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## **The monkey's sworn oath : Cultures of engagement for reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of the civil war in Mozambique**

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**The Monkeys' Sworn Oath  
Cultures of Engagement for Reconciliation and  
Healing in the Aftermath of the Civil War in  
Mozambique**

**VICTOR IGREJA**

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Cultures of Engagement for Reconciliation and  
Healing in the Aftermath of the Civil War in  
Mozambique**

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Victor Igreja

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## ***Abstract***

This study examines the social world of reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of the protracted Mozambican civil war. Using a multidisciplinary approach (sociology, history, legal and medical anthropology, and international law) this research explores how reconciliation and healing unfold contributing to the repair of a devastated social world. It examines the war survivors' judgments regarding the potential roles of various forms of transitional justice in redressing the abuses and crimes of the past, the contributions of the agricultural cycle and customary justice to reconciliation, and those of healing practices in addressing ill-health problems. The overall goal is to elucidate how the various social practices invested in reconciliation and healing contribute to rebuilding the shattered social world, to peace and to social stability. The study demonstrates that amidst the indescribable and appalling human disruption and material destruction coupled with the officially orchestrated post-war *cultures of denial*, war survivors in Gorongosa have laboured to create and maintain peace and social stability by breaking the cycles of injustice and unaccountability, reconciling with former enemies and healing the wounds of war.

The study starts out from a comprehensive revision of other studies in that it addresses the existing scholarly literature on transitional justice and its contribution to reconciliation and on the healing of war-related suffering among individuals, families and communities. This revision leads to the formulation of questions for empirical investigation of the transitional justice process in Mozambique as it unfolds at grassroots level.

A careful analysis of the local dynamics of war demonstrates a clear collapse of the notions of “war front” and “home front”. The extreme abuses and crimes perpetrated by soldiers against civilian individuals and families living within the war zones went far beyond the limits of what is endurable. The reverse dynamic, that is the process of reconstituting the social world, indicates the presence of both pernicious long-term legacies and an extraordinary capacity in the communities to overcome their plight. This capacity is referred to here as *cultures of engagement*. It is empirically observable in the processes of reconciliation and healing. *Cultures of engagement* consist in war survivors being actively involved in accessing and utilizing the available endogenous resources for the purpose of reconciling alienated people and healing the wounds of war. These

endogenous resources are embodied both in the geographic environment that gives rise to a specific type of economy and in the socio-cultural, politico-legal practices that constitute reservoirs of social capital. The key features of these resources indicate how people in Gorongosa live in an ecological system of mutual relationships and interdependencies, which can represent either a constraint or the potential for full usage of these available resources. It is this striking combination of availability and accessibility of resources with the contingencies - such as establishment of relationships, family and community participation - attached to their exploration that creates the possibility of a functioning society. Viewed from this perspective, the Gorongosa case stretches to the limit contemporary understandings of the human capacity for reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of brutal civil wars. In conclusion, theoretical and practical implications are drawn from these results.

## ***PART I Getting Acquainted with the Topics***

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This doctoral thesis is about the disturbances and vicissitudes of a post-war society and the processes of repairing its devastated social world. It addresses the strategies deployed by the survivors of war violence to overcome their post-war plight amidst shattered families and communities in central Mozambique. To serve as a point of entry to the main topic, a short story is presented here. It is a story about different types of animals trying to make sense of a disturbance in their social world.

#### **1.1. “Swear, monkeys, swear!” Justice in the animal kingdom**

*In a tiny village, the different creatures were peacefully living together until one day a serious problem erupted. The village was composed of trees, flowers, bees and other animals. One day, the bees went away on a far-off and complicated mission. On their return home they found something strange in the tops of their home trees: the honey was missing from their hives. Someone had stolen their property. They felt outraged; but instead of retaliating by biting every habitant in the nation, they thought, "There is still hope". The bees kept cool and on the following day they flew to the local court to report their case. After a preliminary enquiry, the judges indicted the monkeys with stealing the honey from the beehives in the tops of the trees.*

*On the day of the trial, one judge raised his voice to speak. There was complete silence, "You may all sit down", he said. The female judge standing in the far corner of the gathering echoed her colleague's voice, "garane pance", and the word went back to the central space of the gathering. The reverent silence prevailed. The judge said, "We are here today because the honey was stolen from the bees. To steal is wrong. The monkeys stole the honey from the beehives, and it is our responsibility to right wrong. Who among you dares to present evidence to the contrary beyond reasonable doubt?"*

*Then it was the defendants' turn to speak. One elder monkey stood up and said, "In the name of all monkeys like me who are present at this judgment, I swear that we did not steal the honey from the beehives". There was a tense silence, but the judges were not impressed. They kept listening very carefully. "You may proceed with your defence in the attempt to honour your descendant", one of them said. The elder monkey proceeded, "We have four legs, and two of these we use equally as hands. And we can easily climb trees;*

