozambique's majority population (Capela, 1974, 7-12). In the high colonial era most Portuguese people did not pay particular attention to the quotidian of the majority. Soares Martins' willingness to subsidize the *Voz Africana* was one thing. The fact that his partnership with *Centro Africana de Manica e Sofala* confirmed the *Centro's* full authority over the paper's content and editing, despite the subsidy, was something else (Capela, 1974: 7-12). Nothing was more contested in colonial Mozambique than the authority of the black majority population, particularly when that authority was exercised independent of white oversight. José Soares Martins, the rare man, did not oversee the *Centro Africana de Manica e Sofala* or *Voz Africana*. He accepted and respected their authority and dignity.

The *Voz Africana* regularly published letters to the editor written by its diverse readership. In 1971 Soares Martins selected and edited a collection of these letters from the late 1960s and early 1970s and published them as: *Moçambique: Pelo Seu Povo.* Although the social tenor of Mozambique was shifting somewhat by the early 1970s, I am sure that the title, claiming that this was Mozambique, captured by Mozambique's people – with the letters written by ordinary Mozambicans, rather than by Portuguese – was a statement in itself. The letters range from perfectly correct Portuguese to what is popularly called *Português do Quintal* – backyard or kitchen Portuguese. Many of the writers began or closed their letters asking forgiveness for the errors in their written Portuguese, or mentioning that they had little or no schooling. Capela, always a meticulous editor, further confirmed his respect for the dignity and authority of the authors of these collected letters through his exact reproduction of their orthography, grammar, punctuation and word choice. He changed nothing. That too was a statement.

Capela located his sympathies right from the outset. He dedicated the collection to Padre António Vieira's *Sermão do Bom Ladrão*: *"Those who deserve the name of thieves are those who raise the legions and direct armies who rob and dispossess the population. Those other thieves rob only a man; these rob cities and kingdoms. The others rob at their personal risk. These rob without fear or danger. The others rob and are hanged; these others hide and hang people" (Capela, 1974: 5). He arranged the letters into seven sections. Five of the seven featured ordinary men's perspectives on the rapidly shifting social and material expectations and loyalties among lineage, family, work colleagues, neighbors and urban acquaintances. The letters highlight the tensions among shifting moral economies, ascendant capitalist relations and what Goran Hydén called the "economy of affection"* (Hyden, 1980).

The sixth category directly challenged colonial rule – "*Em patria ocupada*." That one included letters regarding the daily abuses faced by people considered *indígenas*, or natives. That was a legal category before 1961 and a status in practice after that date (Penvenne, 1995; O'Laughlin, 2000). Throughout the colonial era white employers and the police had largely uncontested authority over black employees and residents. Nonpayment, arbitrary firings, petty and wholesale violence were common complaints in quotidian conversations, but were not voiced *"upward"* to colonial authorities without considerable risk.

The final category, *"A vida na tragédia do dia a dia,"* conveyed the systemic violence of poverty and voiced the writers' frustrations with inequality, rapid change and arbitrary over-rule. Those were solid threads through all of the sections. Although Capela did not change any of the writers' words, he occasionally inserted a footnote to clarify a word's meaning or to confirm his solidarity with writers' sentiments. Some footnotes were editorial and risky. Capela asserted, for example, that*: "Workers are recruited for large companies by administrators who receive gratuities (500$00 to 1000$00) per head delivered. From there, naturally and in truth in Mozambique, they say we sell people."* (130). He also noted that whole communities moved *en masse* to avoid *"injustices and arbitrariness"* inflicted by

the colonial authorities (131), and he confirmed that patterns of arbitrary police violence described in the letters to the editor could be generalized to the *bairros* population as a whole (97).

