

## Political Power in Mozambique and Women's Activism<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

"I have been touched by taking the path from the sidelines to the state, and on this journey meeting different expressions of power. The power of the powerless and the power of those in power." (Virreira, 1999)

The welfare state, "embodying" in Mozambique a collectivist revolutionary ideology,<sup>2</sup> allowed women to become visible in the public sphere, changing their access to claims for equal rights in comparison with the colonial past.

This equality should be understood more as a formal expression of revolutionary political discourse than as a change in the social relations of power that surround gender relations.

As I shall seek to show in the first part of this chapter, the political strategies in the first 15 years of independence reinforced women's subordinate position in the framework of the political model, while at the same time revealing a "woman with rights." This means that women's access to rights in the context of the welfare state is delimited by norms and discourses that relocate women to roles enclosed in a logic of subordination; in other words, women's rights depend on conforming with the status conferred on them by the "androcrat" (Seidler, 1994). The evidence of discrimination against women in this period is found in the discourse and in the forms of occupation of power and the exercise of politics. The "essentiality" of female nature becomes the basis for legitimating domination, which has translated into multiple constraints on political action by women outside the normative framework that has defined their responsibilities as wives and mothers.

The struggle by women for access to political power in Mozambique in the 1970s and 1980s was configured by an ideology that did not permit mechanisms for individual political affirmation, the penalty for which was exclusion from the national revolutionary process. With the break away from

revolutionary ideology and its replacement by a liberal ideology at the end of the 1980s, the regulatory and neutral character of the state led to the concealment of domination (Stetson and Mazur, 1995: 9). The result of the liberal policies in Mozambique in the field of women's human rights is the strengthening of the concept that stresses the need for women to have an institutional presence, while draining politically the struggle to change gender relations. Besides being insufficient, the legal changes we have witnessed seek to conceal the basic mechanisms of inequality. At the same time, the quantitative increase in the number of women in the civil service and in the political parties has in itself been used as a force for change, without questioning the structures, hierarchies, and value systems that surround and determine the status of women in institutions.

Thus the question of quotas could have the perverse effect of reducing change in gender relations to a female presence in the corridors of power, if we forget that the transformation of forms of domination includes incorporation (in discourse and in political activity) of the systems of differentiation that configure female identity (Pitanguy, 1999).

Since the mid-1980s, the feminist movement has focused some of its attention on the capacity to transform political organizations from within the dominant model. Faced with the growth in the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and their transformation into mere executors of government policy or of international agendas, women's organizations have sought to reflect on the usefulness of women's participation in institutions of power (Astelarra, 1999). The debate has centered on two positions: the first denies that existing institutions have any capacity for transformation, considering that maintaining them as a sphere of power is structurally justified by the "androcracy" that underlies the social model; from this point of view, and to the extent that power sharing "seeks" formal equality, the participation of women is aimed at concealing continuing inequality, and drains the feminist movement of its capacity for self-affirmation.

The second position (which defends women's occupation of political power) highlights the need to occupy spheres of political decision-making, seeking at the same time to influence and change not only the legal framework that supports the inferiority of women, but fundamentally the mechanisms that legitimate and recognize the political sphere as a male preserve, where women are accepted but not included.

The political praxis of women the world over has demonstrated abundantly that most women who reach leadership functions in the political machinery have taken on board the "masculinization" of power. Spin-doctor logic, the manipulation of information, and strategies for persuasion increase the effectiveness of institutions without changing the political modes of thought and action. While important legal victories are achieved, the movement is unable to revive feminist propositions through these women.

It was in this context that at the end of the 1990s the question of political participation by women was studied in order to link institutional presence to forms of action (for example, joint participation with other political movements) that might highlight, draw attention to and recognize the existing diversity and differences. From a theoretical point of view, this debate allows us to advance the production of knowledge, with a greater number of objects and conceptual constructs, without fear of upsetting the legitimacy of the universal framework of reference. As Virginia Guzmán has said:

Feminism faces the challenge of weakening the barriers that hamper the spread of knowledge produced so as to influence cultural and academic output more systematically, without losing its creativity or becoming domesticated at the time of choosing its areas of interest, topics and approaches. (1999: 5)

If modern democracy, with its focus on the need for ideological pluralism, within which conflict exists, is an essential requirement for women's political participation, the modes and the "framework" that make such participation possible hamper the emergence of new ways of exercising power. As I shall try to illustrate through the words of the respondents, the political sphere in its present configuration does not encourage the inclusion of women as subjects. Since conflicts are socially constructed, the recognition of what constitutes conflict depends on the patriarchal model, that is, women's challenge to domination is perceived as a deviation from identity. The woman who does not conform to the ways in which political action is structured and ranked hierarchically is penalized by the members of the organization and by society.

With the introduction of a multi-party system in Mozambique in 1994,<sup>3</sup> women's access to and occupation of new places of power has followed a globalizing democratic logic that tries to obey the rules of dominant international agendas. Thus female empowerment appears basically as a way to legitimate the model of political activity, inasmuch as the ways of structuring places of power remain unchanged and the rules of the political game are consolidated—at least apparently. For example, 27 per cent of the members of parliament in Mozambique currently are women, and 40 per cent of the representatives of the majority party are women, although this number does not reveal, first, any difference in women's participation between the two parliamentary sides, and second, any change in perceptions or in parliamentary activity in relation to approaches, references, and proposals for new political strategies.

However, the continued presence of women in the sphere of power provides potential for redefining the political space. In the Mozambican case, while there is as yet no collective questioning of the criteria for access to

power and of the positions occupied by women, individual speeches by leading women have begun to show a certain disquiet about the inequality in the status of women and displeasure/anxiety at the lack of incorporation of the female system of differentiation in the exercise of power. Thus, as cracks appear in the intimacy of the male political model, strategies appear, albeit fragmented, that question the legitimacy of the sources and modalities of the exercise of this power.

