

# MOZAMBICAN POLITICAL STRUCTURE BEFORE AND DURING COLONIALISM

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When I was twelve years old, my grandfather, Lamno, taught me many things concerning my family history. Among other things, he said our family state Vilankulu, was a large nation, which the Portuguese divided into smaller regions in an attempt to create an unstable political situation. As I was growing up, I became more interested in finding out from the older people how the political structure operated before the coming of Portuguese exploiters. Many older people told me the same things as my grandfather did. In this article I will relate to you what I have gained from them. I mention the source of my information so that you will realize that I am speaking from an African frame of reference.

Europeans especially, have too often become conditioned to thinking of Africa in European terms and of course in terms of European interest. This is an unfortunate attitude that tells people more about Europeans than it does about Africans. This attitude is as prevalent among Europeans of the West as of the East; a point neatly illustrated by Mr. Tom Mboya who says that both Westerners and Russians look at Africa through the same pair of glasses, the one lens of which is marked pro-East and the other pro-West. It is not surprising that looking at Africans this way most foreigners fail to understand one great reality about our continent, that Africans are neither pro-West nor pro-East; they are pro-Africa. Only when people accept the fact that African leaders for the first time in their history feel free to shop and trade for import and export, as well as for loans and ideas, will they be able to avoid the mistake of attributing ulterior motives to them. Thus, they will avoid acting rashly for fear that the African nations are "going over to the wrong side."

### The Western Excuse for Exploitation

For many years Africa has been called the "Dark Continent," but since the Africans are now shaking off the colonial yoke, and are able to have direct interaction with the outside world, people are learning that their ignorance of Africa has been darker than the continent itself. The Europeans invaded Africa with two missions, civilization and christianity. They forgot their religious mission, however, and handed the Bible to Africans as an exchange for their land. In order to justify their cultural mission they announced that the Africans are people without culture, religion, history or political structure. They even say that Vasco da Gama discovered Mozambique, but the truth is that Mozambique and its people were there before Vasco da Gama was born. Mozambique and its people are not Vasco da Gama's creation, but God's creation, and although one can say without



doubt that Vasco da Gama reached and passed through Mozambique, he did not discover people, as I do believe people cannot be discovered.

The exploiters that came after Vasco da Gama propagated gross misrepresentation saying that Africa of this period never had government or leadership. My question is, when the exploiters reached Africa, did they not find "Chiefs" (as they call them) with whom to negotiate, chiefs who were, in fact, used by them in their program of exploitation. Who were those "chiefs," if they were not the leaders of their respective governments? The Europeans destroyed this African system of governing to a large extent, but it survives in the minds of many Africans, because it is a system based on beliefs which Africans still hold to be valid. It is a humanitarian system based on family relationships, a system under which the foreigners were welcomed as a guest is honored by the individual family.

When the African governments came into contact with this Western system of government based on exploitation, it was inevitable that the hosts would be oppressed by their guests. For the people of Angola and so called Portuguese Guinea and Mozambique, this clash resulted in their destruction physically, ~~spiritually~~, and mentally. It was physical because the African people are being shot and killed even today by Western inhuman devices. According to the Westerners, their guns and bombs do not kill but rather cure Africans and make the survivors the recipients of "democracy and freedom." Only Communist guns kill and destroy the African souls. Its destruction was spiritual, because the African people were forced to abandon their culture, their ways of worshiping. The African had to follow the Western culture, which represents God's will as "He was always by their side." It was mental because the Africans as an inferior race, have been deprived and could not do anything except to serve as the machine of the so called "white man." He was born to wash and to iron the white man's clothing, to shine his shoes, to cultivate his land, and to tasks which involve the muscles but never the mind.

#### Mozambican People, Members of a Large Family

In order that you may understand Mozambican political structure, let me explain to you the family structures and their relationships. I will not go into detail, but I would like to say that the African people have an extended family, which is tied together by mutual reliance. There is a feeling of togetherness and a warm love among the members of the family. Let me give you a good example. Here in America when people see one another they say, "Hi, how do you do," or "what is cooking?" and the answer will be, "Fine," "Not too bad," or "Okay." In my country or in Africa in general it is not that way. When people meet, they will say to each other, "Good morning (Gicile)" or "Good afternoon," and will ask, "How are you?" The answer might be, "I am doing well, but my husband is not feeling well, and last night my rooster was killed by a hyena." The reason one says all this, is that other people will assist him, as has always been the African tradition. If, for instance, the rooster has been killed, the people



will lend their unfortunate neighbor a rooster to mate with his hens. If one of the neighbors has any troubles, the rest of his neighbors will assist him.