Senhor Director – Letters to the Editor of *Voz Africana*

Precious few black Mozambicans contributed in any form to Mozambique's many newspapers, and those who did were almost exclusively men. The letters to the editor of *Voz Moçambicana* collected in *Moçambique pelo seu Povo* captured the spirit of the era and shed light on the challenges of urban life and the social dilemmas faced mostly by young men in Beira and the small and medium cities in Central Mozambique. The letters highlighted men's shifting expectations and the erosion of their ability to exercise social control over women, youth and their own circumstances. Quite apart from the many lines of interpretation the letters suggest, they also comprise a treasure trove of what would later be called *Moçambicanismos*, contemporary expressions and the particular ways Mozambicans spoke and wrote Portuguese: *paus* for escudos, *dar porrada* for beatings (16, 17) (Lopes et al., 2002). Many of the letters to the editor in the first sections revolved around jockeying for position regarding employment, social status, race and color hierarchies, education and courtship.

The first letter in the section "*Patria Ocupada*" rang familiar to anyone with knowledge of *bairro* life of this period. It was written by A. T., age 22, from Machanga, resident in Chipangana, "a miserable *bairro* of Beira." A. T. conveys the experience of two hapless Mozambican brothers. One had brought a *garrafão* (gallon jug) of home made *sura* (palm wine) from their family in the countryside to share with family in the city. As most home made alcoholic drinks, families and individuals enjoyed *sura* from time to time as it suited them (Medeiros, 1998). The sale of industrially produced beer and imported Portuguese wines was taxed and licensed whereas *bebidas caseiras,* known also as *bebidas cafreais,* were produced in the household, gift and so-called "informal" economies, and thus avoided licenses and taxation.

Unfortunately one of the brothers encountered a policeman who spotted the *sura* and forced the man to return to his brother's home to destroy the *sura* and smash the bottles. The police then proceeded to convey what Mozambicans commonly called a *pancada da graça* (a free beating). The police beat the men bloody for being in possession of *sura*. Capela assumed editorial license to assert in a footnote that *sura, "like other bebidas caseiras Africanas was barbarously suppressed by the police who systematically invaded homes [in African urban neighborhoods] to that end".* Capela then confirmed that the author's letter regarding home made alcoholic drinks shared among families, *"passionately and accurately captured the tragic detail of the usual situation of daily life of the black populations in Mozambique's cities."* (97). A. T.'s letter ended, similar to many others, by asking the readership: *"is this right?" "Is this in the spirit of Dom Pedro and [Portuguese] justice?"*(97). Harkening back to the 1908 inaugural issue of João Albasini's newspaper *O Africano,* Mozambicans used the press to juxtapose savage injustice and Portugal's claim to promote civilization and justice (Braga-Pinto and Mendonça, 2012: 67). The sale and circulation of alcohol figured in many of those challenges (Penvenne, 1995: 40-43; Penvenne, 2015: 45-60).

My research centers ordinary people, their words, their ways and their quotidian concerns. In 1977-1978 I spoke with and recorded the oral narrations and songs of scores of young, middle aged and elderly men in Maputo. Most of them could not read or write Portuguese, even *Português do quintal*, so they were unlikely to have contributed with a letter to an editor. Nevertheless, the tone, the words and concerns of the people writing to the

editor/readers of *Voz Africana* in the early 1970s rang familiar with the concerns men in Maputo conveyed to me and my tape recorder by the end of the decade. Who held power, by what means, to what ends and against what resistance? What comprised legitimate and accountable governance? Who had the authority to appropriate and allocate resource – key resources like land, labor and taxes? These were all big issues and very much in transition in both periods. The authors of these letters experienced much of their lives in question and in transition: legitimacy, accountability, and responsibility. Lineage authority and control over resources were clearly eroded, but young men, in particular, were conflicted. If legitimacy, accountability and responsibility did not lie within their lineage and family leadership, than with whom were such important features vested?

