



**THE OTHER SIDES OF THE NEW MOON:  
A HISTORICAL READING OF THE ELECTION OF RUI DE NORONHA  
AS FIRST MOZAMBICAN POET  
OUTROS LADOS DA LUA NOVA:  
UMA LEITURA HISTÓRICA DA ELEIÇÃO DE RUI DE NORONHA  
COMO PRIMEIRO POETA MOÇAMBICANO**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article aims to understand from a historical perspective the election of Rui de Noronha as the first Mozambican poet, understanding this as process. Therefore, the article executes a diachronic study of the reception of his work, investigating two groups of texts: 1) the production of critical reviews of Noronha's work by white intellectuals, which gravitates around the posthumous organization of a collection of his sonnets in 1943; 2) the texts that reveal the position and reception of Rui de Noronha in the black and mestizo literary environment in Lourenço Marques in the early years of the 20th century. This elective process is especially relevant to understand the debates involved in the birth of an autonomous literature in moments of cultural assimilation, racism, and intense ethnocentrism in the colony.

**KEYWORDS:** Rui de Noronha; Mozambican literature; Mozambican poetry

**RESUMO**

Este artigo busca ler de uma perspectiva histórica a eleição do Rui de Noronha como primeiro poeta moçambicano, entendendo-a como um processo. Para isso, o artigo procede a um estudo de recepção diacrônico, investigando dois grupos de textos: 1) a produção de resenhas críticas de obra de Noronha por meio de intelectuais brancos, que gravita em torno da organização póstuma de uma coletânea de sonetos em 1943; 2) textos que revelam a posição e recepção de Rui de Noronha no meio literário negro e mestiço em Lourenço Marques nos primeiros anos do século XX. Esse processo eletivo é especialmente relevante para a compreensão dos debates ligados à formação de uma literatura autônoma em momentos de assimilação cultural, racismo e intenso etnocentrismo em colônias.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Rui de Noronha; literatura moçambicana; poesia moçambicana.

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The literary production of Mozambican Rui de Noronha is by itself a critical problem, aside the intrinsic issues raised by his poems and chronicles. This article discusses how the reconstitution of his reception has a complex meaning: the author was elected as a pioneer of Mozambican poetry, therefore excluding a whole generation of intellectuals and literary writers whose emergence had occurred decades before Noronha. It proposes some basic questions to the critical and historical analysis: how and when did this election process happen? Who are the agents involved in this process? What are the power lines engaged in reassuring or denying this process? This article does not intend to gather an exhaustive amount of information but to critically read of some texts that circulated in Mozambique around Rui de Noronha's production. The objective is to inquiry these texts to understand the role they played in the process of constituting the reception of Noronha's work during the time of his production and later. After that, this article outlines Rui de Noronha's relationship with the surrounding literary environment to investigate his position and the reception of his work by other agents.

This article<sup>2</sup> investigates a specific process of Mozambican literary history, and because of that, it uses a methodology sometimes hybrid, closed on reading texts from literary criticism, in order to reconstruct the diachronic aspect of the reception of Rui de Noronha's work and also to reflect on the historical dynamics of period. Although it is not completely based on a specific theoretical framework, this article agrees with the German critic Hans Robert Jauss when he states "considering that, both in its artistic character and in its historicity, the literary work is conditioned primarily by the dialogical relationship between literature and reader [...]. And because the relationship between literature and reader has both aesthetic and historical implications"(JAUSS, 1994, p. 23<sup>3</sup>). These dialogical relationship interweaves complex issues, such as the political and social dimensions of cultural life in Mozambique as a colony, where are established cultural hegemonies and asymmetries between white, black and mestizo people, and this question has fundamental value for the problem posed, as it will be discussed next.

### **The prediction: a place of poetry**

Rui de Noronha's pioneering position is a historically stratified construct. Before observing his case, it is necessary to highlight the opinion of a Portuguese intellectual in Lourenço Marques, who says Mozambican literature would still be born along the paths of poetry. He is Augusto dos Santos Abranches (1912-1963), a book entrepreneur, writer, literary critic and cultural activist, who arrived in Lourenço Marques in 1944. In 1947, he joined the newly created "Section of Literature, History and Sociology" of the Sociedade de Estudos da Colônia de Moçambique [Studies of Mozambique Colony Society]. At the 1st Congress of this

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2 All citations in Portuguese of this work received approximate translations exclusively for this purpose. The originals quotes are in footnotes.

3 "considerando-se que, tanto em seu caráter artístico quando em sua historicidade, a obra literária é condicionada primordialmente pela relação dialógica entre literatura e leitor [...] E porque a relação entre literatura e leitor possui implicações tanto estéticas quanto históricas".

Sociedade, that took place between September 8th and 13th, 1947, Abranches presented two controversial communications entitled “Moçambique, lugar para a poesia” [“Mozambique, a place for poetry”], on the 8th in the afternoon, and “Sobre ‘literatura colonial’” [“About ‘colonial literature’”], on the 11th in the morning (cf. regarding Abranches: CAVACAS; GOMES, 1998, p. 74; FERREIRA; MOSER, 1983, p. 185; ROCHA, 1989, p. 33; ABRANCHES, 1947a, p. 13 e 37). In his first speech, Abranches was imperative: “Looking for any trace of independent literary creation in Mozambique would be an arduous task, without profit, fruit. Attempts might be found” (ABRANCHES, 1947a, p. 15<sup>4</sup>). The evidence to identify this “independent literature” is expressed on these terms: “pensamento colectivo” [collective thought], “temas correlativos ao ambiente” [themes related to the environment], “diálogo entre artista e público” [dialogue between artist and public], “realizações dinâmicas e abertas” [dynamic and open achievements] (ibid., p. 15-16).

