

# Utopia Live: Singing the Mozambican struggle for national liberation<sup>1</sup>

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*This article engages a historical reconstruction of the formation of Makonde revolutionary singing in the process of the Mozambican liberation struggle. The history of 'Utopia live' is here entrusted to wartime genres, marked by heteroglossia and the use of metaphor, and referring to moments when the 'space of experience' and the 'horizon of expectation' of the Struggle were still filled with uncertainty and the sense of possibility. Progressively, however, singing expressions were reorganised around socialism's nodes of meaning. Ideological tropes, elaborated by Frelimo's 'courtly' composers, were appropriated in popular singing. The relations between the 'people' and their leaders were made apparent through the organization of the performance space. The main contention of the article is that unofficiality, heteroglossia, metaphor and poetic license, although they feature in genres that have been marked out as 'popular' in academic discourse, are by no means intrinsically 'popular'. Much on the contrary, they are the first victims of populist modes of political actions, that is, of a politics grounded on a concept of 'people'.*

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a shortcut for Shimakonde-speaking people – although, of course here language and identity complement themselves.