Vernacular Histories & Social Capital

Letters in the first five sections very much reflect what Derek Peterson and others describe as vernacular or homespun histories. This is an explicitly male genre that asserts men's perspectives and authority on contested issues (Peterson, 2009; Peterson and Macola, 2009). Peterson and others have looked at the content of men's writing in formats similar to the *Voz Africana* letters. They argue that by writing down what they deemed to be proper behavior the men produced a kind of social and cultural history of lineage norms. The letters shed light on the dilemmas young men faced in towns. Although they revealed a truly broad range of concerns, the key themes are contested masculinities and men's efforts to control adult women, young men, boys and girls. Men write to document and argue for right relationships, and to stake, reinforce and defend claims in lineage and colonial society. They narrate situations around bride wealth and proper behavior that reflected lineage norms as they saw them. This brings to mind Martin Chanock's classic essay on the codification of so-called customary law, and the ways the process reinforced male authority and aspired to take a fix on what were otherwise quite fluid and highly contested claims among men, women, and lineage leadership (Chanock, 1982).

J. Raposo Chivale, a twenty year old native of Vilanculos, living in Beira, conveyed his thoughts about his homeland and misunderstandings about courtship, bride wealth, and marriage. He argued that a father's authority and proper education in these matters was essential, particularly when two suitors courted a daughter or when issues of different levels of education, age or social status emerged (29-33). In each case a young man's position was framed in light of *"proper"* lineage norms and family considerations. He implicitly and explicitly asked for confirmation that his position on these dilemmas was correct. That effort to locate one's position within debates and stakes claiming was a key feature of the letters.

Here, Barbara Cooper's comments about *"tradition"*, its meanings and practice particularly for migrants and those seeking to locate themselves within shifting sands. She notes: *"'Tradition' then becomes not fixed formulas or forms but rather a longstanding processual practice of invention drawing on existing images and forms of expression to create a present and future self that is imbued with meaning precisely because the past is immanent with it... The past thus both constrains and enables the present"* (Cooper, 2005: 203).

Social Capital

Many writers posited frameworks and used the letters to position themselves to secure and to reinforce what Pierre Bordieu calls their social capital, their standing within networks in neighborhoods, workplaces, kinship groups and the like. Bordieu underscores the important

work needed to establish, cultivate and sustain one's standing: *"The reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reconfirmed"* (Bordieu, 1986: 250; Berry, 2018). Exchanges institute mutual acknowledgement, assertions and confirmations. When the author asks the readership *"is this correct?"* there is a tacit call to confirm the author's place and claim. Urban and rural household, gift and informal market work and relationships were deeply imbricated with the cultivation and maintenance of social capital. The work necessary to establish, sustain and reproduce social capital was complicated and exacerbated by migration, poverty and the insecurity of *bairro* life in colonial Mozambique. These letters reveal the process in detail when it goes well and when it goes badly. A domestic worker pleads that he was fired because he presumed to buy a fish from the same fish monger who was selling fish to his employer: *"Senhora, eu não tenho boca para comer?"* (111). Alberto Tivane of Beira complains that an errant family member despoiled Tivane's own reputation for proper behavior by his drinking and disgracing the family (17-18). Presenting and defending one's reputation comes up again and again, often followed by the tropes that seek confirmation of the writer's position.

"*Writing Upwards*"

The letters are also a perfect example of Martyn Lyon's notion of "*Writing Upwards*", a form used by the weak to address the powerful (Lyons, 2015). The letter writers might confirm their inferior status and strike a loyal, obedient and deferential tone, but they nonetheless brought to light situations that required redress. Many letters began or ended with the author placing himself and his language skills in perspective. Herminio Nogueira Selimane, an unemployed 16 year old resident of the town António Enes, informed his readers: "*sobre a classe eu tenho, classe-nada*" *"What grade did I complete, no grade!"* (125). The writers located themselves among local and formal tropes, using, as Lyons suggests, *"blend of oral and familiar language with formal discourse of petitioning"* (Lyons, 2015: 327). Lyons reminds us that deference can mask what James Scott calls a *"hidden transcript"* of underlying resistance that is "inexpedient to voice publically" (Lyons, 2015: 328). Lyons calls attention to the tropes authors deploy to make their case – particularly the interface of vernacular images and formal petitioning languages. The comment *"não tenho boca para comer?"* fits this pattern nicely (111).

