

# **“Juventude, Avante!” Youth Perspectives on Independence and the Creation of the *Organização da Juventude Moçambicana* (1975–1978)**

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## **ABSTRACTS**

This article explores non-official expectations of independence during years following Mozambican independence (1975–1978) through the perspectives of men and women who were considered Youth at the time. When the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo) took over the state institutions from Portugal in 1975, many young people organised into reading groups and initiated voluntary work in support of independence and the party. However, with the foundation of Frelimo's own Youth Organisation, the *Organização da Juventude Moçambicana* (OJM), the party began to replace bottom-up independence enthusiasm, with top-down dissemination of its own version of the correct values of independence, using dance, poetry, song, theatre but also policing and punishment – distilling and forging what would later become the official history of independence. The article explores this history through media sources, as well as oral history interviews conducted with members of the OJM and unaffiliated men and women who considered themselves Youth during the early years after independence.

Dieser Aufsatz untersucht inoffizielle Erwartungen an die Unabhängigkeit in den Jahren nach der Unabhängigkeit Mosambiks (1975–1978) aus der Perspektive von Männern und Frauen, die zu dieser Zeit als Jugendliche galten. Als die *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo) 1975 die staatlichen Institutionen von Portugal übernahm, organisierten sich viele junge Menschen in Lesegruppen und initiierten ehrenamtliche Arbeit zur Unterstützung der Unabhängigkeit und der Partei. Mit der Gründung von Frelimos eigener Jugendorganisation, der *Organização da Juventude Moçambicana* (OJM), begann die Partei jedoch, den Unabhängigkeitsbegeiste-

rung an der Basis durch die Verbreitung ihrer eigenen Version der richtigen Werte der Unabhängigkeit hierarchisch zu ersetzen, indem sie mittels Tanz, Poesie, Gesang, Theater, aber auch Polizeiarbeit und Bestrafung, die spätere offizielle Geschichte der Unabhängigkeit herausdestillierten und erfunden. Der Artikel untersucht diesen Verlauf anhand von Medienquellen sowie Oral History-Interviews mit Mitgliedern der OJM und nicht organisierten Männern und Frauen, die sich in den ersten Jahren nach der Unabhängigkeit als Teil der revolutionären Jugend Mosambiks betrachteten.

## 1. Introduction

In November 1968, the University of Dar es Salaam's first vice-chancellor Pius Msekwa banned the student organisation USARF (short for University Students' African Revolutionary Front) and its journal *Cheche*. Just 8 months prior, Nyerere's Tanzanian National Union (TANU) government had dissolved the previous student organisation (the National Union of Tanzanian Students) and created a branch of the party youth organisation on the campus of Dar es Salaam University in their stead.<sup>1</sup> According to historian Andrew Ivaska, the newspaper the *Nationalist* explained USARF's and *Cheche*'s banning as follows:

*To enable the youth to play their rightful role in the political life of the country, the Party has its own youth organisation – the TANU Youth League [...] Looked at from this standpoint there was really no need of having another political youth organisation at the University whereas tanu Youth League has already a branch there. [...] Let it be understood that as far as TANU is concerned, the youth of Tanzania can be as radical and as revolutionary as they wish, provided they do this through the institutionalized organs of the party.*<sup>2</sup>

In TANU's and Nyerere's reasoning, students had a distinct political role to be exercised through a distinct institutional framework, namely within the party's organisation for Youth. The TANU Youth League (TYL) was to channel all political activism by the Youth, including students, on campus and elsewhere. For TANU and Nyerere the TYL was a "‘revolutionary organisation’ with a monopoly on political activity”.<sup>3</sup>

A decade later, Samora Machel followed a similar line of reasoning during the foundation of the Mozambican equivalent to the TYL, the Organisation for Mozambican Youth (Organização da Juventude Moçambicana, OJM), a process that has received much less attention than the student politics at the University of Dar es Salaam.<sup>4</sup> The Mozambican

1 T.Y.L. at the College, in: The Nationalist, 18 March 1967, p. 4; University Embraces the League, in: The Nationalist, 20 March 1967; L. Melchiorre, "Under the Thumb of the Party": The Limits of Tanzanian Socialism and the Decline of the Student Left, in: Journal of Southern African Studies 46 (2020) 4, pp. 635–654, there p. 640, fn 31.

2 Editorial in The Nationalist, 14 November 1970, cited in A. Ivaska, Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam, Durham NC 2011, p. 160, fn 134.

3 The Nationalist, 13 November 1970, cited in Ivaska, Cultured States, p. 160, fn 135.

4 Some of the authors who have written on the subject of Youth politics in Tanzania include A. Ivaska, Of Stu-

revolutionary ideology at independence reconfigured the meaning of Youth<sup>5</sup>, among other things, as a political category with a distinct subject position in the post-independence political order, in ways not unlike in Tanzania, Ghana or Guinea.<sup>6</sup> This position was on the one hand laden with political agency and notions of historic responsibility, but on the other hand always located in a subordinate relationship to Frelimo.

With regards to Machel's views on the political subject position of Youth in the national Revolution, the OJM was the most important actor. Like the TYL, the OJM attempted to establish a "monopoly on political activities". Although this process affected the lives of tens of thousands of Mozambicans, little is known about it to date. Through a detailed reconstruction of the OJM's foundation process using media coverage and interviews, I show here that the OJM's monopoly on political activities rested on centralized organisational structures whose establishment included subsuming pre-existing Youth activist groups that had formed in the wake of independence into the hierarchies of the OJM. Most famously, the campus student organisation *Associação Académica de Moçambique* at the University of Lourenço Marques was replaced through the OJM in ways similar to the TYL in Tanzania. In addition to using the party's organisational power, I show that the OJM tried to establish this monopoly in more subtle ways. Using language and discourse, I argue here that the OJM reconfigured the boundaries of what constituted political activism for Youth in the first place. This is evident in the role texts played during a series of trainings that OJM functionaries received in the early foundation period. It is echoed as well in the memories of those people who considered themselves Youths at the time of the OJM's foundation. These young men and women experienced the OJM's foundation process as one in which the imposition of new structures and a new language went hand-in-hand and the lines between ordinary Youth, activists and OJM became increasingly blurred.

The analysis in this paper proceeds in three parts. The first and second section reconstruct the process of the OJM's foundation, which was chronicled by the media. They illuminate this process from the perspective of the central organ that coordinated the foundation of the OJM, the *Secretariado Nacional da OJM* (from here on *Secretariado Nacional*). The first section focusses on how the OJM established organisational structures and endowed them with power and legitimacy used in some cases to absorb or overrule pre-existing Youth groups in the early independence period. The second section turns towards the use of language and discourse as more subtle instruments through which the OJM reconfigured the meaning of Youth activism. Finally, the third section

dents, "Nizers", and a Struggle over Youth: Tanzania's 1966 National Service Crisis, in: *Africa Today* 51 (2004) 3, pp. 82–107; G. Roberts, *Politics, Decolonisation, and the Cold War in Dar Es Salaam c. 1965–72*, PhD Thesis, University of Warwick 2016; Melchiorre, "Under the Thumb of the Party".

5 I capitalize Youth to draw attention to the politically constructed nature of the term, which was anchored in Frelimo's wider revolutionary project of political, economic, social and moral restructuring.

6 J. D. Straker, *Youth, Nationalism, and the Guinean Revolution*, Bloomington IN 1990; J.S. Ahlman, *Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism in Ghana*, Athens OH 2017, Chapter 3; Ivaska, *Cultured States*.

turns to the perspectives of those individuals who experienced the OJM's foundation process to illustrate how both of these dynamics went hand-in-hand.

## 2. "Organizing the Masses": The Secretariado Nacional Creates OJM Structures

Unlike the TYL, Frelimo created the Mozambican Youth Organisation not as party Youth, but with the aspiration to represent and "organize" Youth universally, in the spirit of a Mass Democratic Organisation.<sup>7</sup> In this decision, Frelimo likely took inspiration from the Soviet model, whose vanguard theory it tried to emulate and adapt to the Mozambican context.<sup>8</sup> The rationale was that the masses' natural political allegiance in the class struggle was spoiled by the colonial legacy – notably "traditionalism", "obscurantism", "individualism", the terms through which Frelimo described the existing social, political and economic relations that the party perceived as un-scientific and un-modern – and required a vanguard to guide and organize it.<sup>9</sup> This implied the 'masses' integration into the system of top-down dissemination of "defined tasks", "goals", and "programme", to ensure that "mass action" would not be "random and chaotic" but would "obey a class logic that would impel the revolutionary process forward".<sup>10</sup> Machel had articulated his views on the subject during the opening speech of the Central Committee's 6<sup>th</sup> session in Inhambane in June 1975, Frelimo's most important decision-making organ. The same meeting was later cited as having decided on the establishment of a Mass Democratic Organisation for Youth.<sup>11</sup>

*The masses are not organised, so they have no tasks; the youth have no tasks because they are not organised; the workers work, work, work, but they are not organised, they have no set tasks – they have no goals, [...] for their work, for their effort. There is no programming. [...] We will have a programme. It won't be just working. No. It takes a program.*<sup>12</sup>

In his seminal speech addressing the Youth of the country on 15 December 1976, Machel specified how his views on the "organisation and mobilisation" of the population applied to the Youth, one of the four important social and political categories that made

7 Besides the Mass Democratic Organisation for Youth, similar organisations existed for women, the *Organização da Mulher Moçambicana* (OMM), and workers, the *Organização do Trabalhador Moçambicano*.

