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The Mueda Massacre Retold: The ‘Matter of Return’ in Portuguese Colonial Intelligence

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In 1959 the Portuguese consul in Dar es Salaam received a written request for the collective return of Makonde migrants to northern Mozambique. This request was then made in person by leaders of mutual help associations to the administrator of the small town of Mueda, opening an incident that would culminate in the infamous massacre of 16 June 1960. The origins of that event have been buried both by the Portuguese will to deny the violence and by the heroic narrative propagated by the national liberation movement. This article delves into the records that colonial intelligence amassed around the rise of subversion in the Makonde precinct. Its objective is to produce a more complex rendering of the trajectory that led from the request itself to violent repression. Intelligence reports produced in the heat of events offer an opportunity to open up the narrative of the Mueda event, to look at it not as the starting point of a teleology of national liberation but as a moment of uncertainty and possibility generated by tentative plans for a federation of independent east African states and by the racial tensions inherent in the transition to Tanganyikan independence, and influenced in its unfolding by individual initiative, ambition, leadership conflicts, adventurism, cowardice and chance.

Keywords: Mozambique; Mueda; colonial violence; counter-insurgency; early nationalism

A Misfiled Beginning

Sometime in early March 1959, the Portuguese consul in Dar es Salaam received a letter written in tidy longhand by four migrants hailing from the neighbouring territory of Mozambique:

We remember that on the date 27 of February 1959 we had come in your presence to ask that the Portuguese government should have much compassion for us who live here in Tanganyika, because we stay in suffering and all of us Macondes would like to return to our native land, but we saw that without the Government’s effort this is impossible and asked our Portuguese Government to help us with the following favours:

- 1) We would like to love each other in all our country. Because without us loving each other there would not be any effort to return to our Country.
- 2) Because we heard that our Consulate was looking for a way to have all Macondes return to Mozambique, but the English government did not agree because it very well knows that the maconde are those who make the country of Tanganyika rich and we desire that we ourselves we’d make the effort to return from Tanganyika, because where the

Portuguese Government would agree with our request it would result in a stronger effort to return all to our Country.

- 3) We would be thankful if the Government agreed with all our requests, to give us the permission to build a hostel in Mozambique and all Macondes who would come back from Tanganyika would first go there to receive a little note and repent of [sic] never going back to Tanganyika.

This is the anti-venom we need.

And we ask with big favour to the Government to put an end to all these sufferings, if the Government should give us the strength we are all ready to come back from Tanganyika. Because lots of people from Mozambique judge that in Tanganyika there is some comfort but there isn't; all the land is full of miseries.

We would be thankful if all our pleas were met.

Salutations and thanks.

Those who founded these words are:

Faustino Ferreira Vanomba
Tangasi Macalica
João Arlindo Ambrosio
José da Veiga Jacobo

Headman

Capoca
Naengo
Silavi
Nshingama¹

The letter was duly forwarded to the head consul in Nairobi, who in turn transmitted a copy to the ministry of foreign affairs, prefaced by a detailed commentary.² By a twist of fate, the original missive would not make it into the voluminous folders that a fledgling intelligence unit, the Information Centre, put together to monitor the escalating unrest in the Makonde precinct (*Circumscrição dos Macondes*) – paradoxically, because it articulated for the first time the request that set in motion the events of what came to be called the Mueda massacre. The letter could even be considered the starting point of the Mozambican liberation struggle.

Reasons to Return

The story of the Mueda massacre has largely been told in the voices of victims turned victors. From the late 1960s, survivors who reached the upper echelons of the liberation movement began to recount it according to a mould that would later be corroborated and buttressed by the eyewitness testimonies delivered to research brigades from 1977 onwards, until it solidified into an official narrative. Inspired by the winds of change of the late 1950s and by the forthcoming independence of Tanganyika – so the story goes – envoys from Makonde migrant mutual help organisations travelled to Mozambique to demand independence for their country.³ They knocked at the door of the remote northerly administration of Mueda and asked to be received and heard to that effect. The first two groups were flogged and arrested, not the third. Unable to provide an answer to the demand, the administrator sent for the provincial governor, who called a public meeting on 16 June 1960. Thousands crowded into Mueda from hamlets far and near to hear the outcome, bearing placards with the word *'uhuru'*: freedom, independence.⁴ Two migrant leaders,

1 Arquivos Nacionais da Torre do Tombo (hereafter ANTT), SCCIM 1343, 74–75, undated letter. Though not specified, all translations from Portuguese are mine. The list of headmen to the right of the names of the signatories refers to the native authorities from whose lands each came.

2 ANTT/SCCIM 1343, 69–73, Lisbon, Process II/B/G, Nairobi, 16 March 1959.

3 I use the modern spelling, 'Makonde', but leave the Portuguese spelling, 'Maconde', when it appears in original documents.

4 The Kiswahili *uhuru* covers both meanings. Already by early 1959, Julius Nyerere used *uhuru* in speeches to refer to independence.

Faustino Vannomba and Mateus ‘Shibiliti’ Waduvani, were summoned for a long discussion inside the administration building.⁵ Stray dry-season rain fell. Finally, the governor walked out, spoke badly of the two, promised better buying prices for agricultural produce and reminded the people that they were Portuguese citizens after all. The crowd booed and refused to stand to attention for the colonial flag. Handcuffed, Vannomba and Shibiliti were ushered into a jeep to be carried away, and that was the tipping point: the jeep was held up, mud and stones hurled, and an old man attempted to stab the governor, who ordered the troops to fire. The deaths that ensued awakened the political consciousness of a generation, who understood the inevitability of armed struggle and the necessity of political unity. The events of Mueda were inscribed as a foundational moment of the narrative of national liberation through a variety of memorial means: songs, a theatre piece, a feature film, a titular street in the capital, celebrations and frequent invocation in writing and speech.⁶

João Paulo Borges Coelho has insightfully observed that the ‘script’ harnessed by the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique – Frelimo) to bolster its historical legitimacy is inherently oral, to allow for periodical revisions according to the political demands of the present.⁷ Indeed, a close reading of the various official and semi-official versions of the Mueda events, from Alberto Chipande’s 1969 youthful impressions to Raimundo Pachinuapa’s 2010s memoirs, reveals myriad shifting and conflicting details. The organisations to which the migrant leaders belong, their objectives and mutual relationships, the identity of some of the leaders, especially women, the demands addressed to the administrator and the governor, the expectations and behaviour of the crowds: none of these, let alone the kaleidoscope of individual circumstances, remain stable. Rumour and the occult pepper even the most literate testimonies. A genealogy of this official narrative is yet to be drawn, but a more urgent task is at hand: to provide a critical reading of the archive established by colonial counter-insurgency in the heat of the moment.⁸

As a response to the threat posed by the wave of independence sweeping across Africa, a Centro de Informação (Information Centre) was created in 1958 and then transformed into the Serviços de Centralização da Comunicação e Informação de Moçambique (SCCIM) three years later.⁹ More than the infamous political police (Policia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado – PIDE), the Centre would be responsible for monitoring the unfolding of the Mueda events, under the leadership of a former employee of the city of Lourenço Marques, Afonso Henriques Ivens Ferraz de Freitas, renowned in the capital for his cruelty.¹⁰ Ferraz de Freitas left behind a rich archive, which provides a unique opportunity for reconstructing both a history of the event and the modes of colonial surveillance.

5 I use, where possible, the correct Shimakonde spelling of names, instead of the colonial ones, because the names have meaning when pronounced correctly. In this case, Vannomba means ‘they marry her’ (presumably, the name of an ancestor used to changing husbands); Waduvani, ‘of when’. Shibiliti (Kibiriti in Kiswahili) is a nickname, which means ‘matchstick’.

6 I have traced the musical memory of the massacre in P. Israel, ‘Mueda Massacre: The Musical Archive’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 6 (2017), pp. 1157–79.

7 J.P. Borges Coelho, ‘Politics and Contemporary History in Mozambique: A Set of Epistemological Notes’, *Kronos*, 39 (2013), pp. 20–31.

8 The best attempt to read the colonial sources pertaining to the Mueda massacre is L. Laranjeira, *Mashinamu na Uhuru: Arte Makonde e História Política de Moçambique, 1950–1974* (São Paulo, Intermeios, 2018), pp. 145–208, which, however, draws mostly from the slim and derivative PIDE file on Vannomba, disregarding the massive SCCIM documentation.

9 For the details of the establishment of the Centre and of SCCIM, see S.M. da Silva Carlos Araújo, ‘Um Império de Previsões: Os Serviços de Centralização e Coordenação de Informações de Moçambique e a Governança Colonial do Islão, 1961–1974’ (PhD thesis, University of Lisbon, 2018), pp. 76–166.

10 ‘Ferraz de Freitas was called *Malalanyana*, the skinny one, because no matter how much blood he drank from the city’s black labour force he never got fat. He was always hungry and therefore dangerous [... and] cultivated his reputation as a fierce disciplinarian’, J.M. Penvenne, *Women, Migration and the Cashew Economy in Southern Mozambique, 1945–1977* (Woodbridge, James Currey, 2015), p. 107.

The four bulging folders, untidy and full of multiple copies, find an anchoring point in the ‘request for return’ addressed to the colonial government in various forms by different groups of migrants.¹¹ At first, the colonial government assessed it as a bona fide plea, then with more and more suspicion as the events escalated. When the dust settled over Mueda’s dead, the saga of the Makonde’s return was all but buried in silence. The Portuguese pretended that the massacre never occurred. The nationalist leaders had little interest in reconstructing its origin, favouring a heroic rendering.¹² Besides a cursory revisionist intervention by the historian Michel Cahen, who alleged that Vannomba and Shibiliti worked in harmony with the Portuguese and had no nationalist leanings, the ‘matter of return’ has been, by and large, erased from the history and collective memory of the event it generated.¹³

The archive amassed by Ferraz de Freitas offers an invaluable opportunity to ‘open the fable’ of the Mueda massacre and reconstruct the trajectory that led from the request to return to violent repression.¹⁴ Established in the heat of the moment, the intelligence record has the advantage of immediacy. Indecisions and uncertainties emerge in stark relief, foregrounding indeterminacy at the core of the event. Yet this is also an archive of counter-insurgency, paranoia and race – a tool of war rather than knowledge.¹⁵ I approach it here with a sensitivity to both polyphony – the traces that multiple voices have left in the fabric of the repressive text – and rhythm – the syncopated, feverish unfolding of actions and doubts and suspicions and missed encounters – all the while heeding the larger questions that still beg for an answer: why did the leaders of mutual help associations lobby for a massive return of Makonde migrants to Mueda? Why were they heard out by the colonial administration? How did the request produce the event we know as the Mueda massacre? How did a public narrative of the massacre emerge?

Applied Anthropologies

When a written request for the return of Makonde migrants to Mueda landed on the desk of the Portuguese consul in Dar es Salaam, Caetano Martins, the Makonde had been a problem to the colonial administration for a while. The problem manifested itself on two fronts, which, in the minds of colonial officers, were closely connected: the emergence of cotton production co-operatives led by Lázaro Nkavandame in Mueda and of mutual help organisations among migrants in Tanganyika.

Ferraz de Freitas provided the first analysis of the two entwined threats in a lengthy secret report addressed to the governor general, which systematised, summarised and commented on the available communications from the Mueda administration and the

11 The documents can be clustered in five categories: communications between the administrative echelons (telegrams, secret and confidential missives); reports; correspondence (including intercepted letters); press clippings; diverse items. Each piece is connected to the other by way of coding, to form a bureaucratic web that is as fastidiously intertextual as it is lacunary.