African Print Cultures

Recent work focused on *African print cultures: newspapers and their publics in the twentieth century* confirms that 20th century African newspapers are rich vehicles for scholarship at many levels (Peterson et al., 2016). The letters in *Voz Africana* not only conveyed the day to day lives of ordinary people, the anxieties of men and youth, but they were arenas for experiments in stakes claiming, in "*voice*", and for the negotiation of community. Many of the letters in this collection "wrote upward" and voiced truth to power, if often in veiled tones with hidden transcripts. The letters and the press overall provided a space for Mozambicans to navigate evolving and contested identities. Tensions among people who identified as *assimilados* and *mestiços* highlighted the ever-present energy around race, class, education and status. Documents and mobility still hinged on *bom comportamento*. Testaments to appropriate behavior and the capacity to call in character references could be the keys necessary to open doors of upward mobility, or even to sustain one's place in society. Again, notions of social capital and the energy needed to sustain and expand it

were ever operative in letters to the editor. In sum, these letters illustrate men's efforts to craft vernacular histories, their skills of *"writing upwards"*, their experiments with developing discourse and tropes for evolving identities, their strategies for claiming and reproducing social capital and the importance of African newspapers and their publics. These are all very rich areas, and tell us a lot about the issues men in Beira and Central Mozambique worried about in this period. Again, the concerns and tone of the letters very much resonated with the oral testimonies conveyed by men in Maputo in the late 1970s when I conducted research on labor, urban and social history.

Seeking Gendered Perspectives: *Voz Africana* – Men's Perspectives on Life Struggles & Women

Compiled before our contemporary attention to gendered perspectives, the *Voz Africana* letters clearly documented contested and shifting masculinities, but also revealed how men spoke about women. Indeed very many of the men's letters were specifically about women. Women did not write in these newspapers. Women overall had lower levels of literacy in any language than did men, but more importantly they were unlikely to have written *"upwards"* to men or anyone else in this era. Women had ways of being heard, usually through songs, stories and spirit possession ritual, but they would have viewed publically speaking out as inappropriate and feared the predictable sanction (Vail and White, 1991: 231-277; Penvenne, 2015: 25-27; Sheldon, 2010). Within the *mestiço* population, however, in some places and times, girls actually outnumbered boys in the upper grades. *Mestiço* women's education, in partnership with their alleged attitudes of superiority, is sometimes mentioned as a factor in their *"marriagability."* Depending upon their specific circumstances, *mestiça* and *assimiladas* women could enjoy more mobility and independence in urban areas than women considered *indígenas* (Frates, 2002).

Men argued that urban women, and especially *mestiças,* would not court a man who had not completed the *quarta classe,* the equivalent of primary school and the basic credential for entry-level employment in the formal economy and civil service (29-31). Women, the men further alleged, favored men who worked in offices and disdained anyone who worked in domestic service (125). Men's letters complained bitterly about discrimination around differences of education, class, color and race (144-145). Saide, a 19 year old from Nampula, then a student at the *Escola de Artes e Ofícios,* wrote to a young woman *"of the same color"* to see if he could court her. Instead of writing back, to simply say no, she wrote that she did not want to hear any more from him because *"she didn't want to marry um preto"* (28).

Control over women, courting, sexual access and women's capacity to evade male control were core themes throughout the letters, but the tones were far from uniform. A man from Vila Nova de Mocuba blamed girls of eight or nine years old for their being married as children. Some letters framed contested masculinities around men's treatment of women. A man from Charre wrote of the disgraceful behavior of a civil servant/interpreter from Charre who took out his aggression on his wife, beating her as though she were a slave or his domestic worker: "*Senhor Director: isto não é uma vergonha um senhor vingar a sua senhora parece uma escrava? Cara sem vergonha".* The letter asserted the shame of beating one's wife (28-29).