As someone travels inside or outside of the state, he could stop at any home, ask for a place to sleep, and could have food and water to drink. As a matter of fact, there is one proverb in my language which says: "When you find some people cutting the tree, go and help them to cut (Loku u kuma vanhu na va jema sinyu, jemawo)" This means that if you find people eating, go and sit down and eat with them. Also, if someone in his traveling sees oranges, tangerines, coconuts, peanuts, pine-apples, etc., he can pick up any number he wants and sit down and eat. This does not only apply to the people of the same tribe or clan, as the Westerner calls them, but it applies to all human beings. If the owner comes he will not bother to ask why you are eating his fruits, but will instead greet you and ask you where you are coming from and how far you are going. If you come from far away and still have a long way to go, he will invite you to spend the night with his family and continue your journey the next day. One thing everyone must know, is that when you pick up the oranges or what ever fruit one picks, he cannot take some with him, but he must sit down and eat them there.

One can see that this system of living is based on mutual reliance, brotherhood, and love for his fellow man. This is the system that the Portuguese exploiters in Mozambique tried to destroy. However, I may say that although they were able to exploit us in many ways, they were not able to change some of the African ways of living.

Assimilation (assimilacao) was one of the tools the Portuguese used in attempting to change the African culture, even to the point of changing his name. Besides the African being required to know the Portuguese language in order to become assimilated (assimilado), he has to have a Portuguese name. If a young man or girl becomes assimilated he is no longer part of his family, and if, for instance, his family is in trouble, he cannot assist them, because he is no longer "savage." Interestingly enough, however, the African in Mozambique did not accept such nonsense and continued to have family names. Notice the following names: Jose Filipe Nyancale, Jose Chicuarra Masinge, Alberto Nyatumbo, Gabriel Sipo Simbine, Constantino Dumangane, Artur Xavier Lambo Vilankulu, to mention only a few. One can notice that their first names are Portuguese, but the last names are African or family names. Also, the grandparents teach their grandchildren to know their generation names. For example, I was taught my generation as: I am (Hi mina) Artur, son of Xavier; Xavier, son of Lambo; Lambo, son of Xihoyi; Xihoyi, son of Xibumo; Xibumo, son of Nyangungwane; Nyangungwane, son of Nyanyankulu...Mukumbe, son of Vilankulu. The generations are related until we come to Vilankulu which is the first generation of my family. This not only helps the young people to know their family generation, but it also helps them to avoid taboos, such as not marrying one's cousin, niece, etc. Therefore, one has to go away from his family state in order to find a wife. When one marries a



girl from another state, however, the members of the girl's and of the boy's families are bound together with strong relationships, which leads to a strong relationship between the two states.

### The Traditional Government

Having explained some generalities about family structure, I will go on to the political structure, which was set firmly on a family basis. In fact, the nations (which later were grouped together by the Portuguese as Mozambique and became a state rather than nations) represented families. Let me use two nations as an illustration. There had been, before the coming of the Portuguese, a government called Yingwane, having two states, Zunguze and Masinge. Both Zunguze and Masinge were paying their homage to Yingwane, as he was the King. Zunguze and Masinge are both members of Yingwane's family and were Dukes representing the King in their respective states.

Another example of government is my own state of Vilankulu, one of the largest states in Mozambique. Mukumbe was our King and Mapinyane and Pupilwani were the Dukes, all of them coming from Vilankulu. Reports from the states were given to Mukumbe, including taxes and local disturbances. The King had his own cabinet, composed of Lawyers (Madota), Advisers (Manghanakana), and the Messengers (Tinduna). The advisers' function was to counsel the King, as they were old people (sometimes older than the King) and knew the rules of the family state very well. The lawyers' function was to see that the people were carrying out the laws of the family and not practicing taboos of the family, which was by itself a government. The King and his advisers could not add or change the laws without the lawyers' ratification. Some of these lawyers composed the Supreme Court of Justice (Hubye) and they were required to live near the capital, which was the King's home. They not only dealt with the capital's problems, but with those of the entire nation. The messengers' function was to transmit verbally, the news from the King to the Dukes as well as other government officials. The system worked so smoothly that, for example, we did not have policemen to protect the people, and our Kings could travel from one state to another without any protection. As a matter of fact, the guards of the King were beautiful girls as a sign of peace and love.

The Dukes' function was to represent the King and to transmit all government information to the people. The Dukes gave reports of the state activities to the King once a month. It was necessary that all the Dukes go at the same time in order that when each Duke gave his report, the rest of the Dukes would be informed of what went on in the other states. Since the reports were oral, everyone had to come. Of course, everyone of them felt it was his duty to know what was happening to other members of his family in other states. If the Duke was sick he could send one of his advisers to deliver the speech and to gather all the information from the capital. The day of the meeting was determined before hand, so that everyone knew when the meeting was to be held.



