

Tufo Dancing: Muslim Women's Culture in Northern Mozambique*

Estrela Vermelha, Ilha de Moçambique

It is afternoon in one of the densely populated *bairros* in Mozambique Island. A group of women gather on the veranda of a small red house in one of the sandy streets, not far from the sea. It is early April, the air is still warm, but not unbearably hot. There seems to be no fixed time for the meeting; some women pass by, others come and go, some settle down in the shade of the veranda. One woman is braiding another's hair. After a while, some 10 to 12 women have assembled. They move inside, and rehearsals can begin. Inside there is one big room with benches along two walls and no other furniture. The women sit down on the floor learning the words and the music of a new song for their performance on April 7th for the celebration of the Mozambican Women's Day. This time the words of the song have been written by the group's «poet», who is one of the group's four male drum beaters. The words are written in a cheap exercise book, the kind children use in school. The characters are Arabic but the language is Emakhuwa. Some of the women have never gone to school, but most have attended the Islamic *madrassa* (the Quran school) and thus they are more familiar with Arabic than with Latin letters. They rehearse the words along with the music, one verse after the other. Later they rehearse the choreography for the dancing. When I ask who invents the music and creates the dancing, the women say they do it themselves, collectively. Sometimes it is also one of the women who writes the words of the song.

The women are members of the group *Estrela Vermelha* of Ilha de Mozambique. *Estrela Vermelha* - Red Star - is one of the most famous women's dance groups of northern Mozambique. Their favourite dance is Tufo. Tufo used to be a religious dance, praising the prophet Muhammad in music and words. It used to be danced by men as well as by women - always, however, in separate groups, never together. Nowadays men only dance the Tufo at special festive occasions linked to religious celebrations.

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For the women, Tufo has changed a lot in both choreography and in the song lyrics. In classical Tufo the women dance while sitting down on their knees, wringing their shoulders and arms, and bending the upper part of their bodies this way and that. That style of Tufo is still popular, but it is no longer the only one. Nowadays, the women often dance standing and moving about, gesticulating according to the content of the song. The rhythm of the four flat drums or tambourines, which now as before accompany the Tufo singing and dancing, has grown more hectic. Also the words of the songs have changed. Religious songs are still part of the repertoire, but many songs take up a variety of contemporary themes, some of them commenting upon particular political issues. «The Tufo songs have more political impact than the speech of some government minister,» one group member said¹.

All of this is intriguing, but most of all the fact that the women's Tufo groups are an expanding culture; new groups are mushrooming all along the coast and as far inland as Nampula city, the largest provincial capital in the north. The coastal culture is Islamic, and Nampula city itself has a sizeable Muslim population. In the 1990s, however, the Tufo dancing was spreading even further inland, and Tufo groups were emerging in cultural contexts that were not Muslim at all.

A whole series of questions is raised by this course of events. What explains the remarkable popularity of Tufo groups among women? What kind of support and reassurance do women obtain from Tufo group membership? Do women use the Tufo groups to defend and expand their space of manoeuvre at a time when male/female power relations otherwise tend to change in favour of men?

This paper examines Tufo dancing from the point of view of the women involved, and in the socio-cultural contexts of Mozambican versions of Sufi Islam, of Makhuwa matriliney and of Swahili coastal culture. My motivation for conducting the study on which the paper is based dates back to the early 1980s when I lived in Mozambique, working as a sociologist in the national women's organization, the OMM (*Organização da Mulher Moçambicana*). I was intrigued by the co-existence in coastal northern Mozambique of matrilineal Makhuwa culture with patriarchal Islam, especially because it appeared that the women had succeeded in transferring aspects of their central position in the Makhuwa context to the Islamic setting. A study of the Tufo groups seemed to be a good vantage point for understanding how this cultural mix of matriliney and Islam worked out from the women's points of view. Due to the Frelimo/Renamo war which made northern Mozambique a no-go area for more than a decade, I was unable to return to Nampula province until the late 1990s.

The fieldwork eventually was conducted on Ilha de Moçambique (Mozambique Island), and in Angoche between November 1998 and May 1999. Ilha de Moçambique and Angoche are both old coastal towns, dating back to the first arrival of the Arabs before the 10th century AD. Ilha de Moçambique was taken over by the Portuguese quite early on, and until 1898 it was the capital of colonial Mozambique. Angoche was held by sultans of Arab origin, linked to local Makhuwa chiefs by kinship ties, only

1. Where informants appear in the text, I have changed their names.

definitively conquered by the Portuguese in 1913 (Machado 1970: 427; Bonate 2003). Ilha de Moçambique as well as Angoche may be considered outposts of Swahili culture, even if the Swahili language is not spoken there. The Tufo groups in those two places are very similar, but the Islamic contexts differ. As has been noted regarding Swahili settlements further up on the East African coast, the version and character of Islam differ from one place to the next (Trimingham 1964: 74). Thus, for the sake of simplicity in this paper I shall discuss the Tufo groups only in the setting of Ilha de Moçambique.

Ilha de Moçambique is a tiny island off the coast of Mozambique, precisely at the place where the Madagascar Channel is narrowest. The town, which covers the entire island, has two distinct sections. Half is the stone-built town, which is the old Portuguese part, and the other half is the *macuti*-town, which is the Mozambican part of wattle and daub constructed houses (*macuti* is the name of the palm leaves used for thatching). There is no space at all for fields or for gardens. The island is connected to the continent by a wooden bridge almost 4 kilometers long. Some women have fields on the mainland, and cross the bridge by foot every day. *Dhows*² come over from nearby Cabaceira (a peninsula on the mainland) selling food and vegetables to the Islanders.

The paper is composed as follows: I will first explain about the Tufo dance itself, how the dance is performed, what the music is like, and the ways the women dress for the dancing. I will also relate the oral tradition regarding the history of the dance. The main focus of the paper is the Tufo dance group *women*, but first I will investigate the dance groups as organizational structures in the context of Islamic life in northern Mozambique. I will look at these issues in two parts. First I will look at the Islamic context itself, with an eye to the ways in which organizational characteristics of Makhuwa matriliney are reflected in the organization of the Sufi brotherhoods, called *confrarias* in Mozambique, which dominate religious life on the Island. Second I will focus on the ways in which certain organizational characteristics of the *confrarias* are paralleled or repeated in the organizational structure of the Tufo groups. The point is to show how Makhuwa matrilineal organization has influenced the organization of the Sufi orders, and how the organizational structure of the *confrarias* has provided a model for the Tufo groups. The organizational culture of the Tufo groups must, however, also be seen in the context of other dance and music groups on the Swahili coast, which I will do in the following section. I will then discuss Tufo dancing as seen from the point of view of the women, answering some of the questions posed in the opening section of the paper. Finally I will present the contents of some Tufo songs, and discuss how the Tufo groups have responded to political changes in Mozambique, and how they continue to do so. The Tufo culture is very rich, and much more could be written about it. This paper is to be considered as an opening of the field.

2. Arab type small boats with large sails. A beautiful sight when they are approaching the Island. When there is no wind the sailors use the oars, singing to keep the rhythm.

The Dance, Dress and Music of Tufo

For the performance of the Tufo dance the women, generally 15 to 20 at any one time, will form a block of 3 or 4 rows with 4 or 5 dancers in each row. The leading dancers are placed in the front row, but in most cases all dancers perform the same movements. A characteristic of Tufo is the seated dancing; the ability of the women to rise up from and return down into this position during the dance is amazing. In the seated version most of the dancing is performed with the upper part of the body, with shoulders, arms and hands, but in recent years newer forms of dancing have been invented, where the women not only stand, but also move about, breaking up the standard formation of 3 to 4 rows. The group *Estrela Vermelha* considers itself to be *avant-garde* in terms of inventing and introducing new choreographic styles. One mode of invention is a more expressive dancing which mimics the meaning of the song. One case in point is a song about the horrors of the recent war and the joy of peace when it ended. The gesticulation and the movements of the dancers, who pantomime crying and rejoicing, reveal the content of the song even to those who do not understand the words. *Estrela Vermelha*, like the other Tufo groups, sings most frequently in Emakhuwa, but also at times in Arabic and Portuguese.

