

PIONEERS OF THE PRESS IN MOZAMBIQUE

João Albasini and his brother¹

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ABSTRACT This paper is the first of a series of writings about pioneer journalists in the history of the Mozambican press. Since the second half of the XIX century, the Mozambican press began its development with João Albasini and his brother, José Albasini. João Albasini is considered the first journalist of Mozambique. He created the newspapers “*O Africano*” (“The African”) and “*O Brado Africano*” (“The African Shout”) respectively. This article provides a quick historical background of the country in the late XIX century and examines the contributions of the Albasini brothers to journalism, focused especially on the *Grêmio Africano* (African Guild). “*O Brado Africano*” is considered to be the newspaper in which the most important writers of Mozambique began publishing their texts, while João Albasini himself is the author of a posthumous book which inaugurated the country’s literary period.

Key-words: History of the press; Mozambican Journalism; João Albasini; “*O Africano*”; “*O Brado Africano*”.

INTRODUCTION

Unlike Spain, Portugal delayed the deployment of the press in its colonies about three hundred years. It was an external phenomenon – the invasion of Portugal by Napoleonic troops and the flight of the royal family to Brazil transferring the imperial institutions to the New World – which caused substantial changes. The events of 1817 forced João VI to return to Portugal; the Portuguese liberal constitution of 1820 and the independence of Brazil in 1822 changed the position of the Portuguese Government which in 1836 declared the necessity of creating official information organs in the remaining colonies.

Mozambique, the region that interests us here, began its press with the publication of the first issue of the “*Boletim do Governo da Província de Moçambique*” (“Government Gazette of the Province of Mozambique”) The first unofficial newspaper followed some years later, with the publication of “*O Progresso*” (“The Progress”) on April 9, 1868.

Apparently there was only a single edition, leading immediately to government censorship, even against the will of the Governor General. However, other publications would follow and be multiplied in the entire territory of Mozambique by the end of the XIX century.

The titles are varied and creative; but as some might be repeated from one region to another, the researcher must pay close attention to data selection for the reconstruction of the history of the Mozambican press.

Ilídio Rocha, author of the most organized and consistent research on the subject so far, interprets the multiplication of newspapers in the last two decades of the XIX century based on the following elements (ROCHA, 2000, pgs. 90 e 91):

a) the miscegenation resulted in more or less durable relationships, from which would rise a new social category composed of the mixed (ZAMPARONI, 1998,) or *assimilated* (ZAMPARONI, b). They formed a kind of mulatto elite at that moment, “a rising bourgeoisie and enlightened elite” (ZAMPARONI, a), which would confront the old ideas about colonization and support what many authors call “Mozambicality” (LARANJEIRA, 2005);

b) The founding of schools for literacy by the Freemasonry in Lourenço Marques was followed by others, in which there was no racial discrimination, so blacks and mulattos, boys and girls, could be educated. The same practice took place at the Swiss Mission in Lourenço Marques, devoted exclusively to advancing the literacy of black populations, and later would add vocational training;

c) The emergence of a bureaucratic officialdom composed of mestizos after the Republic;

d) The expansion of the colony’s economy required a larger labor force, absolutely impossible to achieve only with European citizens.

In summary, there was increasing urbanization in some parts of the country (ZAMPARONI, 1998) which would cause great journalistic activity by the end of the XIX century (MARTINS, 2006), as well as a nationalist feeling (PATRAQUIM, s/d) amid the indigenous population. The latter supports and maintains the Portuguese identity of paternal origin, and acknowledges its ties to a native motherhood (ZAMPARONI, b).

This sense of incipient nationality can be clearly seen in the names of some newspapers of that period, and they would be perpetuated throughout the XX century, when the adjective *African* was included. The oldest newspaper is “*O Africano*” (“The African”) in Quelimane (July 1, 1877), whose slogan “religion, instruction and morality” speaks for itself. It was followed by the colony’s first literary magazine called

“*Revista Africana*” (“African Review”), published in Lourenço Marques. It was created and directed by José Pedro Campos Oliveira, who had been in India before (ROCHA, 1973, p. 4); he was the first Portuguese writer born in the colony. He studied in Goa, wrote for other newspapers, and also published the “*Almanaque Popular*” (“Popular Almanac”) in 1865 (ROCHA, 2000, p. 26).