8 Particularly close ties existed between the OJM and East German *Freie Deutsche Jugend* during the foundation years.

9 J. S. Saul, *Difficult Road: The Transition to Socialism in Mozambique*, New York 1985, p. 97.

10 J. T. G. Cravinho, *Modernizing Mozambique: Frelimo Ideology and the Frelimo State*, PhD Thesis, University of Oxford 1995, p. 45.

11 The decision to create Mass Democratic Organizations is often attributed to Frelimo's 3rd Congress in 1977, the 7th and 8th Central Committee Sessions, however, had already started the process. See S. Machel, *Sobre os Problemas Função e Tarefas da Juventude Moçambicana*, Maputo 1977.

12 S. Machel, *Discurso de Abertura, VI Reunião do Comité Central de 19 a 21 de Junho de 1975*, in: *Tempográfica* 248 (6 June 1975), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/al.sff.document.ahmtem19750706>.

up the “masses” (alongside “women”, “workers”, and “peasants”). A Mass Democratic Organisation was needed to “channel [...] the enthusiasm and the creative initiative of [the] Youth, transforming them into an immense material force capable to contribute to the revolutionisation of society.”<sup>13</sup> Machel emphasised that “if the engagement of our Youth was not greater, this was essentially due to the fact that they were not organised”.<sup>14</sup> To Machel, organisation was the only one way of expressing political agency:

*we are certain that only by organising the Youth, only by structuring the Youth, will we win our battle of building the new society, only by organising the Youth will we succeed in our battles, consolidate our independence, extend our victories. [...] we must organize the Youth so that they are engaged primarily on the side of the working classes.*<sup>15</sup>

Beyond Frelimo’s own writing on the Mass Democratic Organisations, little scholarship illuminates what their actual role in the early independence years was. Early works written in the 1980s by Marxist activist-writers, many of whom were directly involved in Frelimo’s revolutionary politics and living as *cooperantes* in the country, tended to endorse Frelimo’s own interpretations and continue to constitute the bulk of the scholarship on Mozambique’s Mass Democratic Organisations.<sup>16</sup> John Saul’s edited volume *A Difficult Road* and Joseph Hanlon’s book *Revolution under Fire* cast the Mass Democratic Organisations as the embodiment of *poder popular* (the People’s power), “exercised both by Frelimo as tribute of the people *and* by the people acting directly through popularly based mass organisations”,<sup>17</sup> in which the problems of the people would be heard by the party, and the party directives by the people.

That such aspirations fell short of reality was already recognized by contemporary scholars as well as Frelimo’s internal mechanisms for self criticism.<sup>18</sup> In practice, the Mass Democratic Organisations operated more from the top down than the bottom up.<sup>19</sup> Democratic mechanisms of interest representation from the bases to the higher levels of the party in the form of policy suggestions or initiatives were rather weak, an issue that particularly commentators on the women’s organisation found problematic, given the

13 Machel, *Sobre os Problemas*, p. 7.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

15 *Ibid.*

16 Saul, *Difficult Road*; J. Hanlon, *Mozambique: The Revolution under Fire*, London 1984; On the OMM, see S. Urdang, *The Last Transition? Women and Development in Mozambique*, in: *Review of African Political Economy* 27/28 (1983), pp. 8–32; H. Hansen, R. Hansen, O. Gjerstad, and C. Sarazin, *The Organization of Mozambican Women (a Organização da Mulher Moçambicana/OMM)*, in: *Journal of Eastern African Research and Development* 15 (1985), pp. 230–244; S. Kruks and B. Wisner, *The State, the Party and the Female Peasantry in Mozambique*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 11 (1984) 1, pp. 106–127 give a more critical reading of the OMM and its policy impacts on the social relations of production in the South.

17 Cravinho, *Modernizing Mozambique*, p. 38; Saul, *Difficult Road*, p. 68.

18 Kruks and Wisner cite a 1984 quote from FRELIMO’s Committee on Ideological Work: “There are few meetings with the masses, especially in the rural areas. Moreover, the few meetings that they hold are often meetings in which the Party member arrives, talks and then goes away. They are not meetings to hear from the people about their problems. They are meetings in which the people only participate as listeners, as observers.” Kruks and Wisner, *The State, the Party and the Female Peasantry*, p. 110.

19 *Ibid.*

dominance of men in higher party ranks.<sup>20</sup> A later generation of scholars, writing in the context of Frelimo's turn away from "Marxism-Leninism" towards multi-party democracy and structural adjustment, found more critical words to describe the role and function played by the Mass Democratic Organisations.<sup>21</sup> Rather than merely failing to keep the "central democratic" promise that the Mass Democratic Organisations would act as vehicles through which citizens expressed their desires, these scholars argued that from the beginning the internal structures and orientations of these organisations rendered them "nothing but arms of the party",<sup>22</sup> and an integral part in Frelimo's repressive and violent revolutionary project. Structurally, the Mass Democratic Organisations were subordinate to the party and not meant to become an "instrument of confrontation [or...] make demands"<sup>23</sup> as Machel made clear at the inauguration of the worker's organisation. Instead of embodying the power *of* the people, Cahen and others viewed this relationship as constitutive of Frelimo's hold on power *over* the people, by using these organisations "to ensure that these sectors of society were collaborating in the national project that it was creating".<sup>24</sup>

Examining here Frelimo's specific approach to organizing the Youth through a variety of novel sources, it becomes clear that neither arguments are fully true: the Mass Democratic Organisations were neither vehicles for democratic centralism, organized in spontaneous ways under Frelimo's vanguardship, nor were they purely top-down "arms of the party". Instead, I argue here that the case of the foundation of the OJM, shows that the lines between enthusiasm-driven, voluntary organisation and coercion into specific modes of organizing were extremely blurred. It was this grey space, I argue, in which Frelimo exercised a considerable degree of power and in which Mozambicans negotiated the meaning of political citizenship in violent, revolutionary and to a certain extent unpredictable times.

How did the "organisation and mobilisation" of the Youth unfold in practice? Shortly before 15 December, in its 8<sup>th</sup> Session, the Central Committee had created a Department for Mobilisation and Organisation (Departamento de Mobilização e Organização) with a mandate for the "mobilisation of the militants and the people and their '*enquadramento*' respectively into the structures of FRELIMO and the Mass Democratic Organisations, such as: [...] the Youth Organisation."<sup>25</sup> The body in charge of administering

20 Ibid., p. 117.

21 M. Hall and T. Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique since Independence*, London 1997, pp. 70, 78; L. de Brito, *A Frelimo, o Marxismo e a Construção Do Estado Nacional 1962–1983*, Maputo 2019; Cravinho, *Modernizing Mozambique*; M. Cahen, *État et Pouvoir Populaire dans le Mozambique Indépendant*, in: *Politique Africaine* 19 (1985), pp. 36–60; A. Dinerman, *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Revisionism in Postcolonial Africa: The Case of Mozambique, 1975–1994*, London 2006, p. 62.

22 B. L. Machava, *State Discourse on Internal Security and the Politics of Punishment in Post-Independence Mozambique (1975–1983)*, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37 (2011) 3, pp. 593–609, there p. 596.

23 Samora Machel quoted in B. Egerö, *Mozambique, a Dream Undone: The Political Economy of Democracy, 1975–84*, Uppsala 1987, p. 140.

24 Cravinho, *Modernizing Mozambique*, p. 51 fn 73; Cahen, *État et Pouvoir Populaire*, pp. 49–52.

25 The creation of the Departamento de Mobilização e Organização (D.M.O.) was decided on in "Resolução sobre Estruturas do Partido" A.2.1.e: "A criação do Departamento de Mobilização e Organização (D.M.O.), que terá como tarefa

the founding process of the OJM was the Secretariado Nacional (SN). It consisted of nine individuals, namely: “Amour Zacarias Kupela, Nurmomade Abdala Hassamo, Alcinda Abreu, Paulo Ivo Garrido, Gabriel Oriste Nacala, Andira José António, Beleza Fernandes, Arnaldo dos Santos Paris, António Alfredo Cuna.”<sup>26</sup> The internal archives of the Department are not available for public consultation at the time of writing, but detailed records of the SN’s activities in the newspaper archives in Maputo allow for a partial reconstruction of the foundation process as viewed by the partisan media.