*that is true. We can run and jump from one tree to another, and we like honey; that is true as well. But I swear, I repeat, I swear: we did not steal the honey from the beehives". After hours of questioning and hearing the defendants, the judges kept insisting, "Swear, monkeys, swear; swear so that this problem can be brought to an end". The audience started to become very concerned about whether or not it was really going to be possible to convict the monkeys based on the evidence that had been presented. Some members of the community members felt that there was serious doubt. When the bees left on a mission, they did not usually leave their beehives unprotected but left their children behind to guard them. This time had been different. They had mobilized all bees together, because their mission was very complicated. At the time of the theft there were no bees around, so no one had actually witnessed the monkeys climbing the trees to steal the honey from the hives. The evidence presented against the monkeys was too weak to stand up in a serious court. With the exception of the judges, who were not uttering their fomenting thoughts to anyone, everyone in the village was pondering over whether a possible condemnation and punishment of the monkeys might not bring confusion into the village. For the first time in the history of this village, the judges had the great responsibility to be careful not to condemn the innocent and let the wrongdoers go free. The judges had to seriously consider the credibility of the justice system for restoring social harmony in the village. About one thing the judges were clear: "To steal is wrong, and our laws condemn it". Apparently everyone in the village agreed upon this rule. Yet the question was whether the monkeys had really committed the offence, and here there was no general agreement. Since the monkeys were doing upoca (persistently denying), the judges were in a very difficult position.*

*The question that was seething in the judges' minds was: "What is the best way to reach a verdict contrary to the monkeys' testimony while at the same time inspiring silence in everyone?" While they were ruminating and staring towards different corners of their village in search of an answer, one judge said to the others, "Sometimes bringing about justice is not like cultivating the land". Another judge added, "Yes, that is true; my grandfather used to say that 'the banana tree dies because of the bananas it delivers'". One judge asked what the allegory of the bananas had to do with finding a solution to the case of the bees and the monkeys. The other answered, "We have to be careful in this case, because the same animals that we are trying to help could turn against us and even kill us". The judges gained illumination from this rapid conversation and they realized that the initial question had not been well formulated. There was a word that needed to be replaced or transmuted in order to facilitate the reasoning that would lead to a fair*

*sentence. It was the word "best". They replaced it with the word, "pragmatic", and the question was reformulated as "what is the most pragmatic way to shake the system while at the same time inspiring silence in everyone?" By "inspiring silence" they meant, "forging a consensus". The judges looked at the litigation on two levels. One was the level of the plaintiffs and the defendants: the bees and the monkeys. The other was the level of the defendants and the village. They realised that the two levels required different and conflicting approaches. Since the legal process was transparent and very procedural, it was not easy to be "pragmatic", that is to pronounce a sentence that would not inspire happiness in some and frustration in others. It would not be easy to keep the unity of the village as well as to attain justice for the bees.*

*The villagers' fear was that in the absence of solid evidence, the monkeys could start a revolt and bring instability to the village. Initially they had only been concerned about the plight of the monkeys, and they were not attentive to the bees' loss of property. One flower enlightened the other inhabitants of the village about the inherent danger of neglecting the plight of the injured bees. The bees had the reputation of being very irascible and attracting destructive powers. The buzzing of the bees generates an echo, which gives the impression that they are striking an entire village all at once; therefore, it is not easy to defeat them in a war-like battle. Among the audience there was one very experienced war lieutenant who was silently watching the court proceedings. He had lost an eye in the war and since his retirement he had not spoken much to anyone in the village, but this time he decided to say something in relation to the idea of an eventual war against the bees, "One of the most effective ways of fighting bees", he said, "is to light a fire. But in lighting a fire, the survival of the entire village is put at stake. A miscalculation with a fire can be disastrous as the grass starts to burn straight away, and then the fields, and ultimately the houses. In the case of an uncontrolled spread of such a fire, no one in the village can survive. The village might end up in ashes".*

*One judge who heard the comments of this retired lieutenant said, "This is not a war, lieutenant; the war has long since retired, just like you. Your experience and opinion are not credited here". The lieutenant was very vexed because of the way in which the judge had addressed him in front of everyone. The lieutenant thought, but did not say: "If it was still war-time this judge could be beheaded and end up in pieces". Yet in enacting leadership and pursuing justice, the judges had to acknowledge the brutal truth regarding possible vengeance by the wounded bees. After days of haggling over a solution for the case, they entered Chicomiana [October] without any clear direction for reaching a final decision. Hence one of the monkeys got very annoyed. He stood up and*

*with his hands on his head he said, “This is enough. There has been too much opprobrium and we will not stand it any more”. The monkey did not have a position of credibility in the hierarchy, so one of the judges interrupted him at once, even before he had finished his lament. “You may speak only when permission is granted by this court.” The monkey shut his mouth and sat down again. The judge proceeded, “The entire village is full of opprobrium and the villagers are divided because of this problem. We, the judges, suggest that you disperse and go home. All the judges will meet again in the near future to find a solution. In the meantime you must pursue what is right, because stealing is wrong. When we are ready we will summon you again for the final verdict to be pronounced by this court of law”. As the villagers were murmuring because of this ambivalent ending, one judge said strangely, “If any of you are not happy, you can ask God to kill you and the devil to carry you to the cross”. All of the participants dispersed, just as in the popular saying zwi nkanga (like chickens of the bush) and went back to their houses. The laws had been breached, but justice had not been obtained.*

War survivors in central Mozambique use stories such as the one presented here to draw parallels with their own plight in the aftermath of the bloodshed of the civil war that lasted sixteen years (1976–1992). Very often these tales are narrated at night around the bonfire and under the moonlight. They play an important role in helping war survivors make sense of wartime cruelties and post-war perplexities, as well as in imparting to those who did not experience the war how war disrupts the organization of social life. The outcome of the case between the bees and the monkeys will be revealed in the concluding chapter after the intervening discussion of war survivors’ strategies for dealing with the aftermath of violence and injustice.

## **1.2. The context of the war violence: A brief history**

The period of violence in Mozambique that captured broad attention because of its protracted nature as well as for the magnitude of its brutal practices towards civilians was a civil war that lasted from 1976 until the end of 1992.