This chapter seeks to analyze, through the roles and functions of women in the leadership of political parties, how access to political power is achieved, the representation of power, and the forms of occupation of the political sphere, translated into differing expectations toward the exercise of power. In order to analyze these three dimensions, I highlight the need to link the following components: the impossibility of isolating women's participation in the political sphere from the socialization mechanisms in the family, which configure female identity around values that exclude them from the current models of political intervention; any analysis of women's political participation must take account of the relationship between the formal definition of women's human rights and the way in which they are socially appropriated and recognized; the occupation of political space by women must take account of particular facets of female behavior, such as greater readiness for collective work and for dialogue. Thus I use the concept of power from the perspective of Foucault of action upon action in a relationship of violence, which, acting against the other, provokes resistance and confrontation and unleashes the struggle against subjection of the subject (Foucault, 1990).

With regard to women's access to power, I consider two central questions: one relates directly to the mechanisms of socialization that hamper women's access to power, in other words, to how the "general conditions" cause the political sphere to be a discouraging one of "outsider" intervention. The other question concerns the influence that family networks might have on women's access to power, both from the point of view that choice may be determined by group interests and that a woman's presence in the field of political power may result from individual motivation separate from the influence of the family network.

I also intend to deal with the way(s) in which political power is represented by women who occupy important positions in political organizations, in other words, how leaders of the parties<sup>4</sup> "exercise" power, mainly in matters they regard as fundamental to their activity. Moreover, I shall seek to identify the mechanisms providing the framework for gender relations within the political parties, ascertaining the functions carried out by men and women, the "political value" attributed to them, and the different fields of intervention. I consider two main hypotheses. The first is that women's access to leadership in political parties is governed by an overall context that,

while recognizing the need to make women visible, at the same time hampers the political participation of women as subject.

The second hypothesis is that, while women's occupation of political space conforms to strategies of male domination (that is, the presence of women in the leadership of political activity not only does not threaten the mechanisms of functioning and structuring political power, but rather reveals the maintenance of subordination through the existing power relationships), at the same time, the disparity in the criteria for access to a political career and to funding, as well as disillusion with the rules of the game, enable women to develop strategies conducive to the production of alternatives to the political model. The period analyzed in this chapter is 1992 to 1999, corresponding to changes in the political system. The units of study were: the two biggest parties in the national political spectrum, FRELIMO and RENAMO and the Front for Patriotic Action (Frente de Acção Patriótica—FAP), one of the parties created after the peace accords, fundamentally urban-based intellectuals.

While the choice of FRELIMO and RENAMO as units of study is due to their being the two largest parties (in terms of visibility and expectations of winning power) and their having been involved in armed conflict, the choice of the Front for Patriotic Action results from less immediate reasons. As a small party, visible only in very restricted circles (apparently without ambitions to win power), whose political discourse questions the functioning of the democratic system in Mozambique, we think that testing the proposed hypotheses in the FAP could provide us with a new and interesting perspective on the problem.

From October 1998 to June 1999, 35 interviews were conducted, 28 with women and seven with men.<sup>5</sup> The interviews were semi-structured and sought to bring out and link, from a gender perspective, the construction of social relations within the family, access to leading places in the parties and how these were occupied. As regards our target group, we interviewed 14 women from FRELIMO, nine from RENAMO and five from FAP, with ages ranging from 25 to 70 years. The mean age of the female respondents was 40.4 years, while the FAP women were the youngest. The educational level of the female respondents ranged from higher education (four), through general secondary schooling (15) to upper primary (nine). The women members of FAP and FRELIMO had the higher levels of education. We interviewed four men from FRELIMO, one from FAP and two from RENAMO, with an average age of 40 years and educational levels ranging from higher education (two) through upper general secondary schooling (three) to lower general secondary schooling (two). Of the men, the RENAMO members had the lowest levels of education.

The women in general were more open, taking more frequently a critical position toward the functioning of the party, particularly with regard to differences in access for women to party resources and the party hierarchy. Their

discourse often contradicted their own statements praising the party, which served to reveal the contradictions between the "politically correct" and practice in the party organizations. The men's discourse was more elaborate and reflected the positive positions of the parties on the inclusion of women, although highlighting the maleness of the political field through metaphor and allegory and the "acceptance and good will" of men in allowing women political visibility.

#### BUILDING UTOPIA: THE FIRST 15 YEARS ...

The changes to the political model introduced in 1994, effected with the holding of the first multi-party elections, created new spheres of public intervention, allowing the production of new forms of access to and occupation of political space. The recent history of the country was marked by a political and ideological orientation that simultaneously defined the breadth and the limits of political activity by citizens, "enclosing" it within a normative framework that governed access to public space in the first 15 years of independence.

The systems of political values were supported by a series of rituals, symbols that are essential to understanding the questions raised today by the introduction of a democratic system, since their function was the integration/exclusion of citizens in the project to build a socialist nation. Revolutionary equality as the legitimating factor in the social order was, as regards women, the basis of the struggle for emancipation (in its various dimensions). Opposition to colonial forms of organization, together with challenges to elements of traditional structures (which were able to manipulate/maintain/reproduce) carried out through a revolutionary and modern political project, brought about violent breaches in the social structure.

The occupation of power was guided by loyalties and solidarity built during the armed struggle, in a context where the participants wanted to replace kin relationships and the "natural" order, on which traditional authority rested, with "revolutionary political ideals."

These conditions apparently opened new opportunities for women to assert themselves: while freedom of rights was guaranteed, from a legal viewpoint, mainly in the Constitution,<sup>6</sup> the political discourse also highlighted the emancipation of women as an essential condition for the sustainability of the new society.

Thus, the public visibility of women appears in a context of liberating the country from colonial domination and imposing a system that aims to configure social practice on the basis of new political objectives. The Mozambican Women's Organization (Organização da Mulher Moçambicana—OMM)<sup>7</sup> emerged as the body that brought together women's aspirations for emancipation. The political discourse of the organization challenged what the new political power regarded as the object of opposition: colonial/

traditional society. This mixing of two forms of social structure in the same political battle created a double ambiguity in the discourse of the women activists in the OMM: on the one hand, the rejection of colonial modernity (including the Churches) and, on the other, the negative depiction of forms of traditional organization, such as bride-price<sup>8</sup> and polygamy.

At the same time, this discourse, which highlights the demand for equality between men and women in access to goods and resources, is based on the paternalism of the ruling party. The literacy campaigns for women, the struggle against violence, the involvement of women in tasks of national reconstruction co-exist, without any apparent contradiction, with the function of "cultural mobilizers" at rallies led by men. Critically examined in a socially progressive discourse, the struggle for women's emancipation is shaped by the language, the categories of analysis, and the priorities that orient the political field. While wishing to break from conservative positions, it does not in fact question the social model that determines the roles and functions of social actors through gender inequality. Seeking legitimacy by means of equality between men and women, those in power in fact conceal the maintenance of a subordinate status for women.