“*Civilização Africana*” (“African civilization”) was another newspaper published in 1886, and there is not much information about it. The alleged edition occurred on the island of Mozambique (DIAS, 1957, p. 55; ROCHA, 1973, p. 5). In 1892, the “*Clamor Africano*” (“African Clamor”) was published, under the direction of the mestizo former Lieutenant Alfredo de Aguiar, who had published other newspapers and continued to edit them, despite the constant prohibitions by the authorities, thanks to the diatribes he used to write. The same researchers also noted a newspaper called “*O Luso-Africano*” (“The Luso-African”), allegedly published on January 3, 1892, and another, “The African”, on November 13 of the same year. There is no further information about either of them and they probably had only one edition (ROCHA, 2000, p. 62).

Many other publications appeared with similar adjectives throughout the following decades: “*O Africano*” (“The African”) circulated between 1912 and 1914 (ROCHA, 2000, p. 87); a weekly newspaper called “*Missão Africana*” (“African Mission”), linked to Nossa Senhora do Rosário da Beira Mission (1931-1940), a weekly newspaper called “*Voz africana*” (“African Voice”), which was inaugurated on December 30, 1932 and continued being published in the 1970s (DIAS, 1957, p. 100; ROCHA, 1973, p. 78), etc.

The challenges for these newspapers, however, were immense: the printing presses’ difficulties, including the lack of type; the scarcity of paper - it was common for newspapers to change not only the kind of paper but also its dimensions; overt censorship not only by the Portuguese authorities but also by any intermediate level bureaucrats who felt affected by the publications; large distances, the lack of roads and virtually no means of transportation became almost invincible factors for these pioneers. And on top of it all, the most important problem was the percentage of illiteracy and language diversity. The 1894 Census indicated there were only 15 Africans who could read and write in Lourenço Marques. And, on the other hand, the city was ultimately the location of greater initial development of the press (ZAMPARONI, b; ZAMPARONI, 2002, c).

In any event, newspaper publishers considered that the press was the

driving force for culture, and so was journalism at that time (OLIVEIRA, s / d): the discourse was linked to pedagogical action. Thus researchers should understand that the importance of what was published did not lie in the victories achieved or the quality of the texts, but rather in the debate it provoked.

The Albasini brothers, João and José, were born in this context. They were the grandchildren of a certain João Albasini (1813-1888), a Portuguese trader who first established himself in the Transvaal², where he helped to build a road to the port of Lourenço Marques (1855). João Albasini was a hunter, tribal chief and senior government official of the Boer Republic. In 1859, this same João Albasini, as a trader, established a Portuguese consulate in the Transvaal, which was self-supporting until 1868. In 1860, João Albasini took the initiative of creating a postal service between the place where he lived, Zoutpansberg, and Lourenço Marques, where there was only a prison then. The mail was carried by a soldier of the military garrison (ROCHA, 2000, pp. 21, 23 and 98). It is also known that Albasini acquired a piece of land and donated it to Portugal in the Transvaal, where the colony of São Luís was founded (*O Brado Africano*, 9/8/1922, p. 1).

João and José Albasini were that pioneer's grandchildren. There is not much data on José, who was younger. Ilídio Rocha indicates that José was the official dispatcher in the harbor, like his brother. He participated in the foundation of two newspapers with his brother and replaced him at "*O Brado Africano*" after his death in 1922. He also got involved in a dispute with Karel Pott³ and the African Guild in 1932, in whose founding both brothers had participated, and for which they fought a lot. As for João Albasini dos Santos, it is known that he was born on November 2, 1876, in Magule, and died in 1922 in Lourenço Marques, at the age of 46. As the son of the local aristocracy, João studied in a Catholic mission of Lourenço Marques (THOMAZ, s / d). With his brother he founded two newspapers, "*O Africano*" and "*O Brado Africano*". In 1925 he had published a posthumous book of chronicles and short stories, ***O livro da dor***⁴ (The book of pain) (OLIVEIRA, s / d). João and José were sons of Francisco João Albasini and Joaquina Correa de Oliveira – she was a mulatto (ROCHA, 2000, p. 98, footnote 28). They had two siblings, Maria Isabel and Antônio Paulino (THOMAZ, s / d).

In his youth, João Albasini was protected by José Aniceto da Silva, director of the Post Office in Mozambique, which led him to work in that department. Starting as an assistant forwarding agent, he later became chief of staff and official forwarding agent. At the request of Governor

Freire de Andrade, he took charge of indigenous services of the Railways of Mozambique. Demonstrating no ideological bias, João used to get along well with the royalist Freire de Andrade, and also he used to support the historical republican Brito Camacho on his measures for education. Later, João would feel betrayed by the republican and broke off their friendship. Since his youth he began writing for newspapers such as “*Vida Nova*” (“New life”) and “*Diário de Notícias*” (“Daily News”), which he would leave to found, in 1908, “*O Africano*” (“The African”). After selling it to the priest José Vicente del Sacramento, João Albasini also founded in 1919 “*O Brado Africano*” (“The African Shout”). He had at least one child on record, Carlos Albasini (*O Brado Africano*, 9/8/1922, p. 1).