12 The return of migrants is, however, briefly mentioned in Alberto Chipande’s interview with Sol de Carvalho, available via <https://www.aluka.org/stable/10.5555/al.sff.document.machel0004>, retrieved 1 May 2020.

13 M. Cahen, ‘The Mueda Case and Makonde Political Ethnicity: Some Notes from a Work in Progress’, *Africana Studia*, 2 (1999), pp. 29–46. Cahen’s unreferenced piece is marred by several factual inaccuracies, such as claiming that two groups of seven people arrived in Mueda instead of one, and muddling the dates of their visits. I hope that the present article will put to rest the claim that Vannomba and Shibiliti were bona fide collaborators with the Portuguese.

14 J.P. Borges Coelho, ‘Abrir a fábula: Questões da política do passado em Moçambique’, *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 106 (2015), pp. 153–66

15 This is not the place to formulate yet another theoretical intervention on the quandary of how to read repressive archives. I find it more productive to engage with the narrative possibilities latent in the archive, for which see S. Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995).

consulates.¹⁶ According to his reconstruction, the foremost migrant association was the Tanganyika Makonde Mozambique Union (TMMU), founded in Dar es Salaam in October 1958. On the surface, the association's statutes and objectives appeared inoffensive: to promote education; to provide mutual support, especially in the case of funerals; to preserve tribal customs and culture. To each of these Freitas applied a forceful political reading: education was a pathway to political emancipation; mutual support, a ploy to capture the 'primitive mentality' of the masses; the valorisation of ancestral custom, a masque of negritude, the most pernicious philosophy expressed by the burgeoning African nationalism. TMMU seemed to champion a form of pan-Africanism, 'the tribe as political institution having to be excluded'.¹⁷ Overall, Freitas concurred with the reading provided by the Nairobi consul, who had written in the accompanying commentary to the letter that the 'real motives ... must be those common to the generality of the associations that were created in these British territories under the influence of African nationalism'.¹⁸ Unlike the consul, Ferraz de Freitas could not explicitly detect a communist influence, but then it was 'public and known by all that communism aim[ed] to make a headway in Africa', and that African nationalism used any ideological means to its end.¹⁹

What was one to make of the request for the en masse return of Makonde migrants, addressed first in person by members of TMMU and then in writing by a group that called itself dissident? Ferraz de Freitas estimated the Portuguese 'natives' who had illegally emigrated to Tanganyika, mostly to find work on sisal plantations, to be more than 8,000. The administration of Mueda had worked to facilitate their individual return over the previous three years. When 'posed collectively', however, the request was to be treated with extreme mistrust. The Nairobi consul was convinced that it would be a Trojan horse for the entry of agents 'trained in the extremist spirit' of nationalist parties, 'a pretext to make a campaign against the ill-treatment that negroes suffer in Mozambique'.²⁰ The language of the missive from the dissident group was particularly suspicious. As 'antivenom', they intended to establish a hostel and control the movement of migrants. What might this imply? 'Perhaps this is the story of the ostrich, who, concealing its head behind a small stone, believes itself to be entirely concealed'.²¹

One factor crucial to assessing the merit and meaning of the request for return was Julius Nyerere's expansive political agenda. A rumour had taken hold in Cabo Delgado that, as soon as Nyerere took power, he would annex the district up to the Messalo river – perhaps even the Lurio – and kick the Portuguese out. The rumour turned out not to be unfounded. First it was confirmed by the administrator of Mueda, whose informants reported that Nyerere would have personally gone to the Lurio to mark it out as a border. Then the Dar es Salaam radio announced that Nyerere had sent 'emissaries' to conduct propaganda as far as the Lurio.²² Finally a spy reported a map, tabled at the Accra All People's Conference of 1958, delineating the project of a Malawi federation, which would include Tanganyika, Nyasaland and the whole of northern Mozambique up to the Lurio.²³ The case was serious, really serious.

16 ANTT/SCCIM 1108, 419–56, Informação 13/959 of 21 September 1959, 'Emigrantes Macondes no Tanganhica'. For reasons of space, I do not discuss here Lázaro Nkavandame and his co-operatives, for which see especially A.M. Gentili and Y. Adam, 'O movimento Liguilanilu no Planalto de Mueda, 1957–62', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 4 (1983), pp. 41–75.

17 ANTT/SCCIM 1108, 438–9, Informação 13/959.

18 ANTT/SCCIM 1343, 69, Processo II/B/G.

19 SCCIM 1108, 439, Informação 13/959.

20 *Ibid.*, 448.

21 *Ibid.*, 447.

22 ANTT/SCCIM 1108, 391, Confidencial 72/C of 10 February 1960.

23 ANTT/SCCIM 1108, 427–8, Informação 13/959, pp. 9–10.

Freitas recommended maximum care. The ‘unshakeable conclusion’ to be reached was that Tanganyikan nationalism had jumped over the Rovuma. The return of clandestine migrants should be encouraged only in small groups, at the migrants’ own expense and upon proof of Portuguese nationality. Meanwhile, further information should be sought about the migrant associations.

A few months later, the anthropologist Jorge Dias handed over a report discussing a brief visit to southern Tanganyika.²⁴ Dias’ account of the number of migrants, based on a British census, was of a wholly different magnitude: 27,489 Makonde – one quarter of those living in Mozambique – 95,464 Makua and 126,741 Yao.²⁵ Dias offered an ethnologically inflected interpretation of the threat posed by TMMU. Contrary to Freitas’ dismissal of tribal politics, he saw the possibility of a cross-border federation of Mozambican and Tanganyikan Makonde – which he considered to be related but separate groups – to create an ‘ethno-political entity’ similar to the Bakongo across the borders of Angola and Congo. Based on conversations with missionaries, he judged that the real objective of TMMU, under the leadership of a charismatic Catholic carpenter, was to combat Islam. The risks involved were two: that the association would ultimately be infiltrated by Islam, and that it would be used as a bridgehead for Tanganyikan nationalism. The matter of return he evaluated as suspiciously as Ferraz de Freitas had:

[t]o what purpose would a committee pose that request to the Consul? To simply test the waters and see the Consul’s reaction? Do they aim to enter en masse and make a show of strength in Mozambique? All is possible, but it is sure that we are faced with a threat that with time will turn more and more dangerous.²⁶

The uncertainties of the two colonial analysts best positioned to understand the situation in Cabo Delgado derived not only from a lack of information or the secretiveness of their subjects. They also reflected the political openness of the moment of the late 1950s, when the imagination of the post-colonial future was not wholly shaped by established borders or the concept of the nation state.²⁷ Recurring mention of the spectre of the Belgian Congo, pulled apart by centripetal forces as it rushed to independence against the master’s will, is revealing. Something was about to happen – but what? No one could tell for sure whether TMMU posed an ethnic, nationalist, pan-African or religious threat, or whether the request for return was a studied ploy or a *ballon d’essai*.

In mid January 1960, Ferraz de Freitas carried out an exploratory mission in Cabo Delgado, during which he had the opportunity to meet Lázaro Nkavandame, ascertain the general lack of enforcement of any mechanism of surveillance on the part of the local administration and install in Mueda his subordinate Manuel António Frias as post chief, to gather intelligence.²⁸ He returned to Lourenço Marques on 24 January.

24 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 369–402, ‘Relatório da Missão de Estudos das Minorias Étnicas do Ultramar Português no ano 1959’. The story of the Dias’ secret intelligence reports is well-known and yet the object of a cult of secrecy in Portugal, where the reports are artfully concealed, and Jorge and Margot are revered as founding figures of national ethnology, museology and ethnographic cinema. See H.G. West, ‘Inverting the Camel’s Hump: Jorge Dias, His Wife, Their Interpreter, and I’, in R. Handler (ed.), *Significant Others: Interpersonal and Professional Commitments in Anthropology* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 51–90.

25 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 371, Dias, ‘Relatório’.

26 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 375, ‘Relatório’.

27 See especially F. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014).

28 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 77–87, Informação 3/960, ‘Colheita de Elementos no Distrito de Cabo Delgado’.

First of Many

On 6 February 1960, the letter's first signatory, Faustino Vannomba, arrived in Mueda with safe conduct provided by the Dar consul.²⁹ Vannomba immediately retired to the hamlet of his maternal uncle, the elder Nandang'a. On 7 February, he assisted at the Sunday mass at the Nangololo mission, where he exhorted all people interested in hearing about matters from Tanganyika to meet him at Nandang'a's hamlet.³⁰ There, at night, he held an assembly (*banja*) 'attended by a great number of natives'.³¹ An infiltrator reported grievances against low salaries, compulsory labour, poor quality schooling (including that of the prestigious Mariri missionary college) and physical punishment. Vannomba also relayed the worry of Makonde migrants in Tanganyika 'to be enslaved by the Swahili once they took power'.³² He bid farewell saying that, should the Portuguese arrest him, more would come to continue his work.

In a meeting of native authorities held coincidentally two days later, post chief Frias asked headman Kapoka – the most powerful and feared collaborator of the colonial government – whether he knew something about one Faustino Vannomba, who hailed from his lands. Kapoka replied that Vannomba had arrived a few days earlier and intended to present himself to the administration in Mueda.

Vannomba reported on 9 or 11 February, 'accompanied by an uncommon and exceptional quantity of people, mostly Makonde youths' – a habit, or strategy, which would have a crucial influence on the events of 16 June.³³ He was received by administrator Garcia Soares, together with Frias and the provincial envoy Ruy Ribeiro. Vannomba introduced himself as president of the Sociedade dos Africanos de Moçambique (Society of the Africans of Mozambique), which, he said, was based in Dar Es Salaam and led by a committee of 12, had about 800 members – 500 men and 300 women – and entertained no commerce whatsoever with Nyerere, being interested only 'in the well-being of its race brothers'. Another less important association also existed in Dar: TMMU, presided over by Feliciano Shongo' Lipinde. The two had 'identical objectives'. Vannomba had come to follow up the request, submitted in writing to the Consul of Portugal, for the return en masse of Makonde migrants to Mueda. The migrants, he said, 'wanted to return because the land was theirs', and because they feared ill-treatment in independent Tanganyika.³⁴ He then tabled four subsidiary points: the creation of a great number of schools, even if it should be at people's own expense; an increase of salaries, to match those offered in Tanganyika; the abolition of the combination of fines and corporal punishment; the abolition of the forced sale of agricultural produce. Vannomba showed one leaflet with the

29 Two reports of the visit are available: one from the administrator (ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 479–89, 35/60/Gov/Conf); the other by the Ing. Ruy Ribeiro (ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 83, 178/S). Another document from the consulate reports 28 January as the arrival date, SCCIM 1110, 415–20, 268/S of 24 May 1960. These reports are synthesised and commented on in Ferraz de Freitas' *Informação 6/960*, 'Colheita de Elementos no Distrito de Cabo Delgado' (ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 98–204). The safe-conduct mentions the 'desire to return home after an absence of five years', ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 59. It was given because Vannomba had lost his native booklet (*caderneta*).

30 The Makonde were acephalous, matrilineal and matrilocal until the 1940s, when matrilocality was eroded by missionary activities and migrant labour. The maternal uncle was the most important figure of authority, exerted especially through advice (*kuduma*), for a man.

31 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 483, 35/60/Gov/Conf.

32 *Ibid.*, 483–4.

33 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 83, 78/S. Portuguese intelligence documents often conflict about dates. Ferraz de Freitas relates that Vannomba introduced himself on 11 February, SCCIM 1110, 100, *Informação 6/960*.