A thorough description of the history of violence must also include the prolonged years of colonization and the struggle for independence as well as the history of the civil war, which was interspersed with periods of severe and deadly drought. I will give only a



brief summary here of the best-known events, the sequential phases of the war violence and certain violent characteristics of the civil war.<sup>1</sup>

The period of effective colonization covered the years between 1930 and 1974. The most striking memory that people still have of this colonial period relates to the forced labour to which they were subjected. In the central region of Mozambique, this practice of forced labour was known as *mutarato*.<sup>2</sup> It consisted of the compulsory recruitment of men (and in rare cases also women)<sup>3</sup> to work on the distant farms of the Portuguese settlers for periods ranging from three to six or twelve months. In order to capture men for this labour, the Portuguese colonizers relied both on the loyal work of the *cipaios*<sup>4</sup> and on the collaboration of the African chiefs, generally known in Portuguese as *regulos* (traditional chiefs).

The Portuguese administrators as well as their *cipaios* were much feared because of their brutal attitudes. The process of recruiting men and making them work involved extreme forms of violence against those who refused to work for many hours without stopping and those who simply could not handle this physical burden. In return for this heavy physical labour, displacement from their home villages and harsh living conditions, the workers would receive only a very small amount of money. Almost every man over 40 years old in this study has a lived memory of these experiences, unless he was able to escape at that time to one of the former British colonies (in most cases the former Rhodesia, where forced labour had not been imposed since the 1940s).

In the mid 1960s the armed struggle for independence led by Frelimo<sup>5</sup> began in the north of Mozambique. This war, which lasted ten years (1964 to 1974), only covered the northern and central regions of the country. In the centre of Mozambique its effects only started to be felt in the early 1970s. In order to contain the expansion of Frelimo military raids, the Portuguese administration created forced resettlement villages called *aldeamentos* (communal villages). Communities were split up and people from different places with no connection with each other were forced to move to new places to set up

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<sup>1</sup> In Chapters 8 & 9, a comprehensive account (based on fieldwork data) of the micro-dynamics of violence that occurred in Gorongosa, the main site of my research, is given.

<sup>2</sup> Etymologically the word *mutarato* probably comes from the Portuguese word '*contracto*' (in English 'contract') or from the word '*maus tratos*' (in English, 'ill-treatment').

<sup>3</sup> In the case of women, they were not taken to distant places; they were only used to build roads near their homesteads and to plant trees along these roads.

<sup>4</sup> A type of police officer (mainly of African origin) created, trained and equipped by the Portuguese.

<sup>5</sup> The acronym for Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambican Liberation Front); created in 1962.

new villages. It was a kind of “divide and rule” policy that caused some measure of social alienation. Militarily this was part of a strategy that the late President Samora Machel<sup>6</sup> described as “drying up the rivers in order to kill the fish.” John Cann (1997) suggests that “the *aldeamento* program was one of the most controversial social operations of the Portuguese armed forces. Conceived in response to the insurgencies [Frelimo troops], it was intended to facilitate three functions in controlling the rural population and in keeping it separated from the guerrillas and their demands for intelligence, food, and shelter” (p. 155). The *aldeamentos* policy represented a rupture with traditional rural ways of habitation among the population in the centre of Mozambique.

In their turn, to counteract the *aldeamentos* strategy, the Frelimo soldiers displaced yet another part of the civilian population by moving them forcibly to their own hidden military bases. The military strategy of both the Portuguese and Frelimo was marked by attempts to manoeuvre and control the civilian population. When soldiers from one or the other army found civilians in the so-called no-go areas, these civilians would be considered enemies; the result was torture and death. Frelimo regarded as an enemy anyone who stayed in the *aldeamentos* under the control of the Portuguese-created militia. The Portuguese took precisely the same strategy, regarding any civilian who had been abducted to a Frelimo base as an enemy. In the *aldeamentos* as well as in the Frelimo military bases, the population suffered severely; and thousands more people died as the result of an outbreak of cholera in 1973. This forced division of the people was also tragic for the traditional chiefs. Rumours circulated, and in the darkness of the night Frelimo soldiers visited certain chiefs whom they considered to be Portuguese allies, abducted them, accused them of betrayal and murdered them in the bush.<sup>7</sup>

Mozambique gained independence in June 1975. After a very short period of quiet, armed violence was again registered in the centre of Mozambique (1976 to 1977) in the form of aggression perpetrated by the military forces of Ian Smith of the former Rhodesia.<sup>8</sup> This brief scenario of foreign military aggression in the post-independence

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<sup>6</sup> Samora Machel was the first president of Mozambique after independence in June of 1975.

<sup>7</sup> This was the fate of traditional authorities such as *Regulo* Tambarara who was the chief authority in the area of Vila Paiva (Gorongosa chief town) and some of neighbouring villages; and Chief Charles who was Tambarara’s subordinate and his main area of chieftaincy is the region of Tsiquir.

<sup>8</sup> In 1976, using as their political justification the fact that the Frelimo-led Mozambican government was harbouring black Zimbabwean refugees and sympathizers of the ZANU-PF (the army that was fighting for independence in that country), Ian Smith’s regime invaded the central region of Mozambique. The result of this territorial invasion was the massacre of Inhazonia in 1976 in Manica Province.

period in fact marked the onset of the military violence that would evolve into an internal war waged between the Frelimo-led government and Renamo soldiers for almost two decades (1976-1992). Though the war covered the whole nation in geographical terms, the most directly and intensely affected people were the rural population. The targets of wars in general are the people and their civilization (Scarry, 1983: 61). During the civil war both Frelimo and the Renamo army acted out this principle by engaging in a kind of carnival of destruction: they fought bloody battles *in extremis*; they oppressed and subjugated the people; and they committed murders for the purpose of controlling the population. The principal war zones were distributed between Frelimo-controlled areas and Renamo-controlled areas.