João Albasini, supposedly to treat his tuberculosis, left for Lisbon. In fact, he had “a list of demands” in which the issuance of discriminatory laws against the *natives* and *assimilated* was in first place. Moreover the following demands were made: a) reduction of the *palhota*⁵ tax (...); b) the end of *chibalo*⁶; c) non-expropriation of the land of flood plains, d) the prohibition of all alcoholic drinks⁷; e) creation of arts and crafts schools, and education for *our women*; f) approval of the statutes of the African Guild, which had been continuously stalled by the local bureaucracy since 1908.

After arriving in Lisbon, Albasini began to write for “*O Combate*” (“The Combat”), the newspaper of the Socialist Party, which took up his demands, directing them to deputy Ramada Curto. At the same time, the journalist sent articles to “*O Brado Africano*”, the same articles originally published in U.S newspapers. He denounced the violence of the Portuguese official policies in Africa (ZAMPARONI, b).

The issue of “*O Brado Africano*” on September 18, 1920 put the spotlight on the deputies’ elections, for which João Albasini was a candidate. Because of this, he returned to Lisbon, and this edition formalized his candidacy in seven columns, occupying the entire top of the newspaper, just below the headline, as it used to be common for newspapers, reading as follows:

The day has come for the people of Mozambique to show in the polls their aspiration [...] the oblivion into which we are voted by our governments is ordinarily criticized, as well as the lack of initiative of the Public Administration, the anachronism that is noted in its processes, the ignorance of those men who govern us from the *Terreiro do Paço*, the needs of the colonies that belong to the people who toil and depend on the elimination of these obstacles for their development; it is repeatedly proclaimed by the colonies the importance of choosing a deputy who is aware of all these needs and who will raise his voice there in front of the parliament, with no links to

any party interests; a deputy who will demand what the colonies need for their development.

As it used to be common, the article analyzed the candidates:

Dr. Jaime Ribeiro, a well-known doctor, is affiliated to the Alvarista party; Fontoura da Costa, an army officer, is affiliated to the Democratic Party, and not having built his career in this Province, cannot meet its needs practically; João dos Santos Albasini, our director and patrician, has sincerely worked as a journalist and staunch supporter of progress, and undoubtedly everyone sees him as a man that only works for the province in order to make the province work.

And the article ended with the call:

all commercial and industrial classes, members of liberal professions, working classes and all workers' organizations together should vote for João Albasini as an independent deputy who has no other purpose than the advancement of this colony, the land he loves and for which he has pleaded all his life as a journalist, despite all the trouble this attitude has brought him. Vote for: João dos Santos Albasini! – Journalist. *O Brado Africano*, 9/18/1920, p. 1).

In the same issue on the same page, the newspaper published the "Notice" signed by Dr. Augusto do Amaral Polônio, Judge of Civil and Commercial Law of Lourenço Marques, making public the candidacy of João Albasini, presented by 25 voters according to the law. It also informed that João Albasini was divorced, lived in Lisbon and that the election would occur the next day. The notice is dated on September 12. The electoral process had begun on September 7th, to end only on August 21st the following year⁸.

Originally, João Albasini and the African Guild were against participating of any elections, as they found them always fraudulent. But the Socialist Party of Lourenço Marques was formed exclusively by white people and thus Albasini preferred to approach the same party in Lisbon, as it accepted mulatto people naturally. For the same reason he decided to run in the elections (THOMAZ, s / d).

Two years later, João Albasini passed away unexpectedly, even though he had remained ill throughout that period, keeping up the fights he had started earlier in the pages of his newspapers.

Little is known about "*O Africano*". José dos Santos Rufino, once quoted by Raul Dias Neves (1957, p. 73 and 74) says that the newspaper was first edited by José Albasini in 1911, and João Albasini was its director. Ilidio Rocha gives the date of December 25, 1908 as the launching of a

program-edition of the newspaper, as used to be common then⁹. The first edition, however, was printed only on March 1, 1909, probably to meet the legislation requirements then in force (ROCHA, 2000, pp. 91-94).