The meanings of the word “independent” are volatile and the text a little polysemic. Sometimes it refers to a possibility of literary autonomy inside a Portuguese culture: a reflection opens the text about the “organization” of Portuguese culture and literature wherever it has been established; after that, it compares Mozambique to Azores, regarding a “universal literature”. At the end of the communication, Abranches establishes Cape Verde as a model for literary development in a colonial context, an example for Mozambique of: “Tries by all means to ignore the existence of black people in their human aspect, with their problems and struggles, primitive tastes and living conditions” (*sic*, ibid., loc. cit.)<sup>6</sup>. At the end of the communication, Abranches establishes Cape Verde as a model for literary development in a colonial context, an example for Mozambique of “how a human cluster can intensify the freedom of its creative tendencies” and how “a liberation journey opens up, unique and beautiful, proper and conscious”<sup>7</sup> (ibid., p. 16).

Abranches predicts a path for the development of “independent” Mozambican literature still in the 1940s. His analysis, however, articulates this constitutive process to specific literary genres. At the outset, he considers that “We opened a history of Portuguese literature and soon the long path of poetry offers itself as its strongest and most present intellectual destiny. We have essentially and always been poets” (ibid., p. 12). Then, he deduces that “by nature, by affinity, nothing more common than to consider this trend to be naive wherever Portuguese culture is organized and, therefore, in Mozambique” (ibid., loc. cit.), since “all the elements, all the connecting wires justified it. And, among these justifications, the species of heredity that dominated Portuguese blood for poetry stand out [...]” (ibid., loc. cit.). Poetry would be the principle of an independent literature formation, because poetry is the “the base of all creation, the poetic phenomenon reveals itself as its main impulse” (ibid., loc. cit.)<sup>8</sup>.

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8 “Abrimos uma história da literatura portuguesa e logo o longo caminho da poesia se oferece como o seu destino intelectual mais forte e presente. Temos sido sempre e essencialmente poetas.[...] Por índole, por afinidade, nada mais vulgar do que considerar-se ingénita essa tendência em qualquer lugar onde a cultura portuguesa se organize e, por conseguinte, em Moçambique. [...] Todos os elementos, todos os fins de ligação o justificavam. E, entre essas justificações, sobressaem a da espécie de hereditariedade que se assenhoreou do sangue português para a poesia [...]. Base de toda a criação, o fenómeno poético se revela como o seu principal impulso[...]”.

Abranches proposes that Mozambique find its “place for poetry” (ibid., p. 17) in the development of its emancipatory process, that would be the possibility to embrace a local conditioning. This would be the “liberation” that would link this literature to its native public, opening up to collective thought. For Abranches, independence is a “destiny”, and it is only possible to be achieved by the openness that poetry offers to creative impulse. For Abranches, the novel practice should come afterwards (ibid., p. 16-17), as the result of a mature and emancipated literary conscience that would have been developed by poetic practice. Abranches ‘speech was received as something subversive and caused revolt: his second communication, on September 11th, was greeted with a violent reaction by a non-conformed audience, demanding intervention of the presiding officer to end the conflict and the newspapers to deal with the case as news event (cf. ROCHA, 1989, p. 85).

To understand the scope of Abranches’ prediction, it is necessary to consider the weight that his presence in Lourenço Marques meant for the literature in Mozambique (cf. MENDONÇA, 2016, p. 183-194). When in Coimbra, his hometown, Abranches was editor of magazines such as *Cadernos de Juventude* (1937), *Altitude* (1939) and “Coleção Vértice”, by Portugália publishing, which, by the way, was his property – it is within these literary undertakings that the neorealistic agitation in Coimbra took shape in the 1940s (ROCHA, 1989, p. 32; 2000, p. 162 and SARAIVA; LOPES, 1989, p. 1103). He went to Lourenço Marques in 1944 (“half escaped”, according to ROCHA, 2000, p. 162) and soon he was employed at Minerva Central, the colony’s main bookstore and publisher. On July 2nd, 1944, he publishes “Sulco – Página de Artes e Letras do *Notícias* de domingo para gente moça”, inside *Notícias* newspaper (since 1925-still published); “Sulco” has only 16 more numbers, until March 4th, 1945. From 1949 on, Abranches became a promoter for the magazine *Itinerário, publicação mensal de letras, arte, ciência e crítica* (1941-1955). Since the periodical or from the bookstore benches, he would circulate a great amount of books by Portuguese neo-realists, works by novelists from the northeast of Brazil, Brazilian magazines; and on the pages of periodicals, several local writers would find space to publish. Historian Ilídio Rocha considers that (1989, p. 35, *sic*):

From the verses which quote and are sometimes even dedicated to Jorge Amado, who speaks of Rio Carnival, Harlem and American jazz singers, we understand how much of the path recommended and facilitated by Abranches had been followed. And we feel them as roots, perhaps clearer in a Rui Nogar (Moniz Barreto) or in a José Craveirinha, who entered and continued: the Portuguese neo-realists, the prose of the Brazilians of the north-eastern denunciation, a poetry by Jorge Amado at that time and the chronicles and sometimes chronic-poetics of Cruzeiro and Manchete (Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Cecília Meireles, Fernando Sabino, Rubem Braga and even Manuel Bandeira). Roots that gave rise to poetry as a fruit today, perhaps more from Mozambique than Mozambican - but clearly denouncing colonialism and racism and now, definitely, non-colonial.<sup>9</sup>

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9 “Pelos versos, que citam e até são às vezes dedicados a Jorge Amado, que falam do Carnaval do Rio, do Harlem e dos cantores de jazz americanos, compreendemos o quanto do caminho preconizado e facilitado pelo Abranches fora seguido. E sentimos-lhes as raízes, quiçá mais claras num Rui Nogar (Moniz Barreto) ou num José Craveirinha, que ficaram e continuaram: os neo-realistas portugueses, a prosa dos brasileiros da denúncia