In line with Frelimo’s wider dictum vis-à-vis the ‘masses,’ the Secretariado Nacional had the mandate to “organize and mobilize” the Youth in preparation for the OJM’s first conference in November 1977 that would formally establish the organisation through its statutes and programme.<sup>27</sup> It was guided by a “work plan” with two phases.<sup>28</sup> Each one entailed a round of travels by the Secretariado Nacional members to the provinces across the vast country. In the first phase, the members of the Secretariado Nacional visited the provincial capitals and some district capitals to establish OJM Secretariats and nominate OJM representatives. In the second phase, the SN again, visited the provinces, but this time to hold seminars and district-level conferences that they hoped would guarantee the ideological harmonisation of all secretariats and their integration into the dominant discourses at the OJM – a process I return to below.

In the first round of travels, the visitors would usually hold *comícios* (literally “councils”) during which higher ranking Frelimo representatives, typically from the *Informação e Propaganda*, *Ministério da Educação e Cultura*, local members of the Grupos Dinamizadores<sup>29</sup> and sometimes OMM representatives were present alongside members of the local population.<sup>30</sup> Such councils took place reportedly in Niassa,<sup>31</sup> Gaza,<sup>32</sup> Sofala,<sup>33</sup> and Tete<sup>34</sup> mostly between May and August 1977. The Notícias reports of the councils usually indicate that they were “oriented” (guided, led) by a member of the Secretariado Nacional, as well as a provincial-level OJM representative, although the Notícias reports did not disclose how and whether this person was (s)elected. During the councils,

a mobilização dos militantes e do povo e seu enquadramento respetivamente nas estruturas da FRELIMO e das Organizações Democráticas de Massas, como: ... Organização da Juventude, in English: “The creation of the Department of Mobilisation and Organisation (D.M.O.), which will have the task of mobilising militants and the people and integrating them respectively into the structures of FRELIMO and the Democratic Mass Organisations, such as: [...] Youth Organisation” published in: Documentos da 8.a Sessão do Comité Central Frelimo: Maputo 11 a 27 de Fevereiro de 1976, Maputo 1976, p. 59.

26 Nomeado Secretariado Nacional da Organização da Juventude, in: Jornal Notícias, 13 April 1977, p.1.

27 Ibid.

28 Como esta a organizar-se a Juventude Moçambicana: Membros do Secretariado Nacional da OJM explicam ofensiva política no seio dos jovens, in: Jornal Notícias, 18 July 1977, p. 3.

29 The Grupos Dinamizadores were the early party structures that represented Frelimo before they had established party cells. See C. Darch, *Historical Dictionary of Mozambique*, Lanham MD 2018, pp. 179–180.

30 See, for example, Juventude Moçambicana Solidariza-se com a luta dos Jovens Sul-Africanos, in: Jornal Notícias, 20 June 1977, p. 3.

31 Delegação da Juventude de Visita ao Niassa, Jornal Notícias, 3 June 1977, p. 3.

32 Juventude Moçambicana Solidariza-se; Brigadas de jovens no Chibuto, in: Jornal Notícias, 3 July 1977, p. 1.

33 Iniciada em Sofala estruturação da OJM, in: Jornal Notícias, 8 July 1977, p. 3.

34 Sede da OJM inaugurada em Tete, in: Jornal Notícias, 12 July 1977, p. 2.

district-level secretaries (*secretariado distrital*) were nominated and given specific "orientations" and tasks to implement in their district.<sup>35</sup> The newly nominated district secretaries subsequently formed brigades that would travel to the lower administrative units and replicate the same process there, the *distritos* (Districts), *localidades* (Localities), *circulos* (Circles), *celulas* (Cells), *bairros* (Neighbourhoods) and in some cases schools<sup>36</sup> and companies<sup>37</sup> within the Districts and Provinces.<sup>38</sup> Notícias chronicled such brigade travels in Nampula, through the districts Chemba, Cheringoma, Marromeu and Caia,<sup>39</sup> Sofala,<sup>40</sup> Gaza<sup>41</sup> among other places.

Thus, in the first phase of the "work plan", the Secretariado Nacional established hierarchical organisational structures in many parts of the country. These structures endowed the men and women who filled the OJM's offices with a degree of authority over how Youth could be political in independent Mozambique. In the months following their nominations, the OJM representatives held meetings, organized voluntary activities in support of the revolution, collected funds, iterated, and policed political positions about the country, the economy, and the society down to the most intimate spheres of life. These individuals carried Frelimo's authority, which they could in theory use to overrule or outmanoeuvre competing Youth activists. This is what Cahen referred to as Frelimo's efforts to capture the "loose political energy"<sup>42</sup> that independence had unleashed across the country.

In Maputo, potential competing Youth activist structures were likely numerous, although little research has been conducted so far on the exact numbers, agendas and alliances of such groups, in part, because Frelimo has worked hard to silence their role in the transition to independence.<sup>43</sup> At the centre of the OJM's attention were likely groups of students, religious youth, but also workers who had a long tradition of organized anti-colonial resistance. Such student movements included in the 1950s the Núcleo dos Estudantes de Moçambique (NESAM) and later in the 1960s and 70s the Associação Académica de Moçambique (AAM) at the University of Lourenço Marques.

35 See, for example, Juventude Moçambicana Solidariza-se.

36 See Iniciada em Sofala estruturação da OJM.

37 See Zambézia Brigada da OJM no Gurué, in: Jornal Notícias, 27 July 1977, p. 3.

38 For example, Notícias reported that, 'The brigades travelled in the districts with the objective to create OJM structures where they do not exist'. Estruturação da OJM em Nampula, in: Jornal Notícias, 12 August 1977, p. 3.

39 Ibid.

40 Secretariados da OJM nos Distritos de Sofala, in: Jornal Notícias, 12 August 1977, p. 3.

41 Brigadas de jovens no Chibuto, in: Jornal Notícias, 3 July 1977, p. 1.

42 Cravinho, Modernizing Mozambique, p. 48 (paraphrasing M. Cahen, Check on Socialism in Mozambique – What Check? What Socialism?, in: Review of African Political Economy 20 [July 1993] 57, pp. 46–59, p. 51).

43 Benedito Machava's forthcoming research traces the history of 'roads not taken' at independence, centring political groups, such as the Partido de Coligação Nacional or the Democratas de Moçambique, that advocated for alternative 'roads' to independence, through progressive autonomy, or democratic elections. See B. L. Machava, The Road Not Taken: Decolonization & Political Imagination in Mozambique, Webinar, Yale, 14 February 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDcQucZcAys>. Interviews with members of pro-Frelimo activists in the transition to independence can be found in: A. Le Bon, Mafalala 1974 – Memórias do 7 de Setembro, A Grande Operação, Maputo 2015; L. Gonzalez and C. Lopes Pereira, História da AAM: Associação Académica de Moçambique (1964–1975), Vila Nova de Gaia 2017.

Religious youth groups who associated mainly with protestant churches constituted centres for anti-colonial activism and politicisation.<sup>44</sup> The best-documented example of such groups are the Swiss Presbyterian Mission's *Mintlaw* groups through which some of Frelimo's own leaders were socialized into anti-colonial values.<sup>45</sup> Other groups are less well-documented. These include groups of mostly younger men, that had formed more recently, in the wake of independence, to support Frelimo's militants in the violent riots that white settlers led in Maputo shortly after the coup in Portugal, that had tilted the power-balances in favour of imminent independence for Mozambique.<sup>46</sup> Among these groups too were some that fell into the age-bracket targeted by the OJM, such as Roberto Tibana's group of *miúdos* (small ones, kids). At age 15, Tibana led a group of Youth during the riots of 7 September 1974. The group tried to keep people from looting and burning shops in the neighbourhood "Unidade 5". Following this event, the group "solidified itself as a study group that engaged also in cultural and sports activities".<sup>47</sup> In a blog post on the Frelimo-critical platform Macuablogs.com, Tibana recounts that "I was disinterested in the philosophical debates of the elders. In our younger group we started doing very practical things like organising neighbourhood clean-ups [...] studying the FRELIMO propaganda leaflets, etc." activities that the transition government encouraged and that later became established roles for the OJM's groups.