J.M.D. Jongué, a 24 year old man from Machanga, living in Beira, wrote to berate men who left their families to work in the city *"...to earn money that the family needed, but then spent their earnings in bars drinking wine, without a thought of their family suffering in the rural area".* They then miss work because they are hung over from drink and risk losing their jobs (49). Women who remained tending a family in the rural area enjoyed more sympathy

in the letters than women who came to the city with their children to try to make a living. But men also wrote, seemingly without regret, about leaving women and children behind. Valentim Cassiano Laissa, a 19 year old student at Escola de Nipuamu, wrote: *"Before I went to school I had a woman and with her I had a daughter, then I wanted to abandon them to go to school. I left the woman so that I could go on arranging my life and family, because a man can not hold on to two things despite having two hands"* (16-17).

Although some letter writers admired women in Beira who worked self-employed in the informal sector, such women were always subject to allegations that they lived a *vida putaria*, prostituting themselves (27, 49, 52-53). Many writers complained of having spent their hard earned money on gifts and clothing for the women they courted, only to be rejected in the end. Selemane Magude Timóteo of Buzi, wrote: *"I am so annoyed when I think of the money I spent [on this woman].. up to today I cry about that money"* (125). Letters along these lines echo a popular men's worksong, "*Wawuya Celina*!" Many men in Maputo knew the song about the husband who regretted buying Celina blouses, *capulanas*, and gifts, because, in the end he alleged she was unfaithful. She was a *"whore"*, and his money was wasted (Penvenne, 1995: 214-215; Penvenne, 2015: 86).

Seeking Gendered Perspectives: Cajú de Chamanculo, Women's Perspectives on Life Struggles and Men

Although contested masculinities, deployment of *"tradition"*, and men's navigation of their social capital dominated their letters, men's efforts to control women were more than a leitmotif. When comparing the concerns conveyed in the *Voz Africana* letters to those voiced by men in Maputo during field research I conducted in the late 1970s and those voiced by women in Maputo during field research in the early 1990s, I find similarities among the men, and strong contrasts between the men and the women. On one level that is unsurprising. Historians are increasingly aware that, as Jan Bender Shetler claims: *"… women possessed not just another version, but wholly different kinds of knowledge about the past…men and women share neither styles of oral narration nor types of knowledge about the past. Men and women occupy separate spheres in their daily routines, sharing the same world but participating in different, though intersecting, sets of discourses about that world… A gendered analysis of oral tradition is necessary for finding its historical meaning"* (Shetler, 2007: 11-12).

A quest for gendered perspectives in this context requires the juxtaposition of narratives and tropes that are entangled. I want to suggest the ways in which the strategies and concerns of the urban male letter writers of colonial Beira, published in *Moçambique pelo seu povo*, reflected, intersected and contrasted with the oral narratives I recorded among women and vice versa. I also hope to follow up on José Capela's insights on taxation, alcohol, and colonial legislation by following one woman's narrative.

The first point to make is that whereas one can tell there were women in men's lives in the letters and in the narrations I collected in the 1970s, not much is revealed about them. In the women's narratives, however, men and the children they fathered were front and center. So too was the responsibility the men did or did not take within families. You could not miss them. Women's conversations were often as much about men and their behavior as men's letters to *Voz Africana* were about women and their behavior. If men were concerned that women were in town and not in rural areas farming their husbands or father's plots, women were concerned that, because the husbands and fathers who were supposed to support their agricultural efforts did not do so, they had to set down the hoe

they used on those plots and pick up the *"hoe of the city". "A xikomu xa lomu, iku tira"*. The hoe of the city, they said, is a job (Penvenne, 2015: 80-120).

Again, in his letter to *Voz Africana* noted above, Valentim Cassiano Laissa simply mentions: *"Before I went to school I had a woman and with her I had a daughter, then I wanted to abandon them to go to school. I left the woman so that I could go on arranging my life and family, because a man can not hold on to two things despite having two hands".* His daughter and her mother clearly had a different perspective, and women often needed more than two hands to care for the children men left behind. A chapter in the book based on the women's conversations is titled: *Children are not like chickens!* Women often said that unlike chickens, you can not just leave your children in the yard for your neighbors to feed. One often heard the refrain *"Someone had to look after these children!".* Elina Cinavale Mulungo captured the narratives' tone: *"These children do not have fathers. But we feed, clothe and educate these children. But when the child grows up, then the father says 'Yes, this is my child'... The men were like that – they were useless for anything except what you do between the sheets!"* (Penvenne, 2015: 167).