Certainly, Abranches was not the first one to think about the autonomy of an intellectual, cultural, and literary medium in Mozambique (as will be seen below). However, his privileged position as a white intellectual and cultural entrepreneur in the colony of Mozambique gives weight to his propositions. There are controversies regarding the extent of his contribution to Mozambican literature (cf. regarding this Ilídio Rocha, 1989, p. 31 attributes a central role to the Portuguese writer, whereas Fátima Mendonça minimizes it in 1988, p. 8). Nevertheless, it seems to be a consensus that the influence of the *Itinerário* magazine and Abranches' contribution to the dissemination of a social literature from Portugal and Brazil (for which the neorealist Afonso Ribeiro and the critic Carlos Alberto Lança also collaborated, FERREIRA, 1987, p. 167) helped to emerge a “new literature” with a much more pronounced political verve (cf. MENDES, 1980, p. 31; KNOPFFLI, 1974, p. 7-8; MENDONÇA, 1988, p. 8-10, MANUSSE, 2008, p. 30-31; FERREIRA, 1987, p. 166-167<sup>10</sup>). However, Abranches' proposition about the role of poetry in the development of an emancipated Mozambican literature produced a more than circumstantial meaning, proliferating beyond the conjunctions of its utterance.

### **A chosen poet: the prediction comes true**

Abranches was not the only one to speak of the poetic birth of Mozambican literature and his inference was not at all original. Other factors contributed to this critical proposition to remain alive in the discourse on Mozambican literature, leading works and authors to a process of constant re-reading and excluding many other works and authors.

Still in 1946, the historian Alexandre Lobato (1915-1986) published in the magazine called *Mundo português: revista de actualidades do império*, in Lisbon, the well-known text “Mozambican poetry: Rui de Noronha the forgotten”. In this text, the historian recalls his personal contact with the poet Rui de Noronha (1909-1943) as a colleague of the “Liceu [5 de Outubro] de Lourenço Marques” (from 1937, Liceu Nacional Salazar and, after 1976, Escola Secundária Josina Machel). The text is short, full of personal description, it describes Noronha's ethnocultural features, defining him as: “A strong boy, a mulatto, almost black, with very curly hair, his black and, shiny and lively eyes, and thick lips” (LOBATO, 1946, p. 356). This exhibition takes on romantic traits, “He didn't study, and he avoided the lessons as he could. But he read a lot, read everything, he was, for our age and for our possibilities, quite cultured and already at that time he wrote as already writing and published publishing poetry

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nordestina, a poética em muito de Jorge Amado dessa altura e as crónicas e às vezes crónicas-poéticas do Cruzeiro e da Manchete (Carlos Drumond de Andrade, Cecília Meireles, Fernando Sabino, Rubem Braga e, até, Manuel Bandeira). Raízes que deram como fruto uma poesia ainda hoje talvez mais de Moçambique do que moçambicana – mas declaradamente de denúncia do colonialismo e do racismo e agora sim, definitivamente, não colonial.”

10 Fátima Mendonça takes up an article by Abranches published years later of his 1947 communication, in which he celebrates the appearance of Noémia de Sousa in the newspaper *Notícias*, de Lourenço Marques; after all, Noémia herself would recognize this circumstance as fundamental for the circulation of her work (MENDONÇA, 2016, p. 183-184).

[...]. It was perhaps because he was a poet that he did not complete the course” (ibid., loc. cit.<sup>11</sup>). When reporting the death of the poet and the impact it had on him, Lobato sentenced: “I came to know, years later, that he had died, and I was sorry to have lost a great Portuguese poet and *the first Mozambican poet*” (ibid., loc. cit. – highlights added<sup>12</sup>).

In Lobato’s text, Rui de Noronha is defined as Portuguese and, at the same time, elected as the first Mozambican poet, without discussion. The reasons for this summary definition come next: it is a quote from “Lieutenant Caetano Montez”, author of a critical text attached to the first publication of the poem “‘Quenguelequeze’ (Lua Nova)” [New Moon<sup>13</sup>] in *Moçambique – Documentário Trimestral* in March 1936. Indeed, Ilídio Rocha defines this periodical as an “official advertising magazine”, which circulated in Lourenço Marques between 1935 and 1961, and the “tenente [lieutenant]” to whom Lobato refers, is Caetano de Carvalho Montês, former director of the Historical Archive of Mozambique, author of some works on colonial history and ethnography of Mozambique (ROCHA, 2000, p. 330, MARGARIDO, 1980, p. 25). Montez’s text quoted by Lobato has already elected Rui de Noronha “the first Mozambican poet” for the following reasons (LOBATO, 1946, p. 357<sup>14</sup>):

First manifestation of a true Mozambican poetry, singing and praising the traditional themes of the black race, “Quenguelequeze” opens us new horizons in the persistent effort that has been made to understand the indigenous soul that is not like the amorphous and rude spirit that many suppose.

Rui de Noronha knew how to give us the rhythm of the party, stunning, disturbing, fantastic, as he says. Have you seen the black dances in secret, free from the uncomfortable presence of the whites, the frantic dances in which, through mime, they tell a story that has a rhythmic motive of religious origin?

For black people, life is a shroud of work, fatalities, dangers and misfortunes. It is necessary to avoid all this. For that, it is necessary to religiously fulfil the sacred rites prescribed by tradition.

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11 “Não estudava, e atamancava as lições como podia. Mas lia muito, lia tudo, era, para a nossa idade e para as nossas possibilidades, bastante culto e já nessa época versejava e publicava poesias [...]. Foi talvez por ser poeta que não concluiu o curso”

12 “Vim a saber, passados anos, que morrera, e senti a mágoa de se ter perdido assim um grande poeta português e o *primeiro poeta moçambicano*.”

13 According to Fátima Mendonça (2006, p. 166), the poem was published in n. V of *Moçambique – documentário trimestral*, in January, February and March 1936 in an abridged version and different from the one published in *O brado africano*, XIX, nº 818, on August 1, 1936, in which there are thirty-five more verses, in addition to a subtitle “(Lua nova)” [New Moon]. According to the researcher, “Having had access to the respective typing, I have no doubts as to its authenticity. However, it [the short version] became practically the only known version, and later, the more extensive one, published in *O Brado africano*, was forgotten” (ibid., loc. cit.).