The novelty was that the newspaper had a page written in *landim* or *Ronga*¹⁰ language, which soon became extremely popular. It is known that the paper was supported by the Masonic group, whose members were, among others, Captain Francisco Roque de Aguiar, president of Capítulo institution; Dr. Jaime Ribeiro, a socialist militant and José Corrêa da Veiga. It was a weekly publication suspended a few weeks after its launching. It only reappeared in 1912, with the same original team, plus José dos Santos Rufino, as secretary-editor and administrator. “*O Africano*” since the beginning had its own printing press, which belonged to João Albasini and Santos Rufino. The latter became the director and editor of the newspaper. It circulated in Mozambique, but it was also sent to the mines of the Transvaal that employed indigenous work forces in Mozambique. Father José Vicente¹¹, a priest whose life story is extremely controversial, used to provide loans to the periodical, and later acquired it. In Lourenço Marques, “*O Africano*” was the first periodical to have a telegraph service from Lisbon by Havas Agency. Later they would add the Reuters services, until then exclusively utilized by “The Guardian”, which used to be published in English in the Mozambican city. For a while, “*O Africano*” was published every two weeks, and during World War I, thanks to the special broadcast bulletins, it was printed every three weeks.

After the newspaper was sold, it lost its original editorial line and began to face competition from a new publication that the Albasini brothers founded immediately, with the money they had received from the business with Father José Vicente. Discredited, “*O Africano*” was closed down. The very rich priest traveled to Portugal, donating money to the church to be forgiven (the priest was even married!). He was replaced by José dos Santos Rufino in the lottery.

“*O Brado Africano*” was responsibility of the Albasini brothers and another mestizo named Estácio Dias, who was an official of the Treasury. The first issue appeared on December 24, 1918, as well as a “program-number.” Soon the newspaper settled its typography in the African Guild, which was still being organized. The newspaper was owned by the *Empresa do Jornal O Brado Africano* (The African Shout Company.), as it read in its header. But this situation changed around 1920, when the African Guild¹² assumed control. That would last for twelve years until in 1932 a crisis affected the newspaper’s publication (ZAMPARONI, b).

“*O Brado Africano*” was also a weekly newspaper, and like “*O Africano*”, it used to have a page in *Landim*. It was clearly addressed to the literate mestizo population, and to the few blacks who could read, or whites who were interested in its information and controversy (ROCHA, 2000, p.120 e ss.)¹³. Ilídio Rocha distinguishes at least three phases in the existence of the periodical: the first was from 1918 to 1932 when it was directed by the Albasini brothers. Until 1922, João was in charge of the publication and, after his death, José took over. Both managements had broad participation by Estácio Dias, who became its editorialist after João’s death. In 1926, a law called João Belo required periodicals to have a director with a university degree. Then “*O Brado Africano*” was formally taken over by the pharmacist graduated in Goa, João Custódio Xavier de Assis Pais. Upon his return to Portugal, João Custódio was replaced by the mestizo advocate Karel Pott¹⁴, who ended up provoking the local authorities, leading the newspaper to be suspended by the Court for two months. According to Ilídio Rocha, “*O Brado Africano*” around 1928 advertised itself as “the newspaper of largest circulation in the Province of Mozambique” (2000, p. 268). However, a simple look at the newspapers shows that, in fact, that slogan had been adopted in 1919, when João Albasini was still alive (*O Brado Africano*, June 30, 1922) (see the edition of 12/24/1919).

The second phase refers to the publication of “*O Clamor Africano*”¹⁵ (The African Clamor) created to replace “*O Brado Africano*” (The African Shout). The “*Clamor Africano*” was still owned by the same institution and was still directed by José Albasini. It also kept the same slogan as the former newspaper: “supporting the interests of the natives of the Portuguese colonies.” There were twelve editions from December 12, 1932 to February 25th of the following year¹⁶.

On the first page of the inaugural edition on December 10, 1932, Estácio Dias wrote the article entitled “Goofy idealism”, regretting the division that took place in the African Guild and in the newspaper itself. However, he acknowledged the importance of a new generation of activists offering to give up their seat. On the same page, under the title “The African Clamor,” Estácio Dias discussed the ruling handed down against the newspaper - the two months suspension that led “the founders” to publish another periodical. Who were they? The article named them: Antonio Xavier, Estácio Dias, Francisco Benfica, Francisco de Haan, Joaquim Smart, José Albasini, Sebastião Torres da Fonseca, Sebastião Xavier and Thomé Fornasini, who were all alive, and Ferdinand Brühheim, Guilherme Brühheim, João Albasini and Rodrigo da Cunha Amaral, who had already died.

It was not only in Mozambique, however, that “*O Clamor Africano*” had problems. The edition of December 31, 1932, reported that the newspaper had also been banned from São Tomé, which was regretted by Estácio Dias in his article to the newspaper.