The civil war not only destroyed the country's socio-economic infrastructure but also fostered divisions and relations of hatred between family and community members. They were compelled to spy on one another, with hints of murder contributing to the erosion and depletion of the trust and relationships of reciprocity that had bonded communities together historically. Husbands were compelled to lie down and serve as beds while their wives were being raped. Young virgin daughters were abducted to military bases for sexual violence and forced marriage. The soldiers from both armies targeted not only physical bodies, but also people's "identity, self, and personhood" (Nordstrom, 1998: 10). Young boys were forcibly recruited and compelled to murder their own relatives and burn their own villages. Thousands of innocent civilians were killed. The numbers of the dead are not known for sure.<sup>9</sup> Regarding the forced population displacement, it is estimated that at least four million people fled into the urban centres, becoming internally displaced; others sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

The war suffering was interspersed with periods of severe drought, which people called "*o crime do sol*" (the crime of the sun). People became completely dispossessed. The sun burned the soil; the soil turned to ash; the ash brought extreme famine; the famine spread death all over. As a result, many people started developing hallucinations of death—"I am already dead"; "We are already dead"—though in reality they were still physically alive. How can people claim to be already dead if they can still breathe, talk

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<sup>9</sup> Some foreign observers of the Mozambican civil war estimate a number of 100 000 civilians killed; others place the figure at one million (Hanlon, 1991); still others suggest that "A more realistic guess would be that some 50 000 victims lost their lives directly as a result of rebel military action throughout the entire war" (Thomashaussen, 2001: 98).

and walk even a little? The issue here is that people had lost their world; and it seemed that they had reached a point of no return.

At the end of the 1980s it became clear that the Frelimo slogan of “when we are at war, the first priority is war”, meaning that “it is necessary to make war in order to end the war”, was disastrous propaganda. It was not possible for either side to reach a military solution for the conflict. Initiatives to end the conflict through peace talks came from Christian religious groups. Eventually in 1990 peace negotiations started between the Frelimo-led government and the Renamo rebels. After two years of mediated negotiations in Italy (Rome), the Mozambican government and Renamo reached a General Peace Agreement (AGP) and publicly swore never to return to war violence as a mechanism for resolving disputes. This sworn peace, which was witnessed nationally and internationally, marked the cessation of the prolonged cycle of extreme violent hostilities on 4 October 1992.

### **1.3. Characteristics and challenges of the transitional phase**

One of the major challenges posed in transitional phases for countries coming out of civil war resides precisely in the nature of such wars. Roy Licklider defines civil war as “large-scale violence among geographically contiguous people concerned about possibly having to live with one another in the same political unit after the conflict” (1993: 9).<sup>10</sup> This has certainly been the case in various civil wars in Sub-Saharan Africa. Very often the rival groups that kill and massacre one another are very closely related: they belong to the same culture, worship the same spirits, cultivate the same land and eat the same type of food, drink the same water, and seek sexual and marriage partners from the same pool of candidates.

Very seldom do these wars terminate with one group vanquishing the other.<sup>11</sup> When the war does not generate victorious heroes (or, as some recent examples demonstrate, even in the case of clear military victory),<sup>12</sup> reconciliation as a way of terminating the conflict and transitional justice as a strategy for attaining reconciliation—

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<sup>10</sup> Licklider (1993) adds to this definition two further criteria pertaining to civil war: there must be multiple sovereignties (defined by Charles Tilly as the population of an area obeying more than one institution) and physical violence towards people (p.9).

<sup>11</sup> The cases of the Angolan civil war, the defeat of the Mobutu army in the former Republic of Zaire by Laurent Disere Kabila, and the conflict in Rwanda a decade ago are some exceptions.

<sup>12</sup> The case of Iraq is a telling one in this context and is addressed further in Chapter 2 (Sec. 2.3).

which may pave the way for peaceful relations and sustainable peace—seem very attractive.<sup>13</sup> The question is what reconciliation means in these contexts, given that it involves groups of civilians represented by thousands of victims of war violence and groups of soldiers (also represented by thousands and thousands of individuals) from different sides of the conflict.<sup>14</sup> In the case of post-civil war Mozambique, official figures estimated that about 90,000 soldiers were demobilized and reintegrated into various communities.<sup>15</sup> The number of civilian casualties, as noted above, remains a matter of dispute.

Two main features characterize the Mozambican transitional process: the change from a civil war to peace, and the change from a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship (1977-1987) to a multi-party constitutional democracy. The transition from war to peace brought with it the challenge of reconstructing the country's infrastructure, which had been completely destroyed by the war. The political transition was characterized by a variety of other challenges: the re-organization of the state to accommodate the various forms of pluralism that had formerly been adamantly denied and to build a state based on the rule of law and respect for human rights; the political and legal challenge of dealing with the legacies of the turbulent past, in particular the numerous crimes against civilians committed by both the governmental and Renamo armies during the war; and the development of strategies for addressing the social and health problems of war survivors.