As I will discuss further below, I came across several young men and women in the interviews for this research who had engaged in activities, such as Tibana's, and the extent to which the emergence of such Youth groups should be considered independent of Frelimo's revolutionary politics is questionable. Nevertheless, the OJM took a great interest in their integration where they existed. In Tibana's case, the Grupos Dinamizadores came first. He recounts that at some point, "another group of 'older' ones appeared. I don't know how they appeared, but they already had FRELIMO 'authority'". The group of 'older ones' wanted to organize a Grupo Dinamizador and excluded the *miúdos*:

*We (in the 'kids' group) had visibility and esteem in the population because of what we had done during the '7 de April' riots [...] But not only were we 'kids' (I was 15–16 years old), we also had no connection with FRELIMO, except that we collectively read the propaganda booklets of the organisation.*<sup>48</sup>

The 'miúdos' group were accused of planning a state coup that escalated into a near-arrest by a *'bufô de alerta* (vigilante) da Frelimo. "The underlying approach that the Grupos Dinamizadores practiced here, that activism needed to be integrated into Frelimo's hier-

44 Anonymous informant, Interview with author, Maputo, 24 June 2022.

45 T. Cruz e Silva, Protestant Churches and the Formation of Political Consciousness in Southern Mozambique (1930–1974), Basel 2001.

46 Bon, Mafalala 1974.

47 R. J. Tibana, "O 'Meu 8 de Março'", in: Moçambique Para Todos (blog), 1 March 2018. [https://macua.blogs.com/moambique\\_para\\_todos/2018/03/o-meu-8-de-mar%C3%A7o.html](https://macua.blogs.com/moambique_para_todos/2018/03/o-meu-8-de-mar%C3%A7o.html).

48 Ibid.

archies and guided by party representatives, however, was one that guided also the OJM's establishment.

In relation to the OJM, the most famous sphere of activism that got subsumed by the OJM was the abovementioned AAM, a student organisation based at the capital's University of Lourenço Marques, later Eduardo Mondlane University.<sup>49</sup> After over a decade of anti-colonial activism, the organisation and its journal *O Diálogo* closed shortly after independence. Unlike *Cheche* in Tanzania, however, the writers of *O Diálogo* portrayed this closure as a natural process that found the agreement of all those involved:

*We have started a new life in Moçambique. We are building a new country in Mozambique [...]. The engagement of the students in the tasks of national construction will only be possible if they are organized for that purpose [...]. That is why the student organisation has to acquire new forms, to correspond to the new functions, the new experiences, which are posed to the students [...]. Which forms should be adopted? [...] Who will define these forms? Those who, trained in the correct interpretation of the wishes of the people, have the necessary conditions to guide our work: Frelimo.*<sup>50</sup>

In relation to the OJM, the last issue of *O Diálogo* echoed the new authoritative discourse and its emphasis on 'unity' among the Youth of different classes, wrote:

*In various parts of our country, young people felt the need to unite and, with the enthusiasm and initiative that characterizes them, to resolutely launch the tasks of national reconstruction. In [Mozambique] today the conditions exist for the Youth [...] to be integrated into a single organisation, because the young workers, peasants, fighters and students in the city or in the countryside are united by their dedication to the popular cause and the desire to jointly dedicate all their efforts to the development and consolidation of the Mozambican revolution.*<sup>51</sup>

These quotes were selected from the archives by two former AAM members who published a book based on AAM publications and interview sources.<sup>52</sup> In the resulting book, the authors described the closure of the organisation and its replacement by the OJM simply as "shortly after the independence of Mozambique, the cause which it embraced and fought for, AAM ceded to the nascent OJM its place in the University of Lourenço Marques – and dissolved itself, integrating its members into the new political and social reality".<sup>53</sup> Their interviewees – most former AAM members – largely supported this interpretation, but clarified that the stimulus for closure and integration into the OJM came from Frelimo:

49 Gonzalez and Lopes Pereira, *História da AAM*; Cravinho, *Modernizing Mozambique*, p. 49.

50 *O Diálogo*, no. 16, April 1975, pp. 1–2, cited in: Gonzalez and Lopes Pereira, *História da AAM*, p. 279, fn 421.

51 *O Diálogo*, no. 18, July 1975, p. 11, cited in: Gonzalez and Lopes Pereira, *História da AAM*, p. 285, fn. 424.

52 Gonzalez and Lopes Pereira, *História da AAM*.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 285.

*For Álvaro Carmo Vaz, who followed much of AAM's path – first as a student and associative activist, then as a lecturer at ULM/UEM, from assistant to full professor – the causes of the decline of associative activities were various: “The role of AAM was declining due to various factors. First, there was a massive abandonment of ULM students; second, Frelimo did not stimulate the continuity of the Association, prioritizing the organisation and functioning of the cells and the University's circle committee; third, with Frelimo's perspective of creating OJM [...] and that all activities with the students should move to OJM.”*<sup>54</sup>

It was in an interview with a former member of the AAM, who wished to remain anonymous, that I learned that there exists an alternative version to the official story:

*In that process from '74 until '77, Frelimo inform[ed] all the other youth organisations that they have to disappear, we can only have a Youth of Frelimo. And that's how this book [about AAM] ends at the moment when we met to decide that we are going to finish with the academic association. So that there won't be problems, but we did not agree.*<sup>55</sup>

Such experiences counter Frelimo's version of the OJM's foundation story and continue to be silenced in public discourse today. Thus, while there exist traces that the OJM absorbed existing forms of activism, the extent to which there was resistance to such absorption is difficult to write about with any degree of certainty.

Subtle traces of resistance against the OJM during the initial years of its foundation can be found in the news reporting. The partisan media reported rigorously on the OJM's activities, but also subscribed openly to its unconditional support for socialism and in their majority, Frelimo's vanguard role.<sup>56</sup> A partisan newspaper such as *Notícias* generally published – more or less voluntarily – along Frelimo's “line”, and acts of resistance were usually framed as “challenges” that the OJM successfully overcame or was to overcome.<sup>57</sup> *Notícias* journalists portrayed acts of resistance as evidence of the presence of the lingering colonial-feudal influences that were to be overcome, accusing parents, rather than Youth.<sup>58</sup>

*There are [...] a certain number of people who do not understand the importance of the organisation for Youth. We can also say that they don't understand that at this stage each Mozambican citizen has his or her place in the Party structures, whether in the mass organisations like the OJM or OMM, in the future workers' organisation or in the*

54 Ibid., p. 280.

55 Anonymous informant, Interview with author, Maputo, 24 June 2022.

56 The complex relationship between journalists of the main newspapers *Tempo* and *Notícias*, the party and the state in the early independence years is discussed in more detail in: P. Fauvet and M. Mosse, Carlos Cardoso: Telling the Truth in Mozambique, Cape Town 2003, pp. 40–44, 49–59.

57 See for example: O.J.M.: Conferências Distritais Decorrem em Sofala, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 30 September 1977, p. 3; Secretariado provincial da O.J.M. analisa Trabalho dos Distritos, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 5 October 1977, p. 2; Juventude Empenha-se na Preparação da Conferência Nacional da O.J.M., in: *Jornal Notícias*, 11 October 1977, p. 2.

58 Como esta a Organizar-se a Juventude Moçambicana: Membros do Secretariado Nacional da OJM Explicam Ofensiva Política no seio dos Jovens, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 18 July 1977, p. 3.

*actual Production Councils. Like the parents, the children also have a role to play in the Revolution.*

A report about a district-level conference by the Provincial Secretary of the OJM in Nampula illustrates this:

*there is a tendency among some young people to retain ideas and practices inherited from incorrect traditions and cultivated by colonialism, such as obscurantism, initiation rites, early marriages, sexual corruption and alcoholism. The [Nampula conference report] attributes a large part of the responsibility for the preservation of these evils in some of our young people to the parents, who take a less active part in the problems of the O.J.M., sometimes going so far as to make it difficult for their children to participate in the tasks of the Organisation.<sup>59</sup>*

Much less frequent were reports about disagreements between members of the OJM and the men and women they sought to recruit. One instance was reported from Niassa, where during a district-level conference with 140 delegates from Circles and Localities of the district Amaramba "severely criticized the report presented by the district secretary of the OJM, for not reflecting the reality".<sup>60</sup>

What do we conclude from such hesitant accounts of dissent? I've argued so far that the OJM was tasked with putting Machel's visions on the role of Youth in revolutionary Mozambique into practice in the early years of independence. Similar to other Mass Democratic Organisations, the OJM did this by trying to establish a "monopoly on political activities" among its constituency. In practice, this meant "organizing" the Youth into a hierarchical organisational structure of OJM Secretariats across provinces, Districts and Localities, down to the smallest administrative units, the Circles, Cells and Neighbourhoods. The OJM Secretariats were in theory endowed with the power to hold the monopoly over political activities in their spheres of influence, which resulted in some cases in the removal or absorption of pre-existing forms of organized Youth activists. The extent to which these processes involved conflict or resistance however, is difficult to know about from the media and without access to the OJM's own archives.