The Dukes too had their cabinets, which had the same functions as the King's. If the lawyers, however, could not solve some of the problems on a state level, they could take the case to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court and that particular State Court could join together and try to solve problems on the national level. The messengers of the Dukes sent their information to the representatives of each community as well as to other officials. The District representative had meetings with the Dukes twice a month, one for state business, another in which the Dukes received information from the King. The District representative was selected within each community and dealt with that particular community's problems. They informed the people about states and national activities, and the people told the representatives what they expected from the King. The people would give their petitions to the representatives and the representatives would inform the Dukes and the Dukes inform the King. This line of communication worked in two directions. Maybe you will be interested to know that drums are used to call the people. The rhythm and sound of drums used by the King's call to his Dukes were different from a Duke's drum, as the representative's call to the community was different from the Duke's. The people who played drums were carefully selected and were the people who had a talent for playing different instruments.

One can see that the African government in Mozambique was not based on the power struggle between haves and have nots, but was based on the relationship between a father and his children. People worked in cooperation based on brotherhood and equality, and they were happy in this situation. They respected one another and lived together as equal beings, as the only supreme being for them was God, not the "white man" (mulungu). When the Portuguese came, however, they started to call African men, "boys" (rapaz). Africans, although educated and elderly, can and have been called "rapaz" by Portuguese children. This kind of abuse of Africans was also found among the educated and uneducated Portuguese, who did not even know how to write their names, as many of them who came from Portugal were illiterate.

#### Political Structure during Colonialism

If you recall, in my above statement concerning the governmental structure, I said that Mukumbe was King of Vilankulu, Pupulwani and Mapinyani being his Dukes and paying homage to him. When the Portuguese invaded Mozambique (coming as guests with empty stomachs), they studied the political structure of Mozambique. Being aware of an old political theme - in unity there is strength - they divided the Africans into a smaller regions. Vilankulu was divided into three parts called in Portuguese: Mucumbe, Mapinhana and Pupuluana. Pupuluana and Mapinhana were told by the Portuguese not to pay their tribute to Mucumbe, but to a Portuguese administrator who is "white," hence the King of the black Africans. The laws were destroyed and the people of Pupuluana had to go to the Portuguese with their problems so that the Portuguese administrator could solve all



the problems, as he had the "right answers." In order to make the divisions stronger, they gave to Mucumbe, Pupuluana and Mapinyana uniforms and sticks and called them Regulo or Regedores (chief magistrate of a district) of each state. The uniforms were different colors although they were of the same family. The Portuguese of course expected that the Africans would fight among themselves over borders and other powers. Fortunately, for us and unfortunately for the Portuguese, the Africans did not fight. The tradition, relationships, and family love were not changed by the uniforms, because it was something stronger, a spiritual thing based on African culture.

Each one of them (Mukumbe, Mapinyana and Pupulwana) was to become a "chief" as they were called. Maybe you will be interested to know that in my language (Xitswa) there is no word that can be translated as "chief," just as there is no translation for civil rights. However, there is a word "hosi" meaning King. The Westerners have made an artificial division between the kings of European nations and the "chief" of the African "tribe." The idea is to forestall any notion of equality between those heads of state.

Since the coming of the exploiters to our mother land, these divisions were forced upon us, and our Kings were no longer respected. The Portuguese administrator has all the power to imprison and beat our Kings. I remember that before I left Mozambique for further education, Regulo Inguana was arrested and imprisoned in Massinga Administration (Administracao) and later on transferred to Morrumbene, and stayed in jail for months and was beaten many times. Not only he, but also other Kings have and still are being treated that way. Just imagine the President of the U.S.A., France, Spain, Soviet Union, etc., being held in prison and beaten. WHAT CIVILIZATION!

Why is it that Portugal still holds colonies in Africa? Portugal is the poorest country in Europe, if not in the world, but still holds colonies and spends about 42% of her budget in war activities combating the nationalists in Angola, so called Portuguese Guinea, and Mozambique. Political and economic powers are under Western control through Portugal. The best lands were given to Portuguese settlers and the resources of these countries are being sent to Western countries. The operation of the government and relationships between people of the same family are controlled by the colonialists. For example, any African traveling from Vilankulu to Masinge must have a passport from the administrator. That never happened before the exploiters invaded us.