The response of the Mozambican official authorities,<sup>16</sup> particularly vis-à-vis the politico-legal challenge of dealing with the atrocious past, was consistent with what Stanley Cohen (2005[2001]) has called *cultures of denial*, in which political authorities “encourage turning a collective blind eye, leaving horrors unexamined or normalized as being part of the rhythms of everyday life” (p. 101). To wit: politicians working in the epicentre of the violence organized public meetings, following directives dispatched from the central government in the capital Maputo, to make speeches to the war survivors

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<sup>13</sup> The case of Rwanda is another telling example. The expatriate Tutsi army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), won the war, but it still used reconciliation as one of its central concepts in the process of transition. The main difference with other cases of political transition using the concept of reconciliation, however, is that in Rwanda the winners of the war equated retributive justice with the goal of reconciliation.

<sup>14</sup> In Angola 100,000 Unita soldiers were demobilized (“Forgotten Fighters: Child Soldiers in Angola”, HRW, Apr. 2003, 15(10)(A); source: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/angola0403/Angola0403.pdf>). In Sierra Leone, 72,500 soldiers were demobilized (“Sierra Leone: DDR” World Bank, Africa Region, No. 81, Oct. 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Ton Pardoel (1996b). “Demobilization in Mozambique: Socio-Economic Profile of the Group of 92,881 DS as per the end of the Demobilization Program on 30/11/94”. Maputo: UNDP.

<sup>16</sup> The general responses in terms of creating political and social spaces for the practice of multiparty democracy is not underestimated (Jacobson, 2005; Lundin, 2002).

about the need to “track life and not death”.<sup>17</sup> The voices of these chiefs at the lower levels of the ecological hierarchy were not in unison, but through narratives of war survivors I could sketch the following fumbled orders:

“Now the war is over, go back to your *madembes* (old places of residence). You are free to go wherever you want to live... That person who lost his father must accept it—it was war. That one who lost his family—it was war. That one who saw his wife being raped—it was war. That one who did not eat *mabatirwa* (bride price) because his daughter was raped—it was war. That one who saw his daughter being raped and then killed—it was war. That one who was wounded—it was war... Even if you see that this is the one who killed your brother, your father or your mother, you must not do *ku hirindzira* (give back, meaning “avenge”), because it was war; it was not him. What you have to do is to return to your *madembe* and track life and not war and death. Forget what happened, because it was war”.

War survivors did indeed disperse like “chickens in the bush”; groups of survivors faded away into the bush, each going into his or her own direction. From the top to the bottom of the political hierarchy there was no explanation as to why no politico-legal initiatives were going to be forthcoming in the post-war context. War survivors were just advised to forget what had happened, and the only reference to justice was the emphasis placed on “you shall not take revenge upon your fellow man”. They went back to their old places of residence in order to start new lives by building houses to live in and cultivating the land to grow food. One compelling reality of the post-war settlement, however, was that these former war-zone villages were not going to be inhabited solely by individuals and families who shared a collective memory of victimhood resulting from the war violence. The ex-soldiers from the two former belligerent armies (the Frelimo-led government army and Renamo) and their associates who had committed the most pervasive abuses and egregious war crimes did not forfeit the right to live in these villages. On the contrary, they went back quite unconcerned to live in these same villages.<sup>18</sup> Some of them even went back to their *madembes*. Generally there were no many reports of former soldiers swaggering and strutting in the villages, but their very presence was a continuous reminder of the wartime abuses and crimes.

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<sup>17</sup> These politicians were mostly *secretarios das aldeias comunais* (secretaries of the communal villages) and district administrators. Church leaders also gave speeches of the same kind, but in the form of religious preaching and confined to the space of their own churches.

<sup>18</sup> From the government side they were mostly *secretarios*, *chefes do quarteirão* (chiefs of neighbourhoods), and militia. From the Renamo side they were *mujibas* (vigilant and collector of food for the troops), *blocos* (vigilantes), and some local traditional chiefs that remained under their control.

After having used and abused the people, the official authorities on both sides of the spectrum completely neglected the situation of the war survivors. They opted for generalized and unconditional amnesties; the Mozambican Popular Assembly controlled uniquely by the Frelimo party at the time of the signature of the peace agreement, promulgated the law no. 15/92 that provided amnesty for the crimes committed between 1979 and 1992.<sup>19</sup> Also as part of the transition, the official authorities applied political reforms and opted for silence about the grisly past as their strategy to engage in reconciliation. The implications of these *cultures of denial* for the general population of war survivors regardless of their gender were the following: no *lex talionis* (retribution), no formal processes of acknowledgment of their suffering, no financial compensation or reparation, no consideration of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), no counselling, no debriefing, and no mental health care programs in general. With this almost infinite catalogue of absences (that is without any of the vital initiatives that have been defined internationally as most relevant for the rebuilding of post-war societies being applied), the main question was whether the post-war communities of Mozambique were doomed to collapse. Two specific things are meant by “collapse” here. The first of these is the reigniting of violence as a way of reckoning with the abuses, humiliations and murders that people had experienced. Although revenge in this context may be claimed as legitimate, it could unleash a cycle of violence whose limits could be unpredictable and could not be controlled, and which could therefore contribute to an infinite spiral of violence.