The cohorts of women who shared their stories were among the poorest in the colonial era city, and a disproportionate number of them were widowed, divorced, separated or single mothers who never married. That was also a characteristic of women in Southern Mozambique as a whole. It is linked with the historically high rates of male labor migration from Sul do Save to South Africa. Like many of the men who wrote in *Voz Africana*, these women's ideal life situation had not worked out, so they invented and worked on the best alternative they could manage. Women's conversations, like men's letters, floated the new self-images that they hoped would accommodate and secure their urban lived reality. Much evidence suggests that women's social capital in resource knowledge, networks, and claim staking capacities is more compromised by migration than is men's (Colson, 2008). Recouping support requires a great deal of social labor investment in family, gift and informal sectors.

Both men and women complained of the way alcoholism fueled abuse, whether domestic or otherwise. A shoemaker from Quelimane wrote to *Voz Africana* about a *bébénhoco* guy – a combination of *bêbado* and *nhoca,* a drunk and a snake – in short a mean drunk (208). Women were more vulnerable to abuse from alcohol than were men. In fact, experience with drunk and violent men often encouraged women to entrust their security – whether in rural or urban areas – to communities of women. For many women that involved gathering what anthropologists call *matrikin*, mother, sister, maternal aunts and nieces. Women, who had not been able to trust or depend upon the socially appropriate man or men in their lives, turned to women whom they felt they could count on more fully. That did not always work out as planned, but it was a common and documented strategy (Penvenne, 2015: 137; Loforte, 2000).

One essential area where men's and women's conversations overlapped was with regard to bride wealth – *lobolo* – the exchange of wealth between the groom's and bride's family that (in part) legitimized a marriage in the eyes of the lineage (clan) community. Although it is a controversial and often misunderstood practice, most male letter writers and most women who shared their narratives felt it was important and that expectations around it should be honored. Bride wealth worked out differently for men and women, but in both cases it was linked to the idea of *"honorable"* and socially *"necessary"* behavior. It was a component of social capital, and was often generated piecemeal as families could manage. The poorest and most vulnerable families seldom managed it, but it was a shared aspiration. Men felt it secured their claims and women felt it honored their contribution and potentially protected them from spousal abuse that could result in divorce without repayment of bride

wealth. As we shall see, women who needed to be free of a marriage, for whatever reasons, often aspired to reimburse any bride wealth exchanged for their marriage because they wanted to bring the social and ritual situation to a proper wrap.

Southern African historical frameworks for labor migration are anchored in models that assume men and the ways men move and work as normative. When the historical actors doing the work and moving are men that's fine. A deep literature exists on the state and private capitalist motors behind men's movement to the city to get a waged job, or men being conscripted for tax payment, forced labor at a private plantation or at the state port and railway complex. We are not as clear that the women and children who migrate and work as part of the making, unmaking and remaking of families – often linked to what men are or are not doing – are also and accurately migrants and workers. Furthermore, the labor of women and children was as deeply imbricated into the state and private economies of Southern Mozambique as men, but it played out differently. Their foundational contributions have often been scripted invisible. Women's *"social work"* in the household, gift, and informal sectors of the economy was absolutely essential for quotidian survival, but even in the recent past such work was approached as residual. Only by putting women's experiences into conversation with men's do we begin to build a fuller appreciation of daily life.

At the close of the colonial era, Mozambique's cashew industry was big business in the formal economy. It was Mozambique's leading source of foreign exchange and the labor force at its heart were women whose *"nimble fingers"* anchored the industrial shelling component. Thousands of Mozambican women put down their field hoes to pick up the hoe of the city at Lourenço Marques' Chamanculo cashew shelling factory, from its origins in the late 1940s through the end of the colonial era. Of the many hundreds of articles published and indexed about the Southern Mozambican cashew economy less than a half dozen even mentioned that the industry hinged on mostly migrant women and their labor as cashew shellers. If women's labor was scripted invisible even in this big and important formal sector of the economy, how much less visible was women's essential work in the household, gift and informal sectors.