Although the Portuguese tried to divide the people and exploit them politically, economically, etc., the family structure remained basically the same. From a political point of view, the Portuguese are the ones who are suppose to represent the people. The regedores go to the Portuguese administrator to report the state's activities and to pay taxes. If the administrator wants people for the Labor Force (Xibalu) he tells the "chief" how many people he wants, and the chief will arrest as many people as the administrator wants. The messengers are no longer playing the same role as they did before the exploiters came. Their function now is to be sent



during the evening, when everyone is asleep, tired from the hard farm work. The messengers go and knock on the doors and arrest the husbands. If the husband is in South Africa in the Mine Labor Force (Mugodwine), the wife will be arrested, taking her husband's place. Believe me or not, the "chiefs" and the messengers, do not want to do all this, but they have to do so. If they do not, they will be arrested and be beaten on the hands (palmatoria) as their lesson. In this matter the distinctive Portuguese theme is: "Nao ha maneira de ensinar o preto fora de bater," meaning that there is no way of teaching the black besides beating him. Beating of course does not imply the hands only, but all of the body. I remember many times in Morrumbene Administration, in Inhambane District, I saw people beaten on their hands and as the blood started to flow, the Portuguese administrator said: "Basta, chega-lhe nos pes" (That's enough on his hands, beat him on the feet). I do not know what happened to him, as I could stay no longer watching that cruel and savage way of treating the human body. However, Salazar says, "the continent of Africa was brought into the light through Western civilization." And I say, yes indeed the African people in Angola, so called Portuguese Guinea and Mozambique, are being bombed and shot at by the Western inhuman devices. WHAT CIVILIZATION!

#### Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO)

Peaceful methods are the ones most often chosen by Africans to solve their problems and shake off the heavy load of colonialism and exploitation. For years, FRELIMO headed by Dr. Eduardo C. Mondlane, has been following the same routes. In the United Nations (which I call the World Historical Theatre, or the place where some big powers lay on their eggs), the African bloc and other nations of good will, tried by all means to convince Portugal's allies not to support or assist Salazar's fascist government regime, either directly or indirectly, so that independence will come to the Portuguese territories without bloodshed. Unfortunately, some of these Portuguese friends have bases in Portugal and prefer to keep these bases more than to see people freed from colonial bondage. These nations small or powerful as they are, are really being colonialized by Portugal, as they cannot say or do anything that Salazar does not want. Such governments are rowing the same boat under Portuguese domination. Afraid as they are that Salazar will take over their bases, may I remind and assure them that Salazar cannot take them, as he knows that such nations will feed Portugal's stomach after the African nationalists have crushed and destroyed his troops. Such powers still give direct assistance to Salazar and at the same time come and tell Africans that the "Portuguese government has assured them that the guns, bombs, aircraft, helicopters, etc., will not be used against the African people, but against the communists." Who is Portugal fighting - Russians, Red Chinese? No! Africans. Because of this failure of Portuguese friends to put pressure on the dictatorship and fascist regime of Salazar on September 25, 1964, the African people in Mozambique through



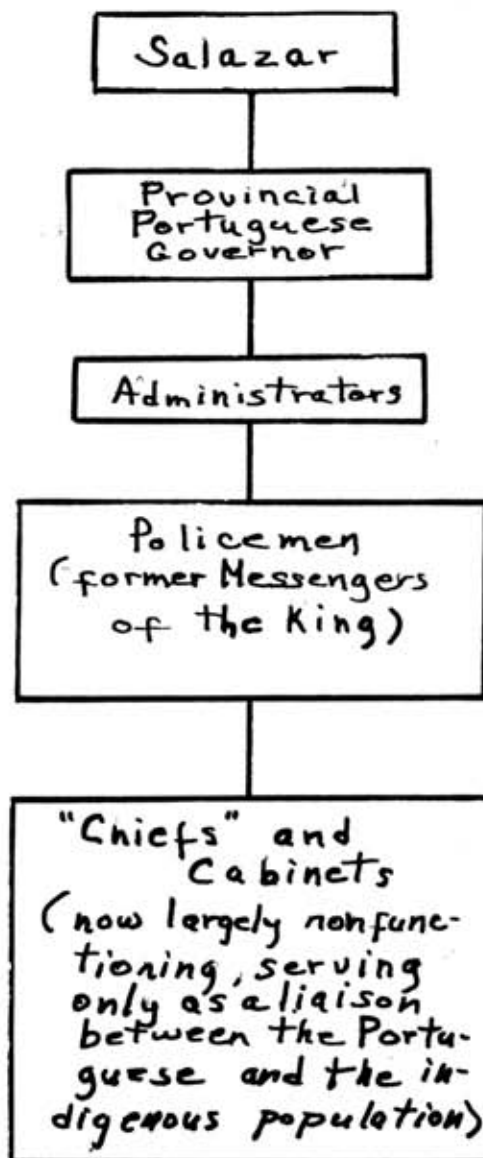
FRELIMO and under the leadership of Dr. Eduardo C. Mondlane have decided to wage war against their exploiters and are determined to crush colonialism and its roots. The free African States are assisting us by all means to shake off the imperialist yoke. Thanks are due also to non-African governments of good will, for their moral and material assistance.