The same issue also brought some happy and sad notes. It reported the seventh-day mass for the death of Father José Vicente do Sacramento, announced the African Guild’s carnival party, and finally divulges the newspaper readers contest, with prizes that include sewing machine, camera, soaps, perfume boxes, dresses, handbags, etc. thanks to the collaboration of its advertisers. And the issue also reported the results of the elections for the new management of the African Guild of Gaza¹⁷.

The third phase began when the paper went back into circulation. Once more Ilidio Rocha criticizes the journal, saying it would no longer be important, except for some significant literary collaboration of authors like Rui Noronha, José Craveirinha and Noémia de Sousa (ROCHA, 2000, p. 123)¹⁸- all of them recognized by all historians of Mozambican literature as the main representative writers at that moment,.

In any event, the African Guild became the African Association of Lourenço Marques and would continue editing the newspaper until 1974. Ilidio Rocha reveals that since 1958 the newspaper was transferred to Aurelio Ferreira, who was no longer the lead writer of the “*União*” (The Union), organ of the defunct National Union (ROCHA, 2000, pp. 268 and 269). It seems that from this period until 1974, the newspaper must have been aligned with the dictatorship of Salazar definitively. In addition, the African Guild received funds for land acquisition and for construction of its headquarters and it also received loans for the same purposes.

However “*O Brado Africano*” was the greatest moment of Albasini brothers. The first newspaper editorial, signed by João Albasini, reads as follows under the title “Pointing Batteries...”:

Anyone who does not struggle for his Right condemns himself voluntarily to be a doormat for others. To stop is to die (...) In front of the Altar of Duty we shall bow down; we shall do it by making our complaints heard, and also our cries, our supplications! A program... Why would we need the explanation of a program here, if everyone knows what we saw and what we want? Let us follow the very same path that we began when we founded *O Africano* in 1908¹⁹ (*O Brado Africano*, 12/24/1918).

In this same first page, under “News”, there is a note as follows: “Until we organize the list of subscribers and have the telegraph service in Lisbon, which has been requested, our newspaper will be printed on

Saturdays. Once we have our services in order, it will be printed every two weeks with more pages or in a larger format.

The paper was launched with four tabloid-size pages and five columns. In the same issue, on page 3, the “Landim Section” reappeared, and it would continue over the years. It reproduced, sometimes *in totum*, sometimes in a reduced way, the news that had been written in Portuguese. It often included advertisements.

Flicking through the editions of “*O Brado Africano*,” the policy adopted by the newspaper becomes clear: in the edition of January 18, 1919, the first page shows the transcription of the “*Memorial*” delivered to the government in protest over discrimination against indigenous and assimilated people. Valdemir Zamparoni (b) questions this delayed manifestation, since the problem had been occurring for a long time. On another hand, he mentions that, in fact, the African Guild was divided by different points of view. Zamparoni also states that “if João Albasini believed in his positions opposing the Ordinance at the beginning, the same did not happen with many of the members of the Guild, whose position was postponed in order to avoid further crises in the group.”

On the same front page, a “Masthead”²⁰ explains: “*O Brado Africano*” which today is distributed, is number 3. Number 1 is the program of “*O Brado Africano*”. Number 2 is the program of ‘*Brado Africano*’ without the ‘*O*’, whose number was seized by order of the Chief of Police.” However, the explanation appears later, under the heading “Embarrassing the press”: “*O Brado Africano*,” comments a note in “The Guardian”, in which the Chief of Police had sent a notice that the newspaper could not circulate without permission, but the warning had come too late. So the newspaper ended up being confiscated on the streets. While the editors apologized to the authorities, stating there was no intention of evading the law, they protested because, as they say, “in this land, unique numbers, program numbers, advertising numbers always came out, while the gazette’s paperwork, intended to be facilitated, moves in jerks, ‘between terms of receipt and acts of completions...’ They have always passed by tacit consent”. However, that was not what happened to the newspaper (*O Brado Africano*, 1/18/1919, pp. 1 and 2).

The publication did not refrain from establishing the controversy with the former “*O Africano*”. One reason is that João Albasini and his group strongly opposed the action of the so-called secular missions, allowed by the Portuguese government since 1913 (ZAMPARONI, 1998, a).

The issue of December 24, 1919, exactly one year after the launching of the newspaper, referred to that first period under the

headline “Our birthday and Christmas.” It complained that too much had been spent to reach few political results. It guaranteed that the fight would continue, though.