It is instructive to take the life narrative of one woman, Balbina Tinga (Penvenne, 2015: 152-153). Through Balbina Tinga's narrative we have her spoken letter, her effort to *"speak upwards"* through the oral history project. Her narrative revealed her efforts to develop and sustain social capital, and the necessary linkages among lineage interests, taxes, forced labor, household, gift, informal and formal sector labor. Men experienced these things in one way and women in another, but they were entangled. Balbina was one of the more than one hundred cashew-shellers who taped their experiences for my research project. Her story may sound dramatic, but was by no means exceptional. Balbina was from a poor southern Mozambican family. Because he did not have money to pay the family's taxes, her father was often taken for *shibalo* (conscript labor) on a near-by Portuguese owned plantation.

When Balbina was about 8, her father accepted a bride wealth for her to become the third wife of a man who asked for her in marriage. He worried about Balbina, but he worried more that another stint of *shibalo* would kill him, and then what would happen to Balbina and the rest of the family. Balbina moved to her new husband's home, thereby forming a new family and contributing her labor to her husband's lineage. By so doing Balbina's father received a bride-wealth that he used to pay the family's taxes. So before Balbina became a teenager her daily labor and migration between households clearly illustrated the entanglements among capitalist plantations, forced labor, state taxes and lineage agreements around bride wealth.

When Balbina's father saw that she was abused in the marriage, he took pity on her. He found another man who was willing to pay twice the amount of bride wealth that he received for Balbina's first marriage. He freed Balbina from her first marriage by using half the new bride wealth to pay off her first bride wealth. Balbina then moved to the second husband's family, and her father used the balance of her second bride wealth to pay the family's taxes. Thus Balbina *"earned"* the family's taxes twice by migrating with her labor to two new families.

Shortly after her second marriage, Balbina's father died, and Balbina worried what would become of her mother and siblings. Balbina experienced alcohol fueled domestic violence in her second marriage to that point that she finally fled to Lourenço Marques. The word had spread in southern Mozambique that women who were suffering in rural households could flee to the cashew factories and make a new life and livelihood. When Balbina left for the capital city's cashew factories she was still under age, despite having been twice married. She was clever and she soon managed to get hired. She saved everything she could, first to repay the bride wealth for the marriage she had fled, and second to pay her family's taxes for the third time. She then saved to relocate her mother and siblings from their rural home to her home in Lourenço Marques.

In short, within a short period of time, Balbina Tinga had paid her family's taxes three times – twice through her migration and labor in the household economy and then through wage savings in the formal economy. After paying off her own bride wealth and bringing her family to town, Balbina put her savings into building a home to shelter her extended family. Eventually her household was comprised of her mother, her sister, her daughter, two nieces and one nephew. Balbina's *matrikin* formed the core of the household. She even repaid the bride wealth for her sister and daughter – first because honorable standing in the lineage demanded it, and second because if the marriage was over, all parties to *"Be done with it!"* Balbina wanted no possibility of further claims on children or resources. Everyone in her household worked in some capacity to leverage each other's production in the household, informal, gift and formal sectors. The group pooled care and resources to support the health of the household.

Men's letters to *Voz Africana* and women's testimony for a history of Chamanculo's cashew factory both contribute many stories from many people about life, migration and work. They offer windows into everyday lives, into experiences and what people choose to remember about them, about people's efforts to construct new identities in changing situations and to claim, extend and reproduce social capital for themselves and their families. Contested masculinities are often more familiar to historians than are the gendered perspectives women's narratives, songs and multiple ways of knowing convey about history and memory. This essay simply skims the surface of the many and generative ways we might think about their words in light of contemporary questions and insights regarding vernacular histories, writing upwards, social capital, evolving discourses of urban identities and contestations around gendered perspectives.

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