

The Political Sublime.

Reading Kok Nam, Mozambican photographer (1939-2012)

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Kok Nam began his photographic career at Studio Focus in Lourenço Marques in the 1950s, graduated to the newspaper Notícias and joined Tempo magazine in the early 1970s. Most recently he worked at the journal Savana as a photojournalist and later director. This article opens with an account of the relationship that developed between Kok Nam and the late President Samora Machel, starting with the photographer's portrait of Machel in Nachingwea in November 1974 before Independence. It traces an arc through the Popular Republic (1976-1990) from political revelation at its inception to the difficult years of civil war and Machel's death in the plane crash at Mbuzini in 1986. The article then engages in a series of photo-commentaries across a selection of Kok Nam's photographs, several published in their time but others selected retrospectively by Kok Nam for later exhibition and circulation. The approach taken is that of 'association', exploring the connections between the photographs, their histories both then and in the intervening years and other artifacts and mediums of cultural expression that deal with similar issues or signifiers picked up in the images. Among the signifiers picked up in the article are soldiers, pigs, feet, empty villages, washing, doves and bridges. The central argument is that Kok Nam participated with many others in a kind of collective hallucination during the Popular Republic, caught up in the 'political sublime'. Later Kok Nam shows many signs of a photographic 'second thinking' that sought out a more delicate sublime in his own archive.

Kok Nam and the President

'Even Bill Gates with all his money, he can't see it'.¹

The portrait of Samora Machel at Nachingwea in 1974 (Figure 1) was the first photograph taken of the Frelimo leader by Kok Nam. This comes from an early visit by the Mozambican press to the northern Liberated Zone after the Lusaka Agreement

¹ Kok Nam interviewed by Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha (in English), Maputo, 29 July 2005. Kok Nam was born in 1939, began his photojournalism career at *Diário de Moçambique* in 1966, worked at *Notícias* and its sister-paper *Notícias de Tarde* from 1968, joined *Tempo* magazine in 1970, was part of the founding group of Mediacoop in 1992 and then director of the independent journal *Savana* from 1994 until his death in 2012. See *Savana* Suplemento, 21 September 2012. The authors thank the many friends and colleagues of Kok Nam who provided interviews and detailed responses to questions, as well as the reviewers and editors of *Kronos* for their critical feedback on this article. The authors are also grateful to the National Research Foundation of South Africa, the Arts Research committee and the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic of the University of the Western Cape, and the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian in Lisbon, for their generous research support.



Figure 1: Portrait of Samora Machel at Nachingwea, November 1974. Kok Nam

before the movement came south to the capital prior to Independence. Kok Nam was apparently filled with various emotions. Everything was on a new footing and he was not sure if he was permitted to take pictures of Machel, whom he admired. He ended up secretly stealing this shot. Machel's face has a remarkable clarity to it. This might be due to the fine tonal range, but perhaps it was also because the future lay completely open. Kok Nam's account describes the natural light conditions at Nachingwea in terms that are photographically almost divine, as if the heavens conspired for the revelation of the leader's face.

It was the first time I saw Samora. The light was fantastic, for me the most fantastic light ... it is when after a great burst of rain the sun explodes, and a cloud comes and covers the sun but the light becomes bright and translucent; that was the situation with the light on his face. That is the portrait Graça and Mandela have in their house in Maputo. [...] It resulted from one, two shots, no more, I was afraid ...²

2 Kok Nam interviewed by António Cabrita in Teresa Noronha et. al. eds., *Kok Nam: O homem por detrás da câmara* (Maputo: Escola Portuguesa de Moçambique, 2010), 36. All translations from spoken or written Portuguese in this article are by Rui Assubuji. Regarding the light at Nachingwea, November is a month with short bursts of sudden rain, cleansing the atmosphere. See the account by journalist Migueis Lopes below.

The clarity of the stolen portrait drew the attention of Frelimo and the party requested the negative for reproduction purposes.

Unfortunately the negative disappeared because the guys from the party asked for it to make a quantity of copies for display in army facilities and offices of state institutions. The negative disappeared and the person held responsible was in prison for fifteen days ...³

As Secretary of the Defence Department, Samora organized visits for press, researchers and strategic guests to the camps and the liberated zones from the early stages of the struggle, as part of the external policy of the movement. According to Oscar Monteiro, the first journalist to visit the country was a Yugoslavian filmmaker Dragutin Popovic who produced the documentary *Venceremos* in 1966. In 1968, Basil Davison observed the Second Congress at Matchedje in Niassa Province. The British documentary *Behind the Lines* was produced in 1971, directed by Margaret Dickenson. In 1972 Frelimo received an Organisation for African Unity (OAU) mission led by its Executive Secretary Hasmin Mbita. The Italian Reggio Emilia Hospital also sent a delegation in 1972. A Japanese photographer and journalists from the two Germanys, Holland and China also visited the country.⁴ However, the press in Mozambique as well as in Portugal had very little information about Frelimo and the life behind its lines.

Kok Nam could easily be filled with emotions. Was this not his baptism of war? Through his Mandarin arts, as he joked, he had escaped going into a *tropa* (troop). 'The colonial military service just accepted blacks and whites; blacks for the *faxina* (servants), and whites to command. Chinese had no rights.'⁵ Yet so much was happening at that time, starting with the accentuated agony of the colonial state in early 1974. The situation in Mozambique was out of the Lisbon government's control, which ended up falling on 25 April 1974.⁶ The war intensified and the press in Lourenço Marques reported increasing attacks on villages, including the massacres of Wiriamu and Inhaminga that came under United Nations and press scrutiny. The railway lines of Sofala and Tete were constantly sabotaged. In July, from Dar es Salaam, Samora Machel announced the opening of the front in Zambesia.⁷

Despite contacts and negotiations between Portugal and the liberation movement,⁸ the war continued in Mozambique until the Lusaka Accord in September 1974. While the agreement was being negotiated and achieved in Lusaka, protests and violent reactions were taking place in the country.⁹ The dramatic events of September

3 Ibid., 36.

4 Ó. Monteiro, 'An Unavoidable Leader' in A. Sopa, ed., *Samora: homem do povo* (Maputo: Mangueso Editores, 2001).

5 Kok Nam interviewed by António Cabrita in Noronha et. al. eds., *Kok Nam*, 37.

6 For the situation in Mozambique (also from a Portuguese military perspective) see A. Afonso, and C. A. Gomes, *Alcora – O acordo secreto do colonialismo: Portugal, África do Sul e Rodésia durante a última fase da Guerra Colonial* (Lisboa: Terreiro do Paço Editores, 2013), 305-309.

7 See, for example, 'Os porcos do governo são mais felizes que os homens livres' in *a Tribuna* (Lourenço Marques), 13 February 1974; 'Frelimo: Esconder uma triste verdade' in *a Tribuna*, 26 February 1974; 'O Que Defendemos em África são os Portugueses' in *a Tribuna*, 29 February 1974; 'In 13 years, colonial war caused twelve thousand mutilated people' 3 July 1974; 'Linha Férrea Novamente Interrompida', in *Jornal Notícias* 16 July 1974; 17 July 1974; 'Frelimo próximo de Milange ... 3 militares morrem em emboscada ... 3 feridos nos quais se destaca o conhecido Né Afonso' in *Jornal Notícias* 17 July 1974; 'Houve Massacre em Wiriamo, conclusão provisória da comissão de inquérito da ONU' in *O Século* (Lisbon), 18 June 1974.

8 'Secret meetings between Lisbon and Frelimo: the key point, transfer of power' in *Notícias*, 17 August 1974. The same edition contains the report 'Notícias and *a Tribuna* targets of attacks, only material losses'. See also *O Século*, 3 September 1974.

9 See, for example, 'Graves distúrbios laborais alastram em Moçambique: certo receio da população branca' in *O Século*, 18 May 1974; 'Em Moçambique - Provável um governo negro em seis meses' in *O Século*, 20 May 1974.

1974 in Lourenço Marques represented the extreme of what was going on in several other parts of Mozambique. Lourenço Marques and Lisbon newspapers reported a rebellion of white people in Lourenço Marques who were trying to constitute a government without Frelimo. Members of a secret organization called the Dragons of Death occupied the central radio station. A right-wing group called FICO and ex-soldiers assaulted the central prison and freed about 200 prisoners, ex-secret police PIDE-DGS agents.¹⁰ Armed whites also occupied strategic places like the airport, the post office and oil refinery.¹¹

Even some whites known for their progressive positions were threatened. For example Danilo Guimarães, a photographer working for the prominent newspaper, *Notícias*, was covering the occupation of the Central Hospital when he was recognized by a violent FICO activist and accused of being a black sympathizer and pro-independence. He recalled running away in order to escape aggression, shutting up his house and hiding for days in different friends' houses. He asked someone to hide his archives and until today he still does not know what happened to his negatives.¹² Another senior journalist, Mota Lopes, whose house was searched and whose mother warned that her son was waiting to have 'his neck cut', was in Lusaka covering the Accord.¹³

In an interview Kok Nam was asked if he was covering the confusion following 7 September 1974. He replied:

No, because the group called 'Dragons of Death' (*Dragões da Morte*) were chasing after progressive people, including those from *Tempo* magazine. For a few days I hid at my mother's house. The Dragons invaded the premises of *Notícias* and destroyed the printing machine to stop the newspaper [from] publishing any more. At that time, I had hair down to my shoulders. Since I wanted to photograph what was going on but afraid of the reactionaries, I decided to cut my hair and grow a moustache. I was coming out from the barbershop when someone greeted me: Hi Kok! I told myself: this masquerade is useless! I quickly went back home. The only images I've got from that event are from when they collected the weaponry. Of that fight at Radio Club, I've got nothing.¹⁴

An estimated number of sixty deaths and 427 wounded resulted from this action that lasted a few days in the capital city. But reactions also happened in other parts of Mozambique with the white population being extremely insecure and having

10 FICO comes from the verb *ficar*, to stay. The acronym PIDE-DGS refers to the Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado/ Direcção Geral de Segurança (Portuguese Security Police).

11 *Notícias*, 9 September 1974. See also the Lisbon newspaper *O Século*, 27 September 1974 and 22 & 23 October 1974.

12 Danilo Guimarães is a Portuguese photographer. He arrived in Lourenço Marques on 4 January 1974. He was pro-independence and one of the first photo reporters to work within the liberated zones. 'Mozambique Liberated' is a series of articles issued by *Notícias*, signed by João Fróis with photographs by Danilo Guimarães; 'Visit the pilot-field (machamba-piloto) where the peasant (agricultor) is a soldier. Through roads and paths of the centre and north of the country' in *Notícias*, 11 November 1974. Today, Guimarães lives in Portugal. Interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Setubal, 15 July 2013.

13 Mota Lopes is a co-founder of *Tempo* magazine and author of the first articles published in the journal about the liberation movement between 5 May and 20 June 1974, including 'Frelimo, what is it?' under the pseudonym Carlos Alexander. Interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 9 May 2013. Newspapers such as *Notícias* and *Tribuna* were targets of attack. See *Notícias*, 17 August 1974.

14 Kok Nam, interview in *Savana*, 17 August 2012.

occasional violent confrontations with black people.¹⁵ Mota Lopes argues that this was a consequence of so little information being in circulation. Kok Nam had the same view.

People in Lourenço Marques (Maputo) didn't know Frelimo because the fighting's far away. [...] All they know is that they are terrorists.... They don't have information from Frelimo. Some people had information from Radio Tanzania. Some had news from BBC, from the Voice of America. But obviously all those people were living outside Lourenço Marques, like people living near Rhodesia, Malawi, Zambia or Tanzania. But in Lourenço Marques at that time you couldn't easily get the radio to hear about this.¹⁶

A Portuguese military official confirms this impression: 'Until 1973 the whites of Mozambique never felt the guerrilla on their skin, after that date they started feeling it. We kept the military situation under control in order to facilitate a political solution for the resolution of the problem. But that solution never existed'.¹⁷ A large-scale exodus of white Portuguese from Mozambique ensued, especially to South Africa, 'running without knowing why' in the opinion of some journalists.¹⁸

The Lusaka Agreement was signed on 7 September 1974. In November, the Mozambican Airline Company called Deta opened the route from Lourenço Marques to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania with an inaugural flight. They invited forty-five people, among them Frelimo's Armando Guebuza, Óscar Monteiro and Hélder Martins already in Lourenço Marques preparing for the transition. The group included journalists who, for the first time, were going to cross the line. Moments before departure a group photograph of the press was taken in front of the plane (with Ricardo Rangel amongst them). The group joined Samora Machel in Lusaka and flew in a small biplane to Nachingwea. On board, Samora Machel alternated between 'contagious dynamism' and short naps, with the head of Internal Administration (Armando Guebuza) 'also reposing'. The journalist Migueis Junior wrote how he and his colleague Arlindo Tembe 'searched, down on the ground, for the key that would perhaps open for us the secret, the magic of Frelimo's most famous political-military centre'.¹⁹

Nachingwea, south west of Dar es Salaam, was a colonialists' farm abandoned due to serious shortage of water. When Frelimo entered the place in October 1965, there were no more than a few houses made of bricks surrounded by forest, generally sandy and arid.²⁰ The new camp for military preparation was opened by Samora Machel, who was by then in charge of training guerrillas. Self-sustaining in terms of food, and producing an income that contributed towards medical expenses and the

15 Insurrectionary right-wing forces also caused disturbances in the region of Vila Pery. See 'Aggression by mistake' in *Notícias*, 17 July 1974. Detailed accounts and analyses of the events of April 1974 and the ensuing insecurity, counter-plotting, aggression and exodus can be found in the papers presented at a conference organized by the Associação de 25 de Abril and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, later published as *25 de Abril 10 anos depois* (Lisbon: Associação de 25 de Abril and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1985).

16 Kok Nam, interview in *Savana*, 17 August 2012.

17 C. Gomes, 'General Paradoxo' in J. F. Antunes, *A Guerra de África (1961 -1974)* (Lisbon: Círculo De Leitores, 1995), 122.

18 See *Notícias*, 23 November 1974; *Século*, 29 October and 5 November 1974.

19 From that trip, senior journalist Migueis L. Junior published a series of chronicles in *Notícias* on 22 November 1974 entitled 'Visit to some sources of the Revolution'; 'Nachingwea: Behind the Northern Border – a little of new Mozambique' and 'Nachingwea: the Land of men in an act of Liberation'.

20 M. L. Junior, 'Nachingwea: a land and the men in an act of liberation' in *Notícias*, 23 November 1974. In this account, the climate has no winter and low temperatures are unknown, with heavy rains in April/May and lighter rainfall between November and December.

acquisition of communication systems, it became the most important reference point for Frelimo's experience and later rhetoric of the liberated zones. 'The liberated zones simultaneously gave a first rehearsal of what would become, after independence, Frelimo's integration plan for rural communities in the nationalist and revolutionary project for the future of independent Mozambique'.²¹

A few weeks after that meeting, another group of Mozambican journalists joined Samora Machel in Nachingwea. This group included Kok Nam and they travelled with Frelimo leaders on to East Germany (DDR), Yugoslavia, and Romania in December 1974. Machel's mission was to strengthen relationships in the new context of independence. Frelimo received guarantees of continuing support. Kok Nam covered many of the President's later travels like those to Russia, China and Vietnam. He also followed the president inside the country. 'I took many portraits of Samora Machel and the myth was born that we were intimate.... They even said I smoked weed with him. Just myths created.... I only fell in love with his personality and never lost an opportunity to photograph him'.²² According to Kok Nam, Machel also enjoyed having a multi-racial delegation on such trips, which he used as an expression of *moçambicanidade* (Mozambican-ness).

From an economic point of view, José Negrão argues that Machel went through three distinct phases during his years in power: 'the phase of counting on his own capacity applied between the date of national independence to the end of the 1970s; the phase of absolute certainty of the Prospective and Indicative Plan (PPI) from 1980 to 1983; the phase of doubt about the role of the state and the market, reflected in the Political and Organisational Offensive (*Ofensiva Política e Organizacional*) that he launched'.²³ In Iain Christie's perspective, the end of the war against Rhodesia (with Zimbabwean independence in 1980) allowed the Mozambican President to shift his attention to the internal problems of the country. The rally he addressed in the city of Beira on 11 January 1980 'turned out to be the beginning of the most remarkable episode of his presidency: the "Ofensiva"'.²⁴ In the speech Samora said: 'we agree that Beira must be the ideological, economic, cultural point of departure for our organizational offensive. It must also be the departure point for the social offensive, for justice, respect for revolutionary legality, and the combat to dislodge slave mentalities indebted to foreign ideas; [the] point of departure for the offensive against banditry, corruption and counter-revolution, against reaction'.²⁵ The second-largest city in Mozambique, Beira was not easy to penetrate by Frelimo. There was an industrial park and harbour, both of which were fundamental for national and regional development. Moreover, through Beira Malawi and Zimbabwe had access to the sea, as well as Zambia and (what was then called) Zaire via Zimbabwe.