The dancing women are all dressed alike, in similar *capulanas*³ and scarves, and in blouses of a matching colour. This uniform way of dressing is an essential aspect of Tufo. Each Tufo dance group has its own set of colours. For *Estrela Vermelha* they are yellow and red: Yellow blouses and red/yellow *capulanas* for skirts. The colours of other major Tufo groups⁴ are as follows: *Forte Amizade*: Red/yellow (red blouse), *Beira Mar*: Black/white; *Fura Redes*: Green/white; *Ausuaafi Sanía*: Blue/white; *Anuar Lihassanate*: Yellow/red. Even if the Tufo dance is not as religious as it used to be, the blouses must have sleeves, and the women must wear scarves. The blouses may be re-used from one performance to the next, but the norms for *capulanas* are more demanding: Each performance has its own *capulana*, and sometimes more than one. If for example the group is going to dance at a wedding in Nampula city, every member must have a minimum of three new *capulanas*: One for the journey going there, another one for the performance during the evening, and yet another one for the return trip. Some groups claim that no less than five different *capulanas* would be needed for such a trip.

Nowadays *capulanas* are plentiful in Ilha de Moçambique. It was different in the period after Independence and during the war, when there was a painful shortage of *capulanas*. But by the 1990s the only worry was the price. A pair of *capulanas* was not much more than 2 or 3 USD (30.000 – 40.000 *meticais*), but in an economy where few have any income at all, even such a small amount is prohibitive. Most *capulanas* are imported from India in designs commissioned by Indian traders in Mozambique, who know their customers and their preferences. Almost every week *capulanas* in new designs arrive at Mozambique Island from Nacala, the large international

3. A *capulana* is a brightly coloured piece of printed cotton cloth (1,00 by 1,85 meters) central to the female culture of the coast. *Capulanas* are usually sold in pairs, one to be used as a skirt and (part of) the other as a scarf.

4. I will return to the history of some of these groups below.

port of the north. When new *capulanas* arrive, the member of the Tufo group assigned to this task will keep an eye out, and when she catches sight of a beautiful one in the appropriate colours, she will place an order with the trader for the number of *capulanas* which the group will need.

The whole business of the dance group *capulanas* is part of a competitive culture well known on the Swahili coast (Ranger 1975, Strobel 1976, 1979, Fair 1997, 2001). In Ilha de Moçambique for national celebrations like the 7th of April and the 1st of May, the Tufo groups will prepare new songs, new dances, and new *capulanas*, sometimes with whole new outfits including blouses especially sewn to fit the new *capulanas*. Before such an occasion, the groups are very secretive, as nothing must get out regarding plans for their shows on those days.

The name Tufo is said to derive from the Arab name: «*ad-duff*» for the tambourine-like drums which are used in Tufo. In Portuguese this word became «*adufe*» or «*adufe*» thus Tufo (Lutero & Pereira 1980: 19). There are four flat, tambourine-shaped drums of different sizes, usually played by young men, though women may also be drum beaters. According to one of the few available texts on Tufo dance and music, the two larger drums play a rhythm which is well known from Arab music, whereas the two smaller ones supply the Bantu rhythmic touch (Lutero & Pereira 1980: 23-24). Often the rhythm will increase in the course of the dance, becoming quite hectic towards the end. All the women dancers sing, but one or two have the principal voices. Sometimes one voice will start a tune and others will join in, or two will sing to each other in a duet while the others make up the chorus. Even to the untrained ear, the music has a significant Arab touch.

According to the legend told in Ilha de Moçambique, the history of the Tufo dance goes back to the Prophet's move from Mecca to Medina. «When the Prophet saw himself obliged to flee from Mecca to Medina, his followers – men and women – welcomed him to Medina with tambourines and songs, showing him thus the joy that they felt and their devotion to the doctrines of the Quran that he had attempted to preach in Mecca. As the Prophet had favourably received the songs accompanied by tambourines, and as the songs invoked the name of Allah praising and exalting his Prophet, they were kept for the time to come, appearing from that day onwards in feasts and celebrations, whenever the respective groups professing the songs were called» (Carvalho 1969, unpublished manuscript, quoted in Lutero & Pereira 1980: 19). The dance of Tufo is said to have arrived to Ilha around 1932-33, brought to the island by a certain Yussuf, a tradesman from Kilwa who used to stay in Ilha for extended periods and who as late as the 1970s was said to pass by now and then (Lutero & Pereira 1980: 20). The timing of the arrival of Tufo to the Ilha corresponds to what I was told when interviewing on the Island.

Tufo is an entirely oral culture, and very little is preserved in writing. The songs are written on odd scraps of paper and often lost after use. Discussing this with one of the groups, I was told, «Oh the old songs are recorded in our heads. This is a better place to have them than in a written archive». Nevertheless I managed to obtain the words of some songs and have them translated from Emakhuwa to Portuguese. A few of these will appear towards the end of this paper.

Sufi Islam, Makhuwa edition, 1: Marks of Matriliny

According to data collected shortly after Independence, Tufo at that time extended along the northern coast, north to the border with Tanzania and possibly beyond, and south to Quelimane, at the mouth of the Zambeze River (Duarte 1980: 28). Northern Mozambique has been under Muslim influence for centuries. Little is known of the early history of the coast, although Vasco da Gama observed in 1498 that the population was «of the Mohammedan sect» (Alpers 2000: 304). The Arab merchants and sailors who came from across the sea married daughters of local chiefs (the Makhuwa *mwene*) thus gaining access to land and to kinship affiliation (Alpers 2000: 306, Bonate 2003: 133), making themselves at home. Ilha de Moçambique, Sancul, Quitangonha, Angoche, and Ilha de Ibo are some of the names of these early Arab settlements. Their culture and religion took root in the coastal population, just as it did further north, in what is now Tanzania and Kenya. The Swahili language is only spoken in the northernmost part of coastal Mozambique; further south it is replaced by indigenous languages and by Portuguese. Nevertheless the Islamic coast of Northern Mozambique is part of Swahili culture⁵. The Portuguese settled on Ilha de Moçambique in the beginning of the 16th century, and the oldest church on the island is built in 1522. Until the late 19th century Portuguese residents (*moradores*) co-existed relatively peacefully with the Arab traders on the coast. Following the 1885 Berlin conference, however, Portugal felt its influence in south-east Africa threatened by British plans for imperialist expansion, and embarked on more aggressive colonial policies (*cf.* Bonate 2003).

The kind of Islam professed on the coast has been influenced decisively by two Sufi orders, known as brotherhoods, or *confrarias* or *tariqas*.⁶ In the Mozambican context, the names of the two *tariqas* in question are the *Cadiria* and the *Xadulia* respectively⁷. Both arrived in Mozambique Island around the turn of the century. According to oral tradition in Ilha, the *Cadiria* was brought to Ilha de Moçambique in 1904 by a *xehé*⁸ who had studied in the Comoro Islands before going to Zanzibar, from where he was sent to Mozambique. A branch of the *Xadulia tariqa* called *Xadulia Liaxuruti* came to Mozambique directly from the Comoro Islands in 1897⁹. It is likely that the decisive rooting of these Sufi orders at Ilha de Moçambique is also linked to the fact that the turn of the century was a period of turmoil on the Mozambican coast. Portuguese colonialism was shifting from a benign presence into aggressive occupation (Bonate 2003). At the same time, the

5. This also conforms to eg schildknecht's (1969) definition of Swahili culture: «The Arabs have commingled with the indigenous African population; this mixing brought about what we call [...] Swahili culture: by marrying African women a new society was formed in which both African and Arab cultural and religious values were preserved» (SCHILDKNECHT 1969: 230).

6. *Tariqa* means way or path. The Arab plural of *tariqa* is *туруque*. I will use the English plural: *tariqas*.

7. In the Swahili literature the spelling of *tariqas* is diverse. *Qadiriyya* and *Shadhiliyya* (TRIMINGHAM 1964) seem to be the most correctly Arab ways of spelling. According to B.G. Martin, most sufi orders are branches from the trunk of the *Qadiriya*, founded in the twelfth century by the saint «Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (deceased 1166). The *Shadhiliya* is named after al-Hasan al-Shadhili (deceased 1258) (MARTIN 1976: 1).

8. A *Xehé*, *Chehe*, *Xequé* or *Xeiqé*, (Arabic: *Shaykh*) means in Ilha de Moçambique both «leader of a *tariqa*» and, used more generally, «a very respected man of learning».