As women could conduct their struggle only within the framework of the party organization, the result was that their expectations for emancipation became affiliated with the system of ideas of a party dominated by men—in the composition of its leadership, in its totalitarian practices and in its exclusion of difference. The women's movement, therefore, was not constituted as a social movement with its own identity, but submitted to a political power that defined its objectives and strategies under pain of exclusion from the national project. This meant that forms of male domination were not called into question and that those in power relegated women to the role of "companion to the committed man" or "she who feeds the combatants."<sup>9</sup> The "androcratic" is thus legitimated.

The possibilities for challenging this model were restricted by the categories used to consider the situation of women: they should have access to public space, they should be able to exercise their rights, but their rights and public access should be guided by the interests that are constructed in the private sphere. This meant that women were given the roles primarily of mother, wife and companion ("comrade") and, on the basis of these, women's right to public respectability was or was not recognized. Women were judged, penalized, or rewarded for party loyalty and for moral behavior. It was not unusual during the 1977 party building campaign that the most frequent accusations against women focused on Judaeo-Christian morality.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, women who did rise to the leadership of party organizations were mostly the wives or other relatives of political leaders, or women (a minority) who in some way or another constituted a political reserve from the national liberation struggle.<sup>11</sup>

The few women who performed leadership functions in the civil service were not outstanding for their struggle for women's rights, often taking extremely conservative positions on matters such as abortion, divorce, and common-law marriage. The inclusion of women in the political field was thus done through the reproduction of the patriarchal model and the maintenance of a social order that keeps politics a male domain. Gender relations, understood as relations of power, were thus built around a discourse on equality that made women's visibility rely on strategies of male domination.

However, political activity was not without its contradictions and ambiguities, visible mainly in the OMM, where party control, through former women militants, began to be challenged and led recently to an attempt to break away from the FRELIMO party.<sup>12</sup>

#### GLOBALIZATION QUOTAS AND THE LOCAL CONTEXTS OF WOMEN'S ACCESS TO POLITICAL POWER

With the changes to the system introduced in 1992, new political parties were created, allowing new problems to arise, as well as new questions and new and differing ways of finding solutions for political participation by women.

However, a study conducted in 1994 on women's participation in politics showed that the gender perspective in the composition of party leadership was expressed through "politically correct" discourse while maintaining a paternalist perspective among the party leadership regarding the role of women.<sup>13</sup>

In the context of the decentralization of state administration, the first municipal elections were held in 1998. By providing citizens with the opportunity to participate in the resolution of concrete problems in the municipality, local power allows questioning of the functioning of politics as an "ideological abstract" and a political competition, creating possibilities for direct involvement by the people.

While research into women's political behavior and their intervention in local power shows that access to decision-making positions is still oriented by kinship networks, it uncovers how the way these positions of power are occupied and raises the quality of female intervention (Osório *et al.*, 1999).

If the special characteristics of municipal politics can open the route to new forms of exercising power—in the broadest sense of exercising citizenship—and therefore promote women's political participation, the occupation of positions that are organized, structured and ranked according to the male model of power (as is the case with the political parties) gives rise to various constraints, both in terms of access to power and in the forms of expressing this power.

Analysis of political party programs shows that all of them mention the importance of women's access to power, although only the FRELIMO party

established a quota system. At the same time, while women's participation appears as a democratic imperative in the party principles, they are almost always relegated to female positions, that is to say, women are expected to bring their recognized skills in private life to the public domain. Women remain some sort of guarantee of family order and well-being, as much in official discourse as in incentives to political participation.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of the political parties studied, women's access to power is essentially through either kinship/party networks or through kinship/ethnic networks, that is to say, women's entry into politics is almost always related to their family background, from which they derive recognition and worth. The "androcratic" model not only intervenes in women's access to places where they are strangers, it also orients and determines how women perceive and behave in politics. As I shall show in detail below, the majority of the women constituting the universe for this study,<sup>15</sup> regardless of their party, or ethnic or other characteristics, achieve power via men, whether this achievement is mediated by ethnic, religious, or social factors.<sup>16</sup> "My family is renowned in the party [...] my father was a fighter [...] I was called [...] they needed me [...]" a party leader told us.<sup>17</sup> Identification with a party is almost always through a male figure, and the party itself represents a paternal figure, obedience and loyalty. The exploitation/transfer of family mechanisms of socialization to the party, as an abstract entity, reflects women's need for social recognition to participate in a strongly male domain (where violence in power relations appears as a male virtue).

It is interesting to note that access to power by women who were soldiers in the national armed liberation struggle or the recent civil war also happens in a logic that puts the importance of acts of bravery or sacrifice in second place and highlights in some way or another belonging to the group. This means that affirmation attained at times of instability (war) is not translated into real occupation of power.

In general, the post-war place reserved for these women (and with the reorganization of political and military power) is either in the women's organizations or in subordinate positions in the parties. The "disorder" of war is followed by the ordered and "natural" sharing out of places and functions. Unlike the (younger) men with similar status, the age of women in the political leadership is between 35 and 40 years, and they are widows, divorcees, or single. A relatively important number of the women interviewed have intermediate schooling and have shown proof of party loyalty.

There is a clear tendency to use differing criteria in the recruitment of men and women, expressed for example in the greater circulation and distribution of power among men, with "new faces" frequently appearing to occupy important positions in the party hierarchies.<sup>18</sup> The rigidity of party machines, despite renewal of the power arena, is related to the impermeability (impossibility?) of institutions to change or to the incorporation of new

ways of doing politics; in other words, continuity of and resistance to change, as a condition for survival, reveals the ambiguity/conflict of a discourse on equity and equality in relation to the way organizations express them (Gaspard, 1995).

At the same time, the greater presence of women in the field of political power has caused some discomfort, which is reflected in the use of arguments related to respect for party cohesion<sup>19</sup> and in attempts to limit participation or involvement by women party leaders whenever the issue is to advance with proposed legislation in favor of women's rights. As I shall seek to analyze, if the disquiet produced by the political presence of women has not yet been translated into change in the model for exercising power, there are signs of conflict with the model of participation—both at the level of discourse and in strategies—visible, for example, in the circulation of information and in harmonizing positions among women leaders, beyond party interests.

The explanation for the need for women to participate in politics, regardless of their political affiliation, varies between recognition that others make use of their capacity and need their presence (which leads the women to accept, or rather, obey the decision), response to individual or collective injustice and the fact that they are subject to electoral scrutiny. As one woman leader in the FRELIMO party told us: "before we used to be appointed [...] there were no elections. [...] Also, women were there almost always just to applaud [...], fill out the numbers. [...] Now they must listen, we argue."<sup>20</sup>

Since the political field is thoroughly foreign to the forms of socialization and construction of the female identity, the individual will of a woman to participate in decision-making processes is regarded as social deviation. Thus the few women who struggle for power are seen in the public mind as "men" or as "bad women." This negative representation is confirmed when only women fight for the same position. As several respondents from different political parties told us, "power struggles among women are considered the result of jealousy that always exists between women, of the hatred they have for other women [...] and because they always prefer a man in charge [...]"<sup>21</sup> The main constraints on women's access to political power thus lie in the conflict between the different processes of socialization and between these and the model of political organization that, by restricting women's participation in politics, causes conflict between their desires and expectations and the responses that politics offers them.

#### THE REPRESENTATION OF POWER: THE COLLECTIVE MIND AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DIFFERENCE<sup>22</sup>

The perceptions that men and women have of power should be analyzed in accordance with the social experience of each group, which may or may not

be in line with the dominant system of values. At the same time, since the representations are components of the cohesion of one group as opposed to another and thus express the system of differentiation, they are also open to instability and change. This means that conflict between representations within the same group and sphere or between different groups and spheres illustrate not only strategies for adaptation to particular historical contexts, but also collective forms of response to domination; otherwise, they constitute a means of maintaining domination.

With regard to the representation of power by women in Mozambique who play leadership roles, the discourse of the great majority (regardless of their form of access or political motivation) resorts to the normative foundations that guided their socialization. Two variables are present in this discourse: one linked to the social construction of inequality—"men are born with power"—and the other that arises from political activity and appears as the product of the exercise of power by women.

The "characteristics" inscribed in the "habitus" of women and men that lead them to appropriate the objectives of political activity differently results in the exclusion of women from power, be it in the private sphere (although the function of maintaining the family is guaranteed mainly by women) or the public, where the characteristics of a "habitus" are reproduced that are not recognized as central to the order of things, or rather, whose social recognition derives precisely from its submission to the "androcratic" model. This means that women either harmonize the private with the public in a logic of submission produced within the family, or break away from it, adopting mechanisms of political activity that confer on them apparent equality. Various FRELIMO and RENAMO women leaders said: "Women have to win power. [...] Men not. [...] We have to demonstrate hard work [...], we can't fall asleep. [...] When we make mistakes everyone points the finger because we are women."<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, the male leaders of the different parties interviewed (with differences only in detail) agreed on the "value" of political work by women, without, however, calling into question the functional mechanisms of party organization or the traditional roles of women. As one party leader told us:

She is a boss and I respect her. I also respect her at home, but she is a mother and wife and I am the head of the family. There are two different spouses. [...] Women are always fighting amongst themselves [...]. They [women] must never forget that behind every woman there is always a man [...].<sup>24</sup>

Political practice has allowed these differences/conflicts among various perceptions of power and its use to be uncovered, and at the same time it permits the production of innovative elements in the representation of power by women.

Power is doing things to help other people. It is collective work. It is asking opinions then acting. It is authority and it is action. It is access to knowledge. It is to have awareness. [...] We work on the basis of passivity. We don't like aggressiveness [...]. We don't want to exclude men. We want them to accept the difference. [...] We have our own way of behaving in power. We can't forget that we are mothers [...]. I like being a mother.<sup>25</sup>

While the majority of the women view power as a mission, as serving others, some women in the opposition parties have more conflicting images of their political participation: "I want to make my voice heard [...]. A child that doesn't cry doesn't suckle. [...] Power for me is not being afraid of going for re-education," some women leaders in RENAMO said.<sup>26</sup> All of the women regard the democratic system as an opportunity for affirmation: "now the electors want you and it's because something clicks in you and the person is more calm, more comfortable," women leaders of FRELIMO, RENAMO, and FAP told us.<sup>27</sup>

The differences in the perception of power are also shown in the way both sexes describe their political activities. While the objectives of exercising political power are almost always linked to the objectives of the organization for women and for men, the women leaders highlight—although often in fragmented statements—concrete activities of mobilization of people to participate in social development programs, with education at the top of their list of political concerns. Statements by men, often more detailed, show the focus of the male leaders on the plans of their party as the guardian of the "just idea" that serves to legitimate the vision of centralized and absolute power.

Moreover, women and men perceive the characteristics of political activity differently, although there is no great difference among the parties. The women say that the men are egocentric and when they appear it is because they want to take advantage of something. They also claim that the women are more honest and that it is men who are involved in corruption. They accuse them of being convinced that they are able to do everything, and that by the fact of being the head at home, they think they have the right always to be in charge. They round off, saying that for the men to be the head is a right.<sup>28</sup> The men say that power is linked to the general objectives and that it is the exercise of authority. They agree that women should participate, but claim they are very emotional and that they then have other priorities, such as the home and their children.<sup>29</sup>

The differing representations are thus the result of conflicts that pose women against the dominant cultural model, conflicts that simultaneously contain proposals for cultural innovation and awareness of a social relationship of domination.

### ALTERNATIVES IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY OR HEGEMONIC CONSOLIDATION OF THE POLITICAL MODEL?

The risks of reductionism in explaining the ways women occupy the political field prompt extra care in dealing with the problem. Among women of such different groups, ethnic origin, religions and ideology, how can one identify the norms that can lead to the global without losing sight of the individual? Is it possible to find common threads among the multiplicity of female views on politics experienced and politics appropriated? In the last analysis, will there be a link between the multiple inequalities and the differences that allow us to talk in specific ways to women about the occupation of political space?

Some of my respondents from the three parties noted that women like to listen, to think a lot and that they do not like war, pointing to the need to adapt what they think to what others want.<sup>30</sup> These words on the purpose of primary socialization show, on the one hand, how inequality in gender relations is a permanent feature in the social relations between men and women, and, on the other, that this inequality underlying the social model is one of the foundations of conservation and reproduction.

Elements such as competition, hierarchies, and "violence as a male virtue," essential to the functioning of the model of political activity, are absent from female discourse on power (Colflesh, 2000: 7).

The production of an innovative discourse (in the realms of power) of inclusion, emotionally and profoundly communicative, reflects the need to transpose the roles learned within the family to politics. In this regard, a female FRELIMO leader told us: "what I really like is to talk with people [...], to resolve concrete problems [...]."<sup>31</sup>

The systems of normative values of family relations that continue to buttress political activity by women are in conflict with the mechanisms for the functioning of the political model. In the light of this conflict, the occupation of the political sphere is done in different ways. First, there is a group of women who adapt or try to adapt to the rules, to the hierarchies and to the party structure, accepting male superiority and inferior positions. They say: "what is to be done [...] power is to have strength [...] and who has strength is the man [...]."<sup>32</sup>

For these women party leaders (many coming from the OMM), gender inequality in the distribution of resources is not perceived as such or it is taken as natural. Their political priorities highlight the grand objectives of the father-party, from a perspective of accepting inferiority. They are conservative and when confronted with possible alternatives for politics, namely with regard to the exercise of rights, these women shelter behind the protection of wisdom and of male action.

Adoption of the rules of the political game characterizes a second group of women leaders. Also characteristic is their profoundly male discourse that

is at the same time professional and contentious. This group regards competence for the exercise of power as the main criterion, while gender relations and discrimination against women are problems they think are solved, inasmuch as the law guarantees or may come to guarantee human rights. Women's rights are regarded as part of a general framework that is neutral and regulates behavior. The inequality and difference between men and women are understood only from the formal point of view. They do not, within the parties, question the construction and social reproduction of inequality, remaining aloof from the struggle of the women's movement. A statement from one of these women leaders is illustrative: "when I go to the Women's Forum they say 'you women MPs do nothing for women,' but that's not true, because in the party we have to be united in one voice, otherwise there is a complete collapse at the base level."<sup>33</sup>

Competence is a fetish for these women. It makes them adapt to the full the rules imposed by male domination (Muraro, 1999). Regarded and described as cerebral, cold and aggressive by their peers, these "adopted" women borrow male traits that function simultaneously as factors for inclusion (in the party organizations) and for exclusion (from the female condition). They do not subvert the institutional order, but, as with the first group, they are a guarantee of the reproduction of the mechanisms of domination, and at the same time they remain on the sidelines of the social reproduction process. Rewarded and punished for the appropriation of a sphere that is socially recognized as being exclusively one of male values and practices, these women make an "offering" of their female condition, adjusting it to party needs (Bourdieu, 1998).

In power relations, these women in the end always have positions of inferiority, either because their "characteristics" were bought off against the "habitus," leading them to violent splits (personal and social), or because they are subject to continuous and systematic control from the "adoption." On the other hand, it is not by chance that the "adopted" women, much more than their male colleagues, develop attitudes of empathy with the organization and with its hierarchy, eliminating points of divergence and conflict.

Joining a party or a political project should be understood (for this type of leadership) as "consenting" orthodoxy (Ansart, 1977), in which the effectiveness of politics is greater inasmuch as they are the focal point for the interests of everyone as a whole and remain above the intra-party struggle, in absolute conformity with the power imposed/consented. In this way of thinking, the democratic system does not represent for these women a necessary imperative for female participation.

A third form of exercising power corresponds to subversion of power from within. By this I mean that, while we are not dealing with a proposal to break away from the current political model, the strategies for occupying

political space developed (by another group of women) contain elements of resistance to the functional mechanisms of political organizations (Hackney and Hogard, 1999). In terms of political or personal biography, this position does not apply to only one of the categories identified above. These are the former freedom fighters, members of women's organizations or career politicians. What do these women have in common?

Many of our respondents<sup>34</sup> made such statements as: "we must work together. [...] We are women [...], we suffer [...] I want to be master in my own home. [...] I want to be happy. [...] I see no contradiction with RENAMO women [...]."

The women in this group represent themselves above all as women, in other words with many and varied objects of attention, with the multiple capacity to be and to live in different places and projects (Facio, 1999). Demanding the right to harmonize the private with the public, breaking away from the rigidity and classification of roles and structures, they build and rebuild the path between the family and the party; donning the mantle of difference, they bring emotion and dialogue to politics. These women invent a pioneering discourse full of allegory and utopia, rejecting male patterns and their categories of analysis. They subvert the instruments of domination by circulating information and knowledge, encouraging participation and integration and rejecting the creation of hierarchies in the family and the party. The leadership of these women gives priority to the sense of mission, responsibility toward others, honesty, the humanization of power, and ethical behavior.

Faced with strategies of domination entrenched in the maintenance of political power, these women adopt a line of action that seeks to question the fundamental mechanisms of the political model through the exercise of citizenship. They do not identify themselves as victims, but seek out space for affirmation that turns them into political subjects. "I like football [...] and it has happened that I have led football delegations, but people abroad did not even shake my hand. They thought I was a masseuse or the wife of a leader [...]."<sup>35</sup>

The cohesion expressed by strong words (honesty, participation, mission) and by the symbolic paraphernalia is often ambiguous and contradictory. "I'm tired [...] I want to stay at home [...]. Women are their own worst enemy [...]. I work for women but it seems they don't understand," are statements illustrative of an emancipating and unified discourse.<sup>36</sup>

While there is no individual or collective awareness in this group of a proposed alternative to the dominant political model (translated into an ideological system recognized by its producers and by its recipients), the praxis and the discourse (although fragmented) represent, on the one hand, the incapacity of the current organizations to adapt/adopt new experiences and new conflicts, and on the other, they show the existence of tension, not only

produced and reproduced within the parties (and which are in the end the reason for their effectiveness), but which are innovative in relation to the structure, hierarchy and functional mechanisms of the political parties. These tensions, touching the nature of the dominant political model, in fact constitute a new path for political action. It is not by chance that "honesty," "dialogue," and "participation in the selection of political options" are words used not just as elements of a new political identity, but also as opposition to what they think identifies maleness. Thus the great majority of our women respondents, even those belonging to the "adapted" group, make such statements as: "women don't drink [...], they are more honest [...]. When they say they will do something, it's because they will do it [...]. Women are more serious [...]. Women think of others, they are less egocentric [...]."<sup>37</sup>

In the power relations established in the intra-party context, these women are constrained in political activity by less access to resources, by the occupation of positions classified as female and by invisibility in the political sphere. Some women<sup>38</sup> said that, if there are cars, they go first to the men, that when they want to work in the districts they have no means to do it, that women always work a lot, but they are never paid attention, and that they could "give" more, but they are not allowed to. When they participate in activities of civil society for the defense of women's rights, their positions are rarely recognized or supported by their organization. Democratic pluralism allows the development of mechanisms for the acceptance of political activity by women, which leads these women to seek political unity within and between parties, even without a formal harmonization of interests.

The recognition of the difference demanded by these women is in fact a struggle against the culture of equality, whose main objective is to sap the feminist struggle, subjecting it to a legalistic conception of rights. Male ideological control within party organizations is expressed in the relations of power, through mechanisms that are at once instruments of exclusion and of ideological vigilance. This control can range from systematically calling meetings at night to surveillance of women's sexual behavior. Persuasion is an important means of domination, often reflected in appeals for "solidarity among comrades" and belonging to a "select group," creating unifying elements for the group from opposition to the "enemy." This categorization, which is effective for men and for women (in the sense that it eliminates internal contention), is of great symbolic violence whenever dealing with women (Ansart, 1977). What is at stake here is not just eliminating opposition or gaining more power, but the survival of the model of party organization. The question (although it may not be clearly understood) is not to win voters or defeat an internal adversary; what is at stake is the emergence of a new way of "being" and "doing" politics. The diffusive strategies of persuasion thus find a type of resistance not controllable by the system.



The exercise of democracy, in the context of globally legitimated systems, fails to “satisfy” the demands of new groups, as is the case with women, in which the need for more multiple and lateral activity in the different places of political production leads to the “invention” of political activity that integrates more political/social intervention. Insofar as the parties maintain existing integrating elements with the intention of strengthening them, at the symbolic and practical levels, they become successive challenges that allow the emergence of identifying elements that configure new means of belonging (Ansart, 1977). We are thus faced with a double movement of conservation/adaptation of the old institutional order (with a symbolic and normative universe of domination) and of infringement/re-creation of ways of thinking and living for politicians.

These “non-hegemonic” contexts lead to reflection not only about how a modern democratic system might be structured, but also about the compartmentalization that pluralist democracy causes in the different spaces and forms of exercising democracy. In other words, what the women who are in “formal” power are demanding is not egalitarian participation in political decision-making, but the inclusion of (multiple) difference in the way politics is organized and practiced. The need to have the private and the public interact in the exercise of female political power is present in many of the words of our respondents:

Society does not accept seeing a woman with power. [...] They say the woman leaves her family disorganized [...], they say the husband should not allow her to remain out of the house [...]. The family, often for fear of the neighbors, does not support the woman. [...] She sometimes then has to leave politics [...].<sup>39</sup>

This discourse illustrates the need to think political power through the family, the place *par excellence* to build power relations based on the discrimination against women (Melkiori, 1997). The mechanisms for building identities that reveal how the family hierarchy is built and how the distribution of power is linked are central elements for analyzing how the private became female and how the public became male.

Considering the context of interaction between the modern and the traditional in Mozambique, with traditional family organization ceding only formally to the urban nuclear family—characteristic of the majority of the respondents—it is useful for the compression of the dialogue between the private and the public spheres to bear in mind some of the mechanisms for socializing boys and girls that give them different and unequal access to and control of resources. Girls are clearly socialized for domestic life and develop capacities in the family that will legitimate them as women in adulthood.

A consequence of the learning expressed in the division of labor and the distribution of authority in the family is the configuration of roles and functions that define a woman’s fate. Her skills prepare her for acceptance/conformity to submission. Being a housewife, mother, and wife constitute the completion of a mission for a woman, the essence of the female nature. This female vocation to care for the other is expressed, from the point of view of value systems, by a symbolic universe whose effectiveness extends beyond family relationships<sup>40</sup> and from the point of view of norms, by concrete impediments to sharing authority.<sup>41</sup> The constraints on access to resources, be they economic, legal, or political, are supported by the sex-gender system, which guarantees the reproduction of inequality in the various social spaces.<sup>42</sup>

These elements are present in the identity of the three groups of female leadership. “Adopted,” “adapted,” or “different,” the women party leaders reveal conformity (which may or may not be accepted either by the “adapted” or by the “adopted”) with primary socialization and on social categorization. If in the two extreme cases of classification of the female leadership, agreement between the party and the family is resolved through appropriation (“adopted”) and by rejection/concealment of the political model (“adapted”), in the third case (“different”) the mechanisms of subordination, although expressed differently, are clearly perceived in the intra-party relations of power. A negative and demeaning representation of female political activity is not the only factor present, as these women clearly understand. The female politician seeks to reconstruct the public space for intervention on a basis of equality in difference, by transferring the acquiescent roles learned in the family to the political field, not repudiating socialization for “the other,” and at the same time developing strategies for adapting the family model.

My husband is not into politics [...], so I try to discuss with him [...], I try to integrate him into the life of the party [...], I ask his opinion. [...] The woman has responsibilities in the party, but not at home [...]. At home I mustn’t forget that I’m a mother [...]. I don’t like anyone else tidying my husband’s clothes. I must do it. [...] Before I had a domestic worker, I used to cook all night because next day I had work.<sup>43</sup>

Unable to face the conflict with domestic inferiority, women seek to expand their sphere of intervention in party organizations, incorporating their difference in the ways of exercising power.

On the one hand, questioning the essentialism that roots gender relations in biology, and, on the other, rejecting the essentialist accusations of the post-modernists, the feminist theorists of difference reaffirm gender as “the collection of values and characteristics that determine masculinity and femininity and in each culture and at in each historical moment” (Facio, 1999). It

is this integrating, multiple and innovative practice of some women leaders in Mozambique that, if continued, may produce liberating effects on the political model.<sup>44</sup>

#### CONCLUSIONS: DOUBTS

The introduction of a multi-party system in Mozambique after a period of socialist orientation took place in a context of strong domination by a democratic model. In a country without a democratic tradition (at least that recognized in modern Western practice), having emerged from colonialism and a civil war that destroyed people and institutions, the state had the responsibility of organizing and defining the rules of the new political game, structured around the two sides in the armed conflict.

With the end of the war and an increase in economic dependence, the formalization of democracy exposed the extreme fragility of the political field on the one hand, divided as it was between two forces without any political program, and, on the other hand, revealed the incapacity of the social forces to take action or innovate (Touraine, 1994). The fragility of civil society (in the broadest sense), economic dependence, and social instability have led to an emptiness in political debate, with political discussion focused on petty economic solutions. At the same time, the political party parties, ever more enveloped in a logic of power, are becoming incapable of sparking any democratic activity. For its part, the state, which established the model of political organization with regard to norms, hierarchies, and values, has been unable to recreate mechanisms that allow social inclusion of citizens.

With regard to the struggle of women for their rights, the political parties either ignore it or turn it into capital in their relations with international agencies or urban elites (in election periods). Thus the political participation of women is apparently taking place in a weak context from the point of view of democratic culture. Women's access to power is still hampered by primary socialization that discriminates against them in relation to resources, such as schooling, health care and employment, which keeps them in a situation where new mechanisms of inequality are produced. An example of this is the strong appearance of women in the informal markets, which, by causing a split from the identifying "core," makes old conflicts become visible and at the same time causes new conflicts to appear. But it is these splits that contain the potential for liberating factors to appear: conflicts in the private domain become worse in so far as the hierarchies and positions established there are interrupted by the logic of the market, of a labor market that makes insistent appeals to capacities to convince, to deceive, and to struggle for survival. It is this struggle for economic survival that tends to unleash a series of acts of resistance and defiance that result immediately in attracting violence (mainly domestic violence) and at the same time create conditions for collective action by women.<sup>45</sup>

The weakness of political debate in the parties, their internal stratification in non-democratic patterns and particularly the absence of a political/ideological identity have two apparently contradictory results. If on the one hand the conception of the political field as a totalitarian one (in which networks of loyalty/commitment determine the circulation of power) produces a kind of ossification in party life and its detachment from social expectations (and a consequent decline in its capacity to mobilize), at the same time groups emerge within the parties (without a system of thought expressed in common practices) whose ideas have force enough to mobilize to a point where pressure for reform is produced. Although the political praxis of many women leaders is not founded on a conscious strategy for emancipation, the political weakness of party organizations permits the configuration within the party of space where women can begin to produce ideas on self-recognition.

Throughout this study, mainly as the data were being collated, it was possible to identify three forms in which political space is occupied that correspond to the differing methods of appropriation, adaptation to and resistance to the dominant political model. The analysis did not permit conclusions about possible groupings by age, life history, social origin, educational level, or political ideology. It became clear that regardless of the political profile, or participation in war (of liberation and civil), the women include themselves in one of the three categories identified: "adopted," "adapted," and "different."

However, these different ways of thinking about and experiencing politics do not serve to make a firm classification of the occupation of political space. As I shall seek to demonstrate, the classification is the result of an attempt to find (on the basis of making the Foucault concept of power operational) common trends toward the model of political organization. Thus women with higher or intermediate education may be found both in the group that adopt the male model of the exercise of power and in the group that tries to subvert and contest the very same model. In the same way, the political parties and the possible differences in their constitution and activities do not determine the position of women toward the male patterns of exercising power.<sup>46</sup> I think that from the research carried out, one should basically seek the mechanisms that differentiate women's political behavior in the interaction between social exclusion/inclusion and politics happening both in the restricted sphere of the party organizations and within the family, or even in other circles, such as women's organizations or the trade unions.

In the case of Mozambique, it is interesting to note that, returning to an earlier idea, while the situation of democratic institutions opens them to diversity, the specific characteristics of the country allow new prospects to open, not for women's rights, but notably in the possible appearance of alternatives for democratic practices brought about by women.

This work shows that, in the specific case of Mozambique, the ambiguity between the democratic system (hardly consistent or regulated) and the

instability of political and social life, create potential for the establishment of space for freedom and innovation. Only in this way can it be understood that under a pure and clearly androcratic model (often to the point of absurdity, if we consider the historical times), there is a group of women leaders who, by resisting male domination in the political parties and through their own actions, seek recognition of their difference and the establishment of new values. While preserving their emotional selves, these women inscribe their actions on the collective mind, seeking to sustain the difference and increase inclusion (Facio, 1999).

However, the possibility for an alternative and its formalization as the re-creation of democratic life depend on numerous factors, not least of which is the capacity of the system to include diversity, a diversity that does not become opposition, but rather a combination of private life with public life, of professional success, of relations of affection, of family ties, and also seek to ensure that men find other ways of combining the different aspects of their existence (Touraine, 1994: 156).

#### Notes

- 1 Information was collected during a research seminar on Women and Political Power in Mozambique. I should like to thank Katia Taela, Ernesto Macuácuá, Norinho Ernesto, Mário Jorge, Sónia Cintura, Ana Paula Jambosse, Guilherme Mussane, Samito Nuvunga, João Carlos, Quitério Langa, Godwin Mata, Manuel Pacacheque, and the students who demonstrated persistence in gathering the data; I share this work with them. I am grateful for the critical support and solidarity of my friends Maria José Arthur and Luís de Brito. Many thanks go to Carlos Serra for his comments. My profound appreciation goes to the women and men who went beyond reluctance and diffidence to open their hearts to us.
- 2 At independence in 1975, the country came to be governed by a people's democratic political system, modeled on that of Eastern European socialist countries.
- 3 The Republic's Constitution, revised in 1990, provides for the creation of a multi-party system. The Rome Accords were signed in 1992, ending the civil war, and the first parties emerged in the new political climate. Legislative elections were held in 1994.
- 4 In this work I use the concepts of party, institution, and organization in a broad sense: they all possess a structure, hierarchy, norms, and strategies for political activity.
- 5 The interviews were coded according to sex and political party. The names of women in FRELIMO have the letter "m" in front; RENAMO women the letter "b" and FAP women the letter "c." The names of men in FRELIMO have the letter "r" in front, RENAMO men the letter "s" and FAP men the letter "t."
- 6 However, it should be remembered that the country's first Constitution discriminated against women in that a Mozambican woman who married a foreigner lost her citizenship.
- 7 The Mozambican Women's Organization was created in 1973.
- 8 Bride-price is a means of formalizing ties between two families through marriage. It transfers the subordination of the woman from her own family to that of her husband (who is the mediator of domination), expressing and socially legitimating gender inequality.
- 9 Anthem of Mozambican women.
- 10 Sexual "liberalism" was the accusation, mainly against women, often used in the process to build the FRELIMO party, and was a way of keeping "spirited" women out of politics.
- 11 In the latter case, these women were appointed according to their loyalty to the leader and in order to neutralize internal arguments.
- 12 In 1994, the OMM decided to split from the FRELIMO party, but joined it again two years later.
- 13 For further information see Brito and Weimer, 1994.
- 14 It was not unusual in the last elections to hear party leaders extol the beauty of Mozambican women and their spirit of sacrifice, regarding them as praiseworthy attributes in politics.
- 15 Although I specifically mention Mozambique, we found in many studies conducted in Africa (see for example MacFadden, 1995) and Latin America (Astelarra, 1992) that the model of public political activity discriminates against women, both in the way it is organized and in the basic norms around which it is structured.
- 16 Given that the concept of class has not been studied in the light of the new circumstances and theoretical frameworks, I prefer to use social group: even though it is much more ambiguous, it is more workable. As we shall see below, access to power is effected within a logic that is foreign to female skills, but the occupation of power by women, while allowing the emergence of compromise, will also permit the model of domination to be challenged.
- 17 Interview with Maria Bernardo.
- 18 It may be noted, for example, that contrary to what happens with male "promotion" in the political parties, the inclusion of women in the leadership is subject to a logic of containing one or other dominant force. For example, in the case of men, their classification into groups that represent forces in conflict is clear, but women "promoted" do not support ideological or other opposition.
- 19 Speeches in parliament by women in favor of women's rights are always governed by a party logic.
- 20 Interview with Maria Gomes.
- 21 Such statements were made by Marta Alberto, Mónica Francisco, Maura Cortês of FRELIMO; Belmira Raúl and Benedita António of RENAMO; Rui Moita and Raúl Francisco of FRELIMO; and Samuel David of RENAMO.

- 22 The concept of social representation as it is used here assumes a collection of images, stereotypes, and values that characterize the way in which groups or quasi groups see themselves as opposed to the other group. Thus I include in this analytical category both the values of belonging to a given group and the different ways of illustrating power.
- 23 Maria Gomes, Maria Leonardo, Benvinda Leão, Bela Cassimo, and Belarmina Alves made statements along these lines.
- 24 Interview with Sérgio Santos.
- 25 This view of power is reflected in interviews with Maria André, Marta Silva, Margarida Tavares Maria Costa, Maria Campos, Bela Cassimo, Bernardete Cossa, and Belarmina Alves.
- 26 Statements of this sort are found in the interviews with Benvinda Leão and Brigida Sousa.
- 27 Statements from Maria Gomes, Bernardete Cossa, Carmo Chaves, and Conceição Issufo.
- 28 Statements along these lines were made by the respondents Margarida Tavares, Maria Leonardo, Benvinda Leão, and Bernadete Cossa.
- 29 Statements on these lines were made by the respondents Rui Moita, Raul Francisco Romulo Bento, Rui Pelembe, Sergio Santos, Samuel David.
- 30 Statements of this type were made by Marta Silva, Margarida Tavares, Bela Cassimi, Belarmina Alves, Carmo Chaves, and Conceição Issufo.
- 31 Interview with Margarida Tavares.
- 32 Statements of this sort were made by the respondents Marta Alberto, Monica Francisco, Maura Cortes, Belarmina Alves and Benvinda Carimo.
- 33 Interview with Monica Francisco.
- 34 Interviews with Maria Gomes, Margarida Tavares, Maria Costa, Marcela Candido, and Maria Leonardo.
- 35 Interview with Manuela Orta.
- 36 Interview with Maria Costa.
- 37 Statements of this type appear in the interviews with Maria Gomes, Margarida Tavares, Maria Leonardo, and Benvinda Leão.
- 38 Statements of this type appear in the interviews with Maria Campos, Mercedes Temba, Maria Leonardo, Benvinda Leão, Belarmina Alves.
- 39 Statements of this type were made by Manuela Orta, Marta Silva, Maria Leonardo, Benvinda Carimo, Bernarda Ahgee.
- 40 The husband's bath must be ritually prepared by the wife, as well as the husband's food (who must always be served first).
- 41 One of the most contentious issues in the debate around the passage of the family law is the article that mentions the possibility that a woman may also be the head of the household. Groups supported by the Churches and by the traditional authorities have conducted a real witch-hunt, dubbing the proponents "ill-loved foreign women, trouser-clad women." The political parties, including FRELIMO, with its history of "emancipatory" speech-making, have

- not taken a position, arguing that "We are listening to the people."
- 42 The adoption of the concept of the sex-gender system toward the end of the 1980s aimed at highlighting women's control over their bodies and their sexuality as a basis of inequality. This perspective arose in opposition to the progressive sapping of the concept of gender and to the advance of conservative forces, who tried to reduce the struggle of the feminist movement to the public arena.
- 43 Maria Bernardo, Marta Alberto, Monica Francisco, Maria Campos, and Benvinda Carimo made statements of this type.
- 44 This topic is developed by Alda Facio in relation to women's political practice in some countries of Latin America.
- 45 Action by women neighbors is becoming more frequent in Maputo, where they prevent women being thrown out of their homes by their husbands; also, in the informal markets, women band together to fight against inspectors or being moved to other selling places.
- 46 The analysis I make tends toward what the feminist movement "of difference" has argued: rejecting the "essentialism" in the construction of identity, both male and female, does not deny the approach that seeks the underlying reasons for sexual discrimination in the construction and normative elements of the social model (including those that govern reproduction and sexuality). The aim of the essentialist accusation against feminist claims is often to negate the special characteristics of the women's liberation movement that make it a sphere of social emancipation, regardless of the nature of its location or linkages.

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