Later during the Political and Organisational Offensive, the President visited many commercial and industrial sites, state institutions and services, from factories

21 L. de Brito, 'The Power Between Utopia and Reality' in Sopa, ed., *Samora*, 32.

22 Kok Nam interviewed by António Cabrita in Noronha et. al. eds., *Kok Nam*, 36.

23 J. Negrão, 'Samora e Desenvolvimento' in Sopa, *Samora*, 44.

24 I. Christie, *Samora: A Biography* (London: Zed Press, 1989), 156. The book is also published in Mozambique as *Samora: uma biografia* (Maputo: Ndjira, 1996). Mozambican journalist Iain Christie was founder of the AIM (Agência de Informação de Moçambique or Mozambique Press Agency) English service. He was born in Edinburgh and after working as a reporter on various British newspapers, moved to Tanzania in 1970. He worked on the state-owned *Daily News* in Dar es Salaam, and specialised in reporting on the struggles waged by southern African liberation movements against colonial and white minority rule.

25 Extract from transcription of Beira speech in *Tempo* magazine, No 485, 25-6.

and harbours, to hospitals and schools. During these visits he addressed people everywhere, even in the streets, where people gathered to see him going from one place to another in spontaneous rallies. But the organized rallies were greater, like the rally of 18 March 1980 in Maputo city whose leading cry was 'We declare war on our internal enemy'. 'Not long ago', Machel said in that speech, 'we spoke about colonial heritage. But now this is our own product, a product of this new phase. We cannot say it's a product of colonialism. We let a minority infiltrate our structures.'²⁶ To the international press who were present in Maputo, the President underlined his position:

We were clear. The State is infiltrated. Once infiltrated, it misinterprets all the recommendations issued by the Frelimo party. Our state is serving the interests of our enemy, not the interests of the people. Our state is corrupted. Our State has been transformed into a refuge for useless people. It is sick; it needs treatment. It needs oxygen. This campaign signifies purification.²⁷

Machel addressed dozens of open-air rallies during the eleven years of his presidency. Kok Nam said he was the greatest mass communicator in the world. 'Samora could convince a cadaver.'²⁸ Mucavele, a former guerrilla with Frelimo, pointed to the President's creative capacity to illustrate his speech in order to educate: 'through examples, calling things by proper names, he spoke to people.'²⁹ With oratorical and performative capacity developed during the struggle in the liberated zones, using analogies and theatrically punctuating his affirmations, he won people's adhesion to his messages. 'The spectacular was an integral part of his way of expression; he needed gesture to be sincere. We're all fearful of a quiet, non-talkative Samora with a cutting gaze.'³⁰

The second portrait shown here (Figure 2) was taken by Kok Nam in 1985, the year before the death of Machel in the airplane crash at Mbuzini, Swaziland. This later portrait is one of many taken by Kok Nam in the intervening years where friendship and empathy had grown between the two men. This portrait, which was later published in the photographic biography of Samora Machel, was taken at a time when he was facing deepening difficulties.³¹ He was preparing for a radical change. In Portugal, Aquino de Bragança declared that 'More important than ideology is our sovereignty.'³² In 1986 Mozambicans were being called upon for a 'decisive step' towards a resolving the country's difficulties and building a better life, the New Year was to be a 'general offensive in all fronts.'³³

Kok Nam's portraits chart a progressively troubled leader. In one photograph, published in *Savana* newspaper in September 1994, he is seen walking alone into his

26 Extract from transcription of Maputo speech in *Tempo* magazine, No. 493, 42.

27 See *Tempo* magazine, No. 494, 30 March 1980 and *O Jornal* (Lisboa), 24 October 1986 (which includes a reprint of the article 'Samora, política quente' from March 1980).

28 Kok Nam interviewed by António Cabrita in Noronha et. al. eds., *Kok Nam*, 32.

29 José Mucavele joined Frelimo in 1974 and trained in Nachingwea. He was an active member of the guerrilla cultural group. Interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 2 May 2013.

30 F. Ganhão, 'Samora, um relâmpago no céu' in Sopa, *Samora*, 17.

31 In Sopa, *Samora*.

32 Aquino de Bragança in *Semanário* newspaper (Lisbon), 22 June 1985.

33 *Bulletin AIM* No. 114; *Bulletin AIM* No. 119, June 1986. The bulletin reported that in a short May Day speech the President warned that '1986 will be a year of radical change in our behaviour towards the enemy'.



Figure 2: Portrait of Samora Machel, 1985. Kok Nam

presidential palace, a figure of isolation.³⁴ ‘The incapacity to protect the populations from barbarous attacks by those whom he considered as such, the impossibility of winning the war, of fighting against neighbouring enemies and against the incomprehension of neighbouring friends, the gradual disenchantment with most of his intimate collaborators, suspicions of betrayal and the feeling of an immense loneliness, that was Samora during his last days. Those who knew him well noticed a progressive degradation of the personality of their leader.’³⁵

It is possible to gain a sense of an entire period from these few photographs of the late President Samora Machel. It is also Kok Nam’s most prolific period where he was continually involved in photographing what was around him. Thus the most ‘revolutionary’ period of Mozambique’s postcolonial history was also the most productive for Kok Nam. In fact Kok Nam’s name is probably most associated with this period of the República Popular (1975-1990).

In his own terms it was a very intense phase of his life. It marked him out from his peers with whom he grew up in Mozambique.

34 The article is entitled, ‘What do politicians look for in this house?’ *Savana*, 2 September 1994.

35 Ganhão, ‘Samora, um relâmpago no céu’, 17.

Before Independence in Lourenço Marques in Mozambique we have ... more or less ten thousand Chinese people. After Frelimo took power then all the Chinese people didn't know the people of the power. The Marxism. Everyone left, even my family, to Portugal, Rhodesia, South Africa, Brazil, Canada. My family went to Brazil then later the United States. From 1975 I became very engaged in the Mozambican revolution. Not only Mozambique. Anti-apartheid, anti-colonial, all kinds.³⁶

A well-known part of Kok Nam's 'anti-colonial' engagement was photographing the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. Besides refugee camps, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) established guerrilla bases in independent Mozambique from which to infiltrate what was then Rhodesia until the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980.

My son, my daughter are always saying, my Dad is crazy. When they say crazy, I'm not really crazy. The way I think, what I'm doing, I'm very happy ... Not only your camera [gave you access]. Circumstances. You're born in Africa. You're born in the colonial time. You're seeing independence. You're seeing the first flag of your country. You're seeing many things. Even Bill Gates with all his money, he can't see it.... That is the riches, people born in Africa can see these things. It's not easy.³⁷

Having escaped the *tropa colonial* (colonial army) himself, Kok Nam spent many years in the field photographing war and its effects from direct Rhodesian aggression to counter-insurgency and the civil war, from 1976 to the 1990s. 'The massive attacks by Rhodesian ground and air forces on Pafuri and Mavue dispelled any doubts Mozambique had concerning Rhodesian's intention.'³⁸ The border was closed and United Nations sanctions were imposed on 3 March 1976. Mozambique was however accustomed to Rhodesian aggression since 1973 when, combined with the Portuguese Army, they conducted attacks on the FPLM (People's Forces for the Liberation of Mozambique) for example at Zumbo. The Rhodesian Air Force also bombarded certain liberated zones of northern Mozambique, particularly in March-April 1974.³⁹ During the second half of 1976 the pattern and severity of Rhodesian attacks altered also to include FPLM military installations and unmistakably economic targets, such as railway stations, workshops, wells and agricultural units. By mid-1979, the cost of these purely economically focused acts of sabotage had probably reached US\$100 million.⁴⁰

Between 20 and 22 April 1979, a series of what the Rhodesians termed 'cross-border raids' were carried out in Gaza Province on the villages of Mapai, Mabalane, Aldeia da Barragem (the Dam Village) and the FPLM headquarters in Chicualacuala.

36 Kok Nam interviewed by Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, Maputo, 29 July 2005. For the purposes of this interview, Kok Nam spoke in English and this is a direct transcription.

37 Ibid.

38 C. Gerry, 'Rhodesian and South African military aggression against the front line States 1975-1979': Centro de Estudos Africanos (CEA) internal memorandum No. 9b, 5 May 1979, 1-14 (CEA Box no. 1b/UV).

39 For a sense of the association of forces between colonial Portugal, Rhodesia and South Africa against Frelimo and other liberation movements, see A. Afonso, A. and M. A. Gomes, *Alcora - O acordo secreto do colonialismo*. After the collapse of the Portuguese empire, Afonso and Gomes speak of South Africa 'correcting the imperfections of the Portuguese' in Angola.

40 *Facts & Reports*, 11 May 1979, 5 and 1-14.

The Air Force used napalm and 500 kilogram fragmentation bombs as well. Mirage jets made their first appearance in the scenario of that war. The journalist Calane da Silva and Kok Nam had been sent by *Tempo* magazine to cover Rhodesian aggression in this important area of agricultural development. Calane da Silva vividly recalls that when Mozambican forces responded to the Rhodesian attack at Aldeia da Barragem, they found themselves caught between two firing points. He said Kok Nam managed to photograph an Air Force plane.⁴¹ Another reporter for *Tempo* magazine Alves Gomes was with Kok Nam at the site of the Chimoio massacre in Manica Province in 1977. They arrived the day after the attack, in an Antonov military transport plane. 'Kok did not waste canvas [film] ... You see there all the hate that Rhodesian soldiers discharged upon Zimbabwean refugees'.⁴²

Situations like that you must document ... It's very cruel what I'm going to say. I think they killed about 800 people or 600 people. But before I arrived it was raining. When I arrived at the camp I saw all these bodies, beautiful bodies, the dead bodies, because of the rain. The skin would be very brilliant.... I see beauty; the dead are beautiful. Not in the context of beauty. I don't know if I can explain ... I don't know if you understand what I mean.⁴³

All this forms an important part of Kok Nam's work, including the Independence celebrations where he and Alves Gomes spent several days in Zimbabwe in April 1980. He calls his photography of the Zimbabwean struggle part of his 'internationalism'.⁴⁴ This intensive period of Kok Nam's work ends with his documentation of the plane crash that effectively ended the Popular Republic (see Figure 3). He was among the first Mozambicans to arrive at the scene after the news broke in Maputo.

This is Samora's plane. Then I say, who is the real terrorist? It's the next day, 20 October. It happened on 19 October '86.... [Daniel] Maquinasse was my very good friend. When I arrived at this place, the security forces, they had cleaned up everything. Already. We arrived on the 20th. [...] After the plane crash they worked all night, then we arrived at about 12 in the afternoon. [...] I found Maquinasse's camera, a Nikon. I still keep this camera. They said, 'You don't touch.' I took the camera then I put it in my pocket. I still have it today. I keep this camera. So many bodies. I saw Samora's body, very clean. Yes, I found many bodies, very bad.... Just like a dream. You don't believe it. You think it's a movie. It's real. Because you find a lot of friends there. Lots and lots of friends.⁴⁵

41 Calane da Silva in conversation with Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 17 April 2013.

42 Alves Gomes interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 3 May 2013.

43 Kok Nam interviewed by Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, Maputo, 29 July 2005. See *Tempo* magazine, No 307, 22 August 1976.

44 It is true that internationalists were normally associated with solidarity movements, those people coming as volunteers or under state agreements to work in underdeveloped countries, such as the internationalists from Europe and Latin America who came to Mozambique. At Zimbabwe's independence, however, Mozambican soldiers fighting in Rhodesia were received back in the country as heroes with some ceremony, and were also called 'internationalists'. See the speech of 23 December 1979 by Samora Machel to celebrate the success of the Patriotic Front at the Lancaster House Conference in London, 'A vitória do povo do Zimbabwe é fruto da luta armada, da unidade e do internacionalismo'. Published in a brochure by DTIP (Direcção do Trabalho Ideológico do Partido), 'It is important to understand the Zimbabwe question and the Mozambican position in the face of that conflict with implications for regional and world peace' in *Colecção Palavras de Ordem*, No. 16 (Maputo: Edição do Partido Frelimo, 1980).

45 Kok Nam interviewed by Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, Maputo, 29 July 2005.

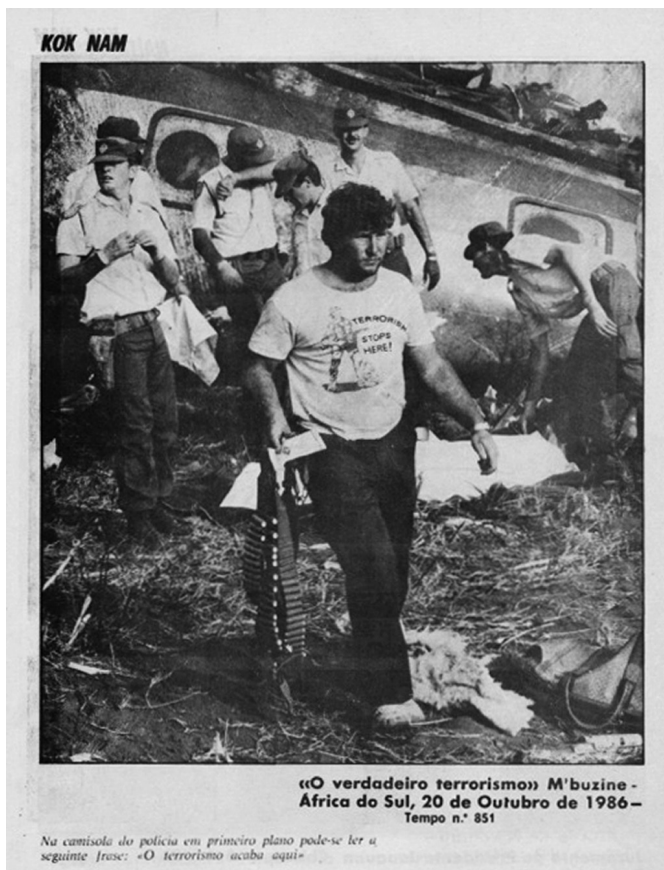


Figure 3: 'The real terrorism'. M'buzzine, Africa do Sul, 20 de Outubro de 1986 (Tempo No 851). Kok Nam

What became known as Kok Nam's plane crash series is regarded as photographically very strong. Kok Nam later took the step of submitting a selection of the pictures to the World Press Photo competition, but this venture into the wider world of global press photography led nowhere. He was aggrieved to receive no feedback or acknowledgement whatsoever. According to Kok Nam, the judges were simply not interested in the death of a black Marxist-Leninist President.⁴⁶

Approaches to reading Kok Nam

There are many historical, archival and photographic points to potentially lead out from the above photographs and statements by Kok Nam. A core question of this essay is in fact what happens when we think about Kok Nam's photographs as history. For many photographers, the idea behind taking pictures is to 'document' something that will have immediate resonance or be stored as a future history.⁴⁷ The work of

⁴⁶ Presentation by Kok Nam at the meeting of the Bamako Photography Masterclass, Southern African region, MuseumAfrica, Johannesburg, September 2004.

⁴⁷ E. Edwards, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination, 1885–1918* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

Elizabeth Edwards on amateur survey photographers recording the physical heritage in the English countryside in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shows many commonalities with photographers in southern Africa who are often categorized as documentary. An implicit question running through Edwards' recent book *The Camera as Historian* is the extent to which it is 'possible to posit a history that is played out at the level of the image'.⁴⁸ The substantial documentation with which Edwards worked enabled her to go beyond history 'as framed by academic discourse', and to engage in an 'anthropological response to photographers' own use of the word'. Here we are interested in this latter question. We must clarify however that while his senior colleague Ricardo Rangel at times made very explicit statements that his purpose was to photograph history in Mozambique,⁴⁹ Kok Nam himself rarely made such a claim. Instead, as we have found in sifting through his statements, he tended to express a variety of purposes and ways of responding to the world around him.