9. Edward Alpers calls this *tariqa* *Shadhiliyya Yashruti* (ALPERS 1999: 11).

formal abolition of the slave trade made trading conditions more difficult, and Mozambique Island, which had earlier flourished as a port of embarkation, was overshadowed by Angoche and other ports, which were beyond Portuguese control. Also in this period (1898) the capital of what was then called the province of Mozambique (and which is equal to the present nation) was moved from Mozambique Island in the north to Lourenço Marques in the south.

The arrival of the new Sufi orders represented an Islamic revival on Ilha de Moçambique. According to old and knowledgeable people in Ilha, before the arrival of the *tariqas*, followers of the Muslim faith were not especially devout. According to Xehe Amade,

«The *tariqas* developed our religion. It was only through the *tariqas* we learned how to live as Muslims. And it was only the *tariqas* that started mobilizing people in the interior of the continent for Islam. When the railway in 1914 reached Monapo, the *tariqas* had already been there».

In this period Islam expanded inland with Muslim Indian merchants, and with the railway line, the construction of which was started 1913 in Lumbo on the mainland opposite Ilha de Moçambique (Alpers 2000: 312). In the district of Ribàué hundreds of kilometers inland the Muslims are few and far between, except for clusters of Muslim populations along the railway line!

Xehe Amade is an old and dignified member of the *tariqa* Xadulia Liaxuruti, with whom I spent several shady afternoons on Ilha de Moçambique. According to him the *tariqas* are religious brotherhoods (including women), but they are also organizations for mutual help. «In the case of illness and death» he said,

«members of the *tariqa* will help each other. Especially for the funeral celebrations you can count on assistance from fellow members and from the xehe and halifa¹⁰ of your *tariqa*».

The *tariqas*, or *confrarias*, are still the context in which most people of Ilha de Moçambique live their religious lives. In some ways the *tariqas* operate like a kinship network with obligations of mutual help and support. Family relations and *tariqa*-membership interlink in complicated ways. According to Xehe Amade it is the norm that all children (male and female) belong to the mother's *tariqa*, thus following the Makhuwa pattern of matriliney. It is always possible, however, for a person, man or woman, to opt for membership in a different *tariqa*. Eduardo Medeiros (1996: 60) has recorded a different pattern of daughters following the mother's line, becoming a member of her *tariqa*, while sons will follow their father. Both may very well be true, reflecting the mix of Makhuwa matriliney with Muslim patriarchy which is characteristic of the coastal culture.

The oral tradition in Ilha de Moçambique records the lives of the founders of the *tariqas*: when and where they were born, when and where they died, how they came to Mozambique and what happened since in terms of quarrels between *xehes* and power struggles for leadership¹¹. All are

10. People in Ilha de Moçambique talk of the halifa as the xehe's deputy. In Ilha the halifa will often be a woman.

11. Most of the Portuguese-language literature available in Mozambique on coastal Islam is based on the same oral tradition (BRANQUINHO 1969; MACHADO 1970; CARVALHO 1988;

remembered in detail, which may explain why there are not two but eight different *tariqas* in Ilha de Moçambique, five rooted in Cadiria and three in Xadulia (cf. also Morier-Genoud 2002).

The great influence of the *tariqas* in the first decades of the 20th century is not limited to Mozambique, but is characteristic of a general pattern of Islamic expansion in Africa (Nimtz 1980: 55). According to Nimtz, Sufism became the religion of the masses, or popular Islam for three different reasons: *Firstly* the Sufi orders, compared to more orthodox Islam, were more tolerant of local customs; *secondly* the Sufi orders allowed for African leadership, and *thirdly* they were in general more egalitarian, as one's position in the *tariqas* was based on piety rather than on status or on book learning (Nimtz 1980: 56, 71). These three reasons are all important in the context of this paper, where Islam is viewed from a gender point of view, since this opening up of Islam made the religion more accessible to women as well as to former slaves (Strobel 1979: 77). Coulon goes as far as to talk about the Sufi brotherhoods as «a more typically feminine form of religious practice» (Coulon 1988: 115). Through the *tariqas*, he says, women gain the opportunity to participate in Islam in their own way, manipulating it and accommodating it to their needs (Coulon 1988: 117).

According to statistical information from 1859, up to three-quarters of the people living on Mozambique Island were slaves; the report for Ilha de Moçambique reports a total population of 4522, of which 3255 were slaves. The non-slaves were Portuguese, Mestizos (mixed Portuguese and African ancestry), Indians from Goa, Baneanas (Hindu Indians), and Arabs and non-slave Africans (Almanach Civil Ecclesiástico Historico Administrativo da Província de Moçambique, 1859, quoted by Arkitektskolen i Aarhus 1985: 17). In other societies further up on the Swahili coast, such as Mombasa (Strobel 1979) and Lamu (Fuglesang 1994), one's slave or free ancestry was well known and was an important factor in the elaborate systems of social segregation found there. In contrast it is remarkable how the former slaves of Ilha de Moçambique seem to have vanished, or rather to have become integrated in the population at large. The fact that all traces of a previous slave society seem to have gone may be due, partly at least, to the egalitarian influences of the *tariqas*. Similarly the integration of women in religious life in Ilha de Moçambique may be due to the *tariqas*. Regarding this issue, however, it might be appropriate to interpret it also the other way round: Could it be that the *tariqas* took root and thrived in Mozambique Island and in the Makhuwa hinterland precisely *because* they were open to women? This interpretation takes as a point of departure the fact that women had certain positions of power in Makhuwa contexts, and that religious and other cultural influences had to be accommodated to this situation.

In Makhuwa daily life, especially as far back as in the early decades of the 20th century, older women had central positions (Geffray 1990, Newitt 1995: 64). Even today men and women complement each other at most levels

MEDEIROS 1996) telling the same stories in slightly differing versions. None of these works see coastal Mozambique in the light of knowledge of the Swahili culture further up the coast. Similarly most English-language literature on the Swahili does not refer to the people south of the Tanzanian border with Mozambique. In this context the recent works by ALPERS (1999a, 1999b, 2000), MORIER-GENOUD (2000, 2002) and BONATE (2003) represent a different approach, investigating Mozambican Islam in the context of (knowledge about) Islamic cultures outside Mozambique.

of traditional leadership: «Whenever you have a *mwene* [male lineage head] at his side you have a *pwiyiamwene* [female lineage head]» (Medeiros 1985). The Makhuwa society as such is not very hierarchical. There were lineages and lineage heads, but no great chieftaincies or large-scale political organization (Newitt 1995: 63). The *pwiyiamwene* was responsible for the important relations with the ancestors and the spirit world. Women in general are said to be better suited than men for these types of activities, and the majority of traditional healers and diviners among the Makhuwa are women¹².

The complementarity of male and female roles in Makhuwa traditional religion seems to re-emerge (to a certain extent) in the *tariqas*. People in Ilha de Moçambique say that «always when you have a *xehe* (male) you also have a *halifa* (female)», a gender-duplication of religious leadership that reflects Makhuwa culture in general. According to my Ilha informants, «*halifa*» means second in charge in the *tariqa* (the *xehe* being the leader) and strictly speaking a *halifa* is not necessarily a woman. In Ilha de Moçambique, however, when people say *halifa* they mean a woman; *halifa* has become the name for a woman with religious responsibility. The *halifa* directs the women's prayer and take care of women's affairs at funerals and religious gatherings. In Ilha de Moçambique the women have their own places of worship. Sometimes called «women's mosques» and sometimes called *zaurias* (from *zawiya*, referring to women's secluded space), *zaurias* are places where women gather among themselves in order to pray, just at the men gather at the mosques. There are three *zaurias* in Ilha de Moçambique, and six mosques, the largest one having a separate space for women. The number of men who pray in the mosques on a daily basis, and particularly on Fridays, appears to be somewhat larger than the number of women who pray in the *zaurias*.