14 Primeira manifestação de uma verdadeira poesia moçambicana, cantando e louvando os temas tradicionais da raça negra, “Quenguelequeze” abre-nos horizontes novos no esforço persistente que se tem feito para a compreensão da alma indígena que não é nada o espírito amorfo e rude que muitos supõem. / Rui de Noronha soube dar-nos o ritmo da festa, estonteante, perturbador, fantástico, como ele diz. Já viram às ocultas os negros danças, livres da presença incómoda dos brancos, as danças frenéticas em que pela mímica contam uma história que tem um motivo rítmico de origem religiosa? / A vida, para o negro, é um sudário de trabalhos, fatalidades, perigos e desgraças. É preciso evitar tudo isso. Para tanto é preciso cumprir religiosamente os ritos sagrados prescritos pela tradição.

The fact that Rui de Noronha produces “Mozambican poetry” is related to these dimensions: 1) Noronha being considered “black”, having access to the cultural dimension of a racial category (the “black culture”, as seen in exoticizing characters), 2) and also to the understanding of the “indigenous soul” and the translation of that “soul” (to white people?), 3) the transparency of the “funeral shroud of works” that shapes “life for the black”. At the end of the text, Lobato, *manu propria*, forgets the fact that he started to say that Noronha was a “mulatto”, to reveal that the poet “knew these traditional rites like no one else”, since he was “connected to the indigenous environment, had over any European who wants to interpret the black soul the advantage of having his mother tongue and understand it well”, since “black people never trust white people”, and for Rui de Noronha, supposedly, “there is no secret in indigenous lives, and black people consider him one of their own, by skin color, by race and by language”(LOBATO, 1946, p. 358<sup>15</sup>). This point of view considers Rui de Noronha a pioneer of Mozambican literature because, supposedly “black”, he could refer to the cultures of “blacks”; this view was consecrated in the analysis of the emergence of Mozambican literature.

After the death of the poet, on December 25th, 1943 (he was born on October 28th, 1909), a group of intellectuals (among them Rodrigues Júnior<sup>16</sup>) took care and handed over to Dr. Domingos Reis Costa, a respected professor of the colony, the treatment of his estate and the posthumous edition of a volume of his sonnets (this edition is surrounded by countless problems and distortions, cf. MENDONÇA, 2006). After the release of the volume in April 1946, Reis Costa presented a communication in July of the same year at the Trade Union of Employees of Commerce and Industry of Lourenço Marques, in which he claims, also using romantic lines, “What draws attention in Rui de Noronha is the friendliness with all men for whom justice must be the base of social life, it is his African drama expressed with desire and moderation of verses”(REIS COSTA, apud MENDONÇA, 2006, p. 14<sup>17</sup>). The Reis Costa, in the preface to the infamous edition of sonnets by Rui de Noronha, also say that he is the “first [poet] of his race to appear in Mozambique, the most noble and painful lyrical expression of the African people in Portuguese land, and its most ardent spokesperson<sup>18</sup>” (COSTA, 1946, p. 10). That ethnocultural and “Mozambican” character attributed to the poetry of Noronha by Montez and Lobato (“life of the black like a funeral shroud of works”), finds a related formulation in Reis Costa’s text, in the form of “African drama”, a concern of those who defend a life fair,

15 “conhecia como ninguém estes ritos tradicionais, [já que] o preto nunca se abre com o branco; [para o poeta] a vida indígena não tinha segredos, que os pretos o consideravam dos seus, pela cor, pela raça, pela língua”.

16 Rodrigues Júnior (1951, p. 126-127) reveals who are these friends: “Willy Waddington, João dos Santos, Manuel João Correia, Humberto Soares, Miguel da Mata, Fernando Redondo, Carlos Simões and the author of these lines”; further on, he also reveals awareness of the editorial problems surrounding Noronha’s work: “His friends entrusted this treasure to hands that desecrated it, without hesitation, mutilating the work of the Poet” (ibid., loc. cit.).

17 “O que em Rui de Noronha impõe sobretudo à nossa atenção é a simpatia de todos os homens para quem a base da vida social deve ser a justiça, é o seu drama africano expresso com desejo e moderação de versos”.

18 “primeiro [poeta] da sua raça a aparecer em Moçambique, a mais nobre e dolorosa expressão lírica do povo africano na terra portuguesa, e seu mais ardente porta-voz”.

although now identified with “moderation of verses”.

A similar proposition will be strongly defended by Rodrigues Júnior in the work that results from the controversy with Alexandre Lobato when “Cinco poesias do mar Índico” [Five poems to Indian sea] was released, by Orlando Mendes at *Seara Nova* (Abranches’ property) in April 1947 (nº 1029, p. 257). In the pages of the newspaper *Notícias*, Rodrigues Júnior tries to answer a review by Lobato about Orlando Mendes’ poems, in which the historian accused the general poverty and lack of originality of the Lourenço Marques cultural environment. To this end, Rodrigues Júnior published a series of essays in the same newspaper between 1949 and 1950, and subsequently brought them together in a volume called *Para uma cultura moçambicana* [For a Mozambican culture] (1951). Rui de Noronha has a prominent place in Rodrigues Júnior’s work. Apropos, the part of the study dedicated to poetry begins with an article called “Rui de Noronha – o esquecido” [Rui de Noronha – the forgotten one] repeating the title of Lobato’s 1946 text. Noronha is now depicted again in romantic lines, as a “Homem” [Man] who “sangrou grande dor” [bled a great pain] (RODRIGUES JÚNIOR, 1951, p. 99), to assume a position very close to that in which other contemporaries had put him; Rodrigues Júnior also quotes Caetano Montez to conclude that:<sup>19</sup>

In “Surge et Ambula”, comes to the surface the awakening that the poet felt from this world that was in him, as it is in all men of his race, just singing, longing to improve the aggregate in which “he” was placed – and that it would not have been if Africa had ceased to be a field of struggle for the aggrandizement of “its” man, that man without a soul, the killer of others in a World without faith or law.