First of all, it seems, his point was to photograph what caught his attention. One of his jokes was that a dog biting a man is not unusual. But a man biting a dog? That is unusual and deserves a photograph.⁵⁰ The second kind of statement Kok Nam made about what he photographed is that he simply took what was in front of his camera, without prejudice, even if it was very ordinary. Because these scenes were things that caught Kok Nam's attention specifically, Yussuf Adam refers to these photographs as 'historic ego stories'.⁵¹

It is not our purpose to iron out this or any other inconsistencies that may appear in this or other accounts of Kok Nam. That would be to flatten out the political imagination and historical experience of a man who was neither loquacious nor smooth-tongued. An unusual man of immigrant Chinese parentage, he grew up in the urban racial interstices of an ebbing Portuguese empire in Africa, and his eloquence (if anywhere) lies in his photographs. We would rather propose such knots and inconsistencies in his statements as something productive, because despite initial impressions of straightforwardness, self-honesty and a no-nonsense materialist approach, there is much about Kok Nam and his work that remains elusive. It would not be out of place to suggest the same thing about Mozambican history, despite a great deal of trenchant historiographical labour that has been devoted to it.

Notions of 'photographing history', or 'photographing for history' and the 'future archival grid' – those '[s]elf-conscious and imaginative acts of inscription' to which Edwards refers – are very important. But they do not exhaust the possibilities of what the question of photography can do for – or to – history. As Edwards argues, 'the impact of the camera cannot be limited to filling gaps in historical content.... [It] necessitates questioning the very concept of history'.⁵² Thus we want to allow for something further. In this article we want to use the opportunity of selecting certain photographs by Kok Nam to try to open these questions about the discipline of history in relation to Mozambique and the southern African subcontinent. At different points in the twentieth century, the awareness of what the medium could do in relation to politics and history has been very acute. Some have argued that the advent of

48 Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 3.

49 For parallel statements made by South African photographers about photographing history, or photographing for history, see J. Liebenberg and P. Hayes, *Bush of Ghosts: Life and War in Namibia 1984-92* (Cape Town: Umuzi, 2010), 22.

50 'Man bites dog' is a longstanding and widely known aphorism among journalists and the press industry in general.

51 Yussuf Adam, email correspondence with Rui Assubuji, 20 May 2013.

52 Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 6.

photography produced a turning point in historical consciousness. Such a statement involves more than asking (in our case for instance) what photography might have done (and might still be doing) to historical consciousness in Mozambique. It is well-known that photography was mobilized for instrumental purposes, for example, and certainly contributed to various turning points. The expansion of the revolutionary presidential profile through the photographic portrayal of Samora Machel from 1974 is a case in point. Kracauer's insight, also put forward by Walter Benjamin in slightly different terms, is that even unconsciously, aside from the 'sovereign consciousness',⁵³ there is a core visual dynamic to conceiving or imagining history. The technological intervention of photography jars us, not only because it is a more obvious version of this dynamic, perhaps, but because, like history, it is an instrument put into the service of reducing distance, whether in time or space, or both. It is supposed to bring close that from which we are, or have become, alienated – like the past.

The way historians try to overcome the distance of the past is most often through accessing written documentation and putting this through processes of cross-reference, interpretation (though often not self-consciously) and then 'reconstruction' in the productive act of writing. Reconstruction is a misleading term, however: construction would be more accurate given that no matter how sensitive and finely-tuned to the nuances of his or her archive a historian might be, there is no hope of ever reconstituting something that has really taken place in the past. Eduardo Cadava, in his reading of Walter Benjamin, makes the same point about photography. In attempting to overcome the distance of the past, both photography and history produce a new distance: an object that is striving to recreate the actual, but produces something new that makes reference to the former.⁵⁴

It must be said at this point though that this line of thinking comes from a precise historical situation in Europe, one often described as catastrophe. Benjamin wrote his 'Theses on the Concept of History' shortly before his suicide as he tried to escape from Europe in 1939. Philosophy is often produced in the midst of its own very particular intensities. Positing the theoretical view of a 'new distance' does not mean it is shared by a photographer, even when Mozambique also faced its own years of catastrophe. Kok Nam, despite or because of what he lived through with fellow Mozambicans, does not come across as a pessimist.

There have been somewhat different emphases in approaches to visual history ('positing history at the level of the image') in the historiographies of Anglophone southern Africa and Mozambique respectively. A fairly sustained set of statements have been made with regard to Namibia, which has three volumes produced by different editorial groups, two dealing with German and South African colonial photographic archives respectively, followed by another volume treating the issue of posters and mainly focused on the nationalist struggle.⁵⁵ These works, as well as the Visual History special issue of *Kronos* in 2001 that focuses on South Africa, have tried to question the automatic operation of an implicit hierarchy of words over pictures in

53 G. Didi-Huberman, 'The art of not describing: Vermeer – the detail and the patch' in *History of the Human Sciences*, 2, 2, (1989), 135-169.

54 See E. Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

55 See inter alia W. Hartmann et. al. eds., *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1998); W. Hartmann ed., *Hues Between Black and White: Historical Photography from Colonial Namibia, 1850s to 1916* (Windhoek: Out of Africa, 2004); G. Miescher et. al. eds., *Posters in Action: Visuality in the Making of an African Nation* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2009).

the discipline of history. The logocentrism of the written word relegates photographs to book covers and illustrations, where the latter are usually treated by social historians as self-evident quotations. The recursive empiricist treatment of photographs on the basis of their 'fidelity'⁵⁶ is an ongoing symptom of a discipline that is reluctant to look at itself in the mirror and question its underlying assumptions concerning the assumed self-evident status of its evidence. Despite long-standing arguments concerning the subordination and neglect of photographs in archives and libraries, at least in Anglophone African countries, the seriousness of the questions posed by photographs for the disciplinary practice – let alone the philosophical basis – of history continue to be largely skirted. Some work has however suggested the ways in which pictures shift historical consciousness.

It might be an obvious move then to consider these questions in a lusophone setting. But there is an inherent danger of the dominance of anglophone preoccupations and prejudices in any reading of Mozambican history, let alone transposing putative 'visual history methods' from one site to another.⁵⁷ This article attempts to take a more open-ended approach and allow the formalities of photographic and artistic production in Mozambique in disciplines other than history, and the informalities and modalities of their production outside the academic sphere, to come to the surface. There have of course been a number of studies that consider history and photography, from António Sopa's work on the early twentieth century portraitist Sebastião Langa, to Drew Thompson's more recent dedicated doctoral dissertation that covers photography in Mozambique in the second half of the twentieth century.⁵⁸ But there are also many catalogues with thought-pieces and interview transcripts, and critical writings published in a variety of print media.⁵⁹ There are a number of films about photography and photographers in relation to Mozambican history. In terms of the organization and/or division of intellectual and artistic labour between anglophone and lusophone countries, the filmmaker June Sinclair once made a striking comment. Compared with anglophone countries, she argued, Mozambicans were more visually-oriented and far more visually literate. This motivated her choice of João Costa (Funcho) as cameraman for the feature film about the Zimbabwean liberation struggle *Flame*.⁶⁰ Funcho was in fact a close associate and friend of Kok Nam. Beyond this alleged visual fluency, some commentators have pointed to the striking depth of 'networks' and cross-fertilisation among writers, artists and other intellectuals involved in (and across) different media at certain times in Mozambican history, especially the late colonial period.⁶¹ Calane de Silva refers to people practising in different genres and sometimes across media as an 'interdisciplinarity', a form of multi-tasking.⁶² It would indeed be counter-productive to attempt to disaggregate this phenomenon or subject it to any kind of anglophone-influenced disciplinary

56 See Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 1, for some excellent examples of positivist argument from the 19th century.

57 A useful statement on the problem of Anglophone preoccupations and prejudices can be found in P. Gupta, 'Mapping Portuguese Decolonization in the Indian Ocean: A Research Agenda' in *South African Historical Journal*, 57, 1 (2007), 93-112, especially 96-101.

58 D. Thompson, 'Aim, Focus, Shoot: Photographic Narratives of War, Independence, and Imagination in Mozambique, 1950 to 1993' (unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2013); A. Sopa, *Sebastião Langa*; (Maputo: Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, 2001).

59 Authors of texts in photography publications include Nelson Saúte, Mia Couto, Luís Carlos Patraquim, José Luis Cabaço, Calane de Silva, Luís Bernardo Honwana, and numerous others.

60 Film panel presentation by June Sinclair at the Gender & Colonialism international conference, University of the Western Cape, January 1997, and personal communication.

61 Alexandre Pomar in the documentary film by Bruno Z'Graggen and Angelo Sansone, *Sem Flash* (2012).

62 Cited in P. Hayes, 'Re-entering time' in A. Pinto Ribeiro, *Present Tense* (Lisbon: 2013), 61.

purification. So where do these questions then take us with regard to Mozambican history and historiography?

Our purpose as we see it here is to agitate the waters a little and generate a response. By reading a small number of Kok Nam's photographs, by pushing even one photograph to speak to and about history, we hope to promote debate. This is not about resuscitating a lost time, or inserting a more political time into the present. There is in fact more at stake. It is what remained unseen or half-seen at that time that we want to try to activate and insert in the present, to agitate the waters both then and now. This is about epistemologies and seeing, not resurrecting some positivist content, but asking about the form in which we think about history. Certain ways of seeing block out other possibilities, and potential histories are lost. This is when photographs become a kind of historical unconscious. When Kracauer speaks of bringing the dead to the surface, we suggest it is not just the obvious dead but the unnoticed of the time, what was not given life, the nuances, layers and planes that were of less note.⁶³

Our methodology is not to follow a conventional historical study. It takes a lead from the conceptualization of 'association' or 'affinities' proposed by Georges Didi-Huberman in his exhibition and book *Atlas*. Didi-Huberman argues that he selected the form of the atlas over that of the archive, because the former allows for both visuals and texts to be set out directly in relation to one another, relations that make an immediate impact on the viewer, rather than the genealogical and lengthy operations demanded by the archive that tends to isolate one medium at a time. Beyond the familiar notion of an atlas as a book with pages, in the actual exhibition, *Atlas*, Didi-Huberman sets out possible atlas 'pages' on flat tables, where things can also be moved around endlessly and new associations and meanings generated.⁶⁴ In our case here, we attempt to 'associate' the reading of a photograph by Kok Nam with other texts, visuals, plays, films, many interviews, and things that contain cross-references and overlaps. An association might be made on the basis of form, or of content. The result is one set of (we hope) polyvalent readings that are intended to be suggestive rather than comprehensive or authoritative, encouraging readers to go further with their own associations.

One drawback of not writing in Portuguese is that of the two languages at play here, we lose the particular polyvalence of certain terms in Portuguese expression. In fact some would argue that Portuguese lends itself to far more plural meanings or multiple *entendres* than English, which tends towards the literal and is, one could say, often affectively reduced.⁶⁵ Thus the associations here could go further, and much that is implicit is potentially lost. Perhaps a way of pointing to this difference in valence in the interchange between anglophone and lusophone languages, is to highlight the different vocabularies and etymologies that emerge even when simply speaking of photography itself. These alone produce huge shifts in association. For instance, the lens in English becomes *objectiva* in Portuguese, allowing for a widening of meanings beyond the merely functional or technical. It is also true that 'lens' is borrowed

63 M. Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 16. Where Kracauer, however, sees this as possible with the repositionings done by film, we take photographs and position them in relation to other documents, interviews and more.

64 G. Didi-Huberman, *Atlas: How to Carry the World on One's Back* (Madrid: Museu Reina Sofia, 2010). The methodology follows his reading of the Aby Warburg archive in London, which also set out objects and texts on different sheets or tables.

65 For a counter-argument on the metaphorical richness of the English language, see G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980).

for other purposes in English and escapes its literal function as part of the camera, coming to mean a perspective that can be applied to other things. But *objectiva* with its suggestion of pointedness or purposefulness is picked up by the photographer Ricardo Rangel when he starts a special feature page under that title, devoted to one photograph, in the magazine *Tempo*. This idea of a photograph allowed to stand on its own was apparently already in practice in earlier newspapers for which Rangel worked.⁶⁶ Kok Nam later brought out a *Tempo* magazine supplemental edition of the 'Objectiva' pages with a collection of these feature photographs. 'Objectiva' photographs were sometimes enigmatic, sometimes glaring, often ironic, sometimes indulgent. They credited the particular photographer, but had minimal or no captions. Readers were invited to read the image alone, and make their own inferences and connections. In a sense that is what we try to do here by highlighting particular photographs, though we are of course presenting our own inferences and associations.

The word 'film' can of course have many applications in English, but in Portuguese the equivalent *película fotográfica* has a connotation related to skin. Also, the 'camera' in English seems to have forgotten its earlier associations with the old-fashioned word chamber. By contrast, Mozambican photographers often talk about the camera as *a máquina* (machine). 'Darkroom' in English (which has in fact proved metaphorically very productive) becomes the *câmara escura* in Portuguese, which seems not to have lost its etymological memory of 'the chamber' as a space where something mysterious and private happens, as the negative slowly turns into the positive.

This leads to another association. The most interesting difference in terminology is the Portuguese word for developing film, *revelação*. Kok Nam thus describes his first job in Studio Focus: 'it was a place that mostly did developing, they printed the developed film (*revelações*)'.⁶⁷ The image is revealed. It is latent and must be brought out. In both languages the word revelation carries a spiritual connotation, where converts are brought into the light.⁶⁸ One could apply this equally to the process of coming to a political consciousness. Kok Nam in fact describes his first experiences of working in the darkroom as an assistant at Focus Studio, where his mother found him a job when he left school, as something of a revelation as well.

The first time I went into a darkroom I was fascinated, that was magic. I helped the guy who developed photographs, I was the man with the tongs, I took the photos from the developer and put them in the fixer, fast, and there were some photos that didn't turn out well and he put to the side, putting them right in front of the trays, that had a window painted black but where there was a tiny little hole through which a ray of light entered, but very minute like a pin head, and the photos stayed there, and us working, and then the image there from outside was printed on the photographic paper of the abandoned photographs on the side, that were still damp from the developing liquid.... For me that was completely magical. We are speaking of 1956, 1957.⁶⁹

66 Ricardo Rangel interviewed by Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, Maputo, 31 July 2005.

67 Kok Nam interviewed by António Cabrita in Noronha et. al. eds., *Kok Nam*, 15.

68 For broader anthropological explorations of revelation and spiritual power see inter alia B. Meyer and P. Pels, eds., *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) and M. Taussig, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

69 Kok Nam interviewed by António Cabrita in Noronha et. al. eds., *Kok Nam*, 15.

Later, with politics and critique, there is something redolent of revelation again. Walter Benjamin writes suggestively that ‘the darkness of the lived moment, is nothing other than what we should determine here, on the level of the historical, and collectively. There is a not-yet-conscious-knowledge of the past, whose furthering has the structure of awakening.’⁷⁰ That is why we would allow here for certain kinds of revelation (that take time) in Kok Nam’s photographs: a processing of that ‘darkness of the lived moment’.

Our selection of photographs here is not necessarily in sequence but interchangeable, as on a tableau. We propose this not as a subordination to the random, but an ‘insubordination to habitual influences.’⁷¹ These influences might be art discourses, the canons of academic disciplines, or the norms that treat one medium in isolation. It is not only important to put aside disciplines, it is also necessary to transcend national boundaries. Here we at least attempt a set of transdisciplinary and transnational associations. There is a limit to the more literal and historical associations and causalities that can be drawn, in a region of subcontinental wars whose often absent centre is Pretoria. The latter frequently rewired things to Mozambique from Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and maybe vice versa, learning from one site and applying it to another, sometimes mediating new modalities of violence – or thinking this is what it is doing, but finding that like photographs, things spill over in unexpected ways and take on their own momentum. Our purpose here is not to use photographs in an instrumental way to point to such complicities, but to instrumentalise the very ambiguity of photographs to suggest new paths of historical possibility.

Photo commentaries

Pigs in public

‘The Pigs of the Government are happier than free men.’⁷²

The photograph was taken in Guro, a district of Manica Province, in 1987.⁷³ A sense of emptiness emanates from the scene, close to dereliction. There is the invisibility of humans, but the increasing visibility of pigs. These new huts photographed from the back are a tiny bit disturbing: they have no face, no entrance, as if any human component was closed out of view so as not to be seen. The real people have been cleansed out of this scene, as if chased out by artillery or airpower. Like an infiltrating force, pigs are coming in from behind. Normally chased out of such living spaces, there are no forces here to react against them.

70 Cadava, *Words of Light*, 71, citing Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt: Surhkamp, 1972-1990), 490-91.

71 G. Debord, *The Naked City: illustration de hypothèse des plaques tournantes en psychogéographie* (Paris: Perlmilid & Rosengren, ca 1957).

72 This is the title of an article in *a Tribuna* published on 5 January 1974. It refers to business deals on land and property and other corruption-related issues within government institutions in the Province of Mozambique that were virtually out of Lisbon’s control due to the political instability in Portugal at the time. Kok Nam considered this newspaper the most progressive newspaper until it was swallowed by the giant Banco Nacional Ultramarino. For an overview of press history in Mozambique see I. Rocha, *Catálogo dos periódicos e seriados de Moçambique da introdução da tipografia à independência, 1854-1975* (Lisboa: Edições 70, 1985). For *a Tribuna* newspaper see also R. Rangel, ‘Os primeiros passos de um jornalista famoso’ in F. Ribeiro and A. Sopa, eds., *140 Anos de Imprensa em Moçambique* (Maputo: AMOLP, 1996), 122-123.

73 The photograph is published in Noronha et. al. eds., *Kok Nam*, 85.

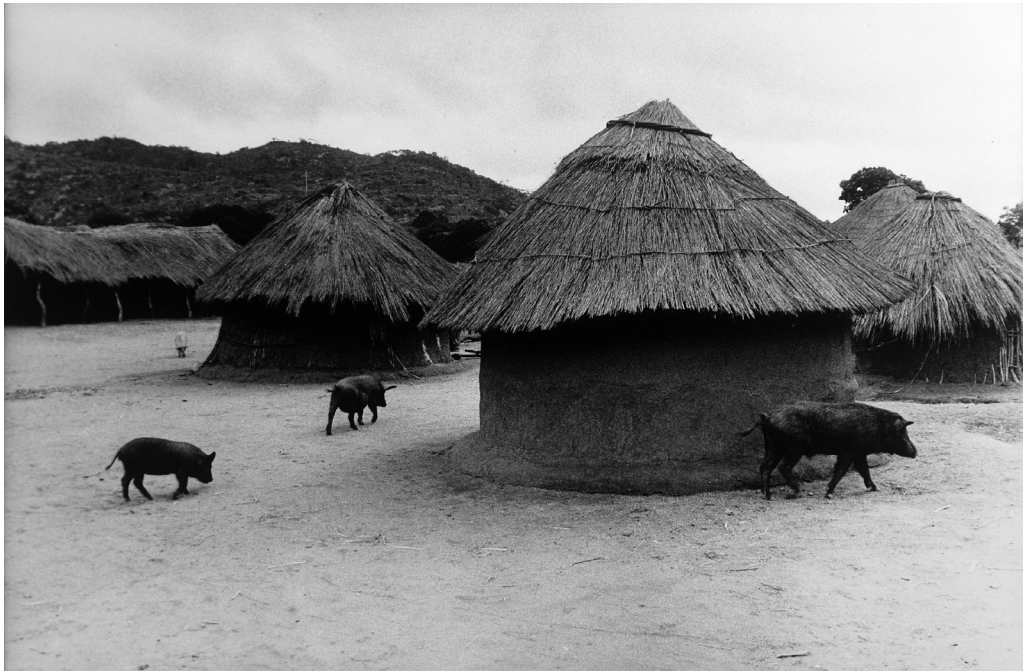


Figure 4: Untitled. Kok Nam

It is striking that this almost immediate interpretation came spontaneously, without any effort, without any deep thinking. It was as if simply looking at that image triggered a command, a sort of emotional mechanism connected to latent information buried in the mind that stimulated this vision. Why? The Mozambican sociologist Elísio Macamo argues that we should not just project meanings from today but interpret things within their ‘historical context’, using criteria that are of our time. According to him, there is always a hiatus between our approach and the time when things were made. This may give space for all kinds of interpretations.⁷⁴ Here we take Macamo’s point as an invitation to explore the temporality ‘when things were made’, but also to use that hiatus productively, allowing multiple interpretive possibilities to emerge and rub against one another.

In a Mozambican setting one could suggest this as a case where the image arrives at its representative function as a result of a psycho-social activity of constructing meaning that produces an implicit and explicit (but tacit) knowledge. This, categorically shared knowledge, constitutes a trace of sociability.⁷⁵ Some of this can be explained by reflecting on the strategies employed to introduce Frelimo and its philosophy to the free country of Mozambique after Independence. Dynamising Groups and cells of the party were created in the urban neighborhoods, within administrative, economic, health, educational and social institutions. People were involved in different fronts of action, from ideological education meetings to cultural activities which, since the early days of the independence process were utilized as a means of

74 Elísio Macamo is a Mozambican sociologist based at the Centre for African Studies at the University of Basel in Switzerland. Interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Lisbon, 23 June 2013.

75 This notion is borrowed from T. Manjate, *O simbolismo no contexto proverbial Tsonga e Macua-Lómwè* (Maputo: Promédia, 2000). In her discussion she addresses folklorist concepts, popular culture, oral tradition and performance for the purposes of a comparative study of symbolism. Some of the ideas relating to oral and textual literature are here applied to the visual.

spreading the ideas of a new history (as distinct from the history brought to society by 'the colonized'), the ideas of the new nation, the construction of a new man, and the identification of the enemy, of what is good and what is bad. Most of that history was grounded in the epoch of the armed struggle and it echoes across revolutionary hymns and songs from the time.⁷⁶ A 1974 pamphlet entitled 'What People Need To Know'⁷⁷ is a very condensed description of that new history, which was also diffused through other popular communication channels such as the theatre. Along that journey figures like the pig, Xiconhoca the snake, the chameleon and the sheep provided striking examples of associations made using animal symbolism. These symbols were also employed in speeches (official and non-official) to facilitate communication with the popular masses and, as a consequence, they entered Mozambican everyday speech as very common expressions.⁷⁸

Theatre in 1975 was enjoying a wave of popular performance and audience participation, and it was a medium consciously directed at 'the masses'. Even if the play was simply to show the leaders or provide some cultural activity, the idea was to communicate with large audiences through different languages that people could understand and relate to directly. In this time frame it is probably justifiable to speak of a popular theatre.

In Nachingwea, the beginning of 1974 saw the creation of the 'Scenic Group' of the Popular Forces of Liberation of Mozambique (*Grupo Cénico das Forças Populares de Libertação de Moçambique*) in the Political and Military Preparation Centre (*Centro the Preparação Político Militar*) of Frelimo. The group assembled non-professional 'actors' who were highly disciplined guerrillas and (as it transpired) devoted to the craft, who quickly drew much appreciation. In 1975 just after the country's independence they performed a play called *Javali Javalismo* at Manuel Rodrigues' theatre, one of the biggest cinema houses of Lourenço Marques.⁷⁹ There were about thirty people involved in the production, including actors, musicians and technicians moving items on the stage. It was a remarkable cultural event and they had a full house the entire season. José Mucavele, musician and composer of the sound track recalls:

We had cultural activities in Nachingwea, theatre, music and dance. Among the members were Lina Magaia, Matias Xavier, Alcinda Abreu, Felício Zacarias and Teodato Hungwana. We all had roles in the government after independence, the last two serving as Ministers. Hungwana was the dramaturge. For *Javali Javalismo* he was inspired by Samora Machel's use of the term to refer the undisciplined, the corrupt and all people who were against the morals and the principles of the movement.⁸⁰

76 A. Mafalda Leite, H.O.R. Chaves and O. Lapa, eds., *Nação e narrativa pós-colonial, Angola e Moçambique* (Lisbon: Colibri Editions, 2012). The argument concerning literature in confrontation with history is very apt here. See especially M. P. Menezes, 'Nação e narrativas pós coloniais: interrogações em yorno dos processos identitários em Moçambique', 311-322.

77 'What People Need To Know: Mozambique and its People' (Lourenço Marques: Imprensa Nacional de Moçambique, 1974) is a pocket brochure of thirteen pages comprising some text written in very simple Portuguese but mostly cartoon-style drawings.

78 See L. Buur, 'Xiconhoca: Mozambique's Ubiquitous Post-Independence Traitor' in S. Thirangama and T. Kelly, eds., *Traitors: Suspicion, Intimacy and the Ethics of State-Building* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 24-47. L. White and L. Vail have also written on the creativity of metaphor in central African poetics and politics, though they focus on how it is accentuated in times of political constraint. See their *Power and the Praise Poem* (London: James Currey, 1992).

79 *Javali* means wild pig or boar.

80 José Mucavele is a former combatant, a classification applied to people involved in the liberation struggle. The interview was conducted by Rui Assubuji in Maputo, 2 May 2013.

According to Mucavele, the public used to be mobilized to attend cultural events by the press, the Dynamising Groups and other structures in the neighbourhoods. Considering the play a success, he argues that everything they did with the arts was meant to educate, and this contributed to the correction of certain kinds of conduct. 'Samora was very creative, he called things by their names. He had the capacity to verbally illustrate his speech and communicate. He spoke to people and the people understood him. He managed to build a society that was respectful'.⁸¹

This Scenic Group, now from the FAM (Armed Forces of Mozambique), edited a theatre play called *The Second Family*, and the script was published in 1980. It included 'The *javali*, with eyes always on the ground, incapable of seeing the midday sun; the chameleon [who] changes color depending on convenience; and Xiconhoca corrupted by the values of the petty bourgeoisie'.⁸² In a 1980 public lecture about theatre, Sérgio Vieira made reference to 'the appearance of the conflicts that grew after independence. *Javalismo* appears in the theatre'.⁸³ This phenomenon made the cover of *Tempo* magazine, with Rangel's colour slide depicting a moment of the play that was not singled out just by chance (see Figure 5). Earlier that year the President had launched the 'Political and Organizational Offensive' (*Ofensiva Política e Organizacional*).⁸⁴ In the 18 March rally he said: 'A group of servants constitutes now the directorate of the company. We found that at Octávio R. Lobo and many other places. When I looked carefully, I saw only *javalis* in front of me. Are *javalis* placed as Directors of companies? [...] I entered a *Loja do Povo* (people's shop) and I found a regiment of employees.... these are *javalis* in the people's shops....'⁸⁵

In the readers' letters section of *Tempo* magazine, there was a complaint about the APIE, the state housing body. 'There are *javalis* in the APIE. Just heard about it in Mr President Samora's speech of 18 March. I thought they were animals created by the APIE but they are people, functionaries of those sectors that transformed themselves into *javalis*'.⁸⁶ Indeed the President had addressed the state housing institution during his offensive: 'We entered into APIE and what did we find? We found a den of bandits, a den of corruption, a centre of humiliation of the people.... The APIE is delivered over to snouts, to the wild, to the criminals who behave like pigs.' Much later, Kok Nam himself publicly stated that APIE, along with the communal villages (*Aldeias Comunitárias*) and Operation Production (*Operação Produção*), were the great failures among the measures taken by Frelimo's government in the face of specific situations.⁸⁷

The scholar and senior journalist Mota Lopes recounts another pig episode but with a different twist. He recalls Samora Machel becoming very upset with an official from Cabo Delgado province who boasted triumphantly: 'Ah, in relation to superstition, in Pemba we put a pig in the mosque. And Samora said, what? Yes Comrade

81 Ibid.

82 The launch of the play *The Second Family* (*A Segunda Família*) is reported in *Tempo* magazine, No. 522, 55.

83 S. Vieira, 'Reflection on the Theatre in Mozambique', public speech at SNJ (National Union of Journalists), 4 October 1980, in *Tempo* magazine, No. 523, 19 October 1980.

84 See I. Christie, *Samora*, 156.

85 *Tempo* magazine, No. 493, 23 March 1980, 35-39. The article 'We declared war against the internal enemy' is President Samora Machel's speech in Maputo of 18 March 1980, fully transcribed in this issue of the magazine, 20 - 61.

86 APIE was created after the nationalizations of certain properties following Independence. *Tempo* magazine, No. 520, 28 September 1980, 53. It should be noted that the figure of the pig was already used to reference corrupt officials in the press before independence. See, for example, 'The Pigs of the Government are happier than free men' in the Lourenço Marques newspaper *Tribuna*, 5 January 1974. The point here is the return of the pigs in postcolonial Mozambique.

87 Kok Nam interviewed in the journal *Savana*, 17 August 2012.

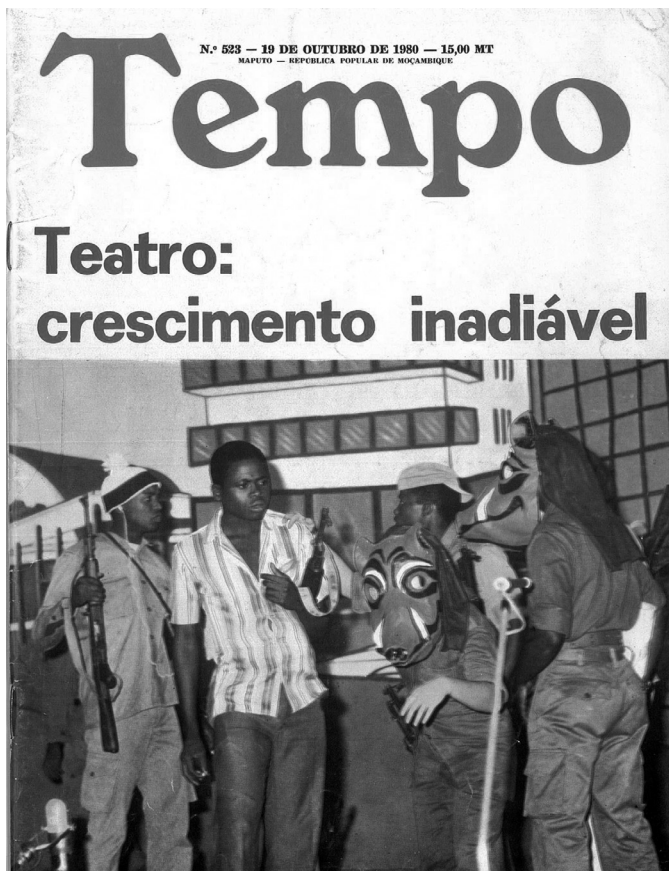


Figure 5: Cover photograph of *Tempo* magazine, No. 523, 19 October 1980. Ricardo Rangel

President, we took a pig and we put it in the mosque! Strongly criticizing the responsible official, the furious Samora said that is *javalismo*! In fact, it was a brutality. But officials from the government did things like that, they did!⁸⁸

Created in Maputo in 1982 with the purpose of re-launching amateur theatre, the *Associação Cultural da Casa Velha* (the Old House Cultural Association) produced and performed the play *Quem me dera ser onda* (*I wish I was a wave*). Based on a humorous novel by the Angolan writer, Manuel Rui, adapted for the theatre and transposed to the realities of Mozambique, the play confronts the petty bourgeoisie head-on. One of the central figures is a pig. The story evolves around a family, a couple and their child, who move from a rural neighbourhood to the city centre bringing along their pig, which becomes the pet of other kids in the building as well. Living in an apartment with the pig, however, creates problems with the neighbours. The drama centres on the pressure to kill the animal despite the affection the children have for it. The play tackles other sorts of social problems such as regionalism, scarcity and rural people's adaptation to the city life.⁸⁹ The actual opening of the play

⁸⁸ Mota Lopes in conversation with Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 9 May 2013.

⁸⁹ While the central figure is a pig, the issues the play engages with are usually associated with the snake character Xiconhoca (his name Xico being the diminutive of Francisco). A pejorative figure, Xico is smart, often pretending not to know rules and avoiding responsibility. He was often associated with problems such as corruption and dodging the military draft.



Figure 6: Poster of *Quem me dera ser onda* by Manuel Rui, Associação Cultural da Casa Velha, Maputo, Minerva Central, 1986.⁹⁰

was delayed by the tragic death of President Machel. As the director João Jerónimo said, ‘No one wanted or had any wish to think about *Quem me Dera Ser Onda*...we were dazed for about two weeks ... until a request arrived from the party, I remember this very well, it instructed us: life has to go back to its normal rhythm, you have the play, work and present it as soon as possible.’⁹¹ The play finally opened, was continually advertised and much covered by the press as theatre to make you both laugh and think.⁹² ‘*Quem me dera ser onda*, apparently simple, speaks about the life and death of a pig who moved from Costa do Sol where he was born to the seventh floor of an apartment block of APIE’⁹³

With the iconicity of the animals in Kok Nam’s picture, the symbolism generally in the imagination, and the history imprinted in a memory of lived experience (some of it from the theatre), we can perhaps start saying things from that very hiatus to which Macamo refers. As pigs occupy the public space, entering a deserted village, coming from behind the empty huts, they seem certain of their place, that they can go there, uninhibited, without being contested. And yet in terms of political symbolism these are creatures that are not welcome, they are something treacherous, traitors to the idea of the new man and socialism. What does that mean for others? Is it, as Patraquim says, a ‘Kokian’ irony? This would suggest a kind of African mythology, as if, in front of the real, the photographer starts to understand something. To reveal a position of desire for something different which is not there, the nostalgic man shows a presence that is in the discourse yet not in the real. At the limit, Patraquim argues, it is a terrible photograph because it breaks all clichés about a kind of ‘invention of Africa’. Just as Edward Said deconstructs the Orientalism of European invention, there is also an Africanism that has been constructed, best translated by the French term *l’Afrique Noir*, which has conditioned all the discourse about Africa and contaminates the ethnic, racial or non-racial discourse, while Africa is in fact totally diverse. According to Patraquim, Africa is not even Bantu. ‘Nilotic Africa is another thing, Sudan is another thing, North Africa is another thing, miscegenation is some-

90 Printed in B. Salström and A. Sopa, *Catálogo Moçambique Cartazes* (Maputo: Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique/Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 1988), 89; catalogued in the Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique (AHM) as Poster No. 769.