Frelimo's own theorists would perhaps find some affirmation of their views that the relationship between the Youth (and the "masses" more widely) and the Mass Democratic Organisations were more symbiotic than critics like to admit. Cahen and his colleagues might interpret such accounts instead in light of Frelimo's continuing control over how its unbroken political rule is remembered (or at least spoken about) until today. Even during interviews, stories about resistance to or domination by the OJM were not shared liberally with me. Those memories that interviewees did share with me, however, complicate the binary between OJM and Youth activists, Frelimo and "the masses", People's Power and state control. As I will discuss in more detail in the final section of this paper,

59 O.J.M. Inicia Campanha de Dinamização para 1a Conferencial Nacional da Organização, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 22 August 1977, p. 3.

60 Niassa: Conferencia da OJM no Distrito da Amaramba, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 18 October 1977, p. 3.

the lines between resistance and acceptance were potentially experienced as much more blurred than what one might expect. In part, I will argue next, this is because the OJM not only imposed a new organisational structure, but also a new language that itself reconfigured what young men and women conceived of as the (semantic) meaning of political activism in the first place.

### 3. “Mobilizing the Masses”: Language and Discourse in the Establishment of the OJM

Borrowing from Alexei Yurchak, the sociologist Jason Sumich argued in 2011 that Samora Machel functioned in Mozambique as an “external editor” to public discourse, in ways similar to Stalin in the Soviet Union.<sup>61</sup> In *Everything was Forever Until it was No More*, Yurchak showed that Stalin had acted as the master of language, himself external to discourse and “presented as possessor of the knowledge of the rule”.<sup>62</sup> Following Stalin’s death, the Soviet discursive regime compensated for the loss of the external editor by increasingly normalizing itself: “The party secretaries and [Central Committee] speechwriters could only look to one another’s texts to normalize their own. As a result, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, this discourse experienced progressive normalisation, with the different texts written in it sounding increasingly like excerpts from one text.”<sup>63</sup> For the producers of authoritative discourse, the speechwriters, journalists and party cadres,

*“ideological literacy” came to be treated in the party and Komsomol institutions (the Soviet state’s organisation for Youth) as the technical skill of reproducing the precise passage and structures of that language in one’s texts and speeches, paying particular attention to the linguistic form, and, [...] not engaging in any public discussions of how these texts might be interpreted by different audiences and in different contexts.*<sup>64</sup>

As a consequence, the texts that Soviet journalists, speech writers, and lower party functionaries produced had certain recurring characteristics: Firstly, “all types of information, new and old, were presented as knowledge previously asserted and commonly known”,<sup>65</sup> secondly, texts would include “a precise or near-precise citation of various language ‘blocks’ from one text to the next”,<sup>66</sup> thirdly, “the use of a limited repertoire of modifiers for particular concepts: certain nouns and verbs tended to be accompanied by concrete adjectives”,<sup>67</sup> fourthly, “the production of long and unwieldy noun phrases, [which...], like modifiers, can be used as powerful techniques for creating presuppositions and pre-

61 J. Sumich, *The Middle Class in Mozambique. The State and the Politics of Transformation in Southern Africa*, Cambridge 2018, p. 4.

62 A. Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, Princeton NJ 2013, p. 40.

63 Ibid., p. 47.

64 Ibid., p. 48.

65 Ibid., p. 61.

66 Ibid., p. 63.

67 Ibid., p. 66.

senting information as something that has been earlier preestablished and as simply being mediated."<sup>68</sup> By the 1970s and '80s, Yurchak sees a hypernormalisation of the new authoritative discourse that "did not simply affect all levels of linguistic, textual, and narrative structure but also became an end in itself, resulting in fixed and cumbersome forms of language that were often neither interpreted nor easily interpretable at the level of constative meaning."<sup>69</sup> The rules that made up the form of the text had become at least as, if not more important than its content.

Although Samora Machel was alive and occasionally interfered as external editor in interpretative disputes within or about the OJM, Frelimo's authoritative discourse during the early years of independence already showed some of the characteristics that Yurchak describes for late-Soviet hypernormalisation. Machel's speechwriters were aware of the rhetorical powers of presenting knowledge as previously asserted, rather than attributable to specific authors, of noun phrases, and the importance of invoking and coining new modifiers (one of which was the word *Juventude* itself).

The founders of the OJM too, were aware of the powers of this discourse and its ability to communicate through both form and content with a wider political constituency. At the various councils the OJM held at different levels, higher ranking Frelimo, and Secretariado Nacional members not only nominated OJM Secretaries, but usually also gave elaborate speeches in the canon of the party's authoritative discourse. Like in the Soviet Union, these speeches were impersonal, usually described as a certain speaker giving an "analysis" of the situation of the Youth in *Notícias* reports.<sup>70</sup> The speakers cited Machel's 15 December speech through the use of particular textual blocks or modifier-heavy rephrasing of Machel's "analysis". Phrases such as Machel's "The colonialists, taking advantage of young people's taste for amusement, made great effort to spread entertainment based on drinking, drug-taking, sexual promiscuity",<sup>71</sup> for example, were recycled variably into

*colonialism, aware of the strength that our youth represented, tried to lower [the Youth], encouraging corruption, drugs, pernicious books, prostitution, pornography, elitism, individualism, in order to distance it from the realities and aspirations of our people.*<sup>72</sup>

*unlike the colonial youth that absorbed and fed the decadent vices of colonialism-fascism the Mozambican revolutionary youth is the vanguard of our revolution because as already defined [by Machel] it is the seiva da nação (sap of the nation).*<sup>73</sup>

68 Ibid., p. 68.

69 Ibid., p. 50.

70 For example, *Notícias* described na opening speech as "analysing the activities carried out by youth at District level, carry out a survey of youth problems at District level" [analisar as actividades desenvolvidas pela juventude a nível do Distrito, Proceder ao levantamento de problemas da juventude ao nível do Distrito]. Conferências Distritais da Juventude Moçambicana, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 11 September 1977, p. 3.

71 Machel, *Sobre os Problemas*, p. 17.

72 Juventude deve engajar-se ativamente em todas as tarefas revolucionárias: Salientado na sessão de abertura do I Curso Provincial de ativistas da Juventude do Maputo, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 14 August 1977, p.1.

73 Juventude Moçambicana Solidariza-se com a luta dos Jovens Sul-Africanos, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 20 June 1977, p. 3.

Adherence to the form of the authoritative discourse granted the speakers constant legitimacy for the orders and instructions that the texts entailed, while shutting down avenues for competing interpretations.<sup>74</sup> Presumptions coded in modifiers and nouns were constantly affirmed throughout the speeches. The speakers employed religiously certain modifiers, for example, that were coined in the 15 December speech and affirmed the new political subject position for Youth. The above phrase “*seiva da nação*” (sap of the Nation) was perhaps the most powerful and frequently used modifier. At the opening of the 1<sup>st</sup> Provincial Course for Youth Activities in Maputo, for example, Central Committee member José Ganácio’s speech invoked the phrase to affirm the new political subject position for Youth (as the life-giving force of the Nation) and simultaneously invoke Machel’s authority:<sup>75</sup> “in the construction of a socialist society, the Youth should assume the most difficult tasks, since they are the sap of our Nation, the seedbed from which we draw the future cadres of our Revolution – as President Machel teaches us.”<sup>76</sup>

Ritualized speech performances and their coherent form signalled belonging to the new sphere of power that Frelimo claimed for itself, so much so that adherence to form became a compulsory feature of OJM events. The OJM thus expected of its members a high degree of “ideological literacy”, the ability to reproduce texts and speeches in their exact linguistic form, without “engaging in any public discussions of how these texts might be interpreted by different audiences and in different contexts”.<sup>77</sup> To this end, the OJM began training its functionaries early on in the interpretation and reproduction of authoritative discourse. In the second phase of the work plan, the Secretariado Nacional travelled to the provinces another time and began training higher ranking OJM functionaries to become versed in the authoritative discourse on Youth. Over the course of the month August 1977, such trainings took place at the provincial and district-level in the Sede do distrito de Bilene, Inhambane,<sup>78</sup> Mocuba in Zambézia Province,<sup>79</sup> Lichinga in Niassa,<sup>80</sup> Manjacaze in Gaza.<sup>81</sup> In some places, Notícias referred to the trainings as courses for Youth leaders, such as in Cabo Delgado,<sup>82</sup> Gaza,<sup>83</sup> and Maputo.<sup>84</sup> In other places, the preparatory meetings were not called courses but simply seminars or meet-

74 E. Gonçalves, *Orientações Superiores: Time and Bureaucratic Authority in Mozambique*, in: *African Affairs* 112 (2013) 449, pp. 602–622; C. Darch and D. Hedges, *Political Rhetoric in the Transition to Mozambican Independence: Samora Machel in Beira, June 1975*, in: *Kronos* 39 (2013) 1, pp. 10–19.