The second is that the lack of recognition of war-related ill health, and the consequent absence of specific healing strategies, could in the long run contribute to the alienation of part of the population reducing the productive capital in the household that is necessary for survival and reproduction. This alienation is twofold: the seclusion of community members whose actions during wartime contributed to the mass abuses and crimes, and the seclusion of those community members who failed to thrive as a result of a poor response from the available healing resources. This form of abandonment is generally considered potentially harmful for the war survivors who have to struggle to rebuild their own lives amidst shattered families and communities. However, it is also generally believed that, “Even following the most horrendous ethnocides (...) social life

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<sup>19</sup> Bulletin of the Republic, I SÉRIE – No. 42. Wednesday October 14 1992. Supplement.

continues. And that is the source both of possibilities and of very deep perplexities” (Das & Kleinman, 2001: 24). Veena Das suggests that the answer to these perplexities and dangers “is not some kind of an ascent into the transcendent but a descent into everyday life” (2007: 15). This study, then, explores precisely the conditions under which possibilities for remaking the devastated social world have emerged on the surfaces of everyday life in the former war zones of central Mozambique. It has been also firmly suggested that “within complex political emergencies, it is important to recognize gender’s crosscutting role and, most significantly, examine the effects of gender on power relations-how it is manifested and used, by whom (individuals and institutions), and how this plays out before, during and after armed conflict” (Mazurana *et al.*, 2005: 13).<sup>20</sup> Following these perspectives, this study specifically addresses how these conditions and possibilities for post-civil war repair of their incredibly devastated social world are shaped by the specificities of the geographic landscape and socio-cultural, gender, legal and religious factors in Gorongosa.

#### **1.4. Research goal**

The general goal of this thesis is to address the extent to which the forms of officially planned abandonment and neglect described above are indeed potentially harmful and represent a recipe for the collapse of war survivors who have to struggle to repair their own lives amidst shattered families and communities. In particular, this study explores the ways in which war survivors, amidst the extreme legacies of war and the post-war official neglect of these legacies, have been able to make use of locally available and accessible resources to develop strategies to engage in and to attain reconciliation and healing. Furthermore, the effectiveness of some of these strategies is studied.

#### **1.5. General research questions**

In this part, I only present the general research questions. These are organized into three parts. The specific research questions, which were generated as a result of the literature study, are described on Chapter 6.

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<sup>20</sup> Other discussions on the relationship between armed conflict and gender are found in Ronit Lentin (1997), Joan Ringelheim (1992), Caroline Moser & Fiona Clark (2001).



First, background questions: What were the dynamics of the war violence in Gorongosa region, and to what extent did the violence not only affect specific individuals but also contribute to disrupting the social world?

Second, questions addressing people's perception of various forms of transitional justice and reconciliation strategies and resources: What kind of judgments do war survivors make of post-war justice in terms of retribution, truth-confession, public apology and financial reparation, and why do they make them?

Third, questions addressing the health consequences of war and the availability of local resources: How and to what extent did the war affect the health of the people in Gorongosa? What is the role of traditional healers in helping people who suffer from war-related health problems? And how effective are they?

## **1.6. Research approach**

Many years ago Bronislaw Malinowski (1940[1926]) formulated an interesting insight that provides a useful point of departure for addressing the goals of this research and the general and specific research questions. He suggested focusing on “the study of life situations which call for a given rule, the manner in which this is handled by the people concerned, the reaction of the community at large, the consequences of fulfilment and neglect” (Malinowski, 1926: 125). This approach has been taken by many other anthropologists. For instance, in an interesting debate on whether in the study of law, the rules or cases should be the main focus, Max Gluckman (1973) endorsed Malinowski's views and concluded that “a study of abstract rules is not enough [and] rules and praxis have all to be handled together” (p. 634). Gluckman rightly added that it is equally important to have knowledge of social life, in its ecological, economic, political aspects.

This study follows Malinowski's and Gluckman's assertion of the importance of everyday life and practice, and uses an ecological model to analyse reconciliation and healing processes in a community-based setting. The basic principle of this model is the interdependent relationships between individuals and their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Here the environment is composed of supernatural forces as well as various social settings and the geographic landscape. One key aspect of the geographic landscape is that it may give rise to specific economic activities in the community. These economic activities in their turn generate specific types of social relations between people, and

these relations may play a role in promoting reconciliation. The ecological model points to the potential of differing physical and social conditions in the various settings in which people establish direct or indirect relationships and access resources for addressing reconciliation and healing. The recognition of these different conditions is extremely important for avoiding the so-called “fallacy of composition”, that is the notion that what is true for the part is also necessarily true for the whole. Since the reality of one setting may not represent the full story, it is necessary to analyse various settings in which individuals and families establish direct or indirect interaction in order to determine where successful or ineffective responses are being generated in the process of reconciliation and healing.

Owing to the high degree of war exposure, many relationships in Gorongosa were damaged and various individuals and families were affected in health terms. In spite of this overwhelming destruction, however, social life continues. Yet it is necessary to understand under what conditions social life continues and which processes are activated to repair fractured relationships and heal the wounds of war. One of the principal hypotheses of this thesis has to do with the availability and accessibility of resources and the intrinsic logic of their utilization. The ecological approach suggests that these resources may be depleted in one level (such as the family) but be available on another level (such as the community or the landscape). Since the agents operating on all of these levels are establishing mutual relationships and mutual influences, the resources available in one social setting or those available in the geographic landscape can be used to compensate for the limitation or scarcity of resources on another level.

