

1987, the year the Mozambican government initiated a programme for the rehabilitation of the economy, was also one of the richest in 'local' book production. The writers' association AEMO, which is the biggest publisher of fiction, had a backlog of titles, unpublished because of a lack of paper. Grants from NORAD (the Norwegian Ministry of Development Co-operation) have enabled AEMO to overcome this problem in the past year. It appears, however, that there is still not enough paper to reprint all the books which are out of print and for which there is a demand. First print runs are usually 3,000 copies for poetry, 5,000 for collections of short stories and 10,000 for the works of Lina Magaia, Albino Magaia and Bento Sítöe. Lina Magaia's book has already been sold out. Even specialized journals have print runs of between 300 and 1,000 copies. And some 600 sets of the autobiography of Sacadura Botte, expensive in the local market, were sold in the seven months before the death of the author in November 1987.

Local book prices are low by international standards (£1 = ca 800 MT), but not in relation to the average income of the nation. Although prices and costs are still rising after three devaluations in 1987, the growing number of secondary school leavers and tertiary institution graduates provide an ever-expanding reading public as well as a pool of authors. The 10,000 copies of Sítöe's *Musongi*, although written in Tsonga which is spoken only by a few million in the south, many of whom are illiterate in their own language, were sold out within a few weeks, as was his earlier short novel *Zabela*. Muianga's stories and Marcelino dos Santos' poems have also been sold out after a few months, as was a second print run (2,500 copies) of Mia Couto's stories, which were well received by Portuguese critics.

Among literary publications, poetry still holds pride of place. Poetry has a long tradition in Mozambique and both the past president and secretary of AEMO (José Craveirinha and Rui Nogueira respectively) were known mainly as poets. While poetry, spoken in monthly public performances, organized by AEMO in Maputo's Jardim Tunduru, retains oral traces when it is published, this cannot be said of the plays, at least ten of which have been written and produced during the last two or three years in Maputo and the main provincial capitals. Their themes are mainly contemporary social and political problems.

There has been some debate in the weekly *Tempo* over the language and content of some of the books under

## 'TRUST YOUR FEET' IN MOZAMBIQUE

### Gerhard Liesegang

Malungate  
by Albino Magaia  
AEMO, 125pp., 380 MT, 1987, 0630/INLD/87

*Dumba Nengue: Histórias Trágicas Do Banditismo* — 1  
by Lina Magaia  
Tempo, 100pp., 380 MT, 1987, 0606/INLD/86  
[US Publisher: Africa World Press, under title  
'Dumba Nengue: Run for Your Life.  
Peasant Tales of Tragedy in Mozambique',  
\$14.95/\$6.95, 0 86543 073 X/0 86543 074 8]

Ualalapi (Contos)  
by Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa  
AEMO, 88pp., 1987, 0618/INLD/87

Musongi  
by Bento Sítöe  
AEMO, 72pp., 1985, 0532/INLD/85

Vozes Anóitecidas  
by Mia Couto  
AEMO, 113pp., 242 MT, 1987, 0590/INLD/86

As Vozes Que Falam de Verdade  
by Marcelo Panguana  
AEMO, 85pp., 266 MT, 1987, 0628/INLD/87

review, in particular *Ualalapi* by U.Khosa. Others, like *Malungate*, have not yet received public criticism, despite the fact that its author, Albino Magaia, is also the editor of *Tempo* and the new secretary of AEMO. The main character in *Malungate* is Ntoninyana (Small Anthony) Malungate whose adopted Portuguese name is that of his Portuguese godfather, Frederico do Amaral. Malungate/Amaral is an anti-hero, whose life story depicts some of the social and cultural problems of 'assimilated' black Mozambicans before and after independence, and the relationship between the *petite bourgeoisie* of the cities and their relatives in the rural areas. Born in 1943 and dying in 1979, Malungate is the author of the first two thirds of the book covering his life to 1974 during which he works his way up from domestic servant to an office clerk. The two principal characters in the final third are a journalist and Malungate's second wife, Luisa, who gives her husband's autobiography to the journalist in 1984. The journalist then starts to do his own research on Malungate's family in the intervening period. In the end he and Luisa, now a university graduate, fall in love.