Therefore, there is discursive polyphony that spreads in the literary environment of Lourenço Marques in which converge two factors: first, the prediction launched by someone relevant as Abranches, announcing that an emancipated literature would be born in Mozambique linked to ethnocultural aspects (the “black in its human aspect”). Secondly, at the same time, Rui de Noronha dies, his literary assets and prestige allow the white critics of the colony to conclude that in the death of the poet the voice of the first Mozambican poet is born, a maker of Mozambican poetry, supposed linked to a “black” origin and, therefore, revealing a singular capacity to produce an expression of “drama of the black people” and its cultural characteristics, sublimated, mainly, in the poems “Surge et Ambula” and “Quenguelequêzê! ...”. In this sense, the death of Rui de Noronha on Christmas 1943 becomes an event, seen as a milestone in the years of 1946, 1947 and 1951, respectively, amid a wide debate about the viability, nature and existence of Mozambican literature in Portuguese.

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19 “Em “Surge et Ambula” vem à superfície o despertar que o poeta sentiu desse Mundo que era nele, como o é em todos os homens da sua raça, apenas canto, anseio de melhoramento do agregado em que “ele” foi posto – e que o não teria sido se a África tivesse deixado de ser campo de luta pelo engrandecimento do “seu” homem, desse homem sem alma, matador do próximo num Mundo sem fé nem lei.”



## The other sides of the new moon

Within this general framework, there are critical speeches by prestigious white critics in the colonial society responsible for electing Rui de Noronha the first voice of Mozambican poetry, based on racial and ethnocultural criteria, viewing the poet's work as a connection between literary writing in Portuguese and the symbolic dimension of local cultures, faced as oppressed by overwork. According to this view, these cultures found a form of representation or aesthetic configuration in the poet's voice – despite all the critics calling for only one poem that demonstrates the cultural connection (“Quenguelequêzê! ...”) and only another that demonstrates an African conscience of delay (“Surge et Ambula”), and the rest of his work is simply not seen from this racial perspective.

It is very significant that this election process neglects a whole literary history that precedes the turn of the 1940s to 1950s in Mozambique, which simply does not fit into the equation of white critics. After all, there is, indeed, a history of literary circulation with which Rui de Noronha dialogues intensively, and it is possible to understand this as a literary tradition (in the sense attributed to this term by Candido in 2013, p. 28-39): an evident articulation between works, writers and readers that, even if they do not identify themselves as “Mozambicans”, at least demonstrate an acute “African” conscience. To discuss this point, it is necessary to resort to a few data from literary history that, in a *vol d’oiseau*, offer arguments to illuminate the issue.

In the middle of the 19th century, it is time of the poet Jose Pedro da Silva Campos e Oliveira. Born in Mozambique Island in 1847 where he deceased in 1911, having spent many years of his life in Goa and Margao. According to Ilídio Rocha (2000, p. 364), he was the editor, owner and director of *Revista Africana*: periódico mensal de ilustração e recreio [African magazine: monthly periodical of illustration and recreation], published from the island, with three issues in 1881, two in 1885 and one in 1887; he was also the author of a *Almanach popular* [Popular Almanac], published in Margao in 1864, 1865 and 1866. According to Manuel Ferreira (1985), as a writer, he published a few dozen chronicles by various press vehicles of the time, in which he reveals a humorous tone and an awareness of the colony's cultural diversity (ibid., p. 45-52); he also published a fictional short story with a passionate theme and several poems, of which, according to the researcher's collections, add up to about forty legible today.

Ferreira does not hesitate to deduce that Campos Oliveira “should be considered the first Mozambican poet, with all the hypotheses competing to say that there was no other before him” (ibid., p. 68), and anticipates other opposite arguments, considering that “the concerns of a social nature, or against the abuses of the administration, were limited to a certain journalism and were not, as a rule, understood as a creative theme” (ibid., p. 70); seeking to historicize the poet, he states that “it is not entirely unreasonable to decriminalize Campos Oliveira for a presumed lack for which, in good judgment, he will not be responsible. He is, in poetic art, a partner of romantic ‘bards’ from abroad. That he could afford to quote well [...]” (ibid., loc.

cit.<sup>20</sup>; cf. also FERREIRA, 1987, p. 35-37).

Almost in the same period of Campos Oliveira's poetic activity, it was published in 1891 *Sons orientaes*, by Arthur Serrano. This was the "first verse book published in Mozambique" (CAVACAS; GOMES, 1998, p. 71). Ferreira and Moser (1983, p. 205), state that, at the time of its publication, Serrano was the director of the newspaper *A situação*. Indeed, this journal was published in Lourenço Marques on February 1st, 1890 and had 5 issues until March 5th of the same year (ROCHA, 2000, p. 369). Arthur Serrano also contributed with poems and chronicles to the *Novo almanach de lembranças luso-brasileiro*, under the pseudonym "S. Rano" between 1884 and 1906 (FERREIRA; MOSER, 1983, p. 205; ROCHA, 2000, p. 370). Although Cavacas and Gomes say that *Sons orientaes* "could be written outside Africa" (1998, p. 71), this work ends with an epilogue entitled "To those who read" in which the author reveals that "We should make a book purely African, but we were unable to achieve it as absolutely as we wished. Verses uniquely made in Africa, and printed in African typography, they are; but we wanted them to be prefaced by a poet d'Africa" (SERRANO, 1891, p. 91<sup>21</sup>).