91 João Jerónimo, director of the play *I wish I was a Wave* (*Quem me dera ser onda*) interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 14 May 2013.

92 ‘Apparently just a play to make you laugh, it actually offers a serious critique of the vices and deviations of the urban petty bourgeoisie of Angola. Given the similarity of the problems it was transported to Maputo, to a flat of the APIE. Adaptation by Perpétua Gonçalves and João Jerónimo’, in *Notícias*, 16 November 1986.

93 Advertisement, *Notícias*, 14 December 1986.



Figure 7: A dovecote in the hinterland, Zambezia province, 1994. Kok Nam

thing else, as well as the Boers. And that is all Africa, and Kok is in the front line of understanding these things.⁹⁴

A different set of feelings emanates from another rural village photograph, of a granary and doves. The absence of people here is not remarkable, and viewers may be tempted to enjoy the freedom suggested by the fluttering white and spreading wings and the sense of peace very often associated with doves. The image has a harmony reinforced by the sober lines of the composition. The living subjects are in a kind of queue, there is no conflict, no confusion, provision is enough for all, to the satisfaction of the ones flying away and the ones flying in. The empty space in the picture also suggests quiet and tranquillity, and there is no sense of invasion. However, João Jerónimo made an interesting comment when looking at the picture:

This is a granary. Funny, because I don't know many people in Mozambican rural areas creating dovecotes, this could be inherited from a colonist, as

⁹⁴ The poet Luís Carlos Patraquim grew up in Lourenço Marques in Alto-Maé, helped to create the National Institute for Cinema and briefly co-ordinated the literary page 'Gazeta de Artes e Letras' of *Tempo* magazine. Interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Lisbon, 2 July 2013.

the Portuguese are the ones who have great tradition of creating dovecotes. Many Portuguese rural families create dovecotes. Here I know one family from Goa, at Bela Vista. They have a lot of doves and they eat them too.⁹⁵

Apparently the Portuguese do not have a monopoly on this tradition. Dovecotes have had a long presence on the Indian Ocean coastal islands of Mozambique. When Frei João dos Santos visited the Quirimba Islands, which were inhabited by local 'Moors', on behalf of the Ordem dos Pregadores between 1592-4, he noted the plentiful breeding of cows, pigs, chickens, goats and domesticated doves in their 'houses'.⁹⁶ When we put the images together here, giving a wider sense of the photographer's output may either disrupt or reinforce impressions. Thus if we juxtapose the picture of the granary with doves and its associations of harmony, plenty, provision, peace, the freedom of flight, with that of the pigs, then it intensifies the sense of purposefulness of the pigs trotting in. They are not in their usual space, they are looking for what they can get, coming to stick their snouts into whatever they can find and leave behind a stink. We certainly do not know if Kok Nam implied all these things, because he was responding to a situation without massive prior intentionality.⁹⁷ But viewers with time to conceptualise and to engage in and across the hiatus between themselves and Kok Nam taking the photograph might make such readings. Images are not innocent. This is the *Nachleben* of the photograph, its survival, its 'continuity or afterlife and metamorphosis', filled with latent possibilities.⁹⁸

Communal villages

Another photograph of an empty village – a communal village (*aldeia comunal*) – was chosen by Kok Nam to exhibit in certain contexts much later. Our commentary here revolves around three things: the communal village, the journalist and the state.⁹⁹

Before independence most of the press was in the hands of financial groups who were adverse to Frelimo. These included *Notícias*, *Diário da Beira* and *Voz Africana* to cite a few that had financial support from the BNU (*Banco Nacional Ultramarino*). The control of information was one of the first pressures of the new government. The new government saw the press as 'an important instrument to transmit their ideology and programs to people, to control hostile sectors and to consolidate national unity'.¹⁰⁰ At Macomia district of Northern Cabo Delgado Province in 1975, journalists met President Samora Machel to discuss the general lines the press should take, namely 'to inform, to educate, to mobilize, to organize' the people. The President is reported as saying:

95 João Jerónimo is by profession an agronomist-engineer and has worked in rural areas as a consultant for Impacto, a company specializing in studies on environmental impact.

96 F. João dos Santos, 'Etiopia Oriental' in A. Rodrigues da Costa, *As Ilhas Quirimbas: Uma síntese histórico-naval sobre o arquipélago do norte de Moçambique* (Lisbon: Edições Culturais da Marinha, 2004), 263.

97 See C. Scott, *The Spoken Image* (London: Reaktion, 1999) on photographers' receptivity and some problematics of ascribing intentionality.

98 The term *Nachleben*, with its connotations of afterlife in English, is the German translation of the French term *survivante* in the title of G. Didi-Huberman's *L'image survivante: histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2002). The German translation is published as *Das Nachleben der Bilder: Kunstgeschichte und Phantomzeit nach Aby Warburg* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2010). See also G. Didi-Huberman, 'Artistic survival: Panofsky vs. Warburg and the Exorcism of Impure Time' in *Common Knowledge*, 9, 2, (Spring 2003), 273-285.

99 For a critique of communal villages, see S. Chichava, this volume. The caption for Figure 8 here is taken from K. Kugel ed., *Saudade de l'espoir, esperança: être photographe au Mozambique* (Réunion: Collection Photographies en Océan Indien, 2004), 48-49.

100 S. Chichava and J. Pohlmann, 'Uma Breve Análise da Imprensa Moçambicana. Desafios para Moçambique 2010' at www.iese.ac.mz/lib/publication/livros/des2010/des/, 127.



Figure 8: Village in the interior, near Lichinga in Niassa province, northern Mozambique, 1995. Kok Nam

We have the necessity to make of our national information, information in the service of the people.... It requires profound work at individual and collective levels.... Who guides the work of the press ... the Party, only it alone. The advantage is that it assumes the entire class struggle of the workers, it sees all our desires, the aspirations of the entire people.¹⁰¹

Due to the history of select access to education during colonialism, however, most of the journalists were of white Portuguese descent, many of them young and without much experience, though full of enthusiasm. Some had a little political experience from the University student movement, but this was far from the military discipline prevailing in the liberation struggle. 'During the struggle, the journalist was also a guerrilla, mobilizer and activist.... The identification between journalism and participation in the popular fight emerged, after independence, as a revolutionary tradition and an inherited moral.'¹⁰² An element of distrust therefore marked the early relationship between the local press and the new government.¹⁰³

The President's preoccupation was the fight for mental decolonization. The current task was to build the popular and democratic power, which, in his view meant to fight or at least overcome the spirit of nationalism. 'From patriotism we moved to the

101 'President Samora meets with information workers' in *Tempo* magazine, No. 259, 21 September 1975. The meeting took place from 26 to 30 November 1975. The audience representatives included journalists from *Notícias*, *Notícias da Beira*, *a Tribuna*, *Tempo* magazine, *Rádio Moçambique* and *Voz de Moçambique* (Voice of Mozambique) radio station.

102 L. Vasconcelos, 'Some Reflections about Post-Independence Press' in A. Sopa and F. Ribeiro, eds., *140 Anos de Imprensa em Moçambique* (Maputo: AMOLP, 1996), 141.

103 M. da Graça, 'Freedom of the Press' in A. Sopa and F. Ribeiro, eds., *140 Anos de Imprensa em Moçambique* (Maputo: AMOLP, 1996), 177-179.

phase of revolution ... the struggle of the working classes'.¹⁰⁴ The information workers received concrete directives for the transformation of the journals and radio into instruments of the People and of the Revolution.

There is no neutral ground in the class struggle.... The petty-bourgeois origin of most journalists, the colonial education they received, the methods and concepts of bourgeois information whose influence carries on today, are factors that facilitate and encourage the active return of misconceptions, old habits.... The journalist ... must fully assume the interests and aspirations of the workers and peasants.[...] His duties correspond to the members of the Party.¹⁰⁵

The first National Conference of Journalists took place three years after Independence, in Maputo, the capital of the country. In his opening speech, the Minister for Information, Jorge Rebelo, called attention to the context in which it was being held, with the restructuring of the party at national level and basic organs being created in all sectors of society. A process of selection and admission of new members was in motion across the country. 'A party of vanguard cadres, of the working class and of militant peasants, involves first of all those who participate actively in the cooperatives and communal villages. The other workers, intellectuals, functionaries, nurses, employees, teachers, who through their struggle showed that they are leaving the old mentality behind, they can also be part of the party'.¹⁰⁶ Popular Assemblies as 'superior organs of popular power' were constituted at local and provincial levels. Mass democratic organizations under the direction of the party, such as workers (OTM), women (OMM) and youth (OJM), were to be created or revitalized to actively reinforce democratic popular power.

Rebelo said the basic objective of the Conference is 'to create instruments capable of organizing journalists to serve the people and the Revolution', in this case the ONJ (National Journalists Organization). The 'new journalists' should be able to describe processes from within and should know how to explain (and organize) collective labour, control of production, vigilance, communal life and work. The country's transformation was already in progress; 'communal villages and agricultural co-operatives are developing and deepening, which manifests the enormous adhesion of our people to the socialization of the countryside'.¹⁰⁷ Rebelo went on:

The journalist is a worker who is at the center of a great battle waged daily between the old and the new, between the right ideas and the erroneous idea. The journalist cannot be a man confused, indecisive and hesitant. He cannot be a neutral element, amorphous and passive. He cannot be a bureaucrat. He cannot be an irresponsible person who puts on paper the first thing that went through his head. He may not be a liberal open to sub-

104 'President Samora meets with information workers' in *Tempo* magazine, No. 259, 21 September 1975.

105 Samora Machel cited in Chichava and Pohlmann, 'Uma Breve Análize da Imprensa Moçambicana', 128.

106 B. Egerö, *Mozambique: The Dream Undone. The Political Economy of Democracy, 1975 - 84* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1987), 113.

107 Jorge Rebelo, Minister of Information. Opening speech at the first National Conference of Journalists, 4 November 1978. CEA, Pasta No 16/YC (UEM, Maputo).

tle influences of propaganda and bourgeois lifestyle. He cannot be a straw flying in the wind from idea to idea. He cannot be undisciplined.¹⁰⁸

When Rebelo argues in 1978 that a journalist ‘cannot be a neutral, amorphous and passive element’ in the execution of his tasks, in a tone that is evocative of certain writings by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, it is just a little striking that these very qualities might occur to the viewer when thinking about Kok Nam’s enigmatic picture of the communal village. It was not published at the time it was taken. Its quietness and lack of action were outside any current discourse.¹⁰⁹ Yet such villages often had people in them, Naíta Ussene assures us. According to Ussene, as photographers they had the opportunity to photograph the country on travel assignments with NGOs or government institutions as they distributed food, donations or any other aid. Then, after taking the ‘official’ photograph, they would go in search of other images while waiting to catch a lift back to Maputo. This was how the photographers operated, especially during the period of the war. Ussene recounts a trip that Kok Nam made, for example, to the district centre of Gúru in Manica province, on the border with Tete, in this period. ‘After the district centre, a little walk takes us to the aerodrome and there was a military barrack almost in the village.’¹¹⁰ One can imagine everybody from the village going to the aerodrome to struggle for whatever aid there was for distribution. That might explain why the villages in some photographs appear deserted. With its thatched roofs compressed together by the powerful middle range lens, this photograph (Figure 8) undoes the impression of an unnatural living environment for rural Mozambicans. Kok Nam spoke of it later as resembling a painting.¹¹¹

To return to the Minister of Information, Jorge Rebelo:

Our information is governed by the party and by the competent structures of the State, it applies their guidance and decisions, guides it permanently on the political and ideological line of Frelimo, intransigently defends the interests of the working classes, it fights relentlessly the enemies of the people, internal and external ... That is Frelimo’s experience of Information during the armed struggle for national liberation, and must be applied and deepened by the Information of the People’s Republic of Mozambique.¹¹²

108 Ibid, 5.

109 See inter alia, J. Mosca, *Políticas Agrárias de (em) Moçambique (1975-2009)* (Maputo: Escolar Editora, 2011); M. G.M. Araújo, ‘O sistema das aldeias comunais em Moçambique. Transformações na organização do espaço residencial e produtivo’ (unpublished Ph.D. diss. in Human Geography, Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, 1988); I. Raposo, ‘Intervenção Estatal nos modos de habitar. O caso das aldeias comunais em Manica/Moçambique’ in *Cadernos de Noroeste* (Habitar: modos e modelos. Arquitetura e habitação social), 9, 1, (1996); A. Yanez Casal, ‘As aldeias comunais de Moçambique’ in *Antropologia e Desenvolvimento* (Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, Lisbon), 1996; Egerö, *Mozambique: The Dream Undone*, 193; C. Geffray *La cause des armes au Mozambique: Anthropologie d’une guerre civile* (Paris: Karthala, 1990); F. de Mira, ‘Os corredores de poder nas elites moçambicanas (1987-1994) in A. Nascimento and C. C. Rodrigues, eds., *A prevenção e a resolução de conflitos em África* (Instituto de Investigação da Defesa Nacional: Lisbon, 2012).

110 The photographer Naíta Ussene started his career in *Tempo* magazine, supervised by Ricardo Rangel and Kok Nam. Naita Ussene in conversation with Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 22 May 2013.

111 The photograph is published in Karl Kugel, ed., *Saudade de l’espoir* with the Niassa caption, and without any caption in Noronha et. al. eds., *Kok Nam*, 82. It was included in a presentation by Kok Nam at the Bamako Photography Masterclass in MuseumAfrica, Johannesburg, September 2005. José Teixeira in conversation with Patricia Hayes, Maputo, 28 November 2012, also highlighted Kok Nam’s painterly leanings. The lens used with this picture was probably 105mm or 135mm.

112 Jorge Rebelo, Ministry of Information of Mozambique. Opening speech at the first National Conference of Journalists, 4 November 1978. CEA, pasta No 16/YC (UEM, Maputo).

Though coming from the struggle with clear ideas of what they wanted to build and which was the best project for Mozambique, any criticism of such was understood as an opposition to the programme. 'When a journalist criticised the project in its globality or aspects of the project, we understood it as an action of sabotage, to destroy the project that we brought. Therefore it was precisely, though not declared, an act of censorship over the press.'¹¹³ Such a statement applies to all media. Machado da Graça speaks about 'purification', referring to journalists being moved from one organ to another, or being given other jobs, being dismissed and their places occupied by state-nominated elements. He recalls the case of the newspaper *Notícias*, which, in less than a month, lost twenty journalists, including its director, the advocate Pereira Coutinho, who had been with the newspaper since colonial times and remained in Mozambique supporting the cause. He was dismissed and replaced by Arlindo Lopes who came from the Dynamising Groups in 1976.¹¹⁴ Another senior journalist, Fernando Lima, referred to this episode as the greatest professional exodus in post-independence Mozambique, a landmark in Mozambican press history that followed the intervention of the government in what is still today the main newspaper. The question is what this does to curiosity, constructive criticism or dissent. It is widely acknowledged that it resulted in self-censorship, as Yussuf Adam outlines very clearly:

It was a more politically engaged journalism and with a concern for social issues despite the fact that there was some kind of restriction on press freedom. Censorship was the worst of all because it was self-censorship. I cannot recall any of my articles not allowed to be published and I worked more or less for five years, after independence, from covering national provinces to international sections of the news. Leaving at my request, I resigned because I felt that I could not express myself freely and there were many decisions of the director with which I disagreed.¹¹⁵

It might explain the turn to 'amorphousness.'¹¹⁶ Going outside journalism and into his own archive later was the only option for Kok Nam if he was to make any comment out of the official frame. Cabrita speaks about the mark of a generation conditioned by the idea of place, their position and role in relation to the image of the country and the purpose of photographic discourse.¹¹⁷ What should photography be? Yussuf Adam also noticed the kind of hierarchy that photographers ended up creating among themselves. There are stories of those who did not belong to the same ideological group, such as the old photographer Carlos Alberto, whose work went into 'the catacombs'. There are stories of the ones who left in 1974-75 or later, who also ended up being forgotten.

In photojournalism the theme is imposed, following a written or literary agenda: it is text first, then illustration. The major themes that Kok Nam managed to

113 J. Rebelo, cited in M. Cremilda Massingue, *A imprensa, o estado e a democracia* (Maputo: Promédia, 2000), 31.

114 M. da Graça, 'Freedom of the Press', 179.

115 Yussuf Adam was one of the untrained youngsters entering journalism in 1974. He worked in *Notícias*, briefly in *Tempo* and at Radio Mozambique in Iain Christie's programme 'Voice of Zimbabwe'. As a historian he chaired the History Department at Eduardo Mondlane University until his retirement in 2013. Email correspondence with Rui Assubuji, 20 May 2013.

116 In a 1977 interview Rebelo admits it had the opposite effect to what was intended. See Massingue, *A imprensa, o estado e a democracia*.

117 António Cabrita is a Portuguese sociologist based in Mozambique. Also a journalist and writer, he interviewed the photographer for the publication by Noronha et. al. ed., *Kok Nam: O homem por detrás da câmara*.

define photographically on his own terms are probably the war, 'Juventude pela Revolução',¹¹⁸ miners¹¹⁹ and the displaced. Kok Nam made every effort to photograph the heroic times. In his mind these were contributions to the construction of his nation, which he almost always portrayed with dignity. After the fall of the myth, there was no more heroism surrounding him, and he did not manage to come down from the universal to the singular. He missed that grandiosity, and the vision that 'could persuade a cadaver'. Kok Nam may have been a victim of the conditional aesthetics of his generation that inhibited other nuances, but this condition is superseded by a different kind of revelation now, the veins of a 'subterranean river' in his archive.

Billboard and antithesis

Kok Nam considered the billboard photograph important enough to not only publish it once in *Tempo* magazine, but also as the cover to a special supplement of selected photographs from the 'Objectiva' section of the magazine in September 1990.¹²⁰ The photograph contains a billboard with socialist figures looking triumphally in one direction and women pushing a cart with firewood moving in the opposite direction. It is not only the people in the image, but the design and aesthetics that are going in different directions. Russian constructivist influence produces the rather abstract one-dimensional figures in the huge billboard, countering a local aesthetics of 'intimism' that inflects the work of photographers on the ground.¹²¹ Kok Nam's gesture of photographing people struggling to survive in a collapsing urban environment during war – a far cry from the utopian figures above them – serves to insert a form of solidarity. In a sense these are two different kinds of monuments.

The billboard registers one example of processes of indoctrination that had been taking place in the city. It seems that most people did not relate to the figures in the billboard, who were seen as *mulungus* (white people, the other). Along with imported socialist visual culture, the city also experienced the imposition of new names. The old city neighbourhood of Benfica was now named after the Bulgarian communist leader Georgi Dimitrov, about whom not much was known locally. Much the same happened with his statue and road name in Cotonou in the Republic of Benin. Suggestively, Susan Buck-Morss makes reference to Dimitrov's mummification in 1949, which allowed his embalmed corpse to be displayed in a Sofia mausoleum like Lenin's mummy in Red Square.¹²² But sometimes things become mummified before they expire naturally, for example the narrowing down of aesthetic possibilities and imaginings after socialist revolution. In the Soviet Union itself the 1920s was replete with experimentation, abstraction and futurism, before becoming reduced (or mummified) into a singular socialist realism that is later exported elsewhere.

118 In 1998 Kok Nam exhibited 'Juventude pela Revolução' (Youth for the Revolution), his photographs of the soldiers displayed at the gallery of AMF (Mozambican Association of Photography) in Maputo. This exhibition also travelled to Rome.

119 Fernando Manuel, junior journalist at *Tempo* magazine recalls that 'in 1982 he [Kok Nam] was chosen to do reportage on Miners at Ressano Garcia (border with SA), a place no one wish to go because the railway line was a target. We went together and stayed longer because the line was cut'.

120 The photograph was first published in *Tempo* magazine, No. 802 of 1986, and is published again as the cover of Kok Nam ed., *Tempo Objectiva* (Maputo: Tempo, 1990).

121 While the influence of Soviet constructivism in visual design is widely-acknowledged in political imagery produced by the left in southern Africa, Sérgio Tique who was formerly the layout designer in *Tempo* magazine is of the opinion that most billboards in Mozambique took their cue from North Korean or Chinese graphic design. Sérgio Tique interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 22 May 2013. The term 'intimism' comes from Albie Sachs interviewed by Patricia Hayes, Johannesburg, 24 November 2005.

122 S. Buck Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 78.

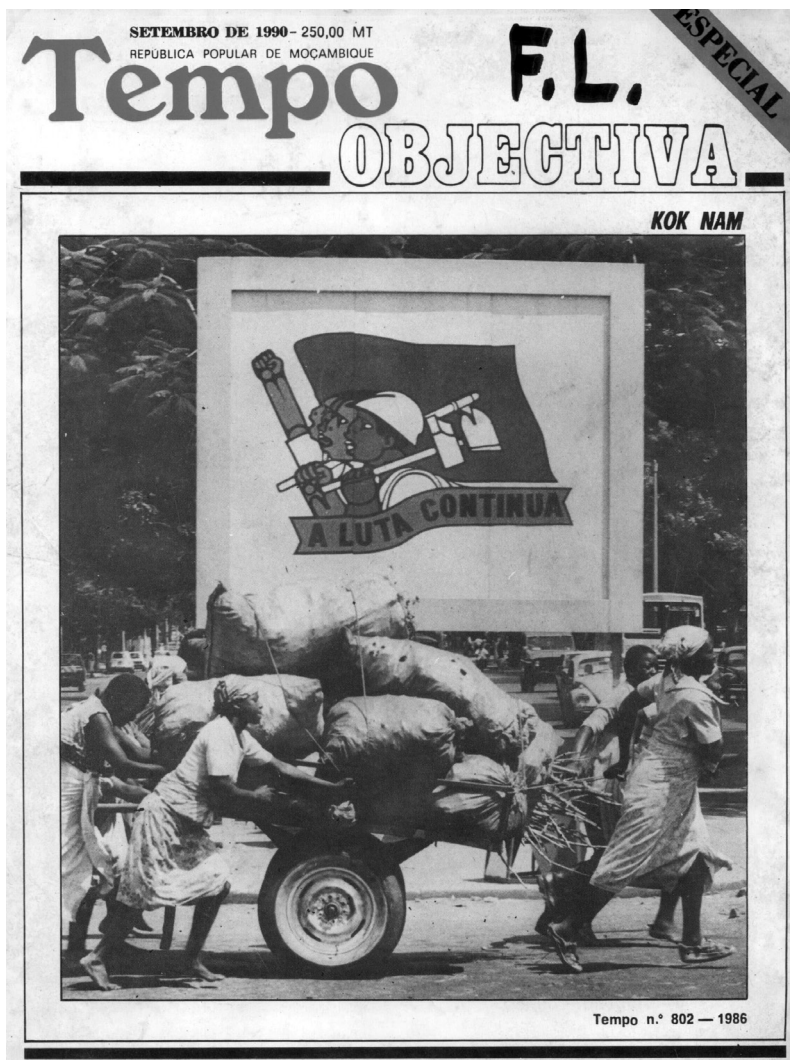


Figure 9: Untitled (*A Luta Continua*), 1986. Kok Nam

The socialist poster shows hoes in the city, valorizing agriculture, peasants and the majority of the Mozambican population. The population of workers was smaller and more urban, represented here by the figure with the hammer. These two categories were exploited, gained their freedom and are now supposed to rule after a liberation war by peasants and workers. In such a narrative of historical progress adopted during this phase of Frelimo rule, the socialist temporality laid down is very linear. The slogan 'A luta continua' indicates the billboard itself was erected earlier than 1986 when the photograph appeared. It dates from the era of the creation of the 'new man' (*homem novo*). Independence had been gained but other challenges loomed: it was a *luta continua* while Mozambique still had to assist its brothers in Zimbabwe and South Africa, countries whose regimes posed a constant danger to the new nation. Of course the phrase is adopted and incorporated by every liberation movement in the region so that many ordinary Zimbabweans, Namibians and South Africans come to use it as a slogan that unifies different revolutionary fronts across the subcontinent. It becomes the most familiar slogan of all their struggles. Like the struggle, the slogan continues, it has an afterlife.

The scene below the billboard also breaks the dichotomy between rural and urban. Numerous photographers, including José Cabral, have dwelt on the rural in the city, their 'synthesis'.¹²³ In Kok Nam's photograph, fuel in the form of firewood and sticks for kindling are being hauled into the city. It is ironic that kindling also has connotations in revolutionary discourse, of kindling the masses. Here the masses are reduced to playing the role of draught animals. In an earlier photograph in this essay, it is animals that take over the human space. This photograph is more about antithesis, perhaps, than synthesis.

Several theoretical propositions could be made here. We could argue (following Hansen) that Kok Nam is promoting a heterotopic debate when he puts the billboard into conversation with the oppositional movement of people in his photograph. He highlights the interpenetration of spaces, not allowing one to lead in a single line of argument. It is the unfolding of a contradiction, 'a politics within a politics'.¹²⁴ In this ongoing antithetical struggle between idealism and realism, the two are going past each other and do not connect at all. Worse, the fixed poster figures are looking in the wrong direction from where people are actually going. But there is an exaltation of the idea that peasant and workers have the power. The term 'exaltation' has religious connotations, and the figures are looking heavenwards, with arms raised in an uplifting gesture. In addition the image is exalted in height over the basic struggles on the ground.¹²⁵ It is assumed that the struggle to survive their daily life means that such people as we see in the photograph have no vision or dream of the future. If everyday life has no political vision, then it means utopian politics is timeless. This is not just the interpenetration of spaces, but also the crossing of temporal streams that become extremely muddled.

We could say that Kok Nam is photographing how things fall apart. Sigmund Freud proposes that when an era crumbles, 'it collapses into images'. These resemble night dreams. Certainly as Buck Morss argues (following Freud), without the narratives of progress, history breaks down into fragments, into images.¹²⁶ It subsides, has no motion, no direction.

There is already at least one diachrony in the picture, with the pre-1986 billboard and later 1986 predicament of survival in the city. The two temporalities slide past each other, revolutionary time fixed and survival time moving. Kok Nam's photograph seems to dwell on the clashing if not collapsing nature of temporalities in Mozambique at this time, potential synchronies broken. This is not the only time we see this in the selection of pictures here, where the time of progress (whether inherited from colonialism or socialism) is frozen or disrupted, and the time of survival goes on. It seems to have genuinely intrigued him. Juxtaposition in a photograph was the forte of Ricardo Rangel, Kok Nam's mentor, and also marks others who came under the Rangel's influence or attended the photography school in Maputo he directed from 1983.¹²⁷ Juxtaposition might be described as an ironic or biting take on the idea of 'synthesis' favoured by a number of Mozambican photographers and writers of this older generation. But even within synthesis there was often an explicit critique of the exclusions of colonial modernisation, for example Rangel's photograph in the

123 Quoted in P. Hayes, 'Time to Restart: Some Provisional Notes on Photography in Southern Africa (1970-1990)' in A. Pinto Ribeiro, *Present Tense* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2013), 61.

124 See Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, 54-55.

125 Note that Xiconhoca slithers along the ground.

126 Buck Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, 68.

127 One of the authors Rui Assubujji attended the Centre de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica in 1987.

first issue of *Tempo* magazine in 1970, which viewed the new high rise developments in the city of Lourenço Marques through a low grid of silhouetted roofs of ordinary thatched huts in nearby Matola, also reproduced in Kok Nam's edition of *Tempo Objectiva*. Such juxtaposition or synthesis however is not always critique. Sometimes it is extraordinarily lyrical, as in certain photographs by Sergio Santimano or José Cabral, where things are so in the mix that 'Those who were, were already no longer, now they are something else.'¹²⁸

But Kok Nam's photograph keeps things distinct, as if socialism does not stick. There are four figures in the billboard above and five in the street below. The four billboard figures appear to be in different shades of colour. It is not certain if this is purporting to represent a multiracial national cast of characters. Those below include some individuals without shoes, as it happens. The billboard is far from a synthesis; it is contrived, literal, one-dimensional. But it is very difficult to assess how residents of a city dotted with such billboards would have responded to them (or not). Susan Buck-Morss argues in her study of early visual culture in the Soviet Union, that 'the dream of culture for the masses has created a panoply of phantasmagoric effects that aestheticize the violence of modernity and anaestheticize its victims.'¹²⁹ Here in Mozambique, in this urban setting, it is more the violence of the breaking of modernity to which people must become anaesthetised.

The soldier as an ordinary person

The Soviet galaxy of heroic figures tended to comprise the worker, the peasant and the soldier. In the visual culture of this period in Mozambique it was mostly the worker and the peasant. Kok Nam's photography in a sense added the soldier to the public imagery of post-independence Mozambique. But this was not a heroic figure. It was the soldier as an ordinary person.

When I was traveling with the army during that time, it was my work. It's not because I wanted to take pictures to sell for the agency. Not like that. It's my work. When we came back from this operation we wanted to show how the soldiers were living.

It might be a soldier dancing with people at a village, as if one of the peasants. Given the largely conscript nature of the Mozambican army, there was a strong likelihood that he came from this background. Or it might be the soldier doing everyday things, like shaving. 'This picture you see, early morning. After that he must ... go to fight. They are human. Just like me.'¹³⁰ In the case of the photograph we have selected here, the activity is soldiers washing in the river.

These pictures here, during three days we only had water to drink. When we found the river everybody went to wash. I think ... it is a scene for me, the river, people washing, I'm not gay but I can feel I suppose they have bodies like that because they are always walking, they're in good shape, it's our soldiers. That is why I made these pictures.

128 José Cabral interviewed by Rui Assubuji and Patricia Hayes, Maputo, 27 July 2010, quoted in P. Hayes, 'Time to Restart', 61.

129 Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, 2-3.

130 Kok Nam interviewed by Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, Maputo, 29 July 2005.



Figure 10: Untitled (original in colour), Revué River, Manica province, 1981. Kok Nam.

Because they are naked, they have no defence, no protection; they are just ordinary, with a kind of camaraderie.

Always my pictures with the soldiers I have this view. They are human beings like you. They eat, they smoke, they drink, and they sleep and make love ... If they are naughty, other people are naughty too.

Asked about whether the soldiers accepted his presence there among them generally, Kok Nam answered: 'Yes, with pleasure. They like [it] because they feel you are soldier like [them] but without guns, without arms. Because your gun is your camera. They accept you because you are [on] his side'.¹³¹ He related that he would always stay ready with two clean T-shirts and a small bag, in case he was called suddenly to go and take photographs with the army.¹³²

Kok Nam here was not concerned to engage in war photography as a genre, nor, more generally, did he take combat photographs. Like many photographers during war, he often arrived at a scene after everything had already happened. Such photographs often only show the aftermath of violence, a retreat or an occupation. Moreover, he described himself as being a photographer of the second line. The official reason for this policy was that Samora Machel in particular was reluctant to put experienced photographers' lives at risk in front line situations, whether it was the early postcolonial years photographing the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in action against Rhodesian security forces up to 1979, or the Mozambican army in campaigns against Renamo. 'During the war against Rhodesia and Renamo,

131 Ibid.

132 Kok Nam interviewed by Patricia Hayes, Maputo, 7 December 2005.

Samora always said, we don't have a lot of photographers. We must keep photographers to teach [one] another photography. Then during the war we never went to the front line. We just stay the second line'. When asked about his experience of walking into difficult scenes left behind by fighting, he said: 'You feel very bad yourself. Even if you destroy a Renamo camp ... You only think what happens to them that time could happen to you'.¹³³

The nakedness of the soldiers in this photograph that was selected for a number of exhibitions, strips away certain kinds of knowledge and expectation.¹³⁴ We cannot take it for granted that they are military unless it is inserted into a specific context of soldiers, or war. But there are small things in the photograph that identify them: the boots and the AK47 rifle, the accoutrements they have removed in order to bathe. They put this world aside, disarmingly, to go back into a natural element. Soldiers are not supposed to be separated from their weapons, and here they remain close, suggesting it is near the front. The photograph moves between war and peace. It is a different kind of war picture, a landscape with persons: not personal, a big picture.

The array of postures of the bathing men has some resemblance to an evolutionary chart, going from those who are bowed over to *homo erectus*. More significantly, water purifies, it has spiritual associations and some of the washing gestures resemble prayer, with the men looking up, and bowing down. It washes away sin.

Water is cleansing, washing off blood, violence, regrets. It suggests a form of 'the care of the self', coming closer to truth.¹³⁵ Again, nakedness suggests a deconstruction of certain kinds of knowledge. Could it be a deconstruction of an iconography of the FPLM's figure of the guerrilla that Samora, always in uniform, took in its entirety? Patraquim argues that 'Kok had a subversive side which is there, most of it not yet seen. For the photographer, that was as important as the official regard he also had. Official in the sense of following the revolution, the independence'.¹³⁶ For Patraquim, therefore, Kok Nam had other preoccupations besides the school of photojournalism from which he came.

Tidying up the spatial chaos is part of photographic practice, suggests Cabrita, and we have an example here. For him, what is astonishing is the special composition, the way in which the picture has geometric designs, and an absolute geometric balance. 'What is very good in this picture is the feeling of harmony that we have in front of its composition. The pattern of equilibrium is completed by the moment... the hidden dimensions of harmony'.¹³⁷ Earlier in this article we said it was assumed that the everyday was deprived of a political vision. But here the photographer has stepped in to endow the scene with a vision through the framing of the camera. The plane of bodies suspended in the light of the water is not much differentiated from the ground. But they are illuminated. There is very little to distract the eye from their clarity against this one element, water.

Water is often pictured because of its quality of reflection, suggesting self-awareness, introspection, the contemplation of the interior depths of the self, looking within, self-reflection. But here the water is moving, it is a big river, not a still pool,

133 Kok Nam interviewed by Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, Maputo, 29 July 2005.

134 Notably the exhibition *Iluminando Vidas*. See Bruno Zraggen and Grant Lee Neuenberg, eds., *Iluminando Vidas: Ricardo Rangel and Mozambican Photography* (Zurich: Christian Merian Verlag, 2002).

135 M. Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983* (New York: Picador, 2011).

136 Luís Carlos Patraquim interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Lisbon, 2 July 2013.

137 António Cabrita interviewed by Rui Assubuji, 26 May 2013.

so their reflections are blurred and the individuation is not clear. There are rough outlines, just some features. Soldiers are not often associated with self-reflection and self-knowledge. They are in the water for functional purposes to wash themselves, but a space opens up for an affective drift.

In *Naked City*, Guy Debord explores how things become reoriented when the signs are taken down from city corners.¹³⁸ A similar process of 'reorientation' happens with the soldiers taking off their uniforms. They have gone from uniform to unique plural bodies. There is no one in command, the scene is egalitarian. But as a soldier, the self is already part of a collective.

This is not a time of hate in the sense implied by a civil war. Men on both sides were compelled, obliged, forced, even abducted into war. When the war finished in 1992, this ended. Children who had become embroiled in it went back to their families, when they could be identified. In many places, when they went home, those involved in the war were put through processes of cleansing.¹³⁹

Soldiers with mortar

When Mugabe's electoral victory in Zimbabwe was announced in 1980, the military situation in Mozambique seemed favourable to the Frelimo government. Lancaster House had stopped the Rhodesian raids; the FPLM's successful Operation Leopard (*Operação Leopardo*) had expelled Renamo guerrillas from the main bases of Gorongosa, Sitatonga and Garáua between February and June 1980. In Sitatonga traces had been found of South African involvement in support of Renamo.¹⁴⁰ Kok Nam spent several days in the latter area in Manica and some of his photographs of soldiers were taken that occasion. According to Naita Ussene, photographer at *Tempo* magazine, the fact that he spent a considerable time there contributes to the quality of the pictures.

This was the first trip they did, Kok Nam and Albino Magaia ... Operation Leopard. This is what I remember about that operation, the photographs. They are the best in terms of military operations from Kok's lens. The pictures are the best because they stayed a long time there, at the bases, talking to those soldiers. There is a photograph, you don't have it here, of a child with a water bottle, he looks like a Chinese or Vietcong guerrilla.¹⁴¹

The question recurs, was Kok Nam becoming an instrument of the regime? We asked him, 'Were you under pressure to make military heroes?' His answer: 'No, no never.'¹⁴²

Filimone Meigos was teaching at the military school in Nampula. With a recrudescence of the war the school closed and they were sent to the front. His group was placed in Nametil, and they operated in that area manoeuvring between Nampula

138 G. Debord, cited in Didi-Huberman, *Atlas*, 365.

139 See inter alia K. Wilson, 'Cults of Violence and Counter-Violence in Mozambique' in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 3, (1992); P. Stuedtner, 'The social integration of child soldiers. Concepts and experiences from Mozambique', Berghof Report Nr 6, Berlin, December 2000; A. Honwana, 'Negotiating Postwar Identities: Child Soldiers in Mozambique and Angola' in G. Bond and N. Gibson, eds., *Contested Terrains and Constructed Categories* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002).

140 S. A. Nhabinde, *Destabilização e Guerra Económica no Sistema Ferro-Portuário de Moçambique, 1980-1997* (Maputo: Livraria Universitária, 1999), 34. On Sitatonga see also *Tempo* magazine, No. 701, 18 March 1984, 33.

141 Naita Ussene in conversation with Rui Assubuji, Maputo, May 2013.

142 Kok Nam interviewed by Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, Maputo, 29 July 2005.



Figure 11: Untitled (Gorongosa, Sofala province, 1981). Kok Nam

and Zambezia Provinces. His group, made up of officials, some soldiers and the cadets from the military academy were involved in the mission to contain what he called the ‘metastasis’ of armed banditry spreading all over the country. As one of the officials, an artillery commander, he received some soldiers coming from Sitatonga where, to use Samora Machel’s expression, the backbone of the enemy was broken.

I heard from my colleagues about the grandeur of the operation in terms of gathering military regions, the general officers, the means, and the Zimbabweans. They say it was a very unparalleled occasion gathering together technique, art and science and military men. It was a large operation, I think it was the largest military operation carried out by the then Popular Forces of Mozambique (FPLM). Two large bases, Sitatonga and Garagua ... And the war spread, it seems was already spreading to Cabo Delgado.¹⁴³

Sérgio Tique was *Tempo* magazine’s graphic designer and as such he worked with the photographers to choose photographs, decide their position in the article, the photo for the cover, the photo to open the work, and so on. He had to learn about the

143 Filimone Meigos is a Mozambican sociologist and writer best known for his *Poema & Kalach in Love* (Maputo: AEMO (Mozambican Writers Association), 1994). His work is also in F. Mendonça and N. Saúte, eds., *The Anthology of New Mozambican Poetry* (Maputo: AEMO, 1993). He entered military service in 1978, and was serving in Nampula Province when the military operation occurred. Filimone Meigos interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Lisbon, 29 July 2013.

relationship between text and image. He developed the capacity to interpret images in order to make better use of them. In his opinion, the image was the principal thing that the magazine had but the situation in Mozambique was bad. The war was hot, *Tempo* had teams going to affected areas all time, to visit refugee camps or, on occasion, recovered Renamo bases. There were many photographs of war.

Kok had an incredible capacity to photograph soldiers.... We could see how worn the soldiers were at the time when there was a pause between fights; people with that uniform all spoiled. Through those pictures we felt that the war had to end, that everyone was tired. You could see it well in the pictures; however, we wanted to give that air of heroism, etc. It was beautiful what he did, the human aspect of the war. When he appeared with such a job it was always a thrill to sit and discuss ...¹⁴⁴

Reacting to this photograph, he said:

[T]hey have helmets which means that they were at war. It is not normal for there to be barefoot soldiers. There are several hypotheses one could speculate [on], but the strangeness of that situation in the theatre of war is a fact, and that is the point. I am interested also in the iconography of the faces, they have a faraway look. Reading these faces I see they are far away from the euphoria of victory. People are tired of war.¹⁴⁵

It is revealing that even at this moment of strength, people were tired of war. This photograph was not published in *Tempo* magazine, we are told, because it shows bare feet.¹⁴⁶

Patraquim recalls Jean-Luc Godard's framing question, the moral and aesthetic imperative that may come from lived experience, moral values, social sensibility or historical awareness. 'The socialist aesthetics ... you see more in the poster and literary terms (poetry of combat, etc.)'. In photography, beyond the official discourse, it is possible to find the 'devious regard' as the photographer 'leaves the frame'. The official discourse is not pasted together with reality, and this invites people to look for the cut, the hidden side of reality. 'Many photographers have done it well.'¹⁴⁷

We come back to Kok Nam's statement that if a dog bites a human, it is not a big thing. But if a man bites a dog, it is something. It captures the attention with its different logic. Photographers do not escape this logic, looking at something that is not normal in a situation created by the war. Kok Nam repeatedly said that during the revolution, 'I never stopped photographing what was in front of me which could be inconvenient to show'. But it was not a question he explicitly posed to himself. The photograph might get published or not, but prior to that point, he simply took it: whether it would be 'inconvenient' in terms of official discourse or damaging to public morale, or not. There is another photograph of a soldier wearing a *tanga* (cloth

144 Sérgio Tique interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 22 May 2013.

145 Filimone Meigos interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Lisbon, August 2013.

146 Sérgio Tique interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Maputo, 22 May 2013.

147 Luís Carlos Patraquim interviewed by Rui Assubuji, Lisbon, 2 July 2013.

wrapping), holding an AK47. Kok Nam says he felt 'shame' to show such a picture, but he did it to call attention to a problem.

It is only some years later that some cracks opened up in what was possible to say and publish. For instance, a French journal reported on a speech by the Minister of Defence General Alberto Chipande in 1986. 'We are aware of problems of resupplying our troops. The armed forces lack not only uniforms, boots and combat rations, but equally fuel and spares for military vehicles. [...] In these conditions it is difficult to confront Renamo forces.'¹⁴⁸ Then, at the second conference of journalists nine years after the first meeting in 1978, *Tempo* magazine reported that it was 'a privileged moment for critical open discussion about what been done and what not, also motives (various and multiple) that force the organs of information to give, daily, an image of a country which does not exist. That does not correspond to the actual reality'¹⁴⁹

Floating in the aftermath of this photograph from Gorongosa are two areas of association. One is bare feet, and the other is the leopard after which the military operation was named. In *Voices Made Night (Vozes anoitecidas)*, Mia Couto writes that feet are far from the heart. They are not associated with the higher order of the senses. As a student at the Centro de Formação e Documentação Fotográfica in Maputo, Rui Assubuji worked on feet to draw attention to the way they are neglected but so highly symptomatic. In the *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography* he published a photograph framing a man's foot and his wooden stump. He also photographed the feet of a woman in a crowd trying to get on a bus with a huge puddle in front of it, where things are too hard to succeed in being 'feminine' as suggested by her delicate shoes.¹⁵⁰ There is no courtesy in such a public transport situation. The state of the feet affects people's feelings about themselves and the situation in which they find themselves. But in the difficult years that Kok Nam described as 'the years of lead',¹⁵¹ very few could afford to think about this. Dirt and mud bring humans close to the pig. But shoes were scarce and it was important to get a ride home. People had to make their lives work, just as the soldier's priority was to make the bazooka work. His boots may have been in such bad shape it was better to throw them away.

A different slant on the barefoot soldier in 1980 emerges, perhaps, if we consider it in relation to an earlier photograph by Kok Nam, taken in 1974 in Tete province. Here he was travelling with another journalist José Quatorze, and they heard that Portuguese soldiers were locally fraternizing with Frelimo guerrillas after the fascist government in Portugal had fallen and the colonial war had ceased. Newspapers of course pointed out the piquancy of the white settlers becoming militant in the capital city while soldiers from opposing sides bonded. Kok Nam shot a roll of colour film at the rural Tete base where the soldiers were freely mingling and posing together.¹⁵² Some of the guerrillas have no boots; others have worn out shoes. Somehow this lack does not constitute an inconvenient issue, it constitutes something else altogether.

With Operation Leopard, the resonances include the animal that moves at night, and is very dangerous. In the colonial period, an elderly man made a renowned

148 B. Couret, 'Le Mozambique face à Pretoria' in *Aujord'hui l'Afrique*, 33 (1986).

149 *Tempo* magazine, No. 826, 10 August 1986, 2.

150 See Revue Noire, *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998), 238; also M. Waller, *A Bigger Picture: A Manual of Photojournalism in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: Juta, 2000).

151 Kok Nam interviewed by Patricia Hayes, Maputo, 7 December 2005.

152 Kok Nam interviewed by Rui Assubuji and Patricia Hayes, Maputo, 2 -5 July 2012. With thanks also to João Zimeima Manuel 'Ngueto' Mangoiane and Maura Quatorze.



Figure 12: Untitled (fraternising Portuguese and Frelimo soldiers, Tete province, 1974). Kok Nam

sculpture of a huge leopard (with a removeable tail) killing an Englishman. This was recently reinterpreted in a painting entitled ‘Tiger eating white man’ by Sebastião Matsinhe. The first colour feature film in Mozambique, a co-production with Yugoslavian director Zdracko Velimirovic working with Camilo de Sousa in 1985, was entitled *Tempo dos Leopardos*. Yussuf Adam gave his book the title *Escaping the teeth of the crocodile to fall into the mouth of the leopard* after a popular genre painting.¹⁵³ Such remediation or intermediality is very common with potent symbols. Associations around the lion in proverbs for example are rather different: dignity, bravery, integrity, authority.¹⁵⁴ Samora Machel’s soul, it was asserted poetically, would come back in the form of the strongest lion in ‘the forest of Chemba.’¹⁵⁵ The leopard does not have the same nobility as the lion, it is of course more unpredictable.

Kok Nam as a ‘second line’ photographer of the war was largely confined to taking portraits and landscapes just behind the front line, with few action shots. But there were also moments of going into other kinds of territory, into the wild. Sometimes there was suspense, things were about to happen, and the front line was not stable. Camps might be dismantled abruptly and forced marches begin.

There is one blurred and seemingly misty photograph of soldiers walking quickly ahead, from 1980. It is very unusual because it has none of Kok Nam’s usual sharpness and clarity. When asked, he said ‘This is not foggy. This is the camera. No good.

153 See *Notícias*, 7 December 1985 and 21 May 1986 on awards for *Tempo dos Leopardos*; Yussuf Adam, *Escapar aos dentes do crocodilo e cair na boca do leopardo: trajetória de Moçambique pós-colonial (1975-1990)* (Maputo, Promédia, 2006).

154 T. Manjate, *O simbolismo no context proverbial Tsonga e Macua-Lómwè*, 65.

155 G. de Melo, ‘O leão que há-de rugir’, *Tempo* magazine, 21 October 1986. Guilherme de Melo was a Portuguese journalist who worked at *Diário de Notícias* (Lisbon), and knew Samora Machel since 1953. See ‘Sou povo e trago o campo no sangue’ in *Diário de Notícias*, 29 September 1985. Samora Machel himself tells a leopard story in a Beira speech reported in *Tempo* magazine, No. 485, 11 January 1980.



Figure 13: Untitled (Limpopo, Gaza province, 1980). Kok Nam

The speed is not correct. But this [is] foggy too. But it's not intentional.¹⁵⁶ It is much later that he retrospectively saw something and selected the photograph for exhibition, with its lack of vision, soldiers not knowing where they are going, everyone just following, and needing to get there quickly.

The bridge

What does a bridge suggest? The postcolonial Rovuma bridge now connecting Mozambique and Tanzania is called a bridge of unity (*ponte de unidade*). It confirms the connection between two countries and facilitates movement between them. It also builds on associations of the liberation struggle against colonialism, where Frelimo used bases in Tanzania to enter northern Mozambique and establish liberated zones. The Rovuma figures as a legitimating point in the narrative of liberation, and Machel's phrase 'from the Rovuma to Maputo' invokes the move towards a new national unity at independence. Sometimes the reasons for building a bridge are as much (if not more) political than economic. Nothing has more visibility and dominance in a landscape, often combining massive engineering construction with formal architectural grace, and thus science and art, land and aesthetics.

The bridge over the Zambezi River in Kok Nam's photograph is the *ponte de unidade* between north and south. It was destroyed in 1986 when three platforms holding up the immensely long structure were detonated, causing part of it to collapse close to the south bank. William Finnegan's *A Complicated War* of 1992 has another picture of the bridge on the book cover, taken by Naita Ussene. Ussene's photograph is a close-up of the broken section, showing the drama of sabotage with much greater

156 Kok Nam interviewed by Patricia Hayes and Farzanah Badsha, Maputo, 29 July 2005. The photograph is published in Z'Graggen and Neuenberg, eds., *Illuminando Vidas*, 54.



Figure 14: Dona Ana Bridge, Zambezi River, Mutarara district, Tete province, 1986. Kok Nam

proximity.¹⁵⁷ Kok Nam's picture is concerned with the larger implications for the immense river, for this was the longest railroad bridge in Africa and the only rail line to cross the river in Mozambique. The bigger view of the bridge and the Zambezi River invites a wider set of questions than simply *who* is engaging in spectacular destruction. It begs the question of *why* such a bridge is there in the first place.

The original and hugely ambitious bridge was inaugurated in 1935. It was called the Ponte Dona Ana, named after the small settlement where construction began, that was later referred to as Mutarara. Simeão Lopes traces the origin of the name Dona Ana to the famous Ana Cativa, who held the lease on an extensive *prazo* in the region. Dona Ana was reputedly a 'Strikingly beautiful and very rich white Zambesian woman who in her magnificent prime is said to have owned a palanquin (*machila*) inlaid with gold'.¹⁵⁸ The official report from an Administrative Inspection of the Circumscription of Mutarara in 1957 takes the view that Dona Ana's name continued in the place not just because she was a famous *senhora* of an independent *prazo* in Zambezia, but also because her 'good relations' with the Portuguese made the district well-known. It is argued that these good relations led the area to become developed. It had a solid agricultural basis in its very rich soils and relatively dense population.¹⁵⁹ The 1957 report describes the Dona Ana *bairro* of Mutarara as the railway nerve centre in the district.

157 W. Finnegan, *A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). According to journalist Fernando Manuel, a group of journalists arrived in Mutarara on the north side from Tete province and Kok Nam walked across the bridge to take the photograph.

158 S. Lopes, *Renascer no Zambeze: Reabertura da Ponte D. Ana*. Publicação do ARPAC pela inauguração da Ponte D. Ana, 14 December 1995 (Maputo: ARPAC, 1995).

159 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, A2.49.004/52.00379, Inspecção á circunscrição de Mutarara pelo Inspector Manuel Metelo, 1957, 1-3.

If the name takes us back to the history of independent *prazeiros* in the interior of Mozambique since the eighteenth century, the building of the bridge itself is linked to David Livingstone's arguments about the need to build trade along the Shire and Zambezi Rivers since the nineteenth century. British missionaries in central Africa were also calling for an end to the servitude of the portage system. It was considered that building a railway line with access to the coast would promote Livingstone's purpose of destroying the slave trade, literally lifting the region out of its bondage. A bridge over the Zambezi River became a real possibility in negotiations between the British and the Portuguese from the 1920s but was hampered by different issues, including the precise choice of the site and the obvious need for significant investment. An injection of Belgian capital into the coal industry in Tete in 1929, however, convinced all parties and the construction process started.

The technological intervention was intended to materialize the vision of the Berlin Treaties and open flows of trade. It is telling that Landeg White refers to it as 'a colonial folly'.¹⁶⁰ The enterprise was something disproportionate in the African landscape. Local newspaper reports in both Mozambique and Nyasaland (Malawi) register the enormity of the event.¹⁶¹ The project was undertaken by an English firm, Cleveland Bridges Engineering, whose spokesman was G.H. Howard. The latter describes the entire village of Dona Ana that they were building for the work camp alone, comprising 'chalets' of wood and zinc with semi-luxurious interiors, plus tennis courts (which alone took about two months to build). The impression gained, according to the Beira newspaper, was of 'stupendous activity revealing lots of money, great method, and no stress'.¹⁶² Howard explained that the iron bridge centres would lie 50 m over river. The bridge was to come ready-made, and the real work on site was to mount it on the platforms. It would take four years to be ready. This prediction was accurate and the bridge opened in 1935. The bridge and Trans-Zambezi railway line in Mozambique to the Nyasaland border were later 'purchased' by Portugal in 1967.

It is suggestive that Hansen speaks of *modernisation* itself as a war zone.¹⁶³ Economic and capitalist forces affect labour and culture in often convulsive ways. The massive bridge construction therefore places this region of Mozambique in a war zone long before the war/s. In addition, such modernisation was designed to stamp out an older war zone – the slave trade – that connected the region into a larger Indian Ocean history of the precolony. This nerve point of the colonial and trans-imperial communication networks then became the target of devastation in the war of the postcolony. A bleak posthumous overview published in the journal *Savana* describes Mutarara as one of the most 'pounded' districts of the warscape between Renamo and the government in which civilians were caught. The report says landmines were planted on all sides, the 'largest bridge in the country' was destroyed and 'practically the entire population escaped to Malawi, the majority on 24 September 1986. The border with Malawi is 45 km from the centre of Mutarara, taken by the *guerrilheiras* in September 1986'.¹⁶⁴ The sense of this depopulation comes out in Kok

160 L. White, *Bridging the Zambesi: A Colonial Folly* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

161 *Nyasaland Times*, Blantyre 28 October 1930.

162 Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, Re Caminho de Ferro, folder of cuttings DSPCFT Divisão Estudos e Construção, Beira, 19 June 1931.

163 Hansen, *Cinema and Experience*, 48 (our emphasis).

164 A. Elias, *Savana*, 30 November 1994. See also S. C. Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos*. Lubkemann uses the term 'warscape' to depict long-standing and widespread conditions that connect violence, economic devastation and migration in Mozambique.

Nam's photograph and resonates with other photographs of empty villages. It also references those debates on 'deterritorialisation', which argue that depopulation served Renamo's interests, because it effectively 'unmade state power'.¹⁶⁵

The Zambezi was one of the rivers central to the Berlin treaties of 1884-5 as a means of communication and the interpenetration of trade and markets. With the modernist industrial bridge straddling the river, the 19th and 20th centuries were literally crossing each other at right angles. The implication of the destruction of the bridge whose purpose was colonial and trans-imperial connection is then isolation, the slowing down if not arrest of all traffic. If any people were still left in this landscape, they must revert to earlier modes of crossing the river at different points. The toxic mined landscape however makes any kind of movement in this space very difficult.

Afonso Dhlakama stated that Renamo was not responsible for the sabotage of the bridge. The preparation of devices to knock out certain pillars holding up Dona Ana in fact required specialized skills. The underlying question has always been the probability of South African involvement in a counter-insurgency campaign that takes on the idiom of guerrilla methods that target infrastructure. The Dona Ana bridge fuses a range of temporal and political issues that take us far afield to consider many scenarios that might be connected with the invisible perpetrators.¹⁶⁶ The tentacles of the South African security apparatuses stretched across the subcontinent, intervening in different situations in different ways. But they connect when we read about the training of a group of Mozambican paratroopers at an air base in Namibia in 1982. Some were dropped back into Mozambique after specialised sabotage training. Does this episode involving the tentacles of South Africa's 'empire' of destabilization and aggression replicate what has been argued elsewhere with regard to photographing history in the subcontinent, that apartheid was directly concerned with the destruction of modernity for black people?¹⁶⁷ It pushes people back in time, anachronistically.¹⁶⁸ But there are other dynamics at play that locate the bridge in a even larger historiography of the region and the continent, culminating in the major Renamo offensive into central Mozambique from Malawi in 1986. In Finnegan's account of the war, the Mozambican economy had collapsed by 1983. This contributed to the signing of the Nkomati Accord in 1984, yet the war continued. Renamo in fact lost the image or propaganda war but carried on fighting.¹⁶⁹ The Mozambican army in turn launched Operation Leopard and eventually captured the Renamo base at Gorongosa. By this time Machel was extremely active in the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) and pushing two strategies with other Frontline States. The one was to isolate South Africa by diverting regional traffic flows from

165 See E. Lunstrum, 'Terror, Territory, and Deterritorialisation: Landscapes of Terror and the Unmaking of State Power in the Mozambique "Civil" War' in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 9, 5 (2009), 884-892. Kok Nam's photograph is in fact populated by a few spectators of the collapsed bridge, but the operation to remove landmines around the base and assess reconstruction was apparently already underway.

166 Eyewitness accounts of the presence of white South African soldiers were reported. See *Noticias*, 18 October 1986, 6 November 1986 and 12 November 1986; *Tempo* magazine, No. 840, 16 November 1986; AIM *Bulletin* No 125, December 1986.

167 See P. Hayes, 'Seeing and Being Seen. Politics, Art and the Everyday in the Durban Photography of Omar Badsha, 1960s-1980s' in *Africa*, 81/4, 2011, 1 - 23; idem, 'Poisoned Landscapes' in S. Mofokeng, *Chasing Shadows: Thirty Years of Photo Essays* (Munich: Prestel, 2011). See also S. Mofokeng, 'The Black Albums' in *Revue Noire, Anthropology of African and Indian Ocean Photography* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1996).

168 For the analysis of a colonial episode of pushing people back in time, with the camera as part of the ensemble, see P. Hayes, 'Northern Exposures: The Photography of C.H.L. Hahn, Native Commissioner of Ovamboland 1915-1946' in Wolfram Hartmann et. al. eds., *The Colonising Camera*, 180-1.

169 Finnegan, *A Complicated War*, 34-35.

South African railways and harbours to Angolan and Mozambican ports instead. Figures however on the corresponding 'destabilisation' on the railway systems of Mozambique show an enormous upsurge of effect by 1986-89, with destruction of locomotives, wagons and lines.¹⁷⁰

The second strategy followed by SADCC with much insistence from Machel was to pressure neighbouring President Hastings Banda to expel Renamo from their bases in Malawi. This finally took effect in 1986. With an uncanny resemblance to what Mahmood Mamdani has outlined in the case of the Rwanda Patriotic Front who pushed militarily into Rwanda in the early 1990s when Uganda was due to terminate Rwandan residence rights there,¹⁷¹ Renamo forces after their expulsion from Malawi launched a heavy offensive into Zambézia province in Mozambique and nearly cut the country in two. In other words, the SADCC solution produced more problems. The bridge fell in September and is part of this larger narrative, as is Machel's death in the aeroplane crash in October 1986 on his return from a SADCC meeting in Lusaka. If the fallen bridge marked the end of a nineteenth century vision of progress, the fallen plane at Mbusuzi marked the end of Samora Machel's Popular Republic. The republic's values appeared to die with Samora, Aquino de Bragança and others. Among Kok Nam's series on Mbusuzi published in *Tempo*, the main photograph takes issue with the uncertainty around the cause of the crash. In the photograph of burly white South African men busy at the horrific scene (see Figure 3), one of them wears a T-shirt with a reference to terrorism. Kok Nam's caption then became 'The real terrorism'. In the expanding history of situations produced by South African counter-insurgency, marked by uncertainty and lack of satisfactory explanation, Kok Nam in his straightforward way turns it right back at the prime suspect.

A Mozambican-Zimbabwean counter-offensive by 1987 succeeded in driving Renamo out of the main towns at least. The provincial capital Quelimane almost fell that year as well, but not quite. Above all, there were huge numbers of refugees and central Mozambique was said to be 'devastated'.¹⁷² But around the entire southern African region these years saw an intensity of activity that could perhaps be described as a crescendo. Even Zambians were finding pamphlets dropped from the air, hostile to their Government and Kaunda in particular.¹⁷³ It was as if South Africa was trying to trigger things everywhere, let alone deal with their own internal protests and pressures. While the Zimbabwean government was finally bringing an end to the lethal campaigns in Matabeleland (1987-8), they were still having the frequent inconvenience of blocked petrol supply at Beitbridge. Mozambique had 60 000 migrant workers deported from South Africa. The war in southern Angola was intensifying and fighting was becoming concentrated in Cuito Cuanavale with later Cuban strikes towards Calueque and even Ruacana in Namibia.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of Renamo, but perhaps a few points should be made. Bill Minter's report of 1989, based on accounts by former members, refers to some training in sabotage, but there is much more emphasis on high involuntary recruitment. These are biographical narratives of burned bridges, because once in Renamo the 'recruits' reported being threatened by leaders and afraid of the

170 See Nhabinde, *Desestabilização*, 124 for statistics on effects of destabilization.

171 M. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

172 See Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos*.

173 See *Notícias*, 2 October 1985, regarding the increase in South African destabilisation in Zambia.

government. When the Rome Accords were signed and a ceasefire ensued, to be followed by elections in 1992, the high Renamo turnout at assembly points was an indication of the widespread desire for an end to it all.¹⁷⁴

Returning to the Dona Ana Bridge, a project for its repair was undertaken with support from a new donor (USAID) that was part of a new political landscape. Unlike the accurate forecasts and assemblage by the British engineering firm in the early 1930s, newspapers reported on the initial failure of the attempted repair. An enquiry by consultants was made public, putting the blame of a miscalculation of weight, and ‘technical reasons’.¹⁷⁵ Lopes’ commemorative publication refers to an accident in the raising of one of the platforms, but other factors too, such as delays in the supply of wood and changes to the initial plan.¹⁷⁶ Finally the much-vaunted *ponte de unidade* – renamed the Zambezi bridge – was re-inaugurated in December 1995.

We found that in reading Kok Nam’s photograph of the Dona Ana Bridge, the photograph allowed us to go *vertically* and temporally (if anachronistically) into the deep past through the register of Dona Ana and the anti-slavery movement to promote trade, up to a point of triumphal colonial construction. We also found that the photograph led us to go *horizontally* and spatially across the entire region of southern Africa. South Africa is of course the missing referent.

Conclusion

The photographer chased an obsession, his own pact with the utopia of the country. There was a collective hallucination that he embarked upon legitimately and passionately, a kind of political sublime. Perhaps this revolutionary time was more ‘palpable’ when it was possible to record changes and newness. Edwards speaks of certain temporal dynamics of subject matter, when ‘there is a coming together of the temporal interjections of photography with cultural perceptions of deep time’.¹⁷⁷ Afterwards it might falter and become negative. But other interesting nuances are lying in Kok Nam’s archive, which, like the veins of a subterranean river, point towards another more delicate sublime, somewhat different from the great themes about which he worried.

In retrospect, in the hiatus between taking the photographs and considering them years later for exhibition or publication, it seems that Kok Nam dipped into these nuanced areas of his archive and found they went better with his present feelings. He also found blurring and ‘accidents’ more acceptable when previously sharp focus and clarity were the handmaiden of political purposefulness.¹⁷⁸ These more ‘amorphous’ photographs are like an echo of second thoughts.

Critical theoretical and other disciplinary treatment of photographs has been growing exponentially in different parts of the world, including by historians. It is increasingly recognized that besides textuality and orality in Africa, for example, there are other mediums of history. Photographs bring with them a different and more

174 Far more detailed and subtle studies of Renamo were later undertaken as research conditions improved, as indeed for the entire period, especially after Geffray’s 1990 intervention with *La cause des armes au Mozambique*.

175 *Notícias* 1995.

176 Lopes, *Renascer no Zambeze*.

177 Edwards, *The Camera as Historian*, 6-7.

178 A useful discussion of the discursive history of focus in photography can be found in Lindsay Smith, *The Politics of Focus: Women, Children and Nineteenth Century Photography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 16-19.

self-contained organization of temporality, compressed spatial dynamics and more. A certain inquietude or excess, perhaps? It seems there is an especially heightened capacity in the survival, storage, reproducibility and repositioning of photographs that ensures no single meaning is possible, and it is inadvisable to close off meanings as if there existed a sovereignty of consciousness at any one time. We subscribe rather to the possibility of the 'sovereign accident'.¹⁷⁹

Sovereignty is, of course, a suggestive notion in Mozambique leading up to and after Independence, because the country changes from a Portuguese-governed territory to a new African nation. Frelimo had its liberated zones in the north from which it sought to present a picture of itself as effective against the Portuguese army and construct a new life for people, but with Independence it had to constitute a new sovereignty. This sovereignty is challenged and riddled with problems as armed attacks continue by the Rhodesians and commence with Renamo, growing to absolute crisis proportions in the mid-1980s. It may be that a parallel exists between acts of photography by Kok Nam and attempts by the Mozambican army to halt the fragmentation of the nation.

In Europe the painted portrait in past centuries in fact constituted the presence of the sovereign.¹⁸⁰ This convention travels to new sovereignties in independent Africa where presidents take over power from colonial dispensations. It is therefore fitting that we began this article with a portrait of Samora Machel in the camp at Nachingwea, which was also the commencement of a friendship between the photographer and the President. When the political party took Kok Nam's negative in a bid to reproduce the new political power in an array of institutions, we might see its loss as indeed a sovereign accident. As a metaphor, however, it presaged the loss of a President and a Popular Republic, and reminds us of the evanescence of the political sublime.

179 Didi-Huberman, 'The Art of Not Describing', 154-6.

180 J. Woodall ed., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), Introduction.