75 See for more examples: *Iniciada em Sofala estruturação da OJM*, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 8 July 1977, p. 3; *Revolução precisa da Juventude para assegurar seu triunfo: Governador de Gaza ao inaugurar conferência da OJM em Chokwé*, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 7 October 1977, p. 3.

76 *Juventude deve engajar-se ativamente em todas as tarefas revolucionárias: Salientado na sessão de abertura do I Curso Provincial de ativistas da Juventude do Maputo*, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 14 August 1977, p. 1.

77 Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, p. 48.

78 *Seminário da OJM termina em Inhambane*, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 2 August 1977, p. 3.

79 *Reunião Provincial da Juventude iniciou-se ontem em Mocuba*, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 21 August 1977, p. 5.

80 *Organização da Juventude*, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 28 August 1977, p. 3.

81 *Conferência da OJM prepara-se em Manjacaze*, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 22 September 1977, p. 3.

82 *Plano de Atividades da OJM Desenvolve-se a Nível Nacional*, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 16 August 1977, p. 1.

83 *OJM Prepara conferências distritais*, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 17 August 1977, p. 2.

84 *Juventude deve engajar-se ativamente em todas as tarefas revolucionárias: Salientado na sessão de abertura do I Curso Provincial de ativistas da Juventude do Maputo*, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 14 August 1977, p. 1.

ings. Both types of trainings usually took several days and involved the participation of a higher-level party official, and a member of the Secretariado Nacional who "orientated" the meeting.<sup>85</sup> This, a Notícias report from 16 August 1977 highlighted, constituted the most important task in this second phase of the Secretariado Nacional's "work plan".<sup>86</sup> The trainings centred on three core texts that together constituted the core of Frelimo's authoritative discourse on Youth.<sup>87</sup>

Echoing Frelimo's authoritative discourse on Youth, the texts used in these trainings also communicated – through both form and content – presumptions and specific instructions for behaviour that constituted legitimate political activities for Youth. The first text was the speech Machel gave on 15 December 1976.<sup>88</sup> This text invoked abstract notions of "historic responsibility" and a new political subjectivity for Youth in the first place and lent his authority to the OJM as the only legitimate institution through which the Youth could act politically. In the 15 December speech, Machel marks only activism that is underpinned by Frelimo's distinctly anti-traditionalist Marxism and the party's goals as legitimate, namely to fight "for social transformation alongside the working classes",<sup>89</sup> "for freedom, democracy, for peace and social progress, against colonialism, racism, fascism, neocolonialism and imperialism",<sup>90</sup> "against the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie",<sup>91</sup> evils that manifested themselves in Mozambique through "initiation rites and premature marriages, [...] *práticas retrogrades*, that traumatise psychologically our youth, [and] contribute to the deformation of their mentalities and to the reproduction of the values of the old society".<sup>92</sup> In the cities, the evils manifested themselves in "drugs, alcohol, prostitution, the happy and carefree life [...] ultra-leftism, petty bourgeois [aspirations]".<sup>93</sup>

85 The opening of the 1<sup>st</sup> Curso Provincial de Actividades da Juventude do Maputo at the Centro de Formação Político-Ideológico de Munhuana in Maputo, for example, was attended by members of the Comité Provincial do Partido, representatives of the provincial OMM and OJM secretariats, and course participants; the course took 15 days. Juventude deve engajar-se ativamente em todas as tarefas revolucionárias: Salientado na sessão de abertura do I Curso Provincial de atividades da Juventude do Maputo, in: Jornal Notícias, 14 August 1977, p. 1.

86 Plano de Atividades da OJM Desenvolve-se a Nível Nacional, in: Jornal Notícias, 16 August 1977, p. 1.

87 The precise documents that the Secretariado Nacional used likely included three core texts, although the Notícias journalists called them by different names.

88 Some examples include: In the district conference in Pemba, Chiure, Ibo and Quissanga, Cabo Delgado Province "President Samora Machel's speech at the meeting with Mozambican youth last December and the OJM National Secretariat's appeal for funds to support the organisation's activities were discussed." OJM. Conferências Distritais em Cabo Delgado, in: Jornal Notícias, 12 October 1977, p. 5b; at the district-level conference in Maputo: "The speech given by President Samora Machel at his meeting with the youth last year, the document of the National Secretariat of OJM, and some documents of the Party will be adopted as the basic documents for the work of this meeting." Conferência da OJM no distrito de Maputo, in: Jornal Notícias, 13 October 1977, p. 6; in Aramba in Niassa Province, the groups studied "President Samora Machel's speech to the youth in December last year". Niassa: Conferência da OJM no Distrito da Amaramba, in: Jornal Notícias, 18 October 1977, p. 3; in Marracuene: "The dominant themes were the speech given by President Samora Machel at his meeting with the youth last December." Juventude de Marracuene Realizou Conferências, in: Jornal Notícias, 19 October 1977, p. 3.

89 Darch and Hedges, *Political Rhetoric*, p. 7.

90 Ibid., p. 8.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid., pp. 15–16.

93 Machel, *Sobre os Problemas*, p. 9.

The second text was in all likelihood a text titled “Let us prepare actively and in an organised way the 1st National Conference of the O.J.M.” that the Secretariado Nacional authored and Notícias published on 22 August 1977.<sup>94</sup> Using the hypernormalized form, the second document derived its authority from Machel’s “analysis” by replicating its linguistic, narrative and rhetorical structures, down to the level of modifiers, noun sentences and citational blocks.<sup>95</sup> Building on this legitimacy, the second document then specified behaviours that constituted “political activities” for the Youth: “there exist general tasks that the Youth must realize in all places of work and residences as a way of supporting the 1st conference.” These included creating OJM structures, to study deeply and collectively the documents to be submitted to the 1st conference, to study the forms of financial support of the 1st conferences indicated by the Secretariado Nacional, to support culturally the 1st conference “by creating and disseminating songs, poems, paintings and drawings, sculptures, games, dances and theatre pieces”.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, “intensifying revolutionary vigilance [...] particularly [...] in the cities” were listed as the specific activities thought of as political engagement of the Youth. Finally, the Secretariado Nacional issued a new so-called *palavra de ordem* (“We prepare actively and in an organized fashion the 1st Conference of Mozambican Youth!”) as guidance to be “assumed and materialized in the concrete circumstances that each Youth finds him- or herself in”,<sup>97</sup> namely factories, firms, communal villages, schools or public office.

A third document was likely a text titled “O.J.M. National Secretariat launches fundraising campaign”, published in Notícias on 5 October 1977 although an internal copy may have been used for trainings prior to this date. This document focussed on Youth activism to financially support the OJM with specific suggestions for activities. In the Secretariado Nacional’s words: “As a Mass Democratic Organisation whose activities will benefit primarily us Youth, it is natural and necessary that the principal support of the organisation comes from us.”<sup>98</sup> The document listed specific short and long-term activities that Youth were encouraged to engage in to this end, including the organisation of cultural and sportive festivals, movie screenings (“where our personality is affirmed”),

94 An instructory document for District Conferences that the Secretariado Nacional published in Notícias and circulated, detailed that the participants would “study the appeal launched by the [National Secretariat] of the OJM, as well as the theses of the 1st Mozambican Youth Conference.” Conferências Distritais da Juventude Moçambicana, in: Jornal Notícias, 11 September 1977, p. 3; referring to: Apelo a Juventude Moçambicana, in: Jornal Notícias, 21 August 1977, p. 3.

95 Some examples include: “it falls to the Mozambican Youth to organize itself and defend the power of the worker-peasant alliance, fight against oppression and exploitation by man of man... to liquidate completely the vestiges of the traditional-feudal and colonial capitalist Society”. Preparemos ativamente e organizadamente a I Conferência Nacional da O.J.M., in: Jornal Notícias, 22 August 1977, p. 3. The aim of the conference and the OJM more widely was described as to “create the conditions for the Youth to engage itself actively on the side of the working classes in the battle for the construction of the material and ideological bases of the socialist society”. Here again, the legitimacy of Youth political activism was tied to its support of the working classes and the project of constructing a socialist society, or a few lines later to “transforming all the initiatives and enthusiasm of the Youth in a conscious force at the service of the People”.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Secretariado Nacional da OJM lança campanha de recolha de fundos, in: Jornal Notícias, 5 October 1977, p. 1.

cultivating and selling vegetables or small animals, and once-off initiatives such as collecting and selling paper to recycling, helping with the cashew harvest, finding small jobs in factories or construction works and donating the salaries to the OJM.<sup>99</sup> Through the authoritative discourse, the OJM communicated new, specific ways in which Youth could be "politically activist" in ways that would form part of the organisation's wider monopoly.

Versed in the interpretation of the authoritative discourse's core texts and ideologically literate to produce it, the OJM trainees were sent off as political missionaries who would "dynamise the party, government and OJM *orientações* among the Youth".<sup>100</sup> Following their training, the functionaries attended district-level conferences that took place between 15 September and 13 October<sup>101</sup> and provincial-level conferences<sup>102</sup> in the subsequent months, that brought together 50-150 representatives from the newly formed OJM secretariats in preparation of the central conference. *Notícias* reports of the conferences make reference to the elaboration and approval of "relatórios" (reports) to be presented at the next higher level conference (provincial for districts, national for provincial), as well as elections of representatives to be sent to these next level conferences.<sup>103</sup> They also detail that the delegates spent multiple days in 'study groups' discussing the above three core texts, oriented by the previously trained higher-ranking functionaries. How effectively they did so is again difficult to know with certainty, but during the months of the district and provincial OJM conferences, *Notícias* reported (and through their reporting also catalysed) the kinds of activities that the OJM documents had deemed the correct political engagement for Youth. Often with the logistical support and encour-

99 Ibid.

100 Juventude deve engajar-se ativamente em todas as tarefas revolucionárias: Salientado na sessão de abertura do I Curso Provincial de ativistas da Juventude do Maputo, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 14 August 1977, p. 1; Juventude Empenha-se na Preparação da Conferência Nacional da OJM, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 11 October 1977, p. 2.

101 Mensagem da OJM, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 14 September 1977, p. 6. *Notícias* reported on such conferences taking place in Manjacaze, Gaza (announced for 26–28 September 1977), Dondo in Sofala Dondo e Chokwé: Conferências Distritais da OJM em Preparação, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 22 September 1977, p. 3; Beira in Sofala: OJM: Conferências Distritais Decorrem em Sofala, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 30 September 1977, p. 3; Chokwé in Gaza (announced for 4-6 October 1977). Conferência Distrital da OJM Inicial Trabalhos em Chokwé, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 12 October 1977, p. 5; in Cabo Delgado in the districts Pemba, Chiure, Ibo and Quissanga: OJM. Conferências Distritais em Cabo Delgado, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 12 October 1977, p. 5b; Maputo: Conferência da OJM no distrito de Maputo, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 13 October 1977, p. 6; Aramba in Niassa: Niassa: Conferência da OJM no Distrito da Amaramba, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 18 October 1977, p. 3; Marracuene District with 63 delegates: Juventude de Marracuene Realizou Conferências, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 19 October 1977, p. 3; Maputo District including Matola, Matatuine, Magude, Namacha: Conferências da OJM. em Distritos de Maputo, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 22 October 1977, p. 2. Attendance varied between 50 and 150 delegates.

102 Inhambane: Juventude dá Início a conferências provinciais, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 9 October 1977, p. 8; Bilene in Gaza, with 130 participants from 10 districts: Juventude dá Início a conferências provinciais, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 9 October 1977, p. 8; Sofala Province: Edificação do Socialismo está confiada à Juventude: João M. Simango na abertura da conferência provincial de Sofala da OJM, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 23 October 1977, p. 3.

103 An instructory document circulated by the Secretariado Nacional makes reference to relatórios, see Conferências Distritais da Organização da Juventude, *Jornal Notícias*, 2 October 1977, p. 3, other examples include conference in Bilene in Gaza Province: Juventude dá Início a conferências provinciais, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 9 October 1977, p. 8, where *Notícias* reported of activities to "prepare and approve the report to be presented at the Provincial Conference of Mozambican Youth".

agement from various other party organisations, local OJM formed “multipurpose cultural and sports groups”,<sup>104</sup> who went on to perform “regional dance”,<sup>105</sup> and gymnastics in festivals, and organized football games “in support of the OJM conference”.<sup>106</sup> Others continued to engage in voluntary work, organizing neighbourhood clean-ups<sup>107</sup> (in most neighbourhoods at least in Maputo, these routinely took place on Saturdays) or brigade work in communal farms, local factories or with the police.<sup>108</sup> Young readers submitted passionate poems<sup>109</sup> to *Notícias*, calling for the Youth to unite, and after the OJM issued a call for suggestions for the OJM’s hymn and emblem on 6 October 1977 young people also began sending in drawings and texts to *Notícias*.

These texts not only show that the authors felt called to expressing themselves politically in the ways suggested by the OJM, but also that they had indeed achieved “ideological literacy”. Poems, such as Farida Cassamo’s poem titled ‘Jovens’ reproduce the authoritative discourse both in content and in form:

*Brother youth/Why do you let yourselves be left behind?/Let’s go, let’s go forward./Let’s go, brothers and sisters, to rebuild our country/Mozambique needs us, the Youth/Let’s stand upright/Let’s face our enemies...*<sup>110</sup>

Another example is a hymn that came from the district of Nakala:

*I: The Mozambican Youth/Guided by FRELIMO/Will grow up free of trace/Defend the Revolution/II: By the bourgeoisie/Youth was considered childish/With FRELIMO it will assume/National responsibility/III: With arms in hand/It will fight and fight/Against capitalist exploitation/It will consolidate the people’s achievements.*<sup>111</sup>

Visually too, the authors of the drawings replicated the authoritative discourse (see Fig. 1 and 2).

104 Seminário da OJM no Distrito de Maputo, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 14 July 1977, p. 1.

105 On 13 February 1977 the „Festival da Juventude” took place in Maputo’s largest arena, the Estádio da Machava. According to the announcement in *Notícias*, it was meant to bring together 7 000 students (primary and secondary from urban and suburban neighbourhoods of the capital. Em apoio ao 3o Congresso: Festival da Juventude, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 4 February 1977, p. 10, in the “Festival Cultural de Apoio ao III Congresso” on 28–29 September 1977 youth groups performed dances: „Grupos representativos dos mercados de Mazambane apresentando ... Makwayela da OMM e Makwayela da Juventude.” Delegação Pan-Africano da Juventude chegou ontem a Maputo, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 8 January 1977, p. 3.

106 See, for example, Depois de Amanha, na Machava: Partida de Futebol entre Maputo e Sofala para apoio a Juventude Moçambicana, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 4 November 1977, p. 6; Torneios Desportivos de Apoio a 1a Conferencia da OJM., in: *Jornal Notícias*, 9 November 1977, p. 5; Em apoio á Conferencia da OJM.: Lêgua da Juventude tem lugar esta tarde, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 8 December 1977, p. 5.

107 See for example in Maputo: Centenas de Pessoas limpam valas no subúrbios de Maputo Iniciativa da OJM, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 18 October 1976, p. 3.

108 For example in Inhambane: Inhambane: Juventude trabalha em machamba comunal, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 31 August 1977, p. 3.

109 See, for example, Alfons Potmos Culhe, Juventude, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 4 July 1977, p. 2; Farida Cassamo, Jovens, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 3 October 1977, p. 2; Paz Jacó, Eu Jovem estou alegre, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 17 October 1977, p. 2.

110 Farida Cassamo, Jovens, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 3 October 1977, p. 2.

111 Contribuições para Hino e Emblema da OJM., in: *Jornal Notícias*, 11 November 1977, p. 4a.

Figure 1<sup>112</sup>



Figure 2<sup>113</sup>



So far, I have tried to show that the OJM's efforts to establish a monopoly on political activities among the Youth in Mozambique went beyond creating new institutional structures that endowed OJM representatives with new power and authority, and subsuming or silencing pre-existing or diverging activist groups. In addition, the OJM used more subtle tactics. By forging a new, authoritative language in both form and content, the OJM reconfigured what kinds of activities constituted political activities for Youth in the first place.

#### 4. Francisco Moiane and the Comunidade de Zinthlathla: Youth Perspectives Beyond the OJM

Yurchak reminds us that the domination of form over content in the late Soviet Union did not mean that

*meanings simply had become unimportant, or that everyday life became a series of automatic actions devoid of meaning. Quite the contrary, the performative replication of the precise forms of authoritative representation rendered the constative meanings associated with this representation unanchored, increasingly unpredictable, and open to new interpretations, enabling the emergence of new and unanticipated meanings, relations, and lifestyles in various contexts of everyday life.*<sup>114</sup>

It is for this reason that I will now turn to the perspectives of those men and women who experienced the foundation of the OJM. How do they remember this time? How did they encounter, make sense of and negotiate the new authoritative institutions and their language?

I explore these questions here through the oral history of Francisco Moiane. When I met Francisco Moiane in 2022, he was a professor at Universidade Pedagógica in Maputo. He was referred to me by a high-ranking Frelimo politician as an example of someone who

112 Contribuições para o Hino e Emblema da OJM, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 16 November 1977, p. 4.

113 Contribuições para o Hino e Emblema da OJM, in: *Jornal Notícias*, 15 November 1977, p. 2.

114 Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, p. 60.

had been very engaged in the revolutionary process in his Youth. Jointly with a number of other Youths who called themselves the Comunidade de Zinthlathla, he had fought for the re-opening of a school in his neighbourhood and spent several years teaching there. By the time the OJM's first conference took place in 1977 Moiane was no longer as heavily involved in the Comunidade. Nevertheless, his narrative of the pre-foundation years illustrates powerfully how many of the individuals who I interviewed experienced the OJM's coming into existence. For Moiane, as for many others, this was a process in which institutions and language were deeply intertwined and the lines between pre-existing activism, OJM activism, Grupos Dinamizadores and other Frelimo authorities were blurred. Secondly, his story also illustrates that within these messy dynamics, a authoritative discourse over what constituted "correct" and "incorrect" forms of Youth activism had emerged, that could serve to delegitimize certain people, actions and behaviours. Moiane began his story with the onset of independence when he was 16 years old. In 1975, he recounted that the "euphoria of independence" motivated neighbourhood meetings in Maputo's neighbourhood Chamanculo "to receive Frelimo, the victorious movement we all identified with". At the time, Moiane was involved with the local Grupo Dinamizador, although he did not remember how the organisation started. He recounted that they organized neighbourhood cleaning days, an activity that was encouraged by Frelimo and took place regularly on Saturdays in most neighbourhoods of Maputo. In Chamanculo too, Moiane remembered:

*We cleaned the neighbourhoods because there was no municipal council [...] In the afternoon we did political studies, which meant reading the books of Mao Zedong, Karl Marx and so on, it was the initiation into Marxism [...] we also read some books on the revolution, how Frelimo fought.*<sup>115</sup>

During this phase, a group of younger men and women started to meet up for separate discussions and political study in an empty school in the neighbourhood. Moiane came across this group one evening, when the local Grupo Dinamizador's office was flooded by rainwater and the members sought refuge in the school. There, he saw his peers, much closer to him in age, and decided to join this group instead of the Grupo Dinamizador. Moiane remembered: "It was a continuation, it was the children (*Era continuação, eram os filhos*). At night, the parents would meet in the Grupo Dinamizador and the Youth [would meet separately]."<sup>116</sup> The group called themselves OJM, even though, the OJM would only be founded two years later:

*We said we were OJM because OJM itself was not structured, we only said "OJM ah the Youth", from the structural point of view it didn't exist yet. So young people organised themselves wherever they were and said they were OJM. [...] That was enough, you said*

115 Francisco Moiane, Interview with author, Maputo, 13 June 2022.

116 Ibid.

[you were] *Youth, the person just identified you with the OJM, we didn't have membership cards, we didn't have anything.*

The group associated closely with Frelimo and the Grupo Dinamizador. Moiane remembered that they had a "responsável da juventude" (youth representative) who participated in the Grupo Dinamizador meetings: "we received guidance (*orientações*) from the Grupo Dinamizador, so that on Wednesday we couldn't leave the meetings before the secretariat of meeting of the party committee (*secretariado da reunião do comité do Partido*), we were there waiting for the guidance that [he] would bring."

Despite this affiliation, the group had its own political projects, some of which drew on elements of Frelimo's wider authoritative discourse and applied it to the local context. Moiane remembered that the group began looking around in the empty school building they used as a meeting place and noted: "As there is a lot of illiteracy, we should use those rooms to teach the people to read and write." Literacy was a form of voluntary, pro-revolutionary activism that Frelimo actively encouraged in the early years of independence (so much so that the party launched an official Literacy campaign between 1978–1983) and an activity that the party often drew on as an example for the Youth's active involvement during the Liberation struggle and in support of the Revolution.<sup>117</sup> The group began cleaning the vacant school rooms and close to 70 volunteers began teaching. At first, they taught "literacy classes" for adults and gradually expanded into other subjects for primary school children and later even secondary school children. The group succeeded in getting school benches and those who had studied in the *liceus* began teaching primary school subjects (1–5) and pre-secondary school (5–6) in morning classes and in 1978, also during the evening class cycle. In this, Moiane recounts that they were inspired by Samora Machel's discourse:

*There was a phrase by Samora, "making school is a basis for the people to take power", so when we took that phrase we said "the problem in the end is to educate the people", so we opened the school.*

They named the school after a guerrilla who was a resident in Chamanculo, named Zinthlathla and themselves the Comunidade de Zinthlathla.

The story of Francisco Moiane illustrates some of the ways in which young people in the early independence years engaged in wider political processes and conceived of themselves as political beings who could affect change beyond themselves. In the case of Moiane and many others, such change took place within Frelimo's institutions, independently to whether they existed structurally, or their existence was only imagined. Considering themselves part of the Revolutionary party structures shaped how young people chose to relate to other party structures (receiving *orientações* from the local Grupo Dinamizador) and authoritative discourses (taking inspiration from Machel's *palavras de ordem*). Despite this institutional affiliation, Moiane's narrative also illustrated a degree

117 Darch, *Historical Dictionary of Mozambique*, p. 222 (see 'Literacy').

of independence and autonomy that young people exercised in relation to their political activities. In the case of the Comunidade de Zinthlathla, this autonomy soon became the source of friction.

Shortly after its foundation, the Comunidade de Zinthlathla became enmeshed in a struggle over money and control with the city authorities (also Frelimo at this point). But the conflict touched on more profound issues than money. Rather, the parties negotiated what constituted “correct” and “incorrect” forms of Youth activism. Moiane recounted during the interview that in 1978, the municipal government wanted to take over governance of the school and hire the teachers. From the point of view of the Youth movement, paying only those teachers who taught on the primary and secondary subjects, was unjust to all those volunteers who had renovated and reopened the school and who continued teaching literacy classes to adults there. Moiane remembered:

*it was a shock for the Youth, these 70 young people there [who founded the school]. So [we] said “no, pay the 70, those who teach and those who don’t teach, because this is the youth movement that built [the school]”.*

The municipal government refused and the Youths responded that in that case, they would not accept payment for anyone. The conflict escalated to the point that the Comunidade de Zinthlathla was accused of “striking”. “This caused many problems [...] The municipal government said] you saw the politicians there saying ‘you can’t strike [...]’.” In the end, the Comunidade de Zinthlathla had to accept that the municipal government would only pay the primary and secondary school teachers, but they found a way to negotiate internally: “the 70 of us got together and decided, all the money that [we] received will not go to the individuals, it will go to this organisation of the 70 young people.”

By 1978, the Comunidade Zinthlathla had become part of the OJM, but the school stayed independent. The story of the strike illuminates not only the strict confines of what constituted acceptable political behaviour for Youth by Frelimo, but also the scope and limits of the party’s power to enforce such notions. The grey space between enthusiasm-driven voluntary organisation and top-down enforcement of a pre-defined revolutionary political Youthhood, as I argued in this paper, was considerably large and constituted an important space in which young men and women like Francisco Moiane and the Comunidade de Zinthlathla negotiated their own political subjectivities.

## 5. Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that the OJM, like many revolutionary Youth organisations in the Twentieth Century, claimed a “monopoly on political activities” among all those they regarded as belonging to “the Youth”. In the early independence period, the OJM spent considerable effort on building this monopoly, a process which itself shaped the lives of tens of thousands of Mozambicans, particularly those who were considered Youth

at the time. In the years leading up to the organisation's official foundation at its first national conference in November 1977, the OJM was already engaged in at least two types of activities: On the one hand, the organisation's central organ – the Secretariado Nacional da OJM – established hierarchical structures consisting of multiple levels of OJM Secretariats, who were endowed with the powers to "organize and mobilize" the Youth. This entailed in some cases overruling, replacing or shutting down any alternative, pre-existing forms of Youth activism.

On the other hand, I showed here that the Secretariado Nacional also used more subtle means to establish a monopoly on political activities. In addition to relying on the power of the OJM Secretariats, the Secretariado Nacional used language and discourse to re-configure what kinds of activities Youth could and should be engaged in in the first place. By training its representatives in the correct interpretation and reproduction of Frelimo's official discourse on Youth, it found an effective way to disseminate widely and in harmony with its organisational structures what kinds of behaviours, activities, and attitudes constituted legitimate forms of Youth activism and which did not. This is reflected in the many poems, drawings, cultural performances and fundraising activities that young people reportedly engaged in in the name of their support of the Revolution during the years prior the OJM's foundation. It is also reflected in the memories that Mozambicans today have of this period. Language and institutions, for many young Mozambicans became one in the "euphoria of independence", and the lines between instructed and independent political activism were often blurred.