The poet chosen by Serrano to write the preface is no other than Campos Oliveira, "the only poet we have" (ibid., loc. cit.), but he declined the invitation for a reason not shown in text. This epilogue, however, presents a public complaint about the denial of the "man of letters so justly appreciated" (ibid., loc. cit.), as seen: "For the blind ones, there are always alms good like a stick or an arm to lean on, and the poet was strongly driven by his own influences to let us fall into the abyss where we fell, without thinking that have arriving alive at the end of the steep slope, then we would have to say out loud how much he was dehumanitarian and lacking in charity" (ibid., p. 92<sup>22</sup>). Therefore, apart from intrigues among poets, the epilogue reveals circulation, reception, and acceptance of Campos Oliveira in Serrano's writing. Furthermore, despite claiming failure to produce "African poetry", this confession means a lot in order to reveal the search for the localist tone. After all, this 1891 work contains the "Canto da guerra vatua (Assibinheia)" [Chant of vatua (nguni) war], a long poem in seventeen stanzas, the first literary arising of sovereign "Gungunhana" (later converted into a literary topic in Mozambique) while he still reigned over all lands south of the Zambezi.

In 1908, the Grémio Africano de Lourenço Marques (GALM) was founded, a social and political organization that brought together black and mixed-race people in cultural activities

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20 "[Campos de Oliveira] deverá ser considerado o primeiro poeta moçambicano, concorrendo todas as hipóteses para afirmarmos que outro não houve antes dele" (p. 68). "As preocupações de índole social, ou contra os abusos da administração, circunscreviam-se a um certo jornalismo e não eram, por norma, entendidas como tema criativo [...]. Não é assim de todo descabido despenalizar Campos Oliveira de uma pressuposta falta pela qual, em bom juízo não será responsável. Ele é, na arte poética, comparsa dos 'bardos' românticos do exterior. Que ele se dava ao luxo de bem citar" (p. 70).

21 "Quizemos fazer um livro puramente africano, mas não podemos conseguil-o tão absolutamente como desejávamos. Versos unicamente feitos em Africa, e impressos em typographia africana, são eles; mas ambicionavamos que fossem prefaciados por um poeta d'Africa"

22 "Aos cegos, faz bem sempre a esmola d'um bordão ou d'um braço onde se encoste, e o poeta foi duramente impellido por influencias próprias a deixar-nos cahir no pelago onde cahimos, sem pensar que, chegando vivos ao fim da ingreme ladeira, havíamos de dizer bem alto quanto fora deshumanitario e falto de caridade".

(NEVES, 1989; ZAMPARONI, 2007). From the GALM, was published in 1918 the long-lived and very important *O brado africano* (1918-1974), a continuation of *O africano*, the first journal of the association that debuted at the turn of 1908 to 1909. Both journals form an editorial project, headed by brothers João and José Albasini, written in up to three languages: Portuguese, Ronga and English. A group of highly active intellectuals surround these journals – they are responsible for the expression of a social, cultural, and political conscience, expressed in the writing of journalistic and literary genres. Beyond Albasini brothers, it is important to mention Estácio Dias (1877-1937) (ROCHA, 2000, p. 236-237; ZAMPARONI, 2007; ROCHA, 1996, p. 29-48). João Albasini (1876-1922), or Nwandzengele, his ronga name, was a fruitful chronicler, expressing critical and political awareness about colonial power in Lourenço Marques. After his death in 1922, a posthumous epistolary book is organized by Marciano Nicanor da Sylva and it was published in 1925, entitled *O livro da dor (Cartas de amor)* [The book of pain (Love letters)], a reunion of letters from Albasini to Micaela Loforte, a platonic love. The rejection suffered by the missivist shows the drama of “assimilado” [assimilated], the non-white people accepted parsimoniously in colonial society (as well observed NHAMONA, 2016, p. 94, cf. also NOA, 2017, p. 25-28).

The practice of chronicles and editorials in *O brado africano* had a great political meaning; nevertheless, in this journal, a lot of literature circulated and there were several literary premieres. Some now are milestones, as is the case of *Na terra ubérrima* [On very fertile land], a novel-*feuilleton* by Estácio Dias. This work was published between number 482 on June 29th, 1929 and number 507 on April 5th, 1930, and its subtitle altered to “Coisas passadas” [Past things], sometimes for “Viagem ao prebostado” [Trip to province] (NHAMONA, 2016, p. 96-97). The novel tells the story of a small landowner located on the border between the Portuguese domain and the Mudungazi property (again, Ngungunhane), during the conflict that brought the Gaza sovereign into exile, after the campaign led by Mousinho de Albuquerque (ended in 1897), who now appears as a historical figure. After the fall of Gaza, the property was dominated by the Portuguese, but not fully colonized. As Nhamona notes, after a few years, the former owner returns to the land and realizes that “it remained abandoned and in a deplorable condition, making useless the endeavour of conquest and colonization, a thing still to be done<sup>23</sup>” (ibid., p. 100). Estácio Dias’ *feuilleton* seems to have passed through the decades under oblivion, but it caused some reactions at that time.

The writer Augusto C. Adonis B. de Conrado, a black man, who was born on June 6th, 1904 in Inhambane, started in 1928 to publish chronicles and poems in the pages of *O brado africano* (n° 445 and 446). Conrado published only three books: *A perjura ou A mulher de duplo Amor (Breve novela simples)* – Ensaios literários, in 1931 [The traitor woman or The woman of double Love (Brief simple novel) – Literary essays]; *Fibras d’um coração (Prosas simples com pretensão a versos)* – Ensaios literários [Fiber of a heart (Simple proses with pretension to verse)], in 1933 (although the cover page of volume shows “1931”) e *Divagações! Tentames*

23 “continuava abandonada e num estado deplorável, tendo tornado a empreitada de conquista inútil e a colonização uma coisa ainda por se fazer, em virtude de continuar a ser um lugar inóspito”.