Regarding matrilineal aspects of Islamic coastal culture, interesting matrilineal influences in the direction of greater equality between former freeborn and former slaves Zanzibar have been documented by Laura Fair (1996). In Zanzibar in the 19th century female initiation rituals, called *unyago* and originating among Yao, Makhuwa and Makonde peoples (all matrilineal), were widespread among the slaves, most of whom were of mainland origin. Fair sees the continued practice of this ceremony as an indication of the resilience and resistance of the enslaved populations (Fair 1996: 149, 151). The interesting thing, however, is that after slavery was abolished in the second half of the 19th century, a new version of female initiation rituals turned into a social force capable of uniting women across their class differences. According to Fair the story goes as follows: The freeborn women knew about the *unyago* from their domestic slaves, and they longed to join the fun and games of the women, which were characterized among other things by quite explicit sexual instructions. But the higher-born women felt inhibited by the religious and moral prescriptions of their class, as sexual purity and restraint of elite women was considered a defining mark of their social status. Thus in Zanzibar at the turn of the last century, the *mkinda* was created; it was a new kind of

12. Information from Ametramo (*Associação de Medicina Tradicional em Moçambique*, ie. the traditional healers' association), Nampula .

initiation ritual in which freeborn women could participate together with former slaves (Fair 1996: 153, 154 ff). The *mkinda* instructions were not very different from instructions for the older rite, the *unyago*. The major change was that the initiation ceremonies, which had been performed in an open space, were moved indoors, thus becoming more hidden and more respectable (Fair 1996: 156). Furthermore, the dancers in the *mkinda* rites would wear identical *kangas* (the Swahili word for *capulanas*), the *kanga* itself being a new form of female dress appearing in Zanzibar only at the turn of the century, exactly at the point in time when tens of thousands of ex-slaves began to define themselves as Swahili (Fair 1996: 158). The identical *kangas* had the effect of «visually marking the women as equals», leveling out previous class differences (Fair 1996: 158).

Laura Fair's story of Zanzibar women creating new egalitarian female initiation rituals and dances in which every woman could participate irrespective of previous class hierarchies, is a potent story of the equalizing potential of female ceremonies, rooted (in this case) in matrilineal structures. Whether something similar has taken place in Ilha de Moçambique is unknown. I read Laura Fair's paper only after having conducted fieldwork, and it had not occurred to me to ask about the history of the female initiation rituals in Mozambique Island. Certainly, however, initiation rituals on the Island differ from mainland Makhuwa rituals in ways similar to the ones described by Laura Fair. The rituals are performed indoors, in a respectable space, but otherwise with much the same kind of direct sexual instruction as is the case in the Makhuwa mainland. It is possible that on Mozambique Island, just as on Zanzibar, women from different classes were able to share matrilineal female initiation rituals and perhaps that became one of the forces that led to a rapid erasure of the status differences evident in a slave society.

Sufi Islam, Makhuwa edition 2: Other aspects of religious life

In addition to normal prayers (*salaat*), a particular activity of the *tariqas* is *dhikr*, in Mozambique called *tiqiri*. *Tiqiri* is a kind of singing prayer with body movements, the performers sitting or standing in a circle, singing and swaying, sometimes for hours. «In a *dhikr* circle the participants commonly sang hymns, recited formulas, and brought themselves to the brink of collective ecstasy by techniques of controlled breathing or bodily motion. Hyperventilation, or states of consciousness approaching the threshold of hyperventilation, could be introduced by these collective rites» (Martin 1976: 1-2). In Mozambique I saw *tiqiri* performed by groups of men as well as by women, always separate. I observed one male *tiqiri* in a city square performed by a fairly large group of men on the occasion of the feast of *Ide al-kabir*. I was told that in earlier years the crowd would have been much larger. In the 1990s the people who care about celebrating the *Ide* tended to be older men. Trimmingham's description of the *dhikr* closely resembles the event I viewed:

«The *dhikr* is the "remembrance" of God by the repetition of His name and attributes, co-ordinated, when recited in congregation, with breathing techniques and physical movements. (...) they begin the *dhikr*, chanting (...)

slowly, then faster, the leader indicating the change of tempo by clapping his hands. The leader then rises and all stand, the outer circle linking hands and usually shutting their eyes as an aid to concentration. Movements become faster backwards and forwards, then change to jumping. All the time the singing is going on, the *shaik* often leading; the singers may know from his movements what song he is changing to, but sometimes he sings the first line and they join in» (Trimingham 1964: 96, 99).

The female *tiquiri*, that I observed were performed in the *zaurias*, partly sitting, partly standing, always chanting and swaying. As noted by Nimtz, because the *dhikr* is performed in groups, it may create a strong sense of group solidarity (Nimtz 1980: 127).

Another aspect of religious life is the *ziaras*; *ziyyara* literally means «visit», and it is often used in the context of «visit to the grave of a saint». *Ziaras* in Mozambique Island indicate large religious meetings, to which members and leadership of the remotest branches of a given *tariqa* are invited. «In the old days» Xehe Amade said,

«the *ziara* was an annual event. Since Independence, however, we haven't had any. For a *ziara* 3000 to 4000 people would come to Ilha de Mozambique to take part, all being members of our *tariqa*. The guests themselves would organize the journey and pay the dhows to take them to the Island. But we here would have to provide the food. Such an event had to be prepared a long time in advance. People would give contributions – money, rice and meat – according to their abilities. Also a collective purchase of cotton material would be organized so that all the women of the *tariqa* could be dressed in matching *kimãos*¹³ and *capulanas*».

Halifa Àmina, now an elderly woman, tells about the *ziaras*:

«For the *ziara* the invited guests would arrive on a Friday, staying until Saturday. The hosts would serve lunch, and after that the orations would begin».

The *tiquiri* started in the afternoon and continued through the night. Men and women performed their *tiquiri* separately. The *ziaras* would also be occasions for the announcement of a new *xehe* or *halifa*. Halifa Àmina was nominated at a *ziara* in the 1950s when she was a young woman. On the morning after the all-night *tiquiri* there was a big meeting. Àmina recalls the event:

«In the middle of this huge mass of people my name was called. I had to go forward and stand next to the banner¹⁴. In this way all were informed that in the Ilha de Moçambique-section of the *tariqa*, Àmina is now *halifa*.»

According to Àmina it was not the *xehe* himself who elected the *halifa*. The older *halifas* made the decision and gave the name to the *xehe*, who announced the nomination.

13. A *kimão* is a type of woman's blouse, long sleeves and open neck with complicated applications and embroideries, which was common on the coast as late as in the early 1980s. Now it is considered old fashioned and is rarely seen. During the recent Frelimo/Renamo war a lot of cheap secondhand clothing (local name: *calamidades*) started pouring into Mozambique, women started wearing T-shirts with their *capulanas*, and *kimãos* went out of use.

14. Each of the *tariqas* has its own banner, which is brought along on occasions like a *ziara*.

Tufo in the context of Sufi Islam

After having looked at ways in which certain characteristics of matrilineal organization – particularly the male/female leadership structure – are reflected in Mozambique Island *tariqa* organisation, I will now look into how certain characteristics of *tariqa* organization and religious life are reflected in the organization and activities of the Tufo groups. I will first look at the male/female leadership of the Tufo groups (a), then at similarities between *tiqiri* and Tufo dancing (b), and lastly I will look at the great gatherings, the *carramas*, arranged by the Tufo groups (c).

a) My first visit to Ilha de Moçambique in November 1998 was a kind of exploratory trip in order to plan for future fieldwork. I was accompanied by Abdallah, a native of the Island who had volunteered to be my guide and facilitator on the trip. Nothing was planned in advance, but my guide knew some of the patrons¹⁵ of the leading dance groups. Thus it happened that on our walk through the *macuti bairros* in Ilha de Moçambique we entered the club house of the Tufo group *Forte Amizade* just at a time when most of the group including its leadership was assembled in order to say goodbye to a sister group from Nampula city, which had been visiting over the weekend. Abdallah greeted his friends and introduced me as somebody who was making a study of the Tufo groups. There were a lot of men and women in the room, the women all dressed in red and yellow, the men in white, gray and brown Islamic gowns of different styles and with the pillbox type of cap, *cofió*, on their heads. The men present seemed to be of an older generation, the women all middle aged or young. Some of the women came up to greet me, after which they continued with whatever they were doing. The men formed a circle around me, however, ready for interview. The men were the male patrons of the dance group. They all had titles in the context of the group: The President and the Vice President, the Treasurer, the Director of Planning, and several Counsellors and Founders. In civil life they were shopkeepers, *xehes* and senior bank employees, people of some standing in local society. When I asked about the group leadership they said that the board of directors consisted of ten men and ten women. As for group members in general the large majority were women. This pattern, which I met the first time in the group *Forte Amizade*, was repeated with slight variations in all of the ten different Tufo groups with whom I worked during my stays in Ilha de Moçambique and Angoche.

When I first heard about the Tufo groups, I was told that they all had male leaders. Seen with Western eyes this will easily be interpreted in terms of female weakness after all: «Women's groups, oh yes, but with male leadership, that is: Patriarchy as usual!» In my view, however, this interpretation is a gross simplification. The gender setup of the groups should be seen in its own context and not with Western patriarchalizing eyes¹⁶.

15. I use the word «patron» to designate a mixture between «leader» and «honourable member».

16. Cf. OYEWUNI (1997) for discussions of processes of patriarchalization.

b) Having discussed *tiquiri* as well as Tufo, it is possible to make a comparison: What are the differences, and could the Tufo dance have roots in the *tiquiri*? A colonial observer in Tanzania in 1923 called *dhikr* «a Dervish dance» (Nimtz 1980 : 67), and certainly it does look like a dance, sharing many characteristics with the Tufo : The singing and swaying, occasional jumping, the acceleration of the rhythm. One difference is that the *tiquiri*, at least as performed in Mozambique, has no drums¹⁷. According to Trimingham using drums or not using drums for the *dhikr* has been one of the standard controversies among the Sunni Muslims¹⁸ of Eastern Africa, singing or not at funerals being another (Trimingham 1964: 82; Bonate 1999: 7; Alpers 2000: 323). And the Tufo dance, as explained above, took its name directly from the drums. When I asked the women about the differences between *tiquiri* and Tufo, they mentioned in addition to the drums the fact that for performing *tiquiri* you must be clean in an Islamic sense, having washed according to the prescriptions.

c) *Ziaras* elsewhere on the coast, according to Trimingham (1964: 101) are annual celebrations of the anniversary of the founder of the *tariqa* in question, sometimes coinciding with the celebration of the birthday of the prophet Muhammad. In East Africa in general, however, the devotion to the Prophet is vastly more important than any cult of *tariqa* founders (Trimingham 1964: 95). This is also true in Mozambique, even if the Prophet's birthday is not being properly celebrated. When the Prophet's birthday is celebrated, it is usually by the Tufo groups. When interviewing the groups I was told of occasional grand get-togethers, *carramas*, where sister Tufo groups would meet. Like the *tariqas*, the Tufo groups have a mother group (for the oldest groups, headquarters are in Ilha de Moçambique) and sister sub-groups all along the coast as well as upcountry. The Tufo *carramas* seem to have taken many characteristics from the *ziaras*, as they include huge gatherings of people, masses of food, a uniform style of dressing, and the use of the occasion for new nominations. Other characteristics that the Tufo groups have taken over from the *tariqas* include some functions of mutual help and the construction of social structure in the «de-tribalized» environment of city life. Seen from the perspective of «social events» it appears that the Tufo groups are expanding and are taking over from the *tariqas*, which are on the decline. If this is the process, it is not just a process of secularization, but also of a shift in gender emphasis from male to female, reflected in an increasing female presence. The majority of participants in a Tufo *carrama* are women.

Daily life in Tufo Contexts: Tufo Group Activities

The Tufo groups meet frequently, sometimes daily, as with *Estrela Vermelha*, or two to three afternoons during the week. The female members

17. Fransesca Declich reports from Somalia of *dhikr* accompanied - although rarely - by musical instruments, generally a tambourine (DECLICH 1995: 198).

18. According to the Swahili literature most East African Muslims are Sunni; this is true of Mozambican Muslims as well.

meet regularly while the male patrons only show up on specific occasions. In some groups the assembly – which is everybody – meets every two or three months. In the assembly the group decides on future performances, outings and celebrations. The three major types of activity of the group are a) performances close to home, where no travelling is involved, b) outings, that is performances in other places, necessitating travel, and c) hosting celebrations with invitation sent to sister groups. All of the groups have membership fees (5.000 – 10.000 *meticaís* a month), but the scarcity of money means that dues are rarely paid. When paid, the fees are used for *esteiras* (large straw mats on which to dance), maintenance of the club house and similar group expenses. Costs of *capulanas* and transport will normally be covered by the members themselves.

The standard way of celebrating national holidays such as April 7th and May 1st is with (more or less competitive) Tufo dancing. The local government also calls upon the groups to welcome important visitors (a minister, an ambassador, a official delegation of donors) by Tufo dancing. The songs for these visits are composed for the occasion, as when the Minister of Health visited and the groups sang about the bad management of the local hospital. Other local assignments are performances at weddings or initiation feasts. Normally the groups are not paid for their performances, but spectators may pay tribute for good dancing, and at private parties the dancers will be fed.

Outings are an important aspect of group life. A group from Mozambique Island may be invited to perform at a wedding in Nampula city, or in another town necessitating travel. Sometimes the group will travel to a celebration, *carrama*, held by a sister group. The rules regarding outings are that the travelling group pays the fare of transport, while the host group, family or individual provides food and lodging, as was the case for the *tariqa ziaras*. I asked the groups about their outings during the previous year; often they told of impressive travelling programmes that included ten to twelve outings (normally over the weekend) annually.

The last activity, hosting celebrations, is the most demanding. *Carrama* is a matter of prestige for the groups. *Carrama* involves inviting all sister groups, or a calculated selection if they are too many. In 1999 *Estrela Vermelha*, which is the largest and most popular of the Tufo groups, had 112 sister-subgroups all along the Islamic coast, in major towns as far away as Maputo, and more recently also in non-Islamic upcountry locations. The other major groups – *Forte Amizade*, *Beira Mar*, *Anuar Lihassanate*, *Fura Redes* and *Ausuañi Sanía* – have fewer, but still between 20 and 50 sub-groups each. By the 1990s, when economic conditions were growing tougher, *carramas* were not held as frequently as in the past. The people of *Beira Mar* maintained that they were the only ones who still had an annual *carramas* in celebration of the Prophet's birthday. «Other groups also do this, but not with the same regularity». In previous years local groups had arranged Prophet's birthday-*carramas*¹⁹ in Angoche and Nampula city. *Carrama* always involves religious orations and recitals, but apparently may be arranged on occasions other than the Prophet's birthday.

19. Sometimes this celebration is called «maulide» or «brazange». The religious terminology is rather floating; few know what the Arab words really mean.

If a local group decides that they will prepare for *carrama*, they first have to contact headquarters, ie. the mother group. All the Tufo groups in Mozambique Island are mother groups, because this was where the groups were created first. The mother group will help send out invitations to the other groups, and well in advance of the date a small delegation from the mother group will visit the host group to help with the preparations. *Carramas* are usually held in a time of plenty, after the harvest during the months of June to October (in this respect my fieldwork in November to May was badly planned). In early 1999 *Estrela Vermelha* was involved in a *carrama* to be hosted by the group in Pemba. Sixty groups, totaling roughly three thousand people, had been invited. Of course such a feast is a major undertaking.

I was told the following account by the Tufo group *Fura Redes*, which had hosted a *carrama* on Mozambique Island in 1997. The host group began collecting money and to amassing the necessary quantities of rice, flour, potatoes, onions, oil, tea and so forth well in advance of the event. Cooking and preparations went on for days. The guests, mostly women, arrived on Friday. The celebrations start on Saturday morning, when breakfast was served and the men made religious recitals and orations. Following that, lunch was served throughout the afternoon until six o'clock in the evening. That was also the time for announcements of new appointments to leadership positions in the groups. In the evening the groups started performing, one group after the other, all through the night. During *carrama* nobody goes to sleep. In the morning, about seven or eight o'clock, the entire party marched through the streets, dancing and playing the drums. After Sunday lunch the party was over and the visiting groups headed for home.

«To arrange a *carrama* is not an easy thing to do. It is very costly. Previously you would kill a head of cattle, as well as several goats, ducks and chicken. Today there is more rice and less meat. But still to arrange *carrama* is a great effort. But it is good for the group. In 1997 *Fura Redes* was the only group that arranged *carrama* in Mozambique Island. In 1998 nobody did».

These tales of feasts and lavish spending are a characteristic which the Tufo groups share with the *Beni* and *Lelemama* groups of Kenya and Tanzania (see below). Both Ranger (1975) and Strobel (1976) tell about competitive slaughter of cattle for lavish *Beni* or *Lelemama* «picnics» (Ranger 1975: 145, Strobel 1976: 187).

But exactly because of these great displays, the Tufo groups, just like the *Lelemama* and *Beni* groups, may be seen as schools of organizational skills:

«The mobilization of people, finances and equipment for these celebrations trained women in organizational skills and leadership. All members were informed of the time and place of the competitions, which meant notifying several hundred dancers, supporters and observers. Money was collected for the purchase of anywhere from one to twenty head of cattle, rice, ghee, onions, and other necessities for the feast» (Strobel 1976: 183).

Precisely the same system is true of the Tufo groups. The capacity for communication, and for planning and organizing these great events, is stunning.

Tufo in the Context of Swahili Coast

One frame of interpretation for the male/female leadership of the groups is provided by the mainland Makhuwa culture, which is matrilineal and where a pattern of balanced male/female leadership is the norm. Another frame of interpretation for the male/female presence and leadership in the Tufo groups is the history of other dance groups on the Swahili coast. The so-called *Beni* associations, active more or less from 1890 to 1960, were predominantly male dance groups, their distinctive characteristic being the European military inspiration in brass band and drill-like dancing (Ranger 1975: 5). The *Beni* groups, however, had women's divisions²⁰, and the women sometimes broke away to form associations of their own (Strobel 1976, 1979). The name of the women's dance was *Lelemama*. In the male/female *Beni* groups «the duties of the Queen and her subordinates are with regard to the female members of the society similar to those of the King and his assistants» (Ranger 1975: 63-64)²¹. Nowadays the male/female balance of the Tufo groups is uneven, because the male element has been reduced to just a small group of patrons. Previously, however, Tufo groups had a lot of male activity, including football playing and male Tufo dancing.

Estrela Vermelha is the oldest of the Tufo groups now active in Ilha de Moçambique. It was founded on January 2nd 1931. At that time it was called *Mahafil Islam*, and it had a different range of activities. The religious aspect was more important then, and the celebrations and recitals on the Prophet's birthday were a major activity. In those days Tufo was danced by men as well as by women. All of the Ilha groups that were founded in the 1930s – that is, *Mahafil Islam*, *Beira Mar* and *Fura Redes* – had football teams²². It may seem odd to realize that organizations that began with men's football in the 1930s developed into women's dance groups from the 1970s on. But the context of the *Beni* groups offers a different framework for interpretation. According to Ranger, football competitions were closely linked with dance societies (Ranger 1975: 84). Lienhardt also comments on the Swahili connections between football and dancing: «Each football team has its own dancing club, and the dance-bands compete just as vigorously as the footballers» (Lienhardt 1968, here quoted from Ranger 1975: 99). Sometimes it was not really clear whether it was a football club *cum* dance association or vice versa (Ranger 1975: 99). Football, dancing and lavish parades were all aspects of a larger pattern of competition, which seems to have been constitutive to the whole *Beni* phenomenon, and also very strong indeed in the *Lelemama* associations (Ranger 1975, Strobel 1975, 1979, Fair 1997: 228). Competition is also a part of the Tufo culture, but nothing as devastating as what is reported from the heyday of *Beni* and *Lelemama*.

In Ilha de Moçambique football faded out during the 1960s. When I asked for the reasons for this, people referred to the lack of sponsors. Football cannot be played without equipment (balls, boots etc.), and

20. The women's divisions are left unseen and unanalyzed by Ranger, even if they are present in the data material he presents (eg. RANGER 1975: 63-64; 97-98). In an appendix to the book he belatedly admits this gender blindness.

21. The *Beni* were copying European royal and military ranks, having internal titles of King, Queen, etc. (RANGER 1975; STROBEL 1976: 189).

22. The name *Fura Redes* derives from football language, meaning something like «blow the net».

equipment in Ilha de Moçambique as elsewhere was provided by sponsors such as wealthy firms and companies. There used to be plenty of potential sponsors on Ilha de Moçambique, the former capital of the country and until the 1960s the major port of the North. But all of this changed with the opening of the harbour in Nacala, which was completed in 1964. The big firms moved their headquarters to Nacala, and Ilha de Moçambique became a backwater town. Another reason is the general exodus of people from Ilha, caused by the opening of the Nacala harbour, and later by Independence. Many young men disappeared, among them football players as well as Tufo dancers. Also many other male dances have vanished. People in Ilha de Moçambique claim that so-called «traditional dancing» was much richer twenty years back than in the 1990s. In Ranger's account *Beni* group dancing was replaced by European style *dansi* much earlier (Ranger 1975: 142). Thus the relevant question seems to be *not* why the male Tufo dancing has gone, but rather why the female Tufo dancing is alive and expanding, even today.

Tufo dancing from the Point Of View of the Women

When I asked the women what was good about belonging to a Tufo group, the first aspects they mentioned were often entertainment and social life.

«The great advantage is the fun we have together in the group. As a single mother you have many concerns, life is not at all simple. But when you are in the group with the others, the problems seem less grave».

And the group indeed does work as an institution of mutual aid.

«The group is like a family. If one of us falls ill, the others will come to the hospital to visit, bringing biscuits, soft drinks and fruit. If somebody dies in the family of one group member, the others will help».

«The group takes notice. The group is concerned with its members».

Both Mozambique Island and Angoche are urban societies. People come from elsewhere, and many women live far from their families. As one woman said, «The first advantage of the group is that when you die you will be treated like a person». Proper burial is a very important issue, and if you live far from your own family, you must depend on friends. A further item in the list of group advantages for its members is the traveling. «Through the group we have the possibility of getting to know other places». The women acquire a mobility which otherwise they would not have had. «If you just stay at home your mind gets closed. In the group things are different. You get to know other places, and you yourself become known». In her historical work on Zanzibar Laura Fair has made similar observations: «Dance groups provided individuals from poor and socially marginalized backgrounds with avenues for achieving status, titles and positions of authority – as well as a ritualized atmosphere in which they could challenge superiors» (Fair 1977: 227) – exactly as the Tufo groups are doing.

Possibly, one may even talk of the Tufo groups as producing female identities. There is first the issue of *titles*. Like the men, the female group members have titles: First, Second and Third *Rainha* or *Rais* (ie. Queen),

Chief of the Line (ie. dancing), Chief of Organization, Chief of Protocol, Chief of Outfit (she is the one responsible for the *capulanas*), Chief of Cooking etc. Sometimes the *Raises* are middle-aged women who have retired from active dancing. Sometimes they have never been dancers at all, but were active in the organizing of the group. Several of the female patrons seemed very obviously to derive their standing in the local community from their position in the Tufo group. Secondly there is the issue of *capability*, which may overlap with acquiring status. As one woman put it, «What happens in the groups is almost a professionalization. Through the group we acquire a personal identity as singers and dancers, as artists». Where the Tufo group men, especially the patrons, tend to be men of some local standing who are employed, the Tufo group women are a mixture of single mothers, street corner vendors, peasants and patrons' wives. Dance group membership is not a source of income, but it may be a source of identity. Through the dance group the women have a chance of acquiring a kind of profession, as «artists», as the local and Provincial Departments of Culture refers to them. They become known outside their immediate neighbourhood. Just as football-playing may offer career possibilities for young men with neither family nor educational background, Tufo dancing to some extent may open the world for the women involved. They travel, they are artists, they become somebody. In this way the Tufo dancing may function as a kind of shortcut to modernity. The women participate actively in contemporary social and urban life. There are Tufo groups in the countryside as well, but Tufo as such is part of an urban, thus more «modern» culture. Furthermore the groups offer a framework for an identity that may help reduce women's dependency on men. This is not without its contradictions, because, as we have seen, Tufo group membership can be quite a costly affair, not least in terms of *capulanas*, which are traditionally offered to women by men. The balance desired seems to be to *have* a man, while still not being *depending* on a man.

To a certain extent the negotiating position of women of Mozambique Island *vis a vis* their husbands has improved. Before the Nacala harbour was built many men had been wage workers and the women were economically dependent on the men. According to social norms, women were not supposed to deal too much with money. This has changed. Most men now are unemployed and the women have taken up petty trading in the streets. At every corner nowadays two or three women will be sitting with homemade sweets or similar items for sale. Other women have fields on the mainland, going and returning every day. At low tide women also go to sea in search of cockles and mussels. Young men make a living by fishing from tiny but beautiful dhows. Life in Ilha de Moçambique is harsher than it used to be: A money-based economy with no money. But it has opened opportunities for women to earn an income. As they say, «We women are now learning to do something». In terms of income generation women sell homemade biscuits, sweets made of coco or groundnuts; cooked corn on the cob, or a whole meal of curry and rice. The profits of this trade are tiny, but the women themselves are proud.

In the Tufo groups it is not a big deal if a woman is married or not. The identity of the woman is her own; it is not derived from her possible relation to a husband. Some of the women are married, some are single. But even the

married women are never identified in terms of their husbands. Identification in terms of marriage works rather the other way round, with male group members being identified in terms of their wives²³. Most of the male patrons are married to women of the group, and this seems to be an important part of their reason for being there. The general pattern is that in a woman's life the dance group membership is a more stable factor than marriage. The man who really wants this particular woman will have to put up with her dance group as well!

Many women in the groups are single mothers, though their marital situation fluctuates. Marriage on the coast is often a shaky arrangement. As the women say:

«It is difficult to remain married to the same man for a long time. Many of us who have husbands are in our second, third or fourth marriage. Some are single because they are fed up with husbands».

In general, however, to have a husband is the most desired state of affairs. But husbands come and go, and divorce is frequent. When I asked about the reasons for divorce, the primary reason (as seen by the women) was the inclination for the husband to get involved with another woman. Polygamy is a part of the cultural norms of Islam, but is not much liked by women. Often their response will be to provoke divorce²⁴. Another reason for divorce mentioned by the women, was the husband's dissatisfaction with too many children. In one case the woman said that her former husband had left her because of this, on the advice of his mother. This explanation again points to the matrilineal Makhuwa context. The children belong to the mother's lineage, and seen from the point of view of the father's family, they have no particular value.

I was lectured by Abdallah regarding the norms of the coast as far as marriage and divorce are concerned:

«The men of the coast do not supervise their women too closely. As long as they behave well in public they close their eyes to what else is going on. Adultery is a normal situation, it is nothing new. The clever woman might have a lover, but in order for the husband not to notice, she will show him even more love than usual, and the husband who has a girlfriend in town will do the same thing. This is the behaviour of wise and well-behaved men and women. Discretion is an important capacity. On the coast adultery is a way of life, it is part of our culture. There is more enjoyment and more fun in these extra-marital relations, and if husband and wife behave well, it will very rarely be those that provoke divorce. What provokes divorce is the bad behaviour of man or woman. If the woman does not wash the husband's clothes, if she leaves the house without his permission, if she responds to him in a bad way - that is: if she uses bad language, if she is not nice, kind and polite in her way of communicating with the husband. Or on the part of the husband: if he gets drunk, if he does not buy clothes and *capulanas* for his wife, or if he is jealous».

According to Abdallah, the rules of discretion in marriage are of the highest importance, and marriages can last only if the rules are carefully adhered to. The problem with the dance groups is the demands of the

23. The identification of men through women is a general phenomenon of Makhuwa matriliney. However, it normally takes place through mothers and sisters, not through wives.

24. When interviewing in southern Cabo Delgado in the early 1980s I found a similar pattern, cf. ARNFRED 1988: 10.

women. If they don't get what they want from their husbands, they will get it anyhow: «Some women in the Tufo groups make negotiations with their body, in order to get hold of the required number of *capulanas*». When I asked the women in group interviews how they managed to arrange the necessary *capulanas*, they said that they got them from husbands or from «male friends».

I did not hear of any cases where the woman's membership in a Tufo group had provoked divorce, but that might be a matter of interpretation. Several groups complained that they had lost members because of marriage. For women the value of marriage is high, and a single woman wants to marry, even if this means that she will have to leave the group. Many men set leaving the group as a condition for marriage. «The men say like this: You cannot remain in the group. I am not going to buy your *capulanas*». Abdallah would never marry a woman from a Tufo group, he said, no matter how beautiful she might be. «I cannot afford three or four *capulanas* a week». The problem with the Tufo groups, from the point of view of certain men, is not just the *capulanas*, however, but also the travels and the independence of the women. Some groups explained that they worked with the husbands, inviting them to take part in group celebrations, and persuading them to let their wives go along on weekend trips. But in many cases the women had to trade group membership for marriage.

Only for so long, however, as any particular marriage would last! Secretly these women will remain group members, not taking part in dancing and outings, but without the husband noting it, they will follow the life of the group and make sure to get hold of every new *capulana*, preparing for a possible comeback. No sooner does the marriage end than the woman is back in the group. This typical account points to the fact that membership in a Tufo group is more stable than marriage in a coastal woman's life. The women compromise between their identity and independence in the Tufo groups on one hand, and their wish to be married on the other. But in the long run the group identity seems to be the stronger one.

Life in Ilha de Moçambique: The Content of Tufo Songs

The golden age of Mozambique Island was in colonial days, a time before the port of Nacala was built, a time when big ships anchored at the shores of Ilha de Moçambique, a time when there was plenty of activity and waged work for the islanders. At that time large sectors of the male population in Ilha worked as stevedores, bringing goods ashore from the ships in the bay, while others were employed as clerks and office workers in the commercial firms. The harbour facilities of Ilha have always been poor, however, with shallow water and a solitary pier, which was falling to pieces by the 1990s. In Nacala the natural conditions for a harbour are much better. When quays were built in Nacala (1951-64) all shipping activity moved there. On Ilha de Moçambique the memory of Portuguese colonialism is the memory of the golden days when Ilha was an important city. All memory of Portuguese colonial oppression, forced labour and secret police seems to have been forgotten.

With declining economic activity, especially after Frelimo came to power at Independence, Ilha houses and streets fell into decay. The colonial programme of maintenance was discontinued; little by little the houses turned into ruins and the parks into wilderness. The building material in the stone-built town is coral limestone covered with lime (whitewash). Such houses need to be whitewashed once a year in order to survive the ocean climate. The process of decay initiated at Independence was accelerated by the war, when masses of people from the mainland sought refuge on Mozambique Island. Wood from windows and doors in the old houses was used for fires. The paved city streets were turned into sandy roads. In the *macuti* town houses are built wall to wall almost like a beehive. The present island population is estimated at 13.000, and according to the City Council the maximum capacity is 8.000. Fresh water supplies are insufficient, and sewage is non-existing. People defecate at the beaches. Several of the Tufo songs touch on this topic of former splendour compared to more recent decay and government neglect²⁵.

*Gentlemen visitors, now you have arrived in Ilha de Moçambique
Today our Island is no longer the same as the one you used to know.
Our palaces and houses are not as they used to be.
Just look at the palace São Paulo, and look at the fortress São Sebastião.
Look at our streets: When a car is passing the dust is everywhere,
and when it rains there are great pools of water.
The time has gone when all our streets were paved
Look at our hospital, such a pity, such a shame,
if a person is gravely ill he or she will have to be transferred from Ilha to Monapo;
the unfortunate will die on the road.
Oh behold, Gentlemen visitors, the great disgrace of the people of this Island.*

Mozambique Island was never a Frelimo stronghold. On the contrary, during the recent Frelimo/Renamo war and in the subsequent general elections (1994) most of Nampula province, and especially the coastal region, supported Renamo²⁶. People on the Island see a connection between this fact and their experience of more recent political neglect²⁷.

Another song about former splendour is also a moving account of a great disappointment when tourists from a South African cruise ship wanted to disembark in Ilha, but were not able to do so because of the destruction of the pier. Subsequent attempts have succeeded, and Mozambique Island is visited by several cruise ships each year.

25. Translation from Emakhuwa to Portuguese was done on Mozambique Island by Maria de Conceição Amade. The last song (How it is beautiful...) was written in Portuguese. Translations from Portuguese to English are mine.

26. Renamo is the major opposition party to the ruling Frelimo. Local administration, even in parts of Mozambique with Renamo majority, is staffed with Frelimo members.

27. Edward Alpers has uncovered another reason for Frelimo reservation vis-à-vis Ilha de Moçambique: In the last years of colonialism the colonial government tactically replaced its former anti-Islamic attitude by a regular charm offensive, in an - as it seems quite successful - attempt to win the Islamic leadership for the Portuguese side, against atheistic, communist Frelimo. At this background, Alpers notes, «it is not surprising that at Independence Frelimo did not embrace the Muslim leadership of Mozambique and its organizations as comrades in arms» (Alpers 1999: 183).

*We, the people, we feel hurt when what we are told is not true.
When long time ago the Portuguese came to this island, they came by the sea.
This was the start of the fame of the capitania²⁸.
In order to get things right, let us tell the story right from the beginning.
In 1996, on the 26th of November, it was on a Tuesday early in the morning,
the first cruise ship arrived in our bay.
Old people were crying, others were laughing happily,
thinking of the past and of the way things were then.
But look how we at the Island are being insulted and abused.*

*At 10 o'clock in the morning the sea was crowded with small motor boats
and tourists waving their hands in good-bye.
They never succeeded in getting ashore on the Island.
There was not a place they could land
because of the destruction of the pier.
The pier has gone asunder, the wood has been used for cooking.*

*Lots of people were terribly disappointed.
So many were those who had wanted to do business with the foreigners
without being able to do so.
The Tufo groups waiting ashore to welcome the visit,
how fed up they were!
Who are those that give such false promises to the people?
How come that the City Council pretends to know about issues regarding the harbour,
when else they do nothing but quarrel among themselves?
These people who never came further than to the 5th grade at school.
Issues regarding the harbour pertains to the capitania.
But nowadays the pilot goes out from the port of Nacala.
Ilha de Moçambique is defamed, even if she used to be the capital of the country.*

This song is a striking critique of the Frelimo members on the City Council, some of whom obtained their jobs through nepotism and not ability, as they have passed only the 5th class. They had been informed about the cruise ship visit and had announced it to the islanders, but neglected the practical preparations for the disembarkation.

Despite the difficulties, few want to move to the mainland. The urban atmosphere of Ilha de Moçambique is found nowhere else. Nightlife on weekends is buzzing with videos and discos. Some Tufo songs also praise these aspects of the Island:

*How it is beautiful, the Island of Mozambique, in the first hours of the morning,
With the strong winds, and the fishermen in their tiny boats,
setting sail in order to eke out a living from the sea.
Even more beautiful it is at time of night,
people crowding in the streets at Hoti and Matadouro,
and also at Estrela there is lots of life.*

Hoti and Matadouro are places for disco dancing and video shows in the macuti town. Estrela is the club house of *Estrela Vermelha*, where the Tufo group at one point ran evening video shows, as a way of raising money for the association. After a while the television set broke down, putting an end to that.

28. *Capitania*, the port authority.

Tufo and Politics

As shown by the Tufo songs quoted above, the population of Mozambique Island is very patriotic. The islanders love their Island, and they are proud of its famous past. Those who grew up on the island all know one another, as distinct from the newcomers who arrived during the war. In colonial days the upper class was the Portuguese colonial administrators, traders and businessmen. Today the top members of society on the Island are the local state representatives, Frelimo Party members, who form the upper layer of district and municipality administration. They are generally Mozambicans from other parts of the country, and often they only stay in the Island for a few years. Stories of corruption are plentiful. Administrators have pocketed aid money that was destined for the physical restoration of the once-beautiful stone-built town. In the early 1980s Ilha de Moçambique was declared a UN World Cultural Heritage, and a lot of aid money was allocated to maintenance and restoration. Little of that project has happened, and the money has disappeared.

The relationship between political power and the Tufo groups is ambiguous. Following Independence, the Tufo groups, along with other local dance groups, were turned into folklore by the Frelimo government: exotic entertainment to welcome important visitors in airports. The Tufo groups replied by singing about harsh realities when they greeted visiting notables, though usually they sang in the Makhuwa language, which meant that the critique might pass unnoticed. When Tufo groups today display Frelimo posters in their club houses or compose songs praising Frelimo they are likely to do so for pragmatic reasons. The wise person or group will back the political party in power. The practice has little to do with political convictions. «When this Father dies, we'll have to look for another» they say, by «Father» referring to Frelimo.

The story of the changing names of *Mahafil Islam* reflects this type of position. *Mahafil Islam* was the name of the oldest dance association cum football club on Ilha de Moçambique. An early Frelimo administrator in Mozambique Island suggested an updating of the name; *Mahafil Islam* had a colonial as well as a religious ring, neither very pleasant in Frelimo socialist ears. The name *Estrela Vermelha* (Red Star) had very different connotations; in addition to the general socialist touch, *Estrela Vermelha* was also the nickname of the Frelimo security forces. The move proved a wise one, and the name *Estrela Vermelha* became very popular. It has even outlived the recent political change away from socialism. At the time of Independence a splinter group broke away from *Mahafil Islam*. That group also changed its name for political reasons, several times. First it took the name of *Mahafil Camarada* (ie. Comrade Mahafil), later- but still in Frelimo socialist times - changing it to *Associação a Luta Continua* (The Struggle Continues). Later again, after the 1994 multi-party elections when «A Luta Continua» had already become a slogan of the past, it changed its name to the present *Associação Forte Amizade* (Strong Friendship).

In Ilha de Mozambique in the 1990s these two groups had quite a close relation to the Frelimo Party, while some of other Tufo groups were blacklisted by the local (Frelimo) District Department of Culture. The crime

of one particular group was that, shortly after the end of the war but before the general elections, it had danced to welcome a delegation from Renamo. Since then this group has ceased to exist as far as the local (Frelimo) administration is concerned. When I asked the District Department of Culture for a list of the Tufo groups in the Island, that group was not on the list. I found a similar situation in Angoche where Tufo groups thought to be close to Renamo were blacklisted.

A new kind of Tufo/Frelimo relationship has emerged more recently, with Tufo not only criticising political power, but also speaking on its behalf. This relationship works in particular with those groups that are «close» to the Party, which tend to be groups with capable and eloquent men placed in central positions. As one of them said:

«Our purpose [*in the group*] is the transmission of messages. Messages that derive from our daily lives. Messages regarding the problems that we encounter, but also regarding our visions and our dreams. Sometimes we will criticize the Government; we are the mouthpiece for what the people want. Sometimes also, however, we will transmit the Government's messages».

In this capacity some groups were active in the information and mobilization campaign regarding participation in the local elections for city councils. In Ilha de Moçambique, as well as in Angoche, some Tufo groups did a lot of work in this context; this was not in favour of one political party or another, but rather an endeavour of civil education, commissioned by the Frelimo government. And in the same vein Tufo groups on the coast are active in consciousness-raising and mobilizing on environmental issues. Seen from the perspective of the Tufo groups this collaboration has the advantage of increasing their visibility and chances of eligibility for small-scale income-generation and savings projects. The development projects, when they occur, are channeled through local and international NGOs. In some respects this is a promising development. Tufo groups are well organized, and their members tend to be women in difficult situations such as single mothers, and women with no income. They appear to be an ideal target group for a poverty-oriented NGO aid programme. It remains to be seen how this will work out in the longer run, and if the groups and the women will be able to maintain their autonomy and independence *vis a vis* economic and political powers.

Women, Tufo, Islam and Politics : Winding up

Supported by traditions of female gender power in Makhuwa culture, women of the northern coast of Mozambique have developed a space of their own in the Tufo associations. Women who don't have that many other possibilities of remarkable social careers – low education, shaky marriages, lack of income – get the chance through the Tufo groups of becoming somebody. The Tufo group activities take a lot of the members' time, but it is not income-generating. On the contrary, a member of a Tufo group must expect to pay a lot of expenses, for *capulanas*, for transport and for the monthly fee. «Survival strategies» however, are not always just about food, but also about identity and belonging. Marriage is important for social

respectability, but for a number of women the long term reliable source of identity and belonging seems to be the Tufo groups.

The Tufo dance has roots in Islam, and on the northern Mozambican coast the Tufo groups are still a part of Islamic culture. Processes of secularization are occurring, however. On one hand coastal groups are detaching themselves from religion, and Quranic songs and Islamic celebrations are of decreasing importance in the life of the groups. Likewise, upcountry Tufo groups are emerging with no religious attachment whatsoever. Thus many aspects of Tufo development display an expansion of women's culture and a renewed source of status and identity for the participating women. On the other hand a factor in, and an effect of, the general process of the secularization of Tufo is the increasing involvement in politics and «development» as described above. Some groups have moved from being the people's mouthpiece *vis a vis* political power to also acting as a mouthpiece for government policies. And some groups have been targeted for small-project support by development NGOs. To a certain extent this looks like an ideal choice, and a good idea: to use these already existing and well-organized associations for small-scale credit schemes and support for income generation. Among the Tufo groups there is a high demand for this type of aid. At the same time, however, this development may be dangerous for the Tufo groups as women's groups. Research from elsewhere (Schroeder 1997) has shown how women's well-functioning organizations, once they were targeted by aid money, became dominated by men. Seen in this light the future of the Tufo groups is uncertain. Will they be taken over and run by industrious men? Or will the women be strong and visionary enough to embark on the development project, while still insisting on the Tufo groups as a women's culture?

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Signe ARNFRED

The Nordic Africa Institute

Uppsala

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