In the following year, on September 18, 1920, João Albasini dared to become a candidate. Afterwards, in the edition of November 13, 1920, he decided to develop a topic of his preference: education. The article “The problem of literacy” discussed the fact that education was the primary means for social ascension in Mozambique – it was not signed, therefore it was the editor’s responsibility. It criticized the fact that the Portuguese government not only neglected the issue, but also was effective in prohibiting private initiatives. A strict legislation was in place since 1907. African children and young Africans were discriminated against in relation to Europeans (ZAMPARONI, 1998, a). The article also highlighted the importance of the Freemasonry contribution and stressed that education was an important civilizing element (ZAMPARONI, c). The African Guild had already established evening classes. The article drew attention to the importance of primary school, and at the same time advocated the need for vocational schools. Furthermore, indigenous women should steer clear of the institution of *lobolo*²¹ by attending the school, so that they would no longer be regarded as mere commodities. According to Albasini, the education of women would contribute to men’s development. There was a need for the creation of agricultural schools for young people and schools to teach girls how to become skilled housewives or professionals, guaranteeing their families’ survival and maintenance, especially in case their husbands left them, which was very common then.

In fact, the above-mentioned crisis between Karel Port and José Albasini would later take place due to a more radical position on these issues, even after the death of João Albasini.

The issue of December 25, 1920 celebrated two years of existence of “*O Brado Africano*.” João Albasini insisted on the “negative balance” regarding the recommended goals for the newspaper and the African Guild. But he also insisted: “Our demand will not stop here and it will be always one of our principal programs: the education of the native.” Under several aliases used throughout his career, e.g., João das Regras (ZAMPARONI, b), Albasini kept up this constant fight.

In the edition of December 24, 1921, reaching its third year, the newspaper repeated the same disenchantment: “What are three years of struggle and disappointments for?” And insisted on a call to action: “To be read – indigenous work force” about the need for legislation that improved indigenous labor conditions and ensured indigenous land ownership.

On June 30, 1922, celebrating the first anniversary of a newspaper of the African League of Portugal, Albasini complained: "Justice! Justice for the Africans, this is the main cause that led them to found the *"Correio de África"*, with no other pretension than lifting the morale of the black people and promoting respect for their rights, accepting cooperation with Europe in all fields of activity according to their degree of intelligence". He insisted in the same article: "Our race is not inferior. We have our ideals; we have our very understandable development."

On August 19, 1922, the sad issue was published which reported the death of João Albasini and his funeral. It is a long article with his name in the title. It describes in detail the transfer of the coffin from the journalist's residence in the neighborhood of Machaquene to the cemetery and the first honors: "Around four o'clock in the afternoon, the hearse left the residence of the former chief of the newspaper. The coffin was placed in a car drawn by two pairs of horses along Pinheiro Chagas Avenue. It was accompanied by eight torch bearers and the priest José Brás Matozo, who had given the extreme unction. The dead man was wearing a black suit. The procession was organized with a group of women in front followed by a large crucifix and the Mission of São José Lhanguene band. The procession reached the cemetery at six o'clock. Six different groups of friends led the coffin to the grave: the second group was formed by representatives of the following newspapers *"Lourenço Marques Guardian"*, *"Jornal do Commercio"*, *"Correio de Mozambique"*, *"Colônia"*, *"Colonial"*, *"Oriente"*, *"Sol d'África"* and *"Emancipador"*. In the fourth group were journalists of *"O Brado Africano"*; in the sixth group, friends from the African Guild. There were speeches in Portuguese and Landim. Five wreaths were laid on the coffin, one of them by colleagues of the National Press and the others by his brothers, son and nephews".

About five thousand people attended the funeral. "During my 70 years I have never seen so many people at a funeral," said one resident, Fernanda Nascimento Thomaz believes that the majority must have been indigenous and assimilated people (THOMAZ, s / d). She mentions that among the authorities present was the future Minister of Colonies, Joao Belo, author of the draconian press law of 1926 (THOMAZ. s / d). In the edition of September 8th, the articles about the death of João Albasini continued. Under the title "Two Dead", Ernesto de Moraes mourned the death of the journalist: "a terrible fighter - lashing the bossy and disapproving of the Pharisees. In the press, he was a giant, and he will be missed in Mozambique. He was a powerful columnist and vigorous polemicist." The same writer added: "He was not an

ordinary man, he was a superman, one of those men whose talent is innate,” and concluded: “a fighting idealist, an abolitionist of racial bias (...), he was a brave and a good man”.