*literários* [Ramblings! Literary attempts], this published in Lisbon, 1938 (WHITE, 1984; LEMOS, 1986a and b). The writer had a busy life: he worked at Niassa, Tete and Lourenço Marques. *Na terra ubérrima* (1929-1930) and *A perjura* (1931) until now are the first proses of fiction written by Mozambicans, but the Conrado novel is effectively the first published in a book. The theme of *A perjura* is a passion motif – a married woman who falls in love with an Italian lover with whom she runs away – despite this, the work offers opportunity for a sharp reflection on the inequalities of colonial society, this in a tone so harsh that it stands out in the scenario of the time (CONRADO, 1931, p. 31-33; apud LEMOS, 1986b, p. 48-49<sup>24</sup>):

The man on the avenue first encounters the glorious beauty of a woman. But she is a blue-blooded bourgeois. And what is he? A poor devil with the lowest mediocre condition. But, on an impulse, he writew to the lady... If all men are equal before the Gospels, how can they not be equal before equal men?! The difference is that some have the ability to deceive others and with these mistakes they are able to enjoy, gather all sorts of comforts that make them live in absolute tranquility. Nobody ignores, however, the fool idiots, the insatiable and insignificant gluttons who support and put on weight through the blood of the innocent; there in power, there on the perch, they do nothing but to invite all the people who care about the plentiful pot... After all this ruffraff got stuffed and got drunk with the sweat and blood of the souls that were robbed of it; then they feel patriots capable of provoking this or that Nation in the name of the Fatherland. But then they flee cowardly like hares, pushing the wretched ones into the fire of the enemies' cruel cannons – starving to serve them in trenches, to be unfairly decimated inhumanly by machine guns.

This excerpt shows attention to the local problems created by racial inequality and Portuguese colonization; this produces a revolted discourse, charged with animosity that will also be present in Conrado's poetry. There are poems with a very specific local tone, reporting different Mozambican spaces: "Meu Inhambane!" (CONRADO, 1933, p. 44-46) ou "Lourenço Marques" (ibid., p. 37-38), "Mulher indiana!" (ibid., p. 40-43) or also "Africana!" (1938, p. 56). There is a certain patriotism linked to the idea of a Portuguese belonging as "Portugal!" (ibid., p. 11-12), "O cavaleiro português!" (ibid., p. 31-32), "Pátria!" (ibid., p. 50). This patriotic dimension, however, appears slightly modified in some poems revealing between the lines of the verses a suggestive emancipatory awareness, as in the poem "Redenção de humanidade" [Humanity Redemption] ("But the beautiful day has dawned / of divine and blonde Redemption

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24 "O homem depára pela primeira vez na Avenida [...] com uma belêsa gloriosa de Mulher [...]. Mas ela é uma burguêsa de sangue azul [...] E êle? Um pobre diabo de mais baixa condição mediocre. [...] Mas, impulsionado impavidamente [...] escreve a dama... Se todos os hómêns são iguais perante os Evangelhos [...] como podem deixar de não ser iguais perante aos hómêns iguais?! [...] ... A diferença que há é que uns possuem habilidade de intrujar os outros e com essas intrujisses conseguem usufruir, angariar toda a espécie de confôrto que lh'os fazem viver num absoluto esquecimento [...] – Ninguém ignora, porém, que os imbecís poltrões, os pifios glutões insaciáveis que se sustentam e engordam-se de sangue dos inocentes, lá do poder, lá do poleiro, não fazem senão convidar [...] toda a cambada que lhes ligam para a farta gamela... [...] depois de esta canalhada toda se empaturrar e embebedar-se á custa do suor e de sangue das almas por ela espoliadas, [...] é que se sente patriota capaz de provocar esta ou aquela Nação em nome da Pátria, para depois cobardemente fugir que nem umas lebres, empurrando para o fogo dos canhões cruéis dos inimigos provocados aos espoliados – esfomeados para sevindo-lh'a de trincheiras, serem injustamente dezimados deshumanamente pelas metralhas".

/ day of holy love, life and Freedom! / The desired Hour is arrived! / Blessed hour of humanity!”<sup>25</sup>, 1933, p. 75-76). Too in poem “Liberdade!” [Freedom] (“...People... Everyone on their knees! Salute the dawn! / The Eleutheria has just emerged on the summit / Salute the Truth Light!”<sup>26</sup>, 1938, p. 12), or even in poem “Africa! Minha querida mãe!” [Africa! My dear mother!] due to which, according to White (1984, p. 47), the poet would have been arrested: “– You are holy! oh martyr of inglorious luck! / Oh my dear and holy selfless Mother! / Doing good to the despots who vex you by insulting you! / To those who stick poisoned arrows in your heart!”<sup>27</sup> (1938, p. 90).

There is in these verses a subversive emancipatory conscience, suggesting the end of despotism between nations and the exploitation of the African continent. There are also poems like “Dor!” [Pain!], In memory of José Francisco Albasini, dated August 12th, 1935. José Albasini, Bandana, his Ronga name, was the referred brother of João do Santos Albasini, in effect, he died in 1935 of tuberculosis (PINTO, 2012, p. 95-112). It is a set of funereal poems very eulogistic, composed of six Italian sonnets in heroic verses. In these verses, the Bandana is described as a hero, a martyr, a master, and a teacher. The interlocutors are “Irmãos” [brothers], called to mourn death, or “Mãe” [Mother], an intertext with the poem “Africa! Minha querida mãe!”. In the last sonnet of the set, specifically, there are some important verses for this analysis:

Your brilliant and grandiose work highlights  
 trail of eternal light that will shine  
 generations of African people, it will shine  
 on the pages of the book of martyrs of the race! ...

Master! we will honour your memory in the lurid  
 path and in the fight! [...]”<sup>28</sup>

The possessive pronoun that opens the first verse is followed by a footnote with a “pléiade” [pleiad, group of famous literati] of names to which the pronoun refers. It is a list with forty names of intellectuals, journalists and activists linked to associations of the early 20th century, among whom are GALM personalities: João dos Santos Albasini, José Francisco Albasini, Estácio Dias, Karell Pott<sup>29</sup>, Joaquim Swat; in addition to these names, is mentioned

25 “Mas eis ahí raiando o dia formoso da divina, loura / Redempção, do santo amôr, da vida e da ‘Liberdade’! [...] Eis a chegada da desejada ‘Hora’ / Bendita de humanidade!”