34 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 101. This motive is not included in the original report, but only in Ferraz de Freitas' subsequent *Informação 6/960*. It might have been conveyed verbally to him by Frias.

association's provisional statutes; he could not, however, produce documents proving that he had been authorised to discuss the matters at hand.³⁵

The response was a rap on the knuckles. The administrator explained that the matter of return was known and discussed in higher quarters, being of great magnitude and of no easy solution; that, in the meantime, illegal migrants would be treated as such; and that the Portuguese government, bearing no responsibility for the massive migration towards Tanganyika, would not accept any imposition on the part of natives. While waiting for the response, Vannomba was not to carry out any unauthorised meetings or political activity.

For ten days, Vannomba eluded Portuguese surveillance. On 19 February, he was again summoned to the administration to produce his documents, which he again failed to do. Asked to account for his night-time meeting, Vannomba first denied it, then qualified his public pronouncements as 'more aspirations than critique or political claims'.³⁶ The administrator offered him 250 *escudos* for the trip back to Dar es Salaam – drawn from the fund destined to pay for intelligence gathering – and saw him off, not to return to Mozambique unless formally instructed to do so.

On 1 March, a meeting was organised with all the native authorities of Mueda, in which the results of the conversations with Vannomba were expounded 'patiently and calmly but with the utmost firmness'.³⁷ The chiefs were warned that they would be subject to grievous punishment, including internment, should they host natives like Vannomba, who 'dared to promote unrest and unjust criticism of the Portuguese Administration'. Waiting for a formal deliberation from the central government, a brief response from Lourenço Marques encouraged the administrator's resolve to accept returnees only in small groups and only if they easily 'agglomerated without provoking any ill-feeling in our populations'.³⁸ An exemption from individual tax arrears was also under study.³⁹

Suspicious and Betrayals

On 25 February, Vannomba received a letter from his associates warning of dissatisfaction brewing in their rival association:

Mr Vannomba, how are you? I inform you that the TMMU party wrote us a letter to tell us the following: what you're doing there in the Makonde [lands] we don't know ... They are unhappy with Tangazi because he didn't meet with them and blame him because we brought the association to the Makonde ... On the 28th we will have a meeting and we will communicate the decisions.⁴⁰

On 12 March, the Tanganyikan newspaper *Ngurumo* announced that, on the following day, a meeting would be held to change the name of TMMU into the Mozambique African National Union (MANU).⁴¹ The move was perceived by the Portuguese consul as a pernicious radicalisation inspired by TANU.⁴² The consul intervened by sending 'seventy

35 Vannomba said that the documents had been taken by a brother from Tanganyika who had come after him. He then said that the brother had escaped with the documents, believing that he had been imprisoned. The brother was Zacarias Vannomba, teacher at the mission, who would later become an important Frelimo activist.

36 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 484, 35/60/Gov/Conf.

37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*, 480.

39 ANTT/SCCIM, 1109, 70, 153/S of 15 March 1960.

40 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 462, 446/SEC of 24 March 1960. Tangazi Makalika was Vannomba's adjunct in SAM.

41 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 390, *Mwafrika*, no. 109, 12 March 1960. This, incidentally, demonstrates that an association or party called 'Makonde African National Union' never existed. The Tanganyika Makonde Mozambique Union (TMMU) would be renamed Mozambique African National Union (MANU).

42 For a description of this meeting, see ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 449–53, Conf. no. 10 of 15 March 1960.

faithful Makonde' from nearby plantations to participate, with the instruction not to intervene but only to wait and watch. Of the 85 people present, only 50 were allowed into the narrow venue.

Three speakers championed the change of name. The first, one Cosimos, proclaimed that the time for the independence of Mozambique had come, that funds should be raised in solidarity with their Angolan brothers who had been imprisoned and that the Union should dispatch a representative to the UN, to whom a letter had already been sent pleading for the independence of Mozambique. A second speaker concurred, adding that TANU was ready to support an association in favour of independence. The third speaker, one Cassamali, vigorously exclaimed, 'Uhuru for Mozambique!' and said that Tanganyika, Uganda, Zanzibar and the Belgian Congo would all support the process. Some of those present – presumably the consul's envoys – told the speakers that 'if they desired independence they should ask for it in Mozambique'.⁴³

When it came to voting for the change of name, the majority of infiltrators determined the result: 39 to 11 among the 50 who had been let in. Both Vannomba and Kibiriti communicated privately to the consul their hostility to the change. It is likely that Vannomba was among the 70 faithful elements: the consul considered summoning Shibiliti from Tanga, 'which was not necessary because on that very same day Faustino Vanomba returned from Mozambique'.⁴⁴

Alarmed by the outcome of the meeting, suspecting the rival faction of betrayal and unsure of what Vannomba had discussed in Mueda with the Portuguese administration, the TMMU leadership dispatched its highest representative to inquire.

Little God

There are personalities that pierce through the drab language of intelligence bureaucracy. Such was Tiago Mula Mulombe, the least sung hero of the Mueda saga. A man in his 40s, father of five, former catechist and carpenter at the Imbuo mission, president and possibly founder of TMMU, Tiago had been living in Tanganyika and Zanzibar for almost a decade after being expelled from the mission for misbehaviour.⁴⁵ Short and stocky, he had a threatening physical presence to colonial officials, with his facial scarifications, 'dark black complexion', and 'relatively long moustache and hair, reminiscent of the type of negro agitator which often appears in the press'.⁴⁶

Tiago arrived in Mueda on 17 March and went straight to the administration, intending to find out how Faustino Vannomba had been received, because TMMU leaders suspected that 'he might not have treated the matters as he was ordered'.⁴⁷ Like Vannomba, he expounded on the structure of his association, which, he said, was based in Dar es Salaam, with branches in Zanzibar, Pemba, Tanga, Mombasa, Mafia and beyond, and comprised not only Makonde but also Makua and Yao. Unlike Vannomba, Tiago did not mince his words. Calmly and clearly, he explained that all members of TMMU were affiliated to TANU, as

43 *Ibid.*, 1110, 451. The use of the word *uhuru* to refer specifically to independence – in a TMMU meeting possibly attended by Vannomba – explicitly contradicts Cahen's fanciful statement that 'it is an anachronism to translate the Swahili word 'uhulu' [*sic*] as independence'. M. Cahen, 'Massacre de Mueda, Moçambique, 1960', in M. Cardina and B. Sena Martins (eds), *As Voltas do Passado: A Guerra Colonial e As Lutas de Libertação* (Lisbon, Tinta da China, 2018), pp. 40–48.

44 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 437, Conf. of 16 June 1960.

45 In the colonial documentation, both Vannomba and Tiago referred to Feliciano Shongolipinde as TMMU's founder, yet Jorge Dias reported that TMMU had been founded by someone who was a devout Christian and a carpenter.

46 ANTT/SCCIM, 1110, 109, Inf. 6/960.

47 The reports from the administration on Tiago's visit are ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 452–61, 445/S of 24 March, and ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 472–4, 448/S of 25 March.

were most Makonde living in Tanganyika. He then declared that Nyerere's intent was to 'take care' of the territory of Mozambique up to the Lurio river as soon as he rose to the presidency. TMMU members therefore wanted to 'return to their lands so that when Nyerere took power they would rule the Makonde'.⁴⁸ He then brazenly asked the administrator to support the Makondes' return and complained about many aspects of colonial governance: lack of freedom, the impossibility of opening shops and the venality of native authorities and sepoys.

The administrator's first instinct would have been to drag Tiago straight to the border, as he had done with Vannomba; yet he left him to roam free for a few days, to gauge his behaviour. Tiago immediately took the opportunity to speak with prisoners and workers of the administration and to visit the native chiefs Mbavala and Dyankali. 'In an attitude of quasi-provocation he took notes and asked questions publicly'.⁴⁹ In the next few days, Tiago would be involved in several other alarming incidents. Some prisoners openly complained of the forced labour to which they were subjected, saying that 'Tiago came and would forbid corporal punishment and gratuitous labour. Shortly the Makonde land would be theirs'.⁵⁰ In Mueda's main formal shop, Casa China, Tiago himself confirmed that he had come to put an immediate end to corporal punishment and unpaid labour. The shop owner, Assam Suleman Juma, was an informant for the Portuguese. In a visit to Mbavala's hamlet, he heard people boast that 'shortly the whites would plough for the black, because Tiago said so'.⁵¹ Moreover, Tiago was called by many 'Little God'.

These reports prompted the Mueda administrator into a sudden change of mind. Judging that a struggle for political chiefship was already under way, he sent Tiago to Porto Amélia to be heard by the governor and requested Ferraz de Freitas' immediate presence. Leaving Mueda by car, Tiago saluted the people, saying that they should await his return. Tiago spoke little with the governor, but told the interpreter that Nyerere had prompted all Africans in Mozambique to form associations and bring them to the territory to achieve what TANU had achieved.

The concern of the colonial government over Tiago's visit found a precise echo in a restructuring of the intelligence archive: on 30 March, it was ordered that 'all correspondence relating to the Makonde's return, TMMU, Vanombe, Lázaro, Tiago and others' be reorganised in a single dossier.⁵² A unified gaze was needed to face the coalescing threat.

Amiable Conversations

Slightly delayed by a surgical operation, Ferraz de Freitas left for Cabo Delgado on 7 April. He immediately set about talking to Tiago, over two days, without resorting 'to police interrogation but to an amiable conversation, tending to create confidence and to obtain an exteriorisation of a spontaneous nature, which, in our view, was more appropriate to the circumstance of the moment and to the mentality of the kind of native which is Tiago'.⁵³ Tiago appeared to him as 'alive and insinuating' and 'highly indoctrinated and obsessed by his cause'.⁵⁴ On the second day, Tiago indeed appeared to open up more.

48 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 452-3, 445/S of 24 March.

49 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 472, 448/S of 25 March.

50 *Ibid.*

51 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 473, 448/S of 25 March.

52 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 439, Apontamento, 30 March. This document marks the birth of the archive on the Mueda massacre and, in a sense, the birth of the event in the eyes of colonial intelligence. The original dossier was labelled L/10/4/CD.

53 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 115, Informação 6/960.

54 *Ibid.*, 109.

The recorded statements – pedantically broken down by Ferraz de Freitas into 52 points that fill five typed pages – revolve around the relationships between TMMU and Vannomba, and the role of Nyerere.⁵⁵ Tiago maintained that Vannomba was the secretary of the Tanga branch of TMMU – presided over by one ‘Kibrite Divane’ – and that he had been sent to Mueda by the organisation. Tiago’s visit, on the contrary, had happened in secret, without Vannomba’s knowledge. Since 1959, the TMMU directorate had aimed to change its name to Mozambique African National Union, which was about the same as Sociedade dos Africanos de Moçambique, but the change had not yet been formalised. Tiago then expounded in detail the statutes and nature of the organisation. Among the society’s objectives, he cited ‘that there shouldn’t be poor nor rich. The rich should buy clothes for those who don’t have. Everyone should have a car’.⁵⁶ Nyerere was the main promoter of the ‘transfer’ of TMMU into Mozambican territory. While Tiago had never heard Nyerere directly mention the plan to take over the north of Mozambique, it was common knowledge. In the case of war between Portugal and independent Tanganyika, Tiago reckoned that all would side with Nyerere, who was the ‘owner of the land’ because he was African, black and a friend of blacks. Finally, Tiago expounded a series of demands: multi-racialism; elections; education; clothing; free trade; reduction of taxes; end to ill-treatment, forced labour and physical punishment; better buying prices for agricultural produce; salary negotiations.

While Tiago was kept in custody, Ferraz de Freitas went to Mueda and organised a meeting with local headmen. Of these, he selected Dyankali for closer scrutiny, despite indications from the administrator and Jorge Dias’ report that he was ‘a hard individual, from whom nothing can be drawn’.⁵⁷ After yet another amiable conversation, Dyankali confessed that Tiago had approached him to organise a secret meeting with all native authorities. Tiago had told Dyankali that chiefs were ‘de facto slaves’, not like in Tanganyika, where they received good salaries and cars, and that they should claim their rights and ‘show the administrator, because they were the owners of the land [and] the white was a guest’.⁵⁸ Dyankali had sent out a written invitation to a number of his colleagues, but the meeting could not be held on account of Tiago’s forced transfer to Porto Amélia.

Upon his return from Mueda on 18 April, Ferraz de Freitas told Tiago the results of the conversation with Dyankali. Tiago denied the encounter and remained silent. When notified of his immediate arrest, he kept calm, ‘giving the impression that he was ready for such an eventuality and that he accepted it’.⁵⁹ He only asked that his bicycle be given to a teacher called Cornélio at the Imbuho mission – that is, Cornélio João Mandanda, second in command of Lázaro Nkavandame’s cotton co-operatives and future great raconteur of the Mueda massacre.⁶⁰ This constitutes a tenuous but unequivocal link between the co-operative movement and the migrant organisations.⁶¹ Tiago entrusted his jacket to his son João, also a teacher. When told that he would need the jacket because of the cold, ‘he limited himself to saying that it didn’t matter’.⁶²

The situation posed by Tiago’s visit was assessed through an exchange of correspondence between the various echelons of the colonial government. The provincial governor took stock of

55 *Ibid.*, 115–19. Freitas’ report first provides an ‘objective’ transcription, then a separate detailed commentary.

56 *Ibid.*, 119.

57 *Ibid.*, 117.

58 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 73–4, 290/S of 25 April.

59 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 120, Informação 6/960.

60 Mandanda wrote a typewritten account of the massacre – Y. Adam and H.A. Dyuti (eds), ‘Entrevista: Falam Testemunhas’, *Arquivo: Boletim do Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique*, 14 (1983), pp. 116–26; he was also the ghost writer of the theatre play that would be filmed in Ruy Guerra’s *Mueda, Memória e Massacre*, and a key informant of the History workshop brigades.

61 This detail contradicts Cahen’s claim that the two movements were unrelated.

62 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 120, Informação 6/960.

the ‘integral contamination’ of the ‘whole Maconde medium’ by Tanganyikan nationalist ideas, especially the missionary teachers. He recommended that the Mueda administrator be replaced, on account of his aloofness and lack of ‘gift to deal with the natives’.⁶³ The governor general wrote a comprehensive report to the overseas minister, highlighting the divisive potential of Islam in the province and suggesting a series of practical interventions to be taken, including the establishment of a military presence in Mueda and the immediate imprisonment of ‘any Makonde traitor to the Portuguese motherland’.⁶⁴

In a report of over 100 pages submitted only in early June – written in characteristically prolix and repetitive prose – Ferraz de Freitas analysed the threat from all possible angles. He considered Vannomba and Tiago dangerous agitators, but was uncertain whether they belonged to TMMU or to rival organisations. In either case, these organisations should be considered as ‘working instruments of Tanganyikan nationalism’.⁶⁵ He found laughable Jorge Dias’ claim that TMMU’s objective was to fight against Islam and prompted the anthropologist urgently to provide more reports to understand the Makonde better, so as to take advantage of their weaknesses.⁶⁶ The request to return he considered as part of ‘a plan ... for the annexation of a parcel of our territory’.⁶⁷ The existence of such a plan was confirmed by a series of media pronouncements by Nyerere, Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda.⁶⁸

Another element should be taken into consideration, however. One informant from the border post of Mocimboa do Rovuma reported a countrywide ‘tribal census’ of sorts, carried out in Tanganyika under Nyerere’s orders and with the co-operation of chiefs at the service of the British, to ascertain who had been the great pre-colonial chiefs in the area, with the objective of reinstating them in power after independence.⁶⁹ Migrants who could not name a pre-colonial chief to whom they should be subject – especially Makonde – were encouraged to return home. Thus an early attempt at Africanisation, wholly enmeshed within the logic of indirect rule, might have offered a more cynical rationale to TANU’s promotion of the migrants’ return.

Whichever the reason, Ferraz de Freitas concluded that a collective return would have disastrous consequences: massive unemployment of former migrants who were no longer used to subsistence agriculture and an ‘upsurge of subversive activities’. And more agitators were to be expected. Vannomba had promised that two ‘women propagandists’ would follow him; Tiago said that 11 more people were prepared to come.⁷⁰

Emissaries

On 27 April, nine days after Tiago’s arrest and Freitas’ departure from Porto Amélia, a group of seven people – six men and one woman – sent by Faustino Vannomba reported at

63 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 404–10, 68/60/Gov/Conf. of 21 April 1960.

64 SCCIM 1109, 77–81, 253/S, 18 April 1960. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first instance in which a political manipulation of religious conflict in Cabo Delgado is suggested. The colonial government would foster more aggressively such policy – whose tragic consequences can be appreciated today – during the liberation struggle.

65 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 146, Informação 6/960.

66 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 149, Informação 6/960.

67 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 159, Informação 6/960.

68 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 155–6, Informação 6/960. These public pronouncements in the media all dated from April 1960 and had Banda as their main protagonist. Banda would later support a splinter liberation party for the creation of a state, comprising Malawi and central Mozambique, called Rombézia.

69 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 161–2, Informação 6/960. I have been unable to locate traces of this early census in the historiography of Tanzania. None of the several specialists whom I contacted could cast any light on the matter.

70 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 171, Informação 6/960. If one of the two women was certainly Modesta Neva, could the other be Verónica Namiva, the traitor perhaps erased from the history of Mueda? See Israel, ‘Mueda Massacre’, p. 1163.

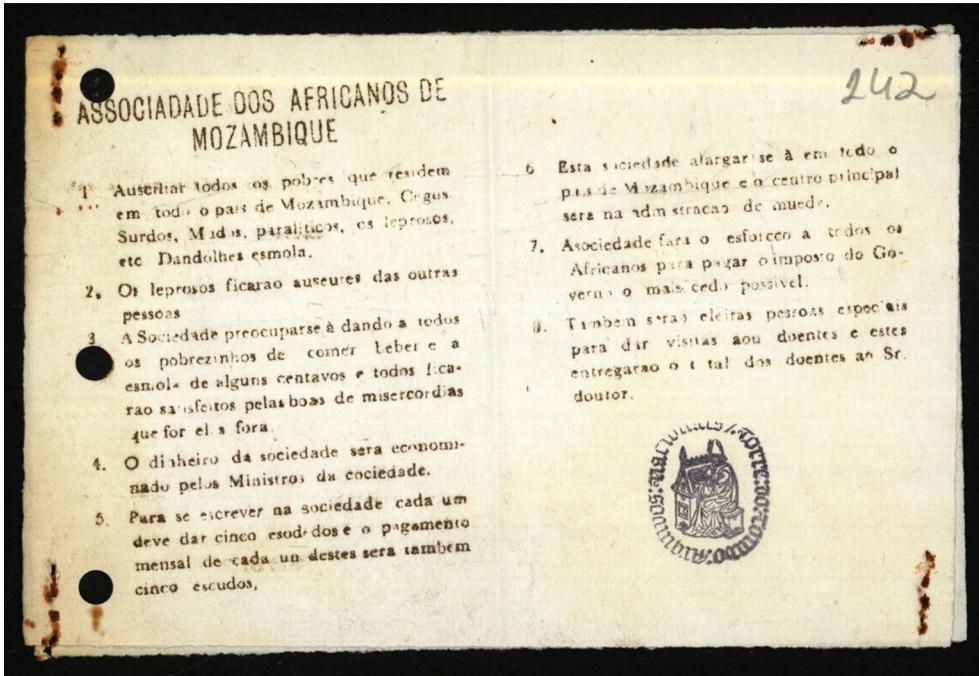


Figure 1. Card of the *Associadade dos Africanos de Moçambique*, number 3. (Document granted by the ANTT, SCCIM 1109, 242.)

the Mueda administration: Simon Nshusha, Lazima Dalama, Simon Shambumba, Modesta Iussufo, Mariano Tumyanetu, Cosme Paulo and Titico Fundi.⁷¹

Their objective was to ask permission to sell the cards of the ‘Associadade [*sic*] dos Africanos de Moçambique’ (Sociedade dos Africanos de Moçambique – SAM), of which they carried one sample. Printed on the back of the card were the association’s eight programmatic points (see Figure 1): (1) to support all Mozambican paupers; (2) to seclude the lepers; (3) to give paupers food and ‘some cents’ alms for everyone to be satisfied of the good deeds of mercy’; (4) to economise its moneys; (5) to exact a levy of 5 *escudos* upon registration and then on a monthly basis; (6) to ‘expand to the whole territory of Mozambique with its main centre in the Mueda administration’; (7) to encourage Africans to pay colonial taxes; (8) to elect people who would visit the sick or bring them to doctors.⁷² The group’s leader, Simon Nshusha, explained that 1,000 printed cards waited in Lindi. They would be sold in Mueda and Nangade for 5 shillings each payable immediately and 25 shillings payable after a month, to be collected by Clemente Nandang’a.

Suspicious of this ‘pseudo-charity society’, the administrator interrogated the seven one by one. They ‘held identical and absolutely well-studied statements’.⁷³ They refused to identify SAM with TMMU, even though they could not explain clearly in what the difference consisted, since the objective was one and the same: the return of the Makonde. Faustino would come soon to clarify the matter in person. The administrator had indeed received a letter from Vannomba, who asked for a licence to return to Mueda for a period of two years ‘to deal with our matters of the Macondes’.⁷⁴

71 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 380–400, 572/S of 28 April 1960, in 78/60/Gov/Conf. of 4 May 1960.

72 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 242. This was the card found in the possession of Vannomba.

73 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 384, 572/S of 28 April 1960.

74 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 384, Faustino Vanomba to the Administrator of the Maconde, 31 March 1960.

The administrator objected that assistance to the elderly and the sick would be of little importance to the Makonde, since the first was provided by the health services and the second by the family. The seven responded that they merely obeyed Vannomba's orders. While Nshusha presented himself as the leader, the administrator suspected that the real figurehead might be Lazima, who seemed 'exceptionally shrewd and endowed with great power of argumentation', and who claimed that the objective of the society was to 'avoid Africans of all races dividing over any matter'.⁷⁵ Modesta also stood out; for bearing and manner of speech, she seemed 'exceptionally prepared for the functions of subversive propaganda among native women'.⁷⁶ The administrator sent the seven home and asked them to reappear on the following day to continue the conversation. Meanwhile, he deployed infiltrators to follow them.

The spies reported that the seven held an incendiary secret meeting that night in the hamlet of Mwangi, in which they said that the land was theirs and that Europeans and Indians would have to leave soon; that they knew Tiago had been captured and they would be as well, but they did not care because more would come; and that nothing much could happen because the whites could no longer beat them. Seventy people participated; Modesta was surrounded by women. More meetings were held on the following morning. Then the shop owner Juma came to relate that a nurse had encountered by the road a group of 30 people, who told him that 'six Swahili and a woman had come to ask for independence and the administrator was about to flee to Mocimboa'.⁷⁷

As soon as the seven presented themselves, the administrator had them arrested and flogged publicly, the men receiving 25 *palmatórias* and the woman 15.⁷⁸ They were probed further in the days that followed, but nothing came of the interrogations. The seven insisted that their organisation had no political leanings and no connection to Tiago, Nyerere or Nkavandame – its only motives were the desire to help the poor, and it had utmost respect for the Portuguese government. They all denied having taken part in a night-time meeting, even though Tumianeto let out that some people from Mwatidi had come asking for news.

The visit and punishment of the group of seven received extensive publicity in the Tanganyikan magazines *Mwafrika* and *Ngurumo*, which devoted, respectively, five and two articles to the events. The titles are eloquent: 'A hundred lashes for those who explain *uhuru*'; 'Seven Africans struck with a hundred lashes: for asking for independence'; 'Brutality of the Portuguese'; 'The Portuguese said: woe to those who don't obey our laws'; 'The Makonde strike against the Portuguese in Mozambique'; 'Bad politics in Mozambique'.⁷⁹ One letter to the editor commented that 'the mentality of the Portuguese is a hundred years behind'. Another held that 'the Portuguese government is rotten, wholly rotten'.⁸⁰ One reader blamed Vannomba and defied him 'to go hurriedly to Mozambique and defend our elders who are prisoners for life and take a hundred lashes.'⁸¹

Meanwhile, in Mueda, imaginations were set alight. The day after the visit of the seven, a nurse found a group of 30 people assembled along the road, 'waiting for independence'.⁸² The Cabo Delgado governor wrote an alarmed missive to the governor-general.⁸³ Why

75 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 385, 572/S of 28 April 1960.

76 *Ibid.*

77 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 386, 572/S of 28 April 1960.

78 Portugal's characteristic method of punishment for natives and children consisted in beating the palm of the hands with a wooden tool.

79 The articles are all appended to ANTT/SCCIM, 196–222, Informação 13/960, 'Sociedade dos Africanos de Moçambique. Os sete indígenas enviados pelo Vanomba'. I have translated the titles from Kiswahili. Note that the translator – as all Portuguese officials – indulges in Cahen's 'anachronism', translating *uhuru* as independence.

80 ANTT/SCCIM, 213, *Ngurumo*, 338, 1 May 1960.

81 ANTT/SCCIM, 213, *Mwafrika*, no. 240, 1 June 1960.

82 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 64, from Soares Garcia to Manuel Frias, 20 April 1960.

83 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 380–400, 78/60/Gov/Conf.

would Vannomba deploy seven people just to show one card? Was this a demonstration of force? Was the new association a means to transcend tribal politics and assume a national character? Was it one and the same with MANU? On 14 May, a telegram from Lourenço Marques ordered the immediate imprisonment of Vannomba upon his return.⁸⁴ This order would never be revoked.

Codes and Warnings

In the aftermath of his envoys' visit, Vannomba received a number of letters from Mozambique, which demonstrate the existence of a burgeoning political network clustered around his native hamlet and the mission of Nangololo.⁸⁵

Two letters were sent by Vannomba's brother-in-law, Clemente Nandang'a. They were written in Shimakonde and poorly translated by the official interpreter, out of incompetence or connivance.⁸⁶ The first informed Vannomba of the visit and imprisonment of the group of seven. The letter ended on a plea: 'now come back immediately because here we are all prisoners, because Kapoka is looking for people who refer to you, such as Naengo, and Dyankali the same, *capitão-mor* Tomas the same and Sinandile the same'.⁸⁷ Kapoka was the most infamous pro-colonial chief; Dyankali was the one who had received Tiago, and who had been questioned and arrested as a consequence. The list thus identified a group of native authorities who saw Vannomba as a leader of sorts.⁸⁸

The second letter recounts the aftermath of the arrest. 'All those who've been heard [by the Portuguese] accuse you,' Nandang'a warns. He then explains how Modesta was harassed by native policemen, who wanted to rape her. The letter concludes by describing a new collective response to physical punishment: 'the Makonde rejoice as they are flogged: Gaspar Vaimba and Romão Gregório rejoiced greatly when the flogging ended. All who made the contributions answered: thank you'.⁸⁹

In April, headman Ntumbati from Mwatidi sent a brief message: 'salutations Faustino the headman Petili insulted the party of – 5 before my very eyes me Ntumbati I didn't reply I hushed. Such are the words I give you all. *Mavi* 2.'⁹⁰ Five in Shimakonde is '*tanu*': the message therefore reports that the headman Pedro insulted the party TANU and was not to be trusted. Two in Shimakonde is '*mbili*', and '*mavimbili*' is an archaic word which means 'with great force'.⁹¹ This is the earliest written evidence of grassroots insurgent intelligence inspired by TANU ideals in Mueda.

Zacarias Vannomba sent a message pleading with his brother not to return:

Tiago's words were very ugly. Because you need to know how to eat a goat, the Makonde say: 'teach us with good heart'. Faustino, look well this letter, because these

84 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 51, 216 Gov. of 14 May 1960. The provincial governor acknowledged the order in ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 51, 88 Gov. of 16 May 1960.

85 The letters were found on, and taken from, Vannomba after his arrest.

86 The interpreter was one Constantino Anlaue. The systematic erasure of touchy issues suggests connivance with Vannomba. Yet a small page of translation notes (ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 303) demonstrates incompetence in both Shimakonde and Portuguese. The systematic distortion of Portuguese words confirm that Anlaue was a Makuwa.

87 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 263, from Clemente Nandang'a to Faustino Vanomba, 30 April 1960. I translate directly from Shimakonde.

88 The interpreter mistranslated this entire sentence. The translation reads: 'Kapoka goes looking for people on the other side. You, who are son of Naengo, Dyankali,' etc.

89 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 268, from Clemente Nandang'a to Faustino Vanomba, undated.

90 ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 245. 'Insulted the party of 5' is mistranslated as 'he said, so – S.'

91 *Mavi mbili* can also mean 'two shits', which does not seem to make much sense here – unless it is a metaphor for which we have lost the code.

days I cannot read without glasses.⁹² Faustino, it is agreeable not to come and see us, because if you go in person perhaps they will imprison you. We are suffering greatly because of slander [denunciations]. I haven't slandered Ndyankali but he was imprisoned in Pemba. Faustino good-bye I don't have further, heed well my words. Do not cast words of war.⁹³

An unsigned letter sent from the mission of Nangololo on 10 June also counselled prudence of speech: 'Faustino C. Vanomba, I tell you this: your words are like the first ones, yet the White is weighing them one by one. Yes, we are suffering but that's nothing. Faustino I beseech do not rush the matter like Tiago. Do thus about the matter of the association: say ...'.⁹⁴ The letter suggests the propositions to be tabled before the administrator: funding education through collective contributions and government management of the distribution of association cards. It then reports that the association was under surveillance and that the sender had been interrogated three times and questioned by a mission nun. 'I said so: Faustino is making an effort to have the people return from Tanganyika, if the government agrees, to stop having people arrested, beaten up, that the shop prices be good and people who work receive good salaries'.⁹⁵

A more pessimistic warning was handed over to Vannomba in Lindi just before he crossed the border into Mozambique:

Vanomba look well, they carried Tiago to Pemba without beating him up, they carried him gently, but they say Tiago was imprisoned, we won't see him again that's it, and with you they will carry you to Pemba carefully that's it, and back here they will say we won't see you again, he's imprisoned that's it, consider very well here big brother, salutations.⁹⁶

On 10 June, *Mwafrika* reported that Vannomba, 'great correspondent from the *Associedade [sic] dos Africanos de Moçambique*' and Shibiliti 'chief of TMMU', had left Lindi by boat headed to Mozambique.⁹⁷ They declared to the press that they would meet with Mozambicans, hear their grievances, and report them to the governor-general, 'to make counsel over our land'. The article also reported that the fellow countrymen who attended the farewell meeting told the two 'that it was their obligation to demand what the natives of Mozambique desire, that is, independence'.

A Craven Postponement

Vannomba and Shibiliti arrived together in Mueda on 13 June, the first in breach of an explicit order from the Portuguese consul, the second with a consular safe conduct granted to him as president of the Tanga branch of TMMU.⁹⁸ The administrator was under instructions to arrest Vannomba upon arrival. But things took a different turn.

92 This is coded language, which might have indicated surveillance or the need to speak in coded language.

93 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 305, Zacarias Vannomba to Faustino Vannomba, undated.

94 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 307. The writing is dissimilar to both Simão Matola's and Aleixo Timbanga's, the two associates from Nangololo who wrote other letters to Vannomba (see next section). It might have come – but this is just a supposition – from Mateus Kaunda or Constantino Mazendo, who are mentioned in Timbanga's letter as his close associates in Nangololo, ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 278.

95 *Ibid.*

96 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 273, Headman Mingorjo, Lindi, 13 June 1960. The official translation of this hard-to-read scribble is surprisingly accurate. The original contains no capital letters or punctuation. I have inserted some commas to make the text more readable, while retaining the original's flux.

97 ANTT/SCCIM 1008, 480, *Mwafrika*, no. 246 of 10 June 1960. All quotations in this paragraph come from this source.

98 The Nairobi consul noted the 'impossibility to retain Vanomba in Dar' in ANTT/SCCIM, 1109, 23, 325/S of 19 June 1960. The safe-conduct was granted on account of Shibiliti's good services as informant. All communication from the Nairobi consul is defensive about the mistake of granting this safe-conduct.

Like Vannomba had done on his first visit, the two approached the administration building escorted by more than 300 people.⁹⁹ They were greeted by post chief Frias while someone sent for the administrator, who was at home. To Frias, the administrator seemed ‘alarmed from seeing so many people gathered’.¹⁰⁰ And to the administrator, the people appeared ‘in a state of manifest excitement’.¹⁰¹ Garcia Soares had a brief chat with the two. Shibiliti said that he had come to take up residence in the town of Mueda because he had grown used to city life in Tanganyika. Vannomba said that he had come to deal with SAM issues.

People kept flowing in, and a sepoy sent by the administrator to observe was chased away. Garcia Soares walked out to speak to the multitude, which he judged to be over 500 people led by four or five figureheads. The figureheads said that they had come to hear the results of the conversation with Vannomba and Shibiliti, as they were concerned that they might be arrested, like the group of seven. The administrator reassured them that Shibiliti’s papers were in order and that he would have a conversation with Faustino, omitting the order for the latter’s arrest. He judged that carrying out the arrest would ‘be impossible in that moment, without unchaining a pure and simple revolt’.¹⁰² Someone asked why some people from Vannomba’s family had been imprisoned, referring to the recent detention of Clemente Nandang’a and others, held in custody for interrogation. The administrator reassured them that Clemente would soon be freed. He then asked the crowd to disband, but the reply was unanimous: *mene!* No!

Garcia Soares engaged the crowd in the backyard of the administration building for what he considered ‘the two most difficult hours of my administrative career’.¹⁰³ Behind him stood officer designate Manuel Godinho, ‘for the eventuality of an extreme order’, while post chief Frias ‘elaborated cyphered telegrams’. ‘It is difficult’, commented the administrator, ‘to put on paper a dialogue that lasted two hours and in which were employed those subtleties and those ploys of language that one has to use with the natives’.¹⁰⁴ Two issues seem to have been at the centre of the conversations: the fear of another arrest and the matter of return. Concerning the first, the administrator observed that the group of seven had defied Portuguese sovereignty and deserved to be punished. Somebody replied that they should be allowed to come from Porto Amélia, to tell the story with their own mouths. The administrator replied that the Portuguese government did not reconsider its just punishments and decisions. As for the issue of return, the administrator highlighted all the difficulties, especially the likelihood of a famine. The figureheads replied: ‘this is our own problem, which we will solve; each family will take care of their own and Mr Administrator shouldn’t worry about this’.¹⁰⁵ The administrator joked that they could well remain there, exposed to the elements; he needed lunch.

During lunch, one prisoner slipped out of the administration block and joined the crowd, followed by a sepoy. The crowd wanted to thrash the sepoy, who was saved by officer

99 Four official reports are available on the events of 13–16 June: the Governor’s, ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 341–8, ‘Insubordinação de indígenas Macondes registada em Mueda no dia 16 de Junho, quinta-feira’ of 17 June 1960; two reports by Frias, ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 220–30, ‘Relatório’, 22 June and *ibid.*, 195–9, ‘Relatório’, 19 July; and the Administrator’s, ANTT/SCCIM 1009, 231–42, ‘Relatório do incidente decorrido em Mueda na banja dada por sua Excelencia, o Governador do distrito, em 16 di corrente, e antecedentes’, 27 June 1960. Frias was the least susceptible to being blamed for the events, and his reports are the most detailed and frank.

100 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, ‘Relatório’, 220.

101 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 231, ‘Relatório do incidente’. Frias’ and Garcia Soares’ reports are at loggerheads over the interpretation of the events.

102 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 232.

103 *Ibid.*, 233.

104 *Ibid.*, 234.

105 *Ibid.*

designate Godinho. The administrator again called Vannomba and Shibiliti into the building and told them that he was due to leave for Mocimboa da Praia to welcome the provincial governor, who happened to be visiting that coastal town about 100 kilometres from Mueda; there he would canvas the superior's opinion. The two agreed and walked out 'with airs of importance' to address the multitudes. Clemente was freed and they all marched away, singing, towards the shops. The administrator drove off to Mocimboa, from where he sent an order for the sepoy to patrol Mueda throughout the night. Frias took the liberty of revoking it.

On the morning of 14 June, Vannomba and Shibiliti returned to the administration, this time accompanied by over 1,000 people. They engaged in a long conversation inside the building, 'showing no sign of fear and not even embarrassment'.¹⁰⁶ They insisted that they were trusted by the Portuguese consul in Dar, to whom they had informed on many TMMU members. When Frias asked for their names, 'they indicated some quite well known'. They discussed some of the grievances exposed in previous meetings; Faustino answered most questions, 'skilfully circling all difficulties'. They again complained about the low prices at which shops bought agricultural produce but were caught off guard when the administrator explained that prices had recently been raised. Towards the end of the conversation, Frias asked them what they did when their fields were infested with weeds. They would eradicate the weeds, they replied. Frias said that 'the Portuguese government also removed the weeds from its fields, be it Shibiliti or Vannomba. They answered that they didn't want to be weed, even though they understood very well'. To conclude, Garcia Soares said that the governor would come to Mueda on Thursday. All queries should be addressed to him in a public meeting, which should be attended by 'the greatest possible number of people'.

In the afternoon, Garcia Soares sent an alarmed missive to the governor, explaining that 'for the first time this administration found itself in a situation in which it had lost control of events'.¹⁰⁷ He then instructed the sepoy to send out invitations to all native authorities, missionaries and 'civilised' people for a meeting on the afternoon of Thursday 16 June. Frias observed the unfolding of events with disapproval, noting that 'the administrator was scared ... That Most Excellent Sir lacked the firmness and serenity necessary to carry out the imprisonment of Faustino and Quebrite immediately on Monday, especially since the people that accompanied them were relatively few'.¹⁰⁸ The provincial governor informed Lourenço Marques, suggesting that the 'administrator should be urgently replaced'.¹⁰⁹

Storm Clouds

On 15 June, Vannomba received communion in Nangololo. Three letters were handed to him on that day. Two came from Simon Matola, the mission's factotum who was in charge of selling SAM cards.¹¹⁰ The first letter reported a conversation that Matola had overheard in Portuguese, a language that he had mastered. It went: 'that Makonde guy, he's pestering the Portuguese government for what reason? Who might have taught them? Better carry away the Dutch padres'.¹¹¹ The fathers would soon be removed, Matola foresaw, 'for teaching us to be civilised', and were therefore dispirited. The governor, the administrator, the chiefs of the whole province, all said: 'what's wrong with the Makonde? Let them go crazy and they will see.' Matola concluded that 'the whites, government of Mozambique,

106 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 222, 'Relatório', 22 June 1960. All quotes in this paragraph come from this source.

107 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 166, Secreta 1/60, 14 June 1960.

108 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 229, 'Relatório'.

109 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 361, 107 Gov. of 14 June 1960.

110 For a short biography of Matola, see Israel, 'Mueda Massacre', p. 1176.

111 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 292, Matola to Vannomba, 15 June 1960.

me Simon Matola I think they will take a long time to accept. For they are very antagonistic'. The second letter expounded practical association matters.¹¹² Matola had sold 200 cards but had been denounced by three chiefs, imprisoned for three days and put to guard a cotton field. Then he provided lists of the chiefs and shop-owners who opposed the association, and of the prices they applied – possibly so that Vannomba would not be caught again off-guard. The third letter came from Aleixo Timbanga, another member of SAM, who accused Matola of embezzling funds.¹¹³

Perhaps on that very day, Shibiliti noted on a little piece of ruled paper the six issues he aimed to discuss with the governor:

- (1) A Sociedade dos Africanos de Moçambique to have a licence; (2) The imprisonment of the group of seven; (3) The suffering of the people of the country; (4) Indians selling badly; (5) We refuse for China to be the one who orders about the Government; (6) We spurn to be grabbed to go to Mpanga and the weak revenues.¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, the administration received alarming news. On the afternoon of 15 June, the Portuguese trader Manuel da Silva found himself in the shop of Omar Camissa in Muatidi. Shibiliti and Vannomba arrived there with a following of approximately 60 people. Faustino complained that the Makonde were 'being robbed by merchants who paid them too little for their produce'.¹¹⁵ Meanwhile Shibiliti said something that severely distressed the shop's employee. When they left, the employee reported that Shibiliti had told him 'not to take sides with the whites because they didn't even dream of what was about to befall them'.¹¹⁶ Da Silva and the employee made a statement that would serve as a basis for Shibiliti's arrest. Then the sepoy Ernesto Shipakaliya came to report some rumours that he had overheard circulating among people: that the administration was scared to deal with the Makonde, that forced conscription for the construction of roads had been discontinued out of fear and that soon all thieving shop-owners and sepoys would be slain and replaced with Shibiliti's minions. That evening, official designate Godinho reported, Shibiliti was to hold a night-time meeting at Kapoka's home.¹¹⁷ The administrator deployed the sepoys to protect the European population.

In Good Faith

Just as Shibiliti and Vannomba were crossing the border with Tanganyika, Ferraz de Freitas flew to Nairobi to inquire about the TMMU and its splinter groups. In transit at Jan Smuts airport, he observed how the 'Portuguese were the last to be called in for the formalities of migration', a circumstance he had observed so many times that it 'ended up seeming normal'.¹¹⁸ Then he flew past Kilimanjaro 'with its helmet of eternal snows, sprouting from

112 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 291, Matola to Vannomba, 15 June 1960.

113 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 278, Timbanga to Vannomba, 16 June 1960.

114 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 247. The second point was mistranslated by the official interpreter: the number 7 disappears and the point becomes 'the imprisonment of people'. Panga was an infamous German-owned sisal plantation near Mocímboa da Praia, to which people found without a tax certificate were taken to pay in labour.

115 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 224, 'Relatório', 22 June 1960.

116 *Ibid.*, 225.

117 According to a testimony released anonymously many years later, Godinho spied on the meeting, reporting drunkenness and bombastic claims about independence; see https://macua.blogs.com/moambique_para_todos/massacre_mueda_16061960/, retrieved 1 May 2020. No report of such a daring intelligence action, nor of the content of the meeting, features in the archive.

118 ANTT/SCCIM 1108, 322–45. Informação 8/960, 'Viagem a Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam e Zanzibar'. This experience of racism did not affect Ferraz de Freitas' own racist convictions.

the plains like a giant'. From Nairobi he carried on to Dar es Salaam, where he arrived on 16 June at midday, just as the crowds were massing at the Mueda administrative post.

The conversations with the Dar es Salaam consul, Caetano Martins, clarified all doubts in Ferraz de Freitas' mind. The consul explained that TMMU had emerged as a burial association and was later politicised. Its founder, Feliciano Shongo' Lipinde, as well as its secretary, Faustino Vannomba, had been expelled for embezzlement of funds. The latter had proceeded to turn the Tanga TMMU branch into a rival organisation, registered as the Makonde Association of Tanganyika (MAT) with formally approved statutes.¹¹⁹ Since 1959, both associations had tried to 'exceed the narrow tribal field', changing their names to MANU and SAM; neither of these changes had been officially approved, but both associations behaved as if they had been.¹²⁰ MAT had substantially expanded beyond Tanga, but TMMU remained larger and more influential.

The consul considered the MAT benign, since its statutes formulated a 'stringent prohibition to exercise any political activity'.¹²¹ Indeed, the objective of Vannomba's first visit to Mueda would have been to expound the differences between the two organisations so as to 'avoid that their families might suffer from the activities of the native Tiago Mulla'.¹²² Ferraz de Freitas believed in the consul's good faith but concluded that he had been fooled by the machinations of MAT's leaders:

Quibrite and Vanomba, leaders of MAT, were the two main informants of the Dar es Salaam consul, this being, certainly, the reason for his reluctance in attributing any political significance to the MAT's activities. What the Consul did not perceive was in fact that they used him as an instrument against TMMU. They provided only information to their advantage, relative to the activities of TMMU. They obtained the Consul's trust and, under cover of this trust, they handled the activities of their organisation completely at ease. They aimed for the extinction or weakening of TMMU, in favour of MAT.¹²³

A man of initiative and good faith, the consul was in a 'very tricky position'.¹²⁴ A Goan born in Tanganyika with thriving local economic interests, he was 'very wary' of growing TANU nationalism, 'fearing retaliations from the future African government', should it come to know that he had 'provided information on the *uhuru* movements'. In fact, Martins wanted to be discharged as soon as possible. 'His mentality', wrote Ferraz de Freitas, 'is a mixture of Portuguese spirit and the spirit of a man of colour who is part of a British colonial milieu'. Ferraz de Freitas recommended that a permanent consul and officials devoted to intelligence gathering be put in his stead. But such considerations were already belated.

Rain, Hail and Fire

Early on the morning of 16 June, Garcia Soares, accompanied by Frias, drove to the Muiriti river near Montepuez to meet the governor, who was there inspecting a project. The governor expounded on the inevitability of Vannomba's and Shibiliti's arrest; his subordinate concurred. Yet the governor also wished that the arrest be carried out in the absence of the platoon that had been sent from Porto Amélia, which was to be stationed 10 kilometres away from Mueda and summoned only in case of necessity. According to Frias,

119 The statutes of MAT, being in Swahili, were not included in the information, as they were being translated.

120 ANTT/SCCIM 1108, 328.

121 *Ibid.*, 329.

122 *Ibid.*

123 *Ibid.*, 332.

124 *Ibid.*, 341. *Melindroso* is one of Ferraz Freitas's favourite adjectives. It can be translated as 'tricky', 'touchy' or 'sensitive'.

the governor reckoned that ‘once he arrived in Mueda he would get dressed with all his decorations’ and would ‘speak, as he knew, to the people’ and solve the situation.¹²⁵ In worse circumstances in Madeira, he had achieved good results. In Nairobi, they crossed paths with the platoon on its way to Mueda and saluted its commander, *alferes* Silvestre.

When the three arrived in Mueda shortly before midday, they were met by a crowd of several thousand people. None saluted or stood up as the car drove in. The European population appeared ‘terrified’, especially the traders who understood the local language.¹²⁶ Juma had been threatened with being chased away together with the Europeans and had come with his gun loaded. Even the missionaries appeared ‘alarmed by the numbers and disposition’ of people.¹²⁷ When the sepoys presented arms, ‘a great part of the native agglomeration belittled them, laughing and mocking’.¹²⁸ Inside the building, the administrator prepared the sepoys for the possibility of a confrontation: they should open fire only if and when officer designate Godinho fired his gun, first in the air, then lowering the aim. A jeep was prepared for the arrest of the leaders.

At 2 p.m., the administrator arrived at the secretariat. The four reports available give different emphases to what transpired over the next few hours, reflecting not only the different physical positions that the actors occupied and their sense of danger and confusion but also the need to shed responsibility for what would come to be considered an administrative debacle. A close comparison of the four narratives none the less allows the establishment of a probable sequence of events as they were experienced from the Portuguese side.¹²⁹

Flag raising. By mistake, the Portuguese flag was raised as the governor was still getting out of the car. The men in the crowd did not stand to attention and the women did not applaud. The governor requested that the ceremony be repeated, saying in jest that perhaps the people had forgotten the procedure. Some composure was regained (lots in the governor’s report, little in Frias’), yet very few women clapped and no man stood up.

Jokes. To ease the tension, the governor walked among the crowd, followed by Frias, cracking jokes and patting children. Meanwhile he inspected the crowd for the possible presence of weapons. He saw only the usual small daggers the Makonde carry wherever they go. He rearranged the population so that the suspects – the identified local figureheads – stood at the front. The administrator began to ‘fear the worst consequences’.¹³⁰

Review. The governor walked back to the patio to review the sepoys and salute the native authorities and the ‘civilised population’.¹³¹ Shibiliti and Vannomba stood at the right side of the veranda, ‘without taking any kind of attitude’.¹³² The governor invited whoever wanted to speak to him to approach; some did, including a woman. The multitude started to encircle the building; the administrator tried to push them back to the sides.

Rain. A sudden shower forced the bystanders to take refuge under the trees and on the administration’s veranda. When the rain stopped, all native authorities and sepoys occupied the veranda. The governor told Frias to order the platoon, stationed three kilometres away, to approach.

Speech. When the rain stopped the governor addressed the crowd in a speech that would remain infamous. He spoke of the great benefits that would soon be brought to the region: a

125 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 226, ‘Relatório’, 22 June 1960.

126 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 196, ‘Relatório’, 19 July 1960.

127 *Ibid.*

128 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 228, ‘Relatório’, 22 June 1960.

129 The following sequence in no way aims to establish a complete picture of the event of Mueda, which would require an integration of the four official reports with the many Makonde eyewitnesses. I leave this for another occasion.

130 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 239.

131 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 344, ‘Insubordinação’.

132 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 239, ‘Relatório do incidente’.

water system, new roads, truck deliveries of goods, increased salaries, building of new schools and health posts, opening of new shops and better prices for produce. The people showed first indifference, then irony and scorn. The administrator communicated to his superior that the situation seemed dire.

Second rain. Another shower interrupted the speech and the guffaws.

Conversations. The two migrant leaders were called in for a conversation with the governor: first Shibiliti, then Vannomba, then again Shibiliti. The governor gave 500 *escudos* to Shibiliti as a reward for his good services to the consul, then asked him gently to come with him to Porto Amélia. Shibiliti refused, saying that he had come to stay at Mueda and would perhaps travel later on, and asked about the liberation of the group of seven. The governor said that they would have to stay in jail and Vannomba would be arrested as well, for returning without permission. Shibiliti ‘took an attitude of agreement ... which appeared suspicious’.¹³³ Then Vannomba was called in. He apologised for disobeying the orders, insisted that he was a friend of the Portuguese, and asked that Shibiliti, who was without fault, be let off the hook. To make time, the governor called more people in and ordered that the platoon should approach nearer. Finally, the governor summoned Shibiliti and told him that he would be arrested too.

Announcement. The governor walked out to announce the arrests. The interpreter mistranslated this as ‘the governor won’t let go of Faustino’, instead of ‘Faustino has a great quarrel with the government’.¹³⁴ The crowd exploded in a great roar of protest. The interpreter ran away, terrified, into the building, and Padre Alberto from Nangololo repeated correctly in Shimakonde what the governor had said. As the handcuffs were being fastened on Faustino, the people exclaimed: ‘carry us all away instead!’ The central section pushed and everybody shouted, demanding the freedom of the captured.

Stones. A hail of stones and mud hit the administration building. The officials withdrew on to the porch.

Knife and pump. A man came forward and hit the governor with a bicycle pump. Another drew a knife and tried to stab him. Manuel Godinho shot the assailant in the head. The governor ordered Frias to call in the platoon.

Shots. The gunshot was taken by the sepoys as the signal to open fire – in the air first. The people walked back, then someone said that they were only shooting up or with mock bullets and the multitude came forward again. The administrator tried to fire with his machine gun, which got stuck. The sepoys lowered their aim. The two jeeps with the platoon arrived; Silvestre and his men jumped down and fired the machine guns at the people. When Frias arrived, he saw dead and wounded by the flag post and punched ‘a native with a stone in his hand’ in the face.¹³⁵ Because of the ‘heavy shooting’, Frias hid in the front veranda; when he saw the crowds disband, he ordered a cease fire, an ‘order that had to be shouted to be heard’.¹³⁶

Burial. The administrator’s and governor’s reports refer to seven dead and twelve wounded. The dead were buried immediately. The casualties dropped to three in a telegram sent to Lisbon. Frias did not report a number.

After the shooting, the crowd dispersed in great fright, leaving hundreds of bicycles abandoned by the administration buildings. Fearing another attack, the entire European population retired to the administrator’s personal residence, guarded by the platoon. No one slept.

133 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 345, ‘Insubordinação’.

134 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 196, ‘Relatório’.

135 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 229, ‘Relatório’.

136 *Ibid.*

On the morning of 17 June, a rumour spread that a group of 1,000 armed Makonde was crossing the Rovuma, aiming for an uprising of the entire population, which was extensively armed with muzzle-loaders.¹³⁷ Only when the rumour turned out to be false and a contingent arrived from Porto Amélia could the local government begin to take stock of the debacle. A great flutter of telegrams and missives discussed the political measures to be taken to re-establish calm and order. A political watershed had been marked in blood.

Birth of a Myth

The Portuguese press succinctly reported on the events of 16 June as a ‘meeting of natives perturbed by foreign agitators’, using a phrasing ‘expressly studied’ by the minister of overseas affairs ‘to avoid foreign speculations’.¹³⁸ The event was then passed over in silence until the end of the colonial war and only unwillingly discussed in the democratic dispensation.

On the other side of the political divide, the news spread quickly. The events featured on the evening of 16 June in a Soviet broadcast in Kiswahili.¹³⁹ The next day, an envoy from Mueda arrived in Lindi carrying a letter that was read aloud at a public meeting. According to the letter, over 500 people had died because the Portuguese did not want to grant independence, which people had asked for ‘with good manners’.¹⁴⁰ The letter was then forwarded to Dar es Salaam for the attention of Julius Nyerere.

Then TANU’s newspapers reported the incident, yet with less emphasis than they had with the group of seven’s punishment, probably because of the difficulty of obtaining information. The day after the massacre, *Ngurumo* published an *ushairi* rhyme lament titled ‘Not the solution for Mozambique’.¹⁴¹ On 30 June, a reporter from *Mwafrika* called Pangalass left Zanzibar to inquire into the Mueda events. News of his mission was intercepted by Portuguese intelligence, but Pangalass was never apprehended.¹⁴² On 13 August, a long article headlined ‘The sin of asking for independence? The Portuguese kill thirty-six in Mozambique’ reported the events from the perspective of one Nambani Chitamba, a native authority who was present on the day and had later escaped to Tanganyika.¹⁴³ Chitamba said that 36 people had been killed and 50 were wounded after the administrator gave the order to shoot at the people who ‘wanted to initiate a political association to reclaim independence’.¹⁴⁴ Then the administrator told Vannomba ‘to make his last prayers, because he would take his life’. Vannomba prayed and cried, and his handcuffs broke thrice before he was carried away.¹⁴⁵ On 15 September, the news was reported by the leftist newspaper *New Age*, with the title ‘Another Sharpeville in Mozambique: 100 Africans Shot Dead By Portuguese Troops’.¹⁴⁶

137 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 34, 239 GOV of 17 June 1960.

138 A first draft of the article was sent by the governor general to the minister on the evening of 16 June (ANTT/SCCIM 1110, 63, 146 SEC); the minister dictated a revised version on the following day (*ibid.*, 363, 97 SEC), which was published verbatim in *Diário*, 18 June 1960, and *O Século*, 19 June 1960.

139 SCCIM 1110, 62, 147 SEC, Lourenço Marques to Lisbon, 16 June 1960. The broadcast was intercepted by the administration of Mocímboa da Praia, but we do not know what its content was.

140 SCCIM 1109, 178, 13/B/5 from the district of Palma to Porto Amélia. The letter was never intercepted: the information was collected orally by an informant.

141 ANTT/SCCIM 1108, 364, *Ngurumo*, 364, 17 June 1960.

142 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 16, 357 Gov., 9 July 1960.

143 ANTT/SCCIM 1108, 312–14, *Mwafrika*, no. 131.

144 *Ibid.* The figure of 36 dead is the same as that reported by Matola in a letter to his sons, and the reckoning of the missionaries. See Israel, ‘Mueda Massacre’, p. 1177. This is, in my view, the most likely figure for the people who were killed on the spot, excluding the ones who might have died of their wounds later.

145 This is the first written trace of the enduring and widespread myth of the handcuffs that break thrice.

146 ‘Another Sharpeville in Mozambique’, *New Age*, 15 September 1960.

The myth of a massacre produced by a straightforward demand for independence, therefore, emerged in a subaltern public sphere – constituted by TANU newspapers, mission workers and anti-colonial native authorities – in the months after the events. One should not attribute too much agency to Chipande, the first Frelimo official eyewitness, who in 1960 was but a young and inexperienced bystander, and who in 1969 retold a version of the events that was already well-sedimented, increasing the number of deaths by only a fraction.

Silence of the People

In late July, Shibiliti and Vannomba were interrogated in Lourenço Marques by Ferraz de Freitas.¹⁴⁷ Vannomba, who was identified as the protagonist of the events, gave the longer deposition.¹⁴⁸ The tone was meek: a sustained retraction through which an implicit political position can be perceived. Probed and pushed, Vannomba expounded his main grievances – the conscription of people to work at the sisal factory in Panga, the artificial administrative limit between Mueda and Muidumbe, forced labour, the low prices at which the government bought agricultural produce – and demands: the construction of a city in Mueda, the opening of shops and markets, the transfer of sepoys, the opening of schools, and the return of the Makonde. He admitted that he had perhaps been mistaken in sending the group of seven and that he should not have crossed the border, but he was stuck in Lindi waiting for the consul's response and hunger had got the best of him. Whenever he was asked to give an account of his actions, Vannomba invoked the agency of the people (*o povo*). It was the people who followed him wherever he went; the people who were always unsatisfied; the people who trusted him as a leader; the 'stupidity of the people' who made them think that MAT 'would function like TANU';¹⁴⁹ the people who constantly came to ask for news and demand meetings; the people who were angered by the imprisonment of the group of seven; the people who protested against his imprisonment by saying that they would rather they were all carried away to Porto Amélia; the people who were angered and excited and threw stones. The association merely wanted to be the 'spokesperson of the people', 'the representative of the people'.¹⁵⁰ Who made the people surge, then? 'If it's like that, then it was himself and Shibiliti'.¹⁵¹

Shibiliti dwelt much more on the structure of MAT and on his activities as informant of the consul.¹⁵² He claimed to be the consul of the Makonde in Tanga, an advocate of sorts. He said that MAT had been founded in 1957 and registered in March 1958, before TMMU, and that Vannomba and Tangazi had joined after they had been expelled from TMMU. He denounced the authors of the journal articles about the group of seven. As for the matter of return, he said it was Vannomba's idea. 'Nothing could be obtained, he put hands for feet and feet for hands'.¹⁵³ Shibiliti also invoked the people, who followed and prompted until the end. Just as he was about to be arrested, he had suggested to the governor at least a postponement: 'Mr Governor, there are here many people, outside, Mr Governor tries to take

147 This interrogation is different from the official colonial dossier, whose acts were published in *Arquivo* by João Paulo Borges Coelho without archival references, the originals of which seem to have disappeared from the Mozambican national archives. See his 'Documento: O Estado Colonial e o Massacre de Mueda: Processo de Quibirite Divane e Faustino Vanombe', *Arquivo*, 14 (1993), pp. 129–54.

148 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 198–224. A first interrogation occurred on the night of 27 June; the longest, on 20 July.

149 *Ibid.*, 204.

150 *Ibid.* 'The technique', notes Ferraz de Freitas, 'is interesting: finding a legal form of infiltration'.

151 *Ibid.*, 217.

152 ANTT/SCCIM 1109, 186–97. Shibiliti was interrogated on 22 July, two days after Vannomba,

153 *Ibid.*, 192. This literally translated phrase means, roughly, 'he wriggled to evade being pinned down'.

us by force, these people can think something else and there can be some manifestation'.¹⁵⁴ But the governor would not hear and the people threw so many stones 'it seemed rain'.

At this juncture, where the main actors' voices should be heard, we must take stock of an impasse. Not only did their intentions remain opaque, muffled by the interrogator's choking grasp. When they did speak, they surrendered their agency to the very subject, 'the people', which would constitute the foundational ground of liberation discourse and whose voice would shape the basis of the heroic, if ever-shifting, narrative that crystallised at the end of the war.

Meanwhile in Dar es Salaam, Tangazi Makalica was left alone to lead a beheaded and demoralised SAM. He again approached consul Martins, trying to clarify that his association had nothing to do with nationalist movements and suggesting the opening of a Portuguese school in Tanga. The consul funded the school, but their trust was broken: the government had by now concluded that SAM was 'a mere ramification of TMMU', 'just a façade to conceal the subversive intentions of its leaders'.¹⁵⁵ As SAM slowly disintegrated, MANU took over as the only nationalist party, claiming as its own the agency behind the Mueda events.

Faustino Vannomba was sent into internal exile in Govuro, where he worked in the administration until the end of the liberation war, 'showing exemplary political and moral behaviour'.¹⁵⁶ Shibiliti was sent to Inhambane in April 1962; in August, in a 'lamentable lapse', he was allowed to return to Mueda for four days before being shipped back to Inhambane.¹⁵⁷ Clemente Nandang'a was found in possession of Frelimo cards in 1964 and spent ten years in jail, where he initiated a theatrical commemoration of the Mueda massacre.¹⁵⁸ Tiago was interned and employed as a carpenter in the Muchope precinct, and then freed – again by mistake – a few years later. He immediately vanished in Tanzania, where he was arrested by TANU in 1964, possibly to stunt his rise within the refounded MANU.¹⁵⁹

Indeterminacies

The idea of a massive 'return' of the Makonde was a direct product of the moment of political openness characteristic of the transitional phase of the early 1960s, and specifically of the first half of 1960.¹⁶⁰ It is unclear whether Nyerere ever openly supported plans for the annexation of northern Mozambique.¹⁶¹ Even if it was mere rumour, the prospect of the immediate independence of a segment of Mozambican territory under Nyerere's charismatic leadership acted as a powerful force among Mozambican migrants as well as counter-insurgency agents. Tiago openly espoused it. Shibiliti and Vannomba never explicitly mentioned it, but were certainly influenced by it. The Portuguese government – mindful of the territorial uncertainties over Mozambique's borders at the Berlin conference – was preoccupied by the eventuality of a conflict with independent Tanganyika.

Secondly, the idea of return was connected to the racial tensions underlying the Tanganyikan transition to independence, which would erupt a few years later in the Zanzibar

154 *Ibid.*, 196.

155 ANTT/PIDE, 2379/60, 45.

156 ANTT/SCCIM 1111, 333, 'Cópias e extractos de documentos e despachos dos processos arquivados no Instituto do Trabalho, Previdência e Acção Social'.

157 *Ibid.* According to Januário Joana Makai, Shibiliti, in the four days he spent in Mueda, lost no time in trying to recruit people into an association; interview with Paolo Israel, Mueda, 15 December 2017.

158 ANTT/PIDE, 2963 SR 63, 18–21.

159 For the former, see *Arquivo Histórico Diplomático*, 13492, Confidencial, 6 November 1964. According to a source I prefer not to identify, Tiago was arrowed down on his way to the fields by a hit man from Namau sent by Frelimo shortly after independence.

160 The Congo crisis and the death of Lumumba gave a powerful blow to the transnational, pan-African ideal.

161 None of the scholars of Tanzanian history whom I consulted could provide a definitive answer to this question, and none had ever come across the map reported by the Portuguese.

revolution.¹⁶² For decades, the Makonde had sat at the lowest rungs of civilisational hierarchies based on Swahili and then Omani ideals: they were the worst hinterland brutes (*washenzi*), scarified eaters of unholy meat, good only as night-guards and sisal cutters.¹⁶³ Meanwhile TANU was seemingly carrying out a census to resuscitate pre-colonial authorities and expel migrants. Many foresaw a clash between coastal Islam and TANU Africanism. What would happen to the Makonde caught in between? Return to Mozambique was the safest escape route. Racial tensions between Africans and Indians – another explosive component of east African politics – also played a significant part. The expulsion of Indians was sometimes mentioned alongside that of Europeans. The shop-owner Juma was a key informant for the colonial administration as well as the target of Makonde hatred. The Portuguese consul of Dar es Salaam was wary of denouncing Vannomba and Shibiliti, lest he fall into disgrace once TANU took power.

Generated by a mixture of early 1960 idealism and racial tensions rooted in indirect rule and older Indian Ocean histories, the Mueda events were also fundamentally shaped by the divisiveness of its protagonists. Vannomba and Shibiliti acted as informants for the consul of Portugal, probably in bad faith and certainly providing irrelevant information. They also opposed an early attempt to rename TMMU as MANU. All this indicates that the frictions between the two factions were motivated by personal rivalries and tactical disagreements rather than a difference in intent. It was the possibility of an annexation of Cabo Delgado to Tanganyika and the alluring – if unrealistic – prospect that the first president of a formally established association would end up occupying the seat of governor that prompted the reciprocal betrayals and the race to return.

These oscillations and uncertainties are not accidental to the event: they constitute it as such. No public clash with the colonial government would have occurred without the ambiguous request for return; without the creation of a splinter association with a more benign face; without the alternating moments of meekness and brazenness; without the prudent discussions in the administrator's office and the night-time meetings, which inflamed people's imaginations such that they believed that an immediate independence was indeed possible. While migrant leaders wavered, changed course of action, double-crossed each other and dissimulated, colonial administrators and intelligence officers simmered in doubt. Even the most insightful observers could not see through, until the very end, the true intention of Vannomba and Shibiliti; nor could they (or we) precisely ascertain whether SAM/MAT truly existed as an independent, registered society or whether Shibiliti still belonged to TMMU in some capacity.¹⁶⁴ This pervasive doubt effectively opened the doors of the Mueda administration to negotiators who would have otherwise been immediately repelled or arrested. Chaos was necessary to generate the event.

None of this, of course, was exactly programmed. But this indeterminacy was also not exactly accidental. It stemmed from a mode of political action shared by all the protagonists of the Mueda events, which one might qualify as improvisational, spontaneous or even anarchist. This kind of proto-anarchism was radically displaced by the vanguardist revolutionary party that came in its wake. The Mueda massacre made it briefly visible just as it began to wane. To trace its roots would require one to take leave of the confines of the

162 The two are closely connected: Makonde migrants were among the fiercest of Okello's supporters. I have omitted from this piece discussion of Zanzibar, for reasons of space.

163 See especially J. Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2011).

164 The doubt still persists. The Dar es Salaam consul was convinced that MAT did exist, but its statutes did not make it into the archive. He provided a pass to Shibiliti as president of the TMMU Tanga branch, just as *Mwafrika* described him as a TMMU leader. And why would Vannomba still be allowed to vote against TMMU's change of name in March 1960 if he had left the organisation entirely? Why did Tiago describe him as secretary of TMMU's Tanga branch?



Figure 2. Julius Nyerere matchbox. (Document granted by the ANTT, SCCIM 1111.)

intelligence archive and to analyse the characteristics of Makonde society, structurally acephalous and resistant to centralised power, and of the east African tradition of associative politics – a task that is beyond the scope of this article.

To make of these oscillations and indeterminacies the basis for a revisionist history that annihilates the utopian meanings of the Mueda events would be a grievous interpretive mistake. The intelligence archive provides abundant proof that the claim for return was perceived with extreme suspicion in colonial quarters; that migrant organisations and their leaders differed in language, temperament and tactics, not in aims or strategy; that whenever those leaders addressed people in secluded meetings, they denounced colonial oppression and spoke of independence; that Tiago and Vannomba sought a clash with the colonial system, consciously embracing the eventuality of prison; that a local network of insurgency and intelligence was clustering around the migrant leaders, with the direct involvement of lineage elders, mission workers and native authorities; that linkages with the cotton co-operative movement, however tenuous, had been established; and that the massacre was a result of a repressive turn in colonial politics as well as of an idiosyncratic act of cowardice on the part of the Mueda administrator. The only player who fleetingly trusted Vannomba's good faith was the gullible (or crafty) consul of Dar es Salaam, and only until 21 May 1960. It is only by adopting such a position of gullibility that one could argue that Vannomba, condemned to imprisonment before he set foot on Mozambican territory, was a faithful servant of the Portuguese civilising mission – *a bem da Nação!*¹⁶⁵

The history of the 'matter of return' should be written back into the public narrative of the Mueda massacre, as a masterly ploy to force the colonial government into a confrontation but also as a powerful political metaphor. For truly to ask to return to one's land is to claim it as one's own. 'I return because this is my home', Vannomba said, according to his own recollection, in response to the administrator's questioning.¹⁶⁶ Again, the intelligence archive has little to offer to understand these metaphorical layerings and their attendant sentiments. Perhaps the strongest traces they left there, besides subtexts and allusions in poorly translated letters, are material objects. A bracelet on which the word *uhuru* is thinly engraved on the side, like a talisman.¹⁶⁷ A box of matches – *kibiriti* – with

165 'For the good of the nation' was the formulaic signature adopted in all secret service correspondence.

166 See Israel, 'Mueda Massacre', p. 1171.

167 ANTT/SCCIM 1108, 188. The bracelet was collected by the hunter Piña Cabral in Montepuez in November 1960.

the image of Julius Nyerere, hand raised like a Byzantine saint, the word *uhuru* glowing within (see [Figure 2](#)).¹⁶⁸

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