On the same front page, another article with the title “João Albasini” narrated the biography of the deceased. The article detailed the condolences received from Lisbon, Ibo, Chai-chai, Chibuto, Quelimane, Ressano Garcia, Inhambane, Beira, and Johannesburg: “João Albasini’s death is lamented throughout this part of our nascent Africa,” said one of the messages, which was even more important because it had come from a political opponent. Some exaggerated: “His writings were appreciated by the world press”, while others are more objective: “He has always defended the race to which he belonged, and he has also been disapproved and applauded”, and concluded: “The indigenous people have lost a fearless defender of their interests.” Meanwhile, the African Guild published a “Call” to elect a new president to replace João Albasini.

José Albasini, his brother, replaced him in the administration of the newspaper until the episode of the dispute with Karel Port.

The importance of “*O Brado Africano*” is incontestable. It was in its pages that Rui Noronha published his first poems. He first appeared in the newspaper when he was 17 years old in 1932, with a series of chronicles. After the rupture within the African Guild, affecting the newspaper, Rui Noronha participated less but he was not absent. Also the poet José Craveirinha began to publish his poems in the 1940s in the same paper. In the 1950s, a young man 19 years old, Marcelino dos Santos, residing in London, wrote for “*O Brado Africano*” highlighting its role as promoter of Mozambican culture. He was the son of Firmino dos Santos, who had also been published in “*O Africano*”. When Rui Noronha passed away in 1943, “*O Brado Africano*” published his obituary noting that Noronha had “proclaimed the right of citizenship of the natives.”

Among the many tributes that were paid to João Albasini, there was a very special one: the school at the African Guild headquarters received his name. And on December 3, 1936, another newspaper from Lourenço Marques, the also long-lived “*Notícias*”, recorded that the João Albasini School had unveiled a portrait of the patron, and its young students had presented an exhibition of handcrafts, “in which there was mainly embroidery.” The article concluded: “If the dead could see and feel, João Albasini would be satisfied in his grave with that product of his efforts.”

In summary, we can say that João Albasini was truly the first journalist in Mozambique; he was also the author of a literary oeuvre that divides the periods in Mozambican literature’s development. He helped

to improve it, publishing the first writers in the country. As a militant, he defended the citizenship of the indigenous people and mulattos, he gave special attention to the social status of women and he recognized that education is the driving force of civilization.

| NOTES

- 1 Translated from the original in Portuguese by Alan Neiva dos Santos.
- 2 Region to the south of the current Mozambique, part of South Africa.
- 3 Young lawyer, also mestizo, part of a second generation of assimilated persons. He wished to take some radical actions that the older generation did not approve. This matter will be treated later.
- 4 Pires Laranjeira, in his study of African literature in Portuguese, identifies five different periods in the evolution of Mozambican literature. The first, called by the author as incipience, refers to the first writings until the year 1924, in which the rise of the press had little influence on the cultural landscape of the colony. The second period runs from 1925 until the end of World War I; it began just when *O livro da dor*, by João Albasini, was published. This period is known as the prelude, and it has the great poet Rui Noronha as its most important reference (LARANJEIRA, 2005, pp. 256 and 257).
- 5 A kind of property tax which had become impossible to pay, preventing black people from becoming landlords.
- 6 A compulsory military service, as in the Middle Ages.
- 7 They considered that alcohol was harmful for blacks and especially for women, leading them into prostitution.
- 8 There were two elections annulled and a third one was delayed. The election took place, finally, on August 21, 1921 and it was won by the Democratic candidate, Delfim Costa. João Albasini received 157 votes, placing second, but he gave up after the first cancelation of the elections (THOMAZ, s/d. ROCHA, 2002, apud THOMAZ, s/d).
- 9 The program-edition was used to publicize the newspaper, and it was sent to potential subscribers. According to a notice in its pages, if it was not returned to the newsroom, those receivers would become actual subscribers.