26 “...Gentes!... De joelhos todos!... Saüedemos a Aurora, / A Eleutéria que além, no cume, acaba agora / de despontar! ... Saüedemos a Luz da Verdade!...”

27 “– Tu és santa! oh martyr da sorte inglória! / Oh minha querida e santa abnegada Mãe! / Fazendo bem aos despotas que te vexam lançando-te ignomínias! / Aos que te cravam setas envenenadas no c’ração!”

28 “A vossa obra fulgente e grandiosa realça / rastro de luz que eterna há de refulgar / gerações de africana grei, há de brilhar / nas páginas do livro dos mártir’s da raça!... // Mestre! honraremos-te a memória na escabrosa / senda e na luta! [...]”

29 According to Zamparoni, 2007, p. 131, Karell Pott was an active member of the GALM, and “the first and then only mulatto lawyer in Mozambique”; according to Nhamona, 2016, p. 94, Pott competed for the leadership

none other than Marcus Garvey – a Jamaican black activist who died in 1940, author of an ongoing reflection linked to the idea of “Africa’s redemption”. Now, the “pléiade”, the group mentioned by Conrado, reveals an intense articulation of a true intellectual tradition, and also a very acute autonomous racial conscience, linked to the claiming dimension of black people at the international level.

Another relevant name that is part of Conrado’s “pléiade” is Rui de Noronha. Apropos, Noronha appears in an opening note of the volume *Divagações!* It is an ironic note, in which Conrado narrates a meeting with Rui de Noronha in Nampula. At this meeting, Conrado asked the poet why he did not collaborate in the local newspapers, to what Noronha replied that it was “impossible”, because they were in “a charged and boring environment” [“ambiente carregado e aborrido”] (CONRADO, 1938, p. 5). Augusto de Conrado takes a few lines to compare himself to Noronha and finish off the opening note: “If Mr. Rui de Noronha [...] cannot produce because the environment is only used for the apoplexy of spirit and intelligence, what will I do since I live in much lesser circumstances than he?”<sup>30</sup> (ibid., loc. cit.). The number of epithets next to Rui de Noronha’s name in the text suggests either an excess of reverence or irony: “distinguished poet that many people know”, “poet that everyone reads”, “famous poet” or “poet that many people know, and known, for the transcriptions that newspapers have made of his verses” (ibid., p. 5 e 6<sup>31</sup>).

This brief revisitation presents some moments in the literary history of Mozambique between the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, demonstrating that Rui de Noronha’s pioneering position was an exogenous construct alien to this native environment of intense literary circulation. It is important to note that Noronha’s poetic work found a favourable environment to emerge and develop precisely in that literary *métier*. It is yet to be done a comparative study seeking to reveal quotations, intertexts and other resonances from Mozambican companions in Noronha’s work; nevertheless, the dialogue between peers is evident in their chronicles. On August 16th, 1935, the 13th anniversary of the death of João Albasini was celebrated. Rui de Noronha published in *O brado africano* (nº 769, of August 17th 1935) a chronicle in which he affirms: “When one day we write the history of the great intellectual movement of our race in this colony, which started about twenty years ago, two names will stand out among the many others that, from year to year, appear and go on forming the steps of the pedestal where our social demands will be raised<sup>32</sup>” (NORONHA, 2006, p. 71). The awareness of belonging to an endogenous intellectual environment was therefore confessed by the poet, who knew he was

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of *O brado africano* with José Albasini and Estácio Dias.

30 “Se o senhor Rui de Noronha [...] não pode produzir porque o ambiente só serve para apoplexia de ânimo e de inteligência, que farei eu que vivo em muito peores circunstâncias que êle?”

31 “poeta insigne que muita gente conhece”, “poeta que toda a gente lê”, “poeta consagrado”, “poeta que muita gente conhece, e consagrado, pelas transcrições que os jornais têm feito dos seus versos”.

32 “quando um dia se escrever a História do grande movimento intelectual da nossa Raça nesta Colónia, iniciado há cerca de vinte anos, dois nomes haverão de destacar-se dentre os muitos outros que de ano para ano vão surgindo e vão formando como que os degraus de pedestal onde se hão de erguer nossas reivindicações sociais”.

not the initiator of a movement that had existed for many years.

### Final remarks

The writings of the black and mixed-race authors mentioned here reveal integration and internal articulation in an endogenous intellectual tradition (more than literary, since Noronha himself refers to the “intellectual movement of the race”) which, although sparse, is not absolutely nonexistent. The election of Noronha as the first Mozambican poet does not come exactly from the interior of this intellectual milieu (although it is recognized by them, as seen in Conrado’s note); but it is the effect of the writing of some important names in colonial society, white men, close to power, who wished to find in Portuguese language, poetic that would reveal cultural and racial characteristics translated aesthetically under an exoticist taste. In this sense, it is also necessary to consider the personal relationships maintained by Noronha with Rodrigues Júnior and Alexandre Lobato, and how his death placed him in a position of a romantic martyr.

Furthermore, the election of Noronha corresponds, on the other hand, to the execution of Abranches’ initial sentence that poetry would be a natural way for emergence of emancipated literature in Mozambique, as a prediction of an inevitable becoming and as if this literature did not exist even in prose, by default of Abranches. This elective process is especially relevant to understand the debates involved in the birth of an autonomous literature in moments of cultural assimilation, racism, and intense ethnocentrism in the colony. Despite this, it overshadowed the existence of an articulate and conscious group of writers and, the most important, undermining the existence of a literature in poetry and prose prior to the 1940s in Mozambique. Evidently, Rui de Noronha’s primary reception does not explain the continuity of his place of choice in the history of Mozambican literature; therefore, it is necessary to continue this investigation to mobilize the factors that will contribute to this continuity later. In this context, Noronha’s image as a “sleepwalker” attributed by Noémia de Sousa in her well-known “Poema a Rui de Noronha” must be highlighted, through which political factors will be considered to define him as “protonationalist”, according to terminology by Mário Pinto de Andrade (1997). But that must be part of another endeavor.

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