The novel appears to be a response to the plea of Luis Bernardo Honwana (now Minister of Culture) to write about contemporary politics and society. To date it is the most suggestive attempt to paint a portrait of social and cultural change before and after independence. Magaia sees the city as a parasite on the surrounding country, and believes it destroys the morality and traditions of rural society.

Bento Sítöe's *Musongi*, written in 1972 when African and European intellectuals were discussing marriage in Lourenço Marques, describes the months of preparations for a marriage in August 1968. The narrator is the bride, ominously called Musongi (the one who avenges) and she is a primary school teacher whose Christian family lives in the country. Her family want a wedding of conspicuous display and are shocked by her opposition and that of her city-bred fiancé. On the eve of the marriage ceremony the clash of expectations finally proves too much and she elopes with her lover, leaving the assembled kin to eat alone. An epilogue written ten years later tells us that they married a week after the events described and had three children.

The moral is that in modern towns colleagues and friends have a more important role to play than relatives. Most of the text is in the form of dialogue and in 1987 it was successfully turned into a radio play.

Contemporary issues are the focus of Lina Magaia's *Dumba Nengue*, based on eye-witness accounts which she collected during her daily work as director of the Manhiça Agrarian Development Region. (Manhiça is about 80 kms north of Maputo and it seems to me that some of Lina's experiences were the basis for parts of her brother's novel *Malungate*.) If you ask in Maputo what 'dumba nengue' means you will be told that it refers to the black market areas which are periodically invaded by militia, police and town market inspectors. If you ask near Manhiça along the National Road No. 1, they will say that it refers to a vast, formerly densely-populated area where the previous users of land return at harvest time to collect fruit and nuts at the risk of their lives. They now live in the outskirts of Manhiça in squalid reed huts, dependent on food aid.

The literal translation of 'dumba nengue' is 'trust your feet' and this phrase characterizes the existence of three to four million people on the run in Mozambique. They face very real dangers as Lina Magaia reveals. We hear of people shot alone and in groups, people cut up and beheaded, people having their throats slit like goats, others dumped alive in wells or burnt alive in houses, all forms of intimidation to ensure support for armed bandits. The text is supported by splendid drawings by Sergio Tique some of which have already appeared in issues of *Tempo*. It is a shocking book with a powerful message.

In one of Mia Couto's (born 1955 and male despite his apparently female name) eight stories, he presents an almost Kafkaesque caricature of corrupt and bureaucratic attitudes at village level. In the 'story of the reappeared ones' he uses the limited, sometimes pompous and often faulty Portuguese of villagers (construed according to local Bantu language rules) with great skill. Two men who were believed drowned return to their village and have to pass many tests until 'an act of clemency' allows them to be 'counted among the extant population'. Couto excels in attaching unused prefixes and suffixes to known word stems. To those who know Portuguese well, his use of language is a constant delight and this may explain some of his success.

In his preface to the collection, José Craveirinha acquits Couto of 'unnecessary exoticism' and cheap 'folklorism'.

Since all the stories are set in the country or subúria, this collection is not far from 'indigenism', although I would rather interpret it as an expression of distance. While he was the editor of the newspaper *Notícias* he must have felt that much of what he published had little relevance for rural life or even misrepresented local perspectives of reality. It remains to be seen, however, if Couto's undoubted talent for observation and precise linguistic nuances, and his superb sense of the absurd, can sustain more complex themes.

The five stories by Marcelo Panguana (born in 1951 in Maputo) are set in the period from shortly before independence to about 1983. One story deals with a black-marketeer killed by 'armed bandits' while on his way to Swaziland. Another centres on a young director of a firm dealing in domestic electrical equipment who owes his career to an uncle who was a cook in the house of a medical doctor before independence. Another story is an intricate portrayal of witchcraft suspicions between two women. Another is the story of a divorced orderly who spends most of his free time in a beer bar. The final story traces a woman's move from the suburbs to the centre of Maputo where the whites lived before independence. Most of his stories are built around some specific social process or historical fact of relevance. His prose includes vernacular colouring, and is playfully pompous in detail.

Aldino Muianga's collection *Xitála Mati* consists of nine stories, one of which is a legend or fairy tale. *Xitála Mati* is the name of the suburb near the former Lake Munhuana just north or northwest of the central part of the city of Maputo. Maybe it indicates Muianga's point of observation, for most of his stories have a rural background. Only 'Maria, Minh'amor' (Maria, my love) is set in the suburbs, dealing with the love affair and preparations for marriage of a milk salesgirl and a domestic servant. Here, grammatically incorrect Portuguese is used to define the speech of the two main characters. Muianga, who practices as a medical doctor, prefers a straightforward narrative, basing some of his plots on stories he heard in rural areas. This novel was very popular and the first edition quickly sold out.

Khosa's collection of stories published under the title *Ualalapi* presents chronological episodes of the rule of King Ngungunyane, the last Gaza king, who lived from about 1840 to 1895 and ruled the area between the Nkomati and Zambezi rivers. *Ualalapi* is the main character in the first of the stories, a man who dies mentally disturbed, with his family, after having executed a brother of the king. This and the intercalated 'fragments of the end' set the stage for Khosa's discourse which has magic vengeance as a powerful agent, focuses on the sufferings of the underlings and examines the sexual appetite and practices of the last Gaza king.

The book raised much discussion among writers. As Teresa Manjate, one of Khosa's critics and friends remarked, it is not a collection of stories but almost a novel about the life of Ngungunyane, portrayed as a hero of African resistance to Portuguese colonialism. But the King was also a grandson of an African colonizer of southern Mozambique, as Abner Sansão remarked, and wars of conquest continued under his rule. One of the six main texts, 'the siege or fragments of a

siege' is about one of these wars, the conquest of Chirime in 1889. Another critic raised the question of whether Khosa's work was really fiction, because contemporary Portuguese reports were occasionally paraphrased. If it was not fiction, had Khosa done justice to the historical figure of Ngungunyane? After all Frelimo had named some of her bases during the armed struggle after him and had transported his remains in a cortege of armed cars from the airport to the town hall in 1985. Khosa sidestepped these criticisms and declared that he simply wanted to tell stories (*estórias*) forgetting that his quotation of written sources and possibly also his use of oral tradition threatened some of the naive hero worship he had attempted. On the back cover of the book Khosa, born in 1957 of a Sena mother and a Changana father and trained as a teacher of history and geography, poses with a naked chest and shoulders, returning to the dress of the ruling aristocracy of the nineteenth century.

Marcelino dos Santos, born in 1929, is of a different generation to the writers we have considered above. Although many of his poems have been published (he began publishing under the names of Kalungano and Liliho Micaia in the 1950s) for the last 25 years he has been better known as a politician. He is at present President of the Parliament, a post to which he was elected in 1987. He also participates in many cultural activities from opening exhibitions to launching books, convinced that art and knowledge of the past are important elements in nation building. Similarly he sees politics and poetry as reinforcing each other. A number of his poems are 'didactic-moralist'; others are political messages or confessions.

Most of his poems date from the 1950s and 1960s when dos Santos spent his time in exile travelling from Lisbon via Paris, Brussels and London to Morocco and Dar-es-Salaam. Some of his poems are widely known, because they are recited on official occasions. They celebrate Mozambique the 'motherland', a beautiful country on the Indian Ocean, victim of the slave trade and colonial exploitation.

Heliodoro Baptista is a poet of a later generation. He was born near Quelimane in 1944 and now works as a journalist in Beira. A quarter of his later poems reflect literary themes, alluding to Neruda, Maiakofsky, Garcia, Marques and others, while the remainder divide between political and personal themes. His is politically committed but he also defends the 'polyphony' of poetic individuality: 'every human being is a world, a structure, a house by the sea-side' (p.67).

It appears, then, that there is a new generation of writers groping their way through the post-independence period, and a generation which is culturally diverse. Compared to this literature the volume of published history is small. Carlos Serra, a former journalist who started to study history under the late Alexandre Lobato shortly before independence, did his B.A. and *licenciatura* at the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane and taught history there. He was the coordinator and editor of the first two volumes of the *História de Moçambique* (published between 1981 and 1983 and which sold 40,000 copies and is now out of print). Between 1985 and 1987 he produced a weekly radio programme

entitled 'Moçambique e a sua história', which also inspired a series of monographs which the university history department has started to publish under his direction. Serra's knowledge of the publishing business and his organizational talents were essential assets in this project.