- 10 It was a new language used by the black elite so it would target few *indigenous* readers, according to many critics.
- 11 Father José Vicente do Sacramento was a missionary in the land of the Rand and the Transvaal. Extremely poor, at the request of the Albasini brothers, he sent publications from the region, whose texts interested the families of those who worked in the mines. He received newspapers that later he would sell to the population of workers. Of course, this was not well regarded by local authorities, thanks to the editorial of the newspaper, which was against their policy. Given the difficulties, the priest gave up and moved to Lourenço Marques; he went to work for “*O Africano*”, writing articles and assisting in the administration of the publication. By approaching José dos Santos Rufino, he became a farmer on the land of the “*velha Carlota*”, situated on the outskirts of town. During World War I, the priest joined Rufe Nylor and became the lottery concessionaire in Mozambique, which made him a millionaire. In 1919, Nylor returned to Europe and Father Vicente ended up alone with the business. He decided to buy the newspaper “*O Africano*”, which included a page in English, which disseminated the results of the lottery, thereby avoiding violation of the laws of the Transvaal (ROCHA, 2000, pp. 92 and 93). Ilídio Rocha, in another observation, says the above-mentioned lands belonged to a rich mestizo lady, the daughter of an important dealer of the Transvaal and Lourenço Marques, Antonio de Paiva Raposo. She married Gerard Pott and had a son named Karel Pott, who would later participate in the history of the newspaper “*O Brado Africano*”.
- 12 Ilídio Rocha is generally very critical on assessing the role of the Albasini brothers, especially João Albasini, and the entire illustrated bourgeoisie. Thus he also criticizes the African Guild, whose formal establishment occurred only with the approval of its statutes on July 7, 1920, due to João Albasini’s trip to Lisbon. The statutes had been sent to different authorities since 1911, based on legislation of 1907 which required all indigenous persons and mestizos to take their charter of assimilated persons. However, they rejected this practice, considering it unconstitutional. On December 25, 1920, the legislation of 1907 was banned for a short time, but that was enough for enabling the recognition of the African Guild’s statute on June 30, 1920. The majority of the petitioners continued being non-carriers of charters. The operating permit came out on July 7th of that year. According to Rocha, the Guild and João Albasini and his newspaper had been victims of discrimination against blacks. However, that is not what I found out by reading the newspaper. And that is not the position adopted by different researchers, not only in journalism, but also in history, social sciences and anthropology.

- 13 The main data about the paper are furnished by Ilídio Rocha (2000), according to the work mentioned. When another source is used, including editions of the newspaper itself, it will be mentioned explicitly
- 14 Karel Pott was the first mestizo university student in Mozambique, son of the former consul of the Orange and Transvaal Republic and Holland, Gerard Pott, who had married a mestizo lady, Carlota Especiosa de Paiva Raposo. Gerard Pott lost his post in the Portuguese Government due to his sympathy for the Boers. Therefore, after graduating in London, he returned to Mozambique, joining the African Guild. He returned, however, with a more radicalized point of view on the support of the assimilated persons, which created the crisis that has already been mentioned here
- 15 According to the law, a single edition publication was not required to have a director with a university degree. And a suspended publication could be replaced by another, only by using a different name. Everything else - management, continuity of articles, page numbers, etc. - could remain the same as the original. It was what happened to this newspaper
- 16 Ilidio Rocha (2000, p. 123) states that during this period the paper was edited by a “ghost” company, which does not correspond to reality. Since the first editions of “*O Brado Africano*,” reference is made to *Empresa do Jornal O Brado Africano* (The African Shout Company). As João Albasini died in August 1922, and the September issues were owned by the African Guild, one can assume that the change took place after the death of the pioneer. Precisely, “*O Clamor Africano*” was re-edited by the original company due to a dispute between the old original group (Estácio Dias and José Albasini) and the new generation. Therefore when “*O Brado Africano*” resumed publication, it was directed by Karel Pott and owned by the African Guild, which may have implied the removal of José Albasini. When Pott traveled to Lisbon, it was Jose Gonçalves Cotta, another lawyer, who replaced him. Ilidio Rocha makes new and heavy attacks against this director, criticizing him because he wrote, at the request of the Portuguese government, discretionary legislation in relation to the natives without being an expert on the subject (ROCHA, 2000, pp. 123 and 145/146).
- 17 I have already mentioned in other articles the great mobility of these newspapers sent to all Portuguese-speaking colonies, including Brazil. Here we can also observe how the idea of African Guilds had been circulated. Gaza is the northern region of the current South Africa. It had been a region of strong resistance to the Portuguese during the colonization, and was later annexed by England
- 18 Again here an explicit unwillingness of the researcher towards the

newspaper: Rui Noronha is considered the first great Mozambican writer, Jose Craveirinha is regarded as the greatest African poet in the Portuguese language, and Noémia de Sousa as well.

- 19 If there was any doubt about the real date of the founding of “*O Africano*”, here it is resolved.
- 20 Throughout the XIX century and beginning of the XX century, whenever a newspaper published any note about itself it would do it through a “Masthead”.
- 21 O *lobolo* was a kind of payment that the groom should make to the family of the bride’s father, as a compensation for reducing the family income. Thus women were treated as commodities. João Albasini personally, and many others through his newspaper, fought constantly against that situation.

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