Portugal and its allies still want to hold colonies and practice exploitation in Angola, so called Portuguese Guinea and Mozambique. They still tell us that we are not ready for independence. Having earned a degree in political science from Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and having studied American government, other Western and Eastern European governments, and the so called non-white governments, I did not notice any difference between these civilized governments and what we had in Mozambique before colonialism. What I discovered, however, is that some of these governments are younger and might have copied from us.

Determined as we are, the people of Mozambique under FRELIMO shall win over oppressive and reactionary forces. Those who are saying that Africans are not ready for independence because of what I call "externally caused coup d'etats" in Africa, should be reminded to go back and read American and European history. May I also remind them that the conflicts they read about in these histories are not more "civilized" than any conflict in any developing nation. There were many leaders of the developed nations that were as unready to rule as we have been accused of being. There is not much they can teach us in this particular area. Politics will be similar all over the world. The African elites and the people in general are well aware that independence does not mean the end of struggle, but the beginning of struggle. Just as Americans, and Europeans had and still have economic as well as political problems, so will the Africans. We expected to have these problems, although they may not be exactly the same.

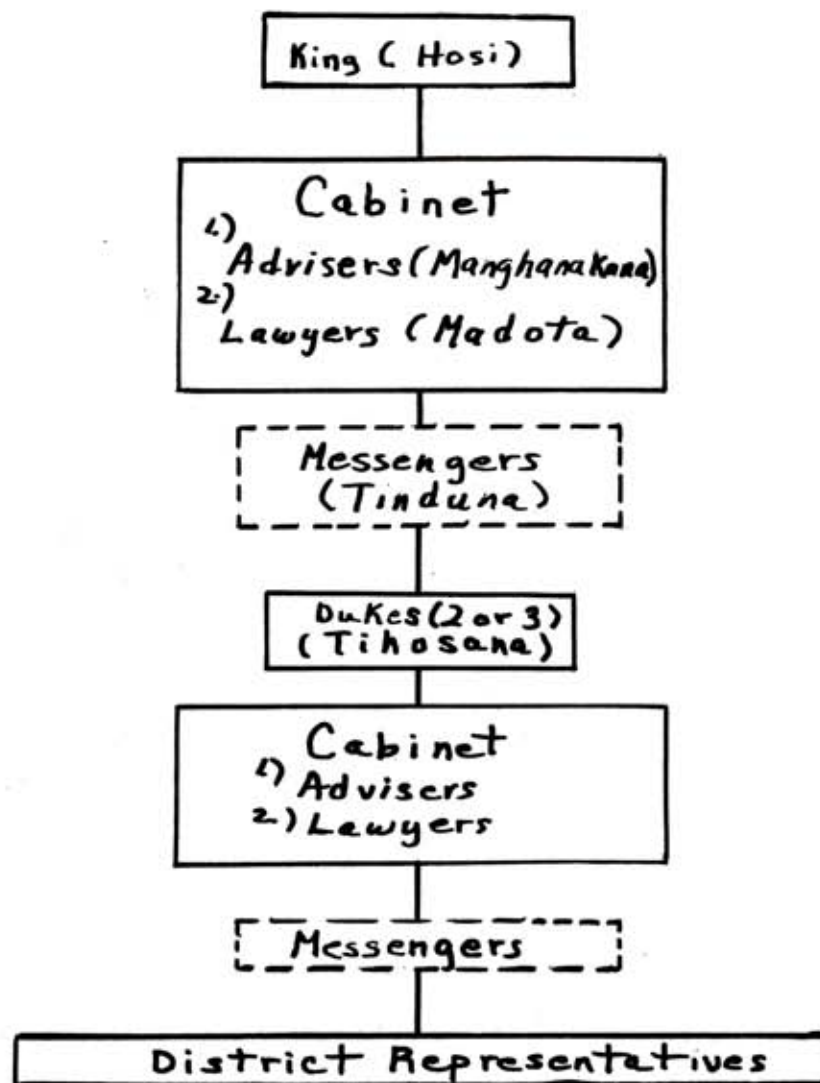
INDEPENDENCE OR DEATH!





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