The first two volumes in the series turned out to be a work of his own, a study of Zambesia. The first volume sketches the outlines of what economy and society might have been like before the impact of inter-continental trade. The second volume deals with the first Arab-Persian (and Swahili) contacts and then tackles the main commercial eras by commodity (gold, ivory, slaves), followed by an analysis of the establishment of plantations. The volume closes with a brief look at anti-colonial rebellions between 1877 and 1884. His is a pointed Marxist analysis and the thinness of some of his sources may give cause for concern, but he is meticulous in his referencing. We look forward to his next two volumes.

But contributions to a study of the past do not only come from professional historians. In mid-1987 there appeared in one of the bookshops in Maputo the unusual sight of three thick volumes containing over a thousand pages and weighing about 2 kilos; they were the accumulated reminiscences of 24 years in Portugal and 60 in Africa. The volumes contain 474 photos of the author, Sacadura Butte, his family and friends. The author admits that in this exercise he shows 'very little or no modesty'. He began writing his memoirs when he was 80 years old and, a few months after the volumes had been published, he died at the age of 85.

Sacadura Butte, son of a judge and wine estate owner, went to Africa in 1926 to manage a tobacco factory. He joined the Civil Service in 1930, and left for the firm of Breyner & Wirth in 1942 to which he remained attached until 1977. There are chapters on his life as administrator of Magude and Marracuene, and as secretary to Governor General Nunes de Oliveira (1936-1940). There are also some interesting observations on the internal structure of Breyner & Wirth and its links with WENELA. There are many gaps, exacerbated by endless ramblings in the last volume. But there are gems of information as well, much of which is unavailable elsewhere. Sacadura Butte was an old monarchist and to some extent he seemed to have accepted Samora Machel as the best substitute king and guarantor of order.

The remaining books (to which more could have been added) are a sign of slowly expanding research. The 1987 publications of the National Archive, directed at the local market, are the result of a long struggle, dating back a beginning in 1982/83. More are in preparation. The periodical *Arquivo* is preparing special issues dedicated to Mozambique island and Beira, after the one dedicated to the 100 birthday of the city of Lourenço Marques/Maputo (No. 2, 1987). As in the case of the publications by AEMO, the work of the National Archives has been made possible by foreign grants (in this case from Sweden's SAREC) but without the build-up of local resources this would have made little impact. Despite war and persistent hunger writers are building a new vision of and for Mozambique.

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Details of the other books considered in this review are:

#### Xitála Mata

- by Aldino Muianga  
AEMO, 88pp., 1987  
Canto Do Amor Natural  
by Marcelino dos Santos  
AEMO, 160pp, 480 MT, 1987,  
0527/INLD/84  
Por Cima De Toda A Folha  
AEMO, 112pp, 525 MT, 1988,  
0639/INLD/87  
Memórias E Autobiografia  
by Theodorico César de Sande Pacheco de Sacadura Botte  
Author's edition (Maputo: Minerva Central) 3  
Vols. 305, 309, 349pp.  
4.500 MT, 1987, 0596/INLD/86  
Como A Penetração Estrangeira  
Transformou O Modo De Produção Dos  
Componeses Moçambicanos — O Exemplo  
Da Zambézia (1200-1964)  
by Carlos Serra  
NE Núcleo Editorial da Universidade  
Eduardo Mondlane, 105, 107 pp, 2 Vols,  
1986, 0585 A & B/INLD/86  
Contribuição Para O Estudo Do Colonial-  
Fascismo Em Moçambique  
by Inês Nogueira da Costa  
Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, 66pp.,  
1987, 0624/INLD/87  
Arquivo: Boletim Do Arquivo Histórico De  
Moçambique  
Vol. I, 1/2, 1987  
Cadernos De História: Boletim Do  
Departamento De História Da  
Universidade Eduardo Mondlane  
Nos. 1-6 (1985-1987)  
Trabalhos De Arqueologia E Antropologia  
No 3:  
Arqueologia Do Norte De Moçambique  
Maputo: Dept. de Arqueologia e  
Antropologia, Universidade Eduardo  
Mondlane, 144pp., 300 MT, 1987