Attempts to universalise the consequences of war violence ignore basic principles of cultural theory, i.e., the nature of culture and its implications for social structure and social life (Smith, 2001). A deep understanding of these social structures, social life and the agents that give meaning to them is crucial to elicit both individual and collective strategies and processes involved in reconciliation and healing in post-conflict countries. Within this context this study explores strategies and processes located in the interplay of agency and structure. Agents behave and interact to create structures. On its turn, these structures shape the behaviour and actions of the agents. This interplay of agency and structure gives rise to specific social practices. In order to explore these interplays I follow two inter-related views developed by Pierre Bourdieu, namely “perspectivism”

and “social practice”. “Perspectivism” consists in the exploration of the “multiple perspectives that correspond to the multiplicity of coexisting, and sometimes directly competing, points of view” (Bourdieu et al., 1999: 3-4).<sup>21</sup> In the social world of this study, perspectivism is applied to elicit people’s perceptions and interpretations of the potential role of various types of transitional justice in bringing about reconciliation and healing. The other view that I follow is on the “social practice” of the actors being studied (Bourdieu, 1977). Richard Jenkins (1992: 68) notes that the importance of Pierre Bourdieu’s project in this regard, “lies in his attempt to construct a theoretical model of social practice, to do more than simply take what people do in their daily lives for granted, and to do so without losing sight of the wider patterns of social life”.

This highlights the need to understand actors and contexts by paying “greater attention to behavioural strategies, especially everyday practical strategies geared toward the attainment of locally defined value (...) understanding social actors or the myriad contexts in which they organize themselves, relate to one another, acquire and use resources, or create order and meaning in their lives” (Peletz, 1995: 351).

The actors in this study inhabit in a social world featured by factors such as kinship relations, gender, and religious beliefs and practices. Particularly the gender and religious factors play a key role in shaping the organization of the social structure of the people in Gorongosa. In this regard, throughout this thesis the gender and religious beliefs and practices of the agents are systematically used as comparative factors in the analysis of social practices that contributes to reconciliation and healing. The main social practices analysed are the agricultural activities and the traditional justice system and their role for reconciliation. In the domain of healing, social practice is related to the healing activities that are enacted in order to restore the health of suffering war survivors. Although during my fieldwork I thoroughly investigated the role of a plethora of Christian religious groups and their contributions to healing of war-related afflictions I do not describe these results in this thesis.

Addressing the issue of healing in post-war contexts is meaningful in that exposure to war violence can leave health consequences that can require interventions targeting survivors in their affliction. The basic concern in healing studies consists in

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<sup>21</sup> In the social context where Bourdieu (1999) uses perspectivism, he indicates that perspectivism “is based in the very reality of the social world, and it helps explain a good deal of what happens in society today, in particular, much of the distress caused by clashing interests, orientations, and lifestyles” (p. 4).

trying to determine the nature and type of war-related health problems among people exposed to war violence and to develop culturally sensitive healing interventions. The efficacy of these interventions constitutes yet another important area of study related to healing war-related illnesses.

In most of the current literature on transitional justice and healing pertaining to post-conflict contexts, the conceptual borders that separate reconciliation and healing are not rigidly defined; indeed on many occasions these concepts are hardly defined at all and tend to be used interchangeably. One reason for this may be that in cross-cultural contexts, healing is not only about the restoration of individual health; it is also a collective phenomenon involving different processes, namely the redress of social relations and of legal and political phenomena. This wider dimension of healing overlaps with some features of the reconciliation process, for reconciliation is about relationships between people. These overlapping processes of reconciliation and healing are fully addressed in Chapter 15. For reasons of analytic clarity, reconciliation and healing are treated here as entailing different but related processes. In the final chapter, however, the two concepts are fused into an ecological whole in order to determine their intersections.

### **1.7. Structure of the thesis**

Seventeen chapters divided into five parts comprise this thesis. Structurally the chapters differ in length. Some chapters are small while others are longer. The reasons for these differences lie in the specificity of the content of certain chapters. As it will be demonstrated in the pages of this thesis, some of the issues addressed required more ethnographic detail than others.

In part I, encompassing chapters 1 to 4, I described various aspects that help the reader to get acquainted with the main topics. The thesis began with a brief story that goes some way towards mirroring a local community strategy for making sense of the grisly past. It also presented a summary of the consecutive contexts of the multiple forms of violence in Mozambique and the ways in which in October of 1992 the Mozambican General Peace Agreement (AGP) was built upon unjust foundations. The main characteristics of the transitional phase and challenges were presented. These features and challenges contributed to shaping the research problem of this thesis, which centres on the one hand, on the community practices that give rise to forms of togetherness that

promote reconciliation and community strategies that break with the officially imposed silences and to create possibilities for war survivors to attain justice that spurs reconciliation. On the other, the research problem centres also on the health consequences of the civil war and the community strategies to create effective healing that plays a key role in rebuilding the shattered social world of the Gorongosa people. This chapter also outlined the research goal, questions, approach and the structure of the thesis.

Chapters two, three and four present the mainstream debates in the fields of transitional justice and reconciliation and healing. These chapters set out to generate questions for empirical study. Specifically, chapter two addresses in a comprehensive way the theoretical discussions in the field of transitional justice concerning post-war societies. The mainstream literature focuses on the contributions of different forms of justice to reconciliation. Chapter three expands the literature on the role of transitional justice to reconciliation to include approaches that provide ample room to explore additional aspects of the ecological world of those who must engage with the reconciliation process. These revisions allow the development of specific questions, which were tested in the field.

Chapter four addresses various debates on war-related suffering. It gives specific focus to literature dealing with transcultural aspects of health and illness, particularly concerning spirits and spirit possession in post-war contexts, and methods of understanding and studying their effectiveness.

Part II is composed of two chapters: 5 and 6. Chapter five presents the research approach. In order to give a structural and analytical orientation to the multidisciplinary nature of the study of the relationship between transitional justice and reconciliation and post-war healing, an ecological model adapted for reconciliation and healing is applied. And the agents that operate within the ecological model are systematically identified and analysed according to their gender and religious beliefs.

Part III comprises seven chapters, chapters 7 to 14. These chapters present the results of the empirical study. Initially the results are focused principally on discursive practices, that is what war survivors themselves narrated. War survivors are systematically identified according to their gender and when their religious beliefs. Chapter six outlines the geographic location of Gorongosa District and the methodology used in the fieldwork. A key aspect of the ecological approach is the necessity to study

the contributions of transitional justice to reconciliation and the healing of war-related wounds in different spheres of social life and to establish the patterns of interactions and mutual influences that can result in processes of change over time. I have employed a combination of ethnographic and quantitative techniques in order to be able to precisely grasp the dynamics occurring in the different spheres of the social world of the Gorongosas.

Chapters seven and eight present collective and individual experiences of war violence. The collective dimension of war suffering is described in chapter seven, while chapter eight provides individual experiences of the civil war by focusing on sexual violence against women. These two chapters unequivocally demonstrate how the civil war eroded important features of social capital that had for a long time helped to maintain social cohesion within the families and communities.

One important aspect of chapter nine is the demonstration that the civil war was fought in a specific social world. This social world is composed of an economy and an array of socio-cultural beliefs and practices, which are regulated by local norms and values, kinship and gender relations. These contextual factors are presented as they might have existed prior to the civil war. The chapter also discusses some of the changes wrought by the civil war.

Chapters ten and eleven present war survivors' perceptions of different types of transitional justice. Chapter ten describes war survivor's perceptions of the potential role of retributive justice and reparation in reconciliation. Chapter eleven presents war survivors' perceptions on the potential role of restorative justice in reconciliation. Although a certain number of people in this study (particularly women) indicated that post-war reconciliation should have included retributive justice for the former perpetrators instead of the prevailing official silence, the majority of war survivors opted for forgiveness—but with a very particular feature. They indicated their preference for forgiveness without either retributive or restorative justice: forgiveness without acknowledgement or apology, and forgiveness without reparation. This means forgiveness without any trade-offs, also known as “unilateral forgiveness”. This unilateral forgiveness strategy was explained in terms of various rationales anchored in a solid knowledge of the dynamics of the war and its implications, as well as in socio-cultural, religious, gender, and idiosyncratic factors. These two chapters conclude by determining

that the most important factor conducive to a community-based approach of this kind, that is unilateral forgiveness and an absence of acts of revenge, is the availability and accessibility of resources: land, legal, and healing resources.

The subsequent chapters take a different route in the presentation of the results of the empirical study in that they shift the focus from discursive to social practices, i.e. what war survivors actually do. These chapters set out to demonstrate the meaning of the availability and accessibility of resources, the ways in which these resources are used, and under what circumstances they contribute to post-war justice, reconciliation and healing in Gorongosa.

Chapter twelve deals with the land resource, which takes the form of an agricultural cycle. The structure and organization of the cycle are presented primarily as a resource that helps to satisfy the basic needs of members of the community. However, the way in which agricultural activities are developed suggests that this resource has played a very meaningful role in post-war reconciliation and healing.

Chapter thirteen describes the contribution of the local justice system as a resource for preventing the continuation of the abuses and injustices that were typical of the wartime period. The justice system is a resource that allows war survivors in peacetime to establish interactions that, while not free of conflict, can be resolved in peaceful and communally accepted ways. The chapter ends by developing a critical approach to the gendered nature of social relations that society as a whole practices and the justice system in particular vigorously reproduces and perpetuates, which can be a contributing factor to unequal legal sentences for men and women.

Chapter fourteen is the lengthiest one. It presents in ethnographic detail the results of the healing strategies for addressing war-related ill health. The main focus is on the articulation of suffering through spirit possession. Initially I present detailed cases of people suffering from post-war spirit possession and the process that patients go through in order to receive treatment provided by traditional healers. The effectiveness of traditional healers in successfully treating their patients is analysed. Efficacy is determined through emic approaches, comparing results from patients studied before treatment, during treatment and after treatment in a longitudinal approach. The chapter ends with my (emic) critical observations of some aspects of the healing process that could appropriately be explored by the traditional healers.

Part IV has only a singular chapter (15), which focus on discursive as well as on social practices and draws the theoretical and practical implications of the main empirical results. The chapter elicits the intersections between transitional justice and reconciliation and healing in the social world of the Gorongosa people. It suggests that the most important finding of this thesis is the elaboration of the concept of *cultures of engagement*. A definition of this concept is given, along with the mode of operation of the *cultures of engagement* as it was identified in the empirical study. The chapter also examines the emergence of a new spirit in the wider context of society, the politics of memory, reconciliation and social change. I discuss the reasons for the gendered aspect of the new spirit, the power relations in various domains of social life, and how the new spirit—though it features some elements of social continuity—nonetheless signals a shift in society. Finally, in Part V, I present the main conclusions of the thesis, the bibliographic references and the lists of appendixes.



## *PART II Debates on Transitional Justice, Reconciliation and Healing*

### **Chapter 2: Transitional justice and reconciliation after mass-scale violence**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter undertakes a comprehensive revision of the theoretical debates in the field of transitional justice and its contribution to peace and reconciliation as applied to contexts of resolution of wide-ranging armed conflicts. The goal is twofold: first, to explore the nature of these debates and discuss their limitations, and second, to generate sensitive questions for studying the strategies developed in the aftermath of the protracted Mozambican civil war to deal with the legacies of its extremely violent past. The overview is presented in five sections. In order to open up the debates on the potential role of transitional justice to reconciliation, I present some of the reasons that transitional justice is important in post-war contexts. This has to do with the challenges of building a lasting peace. That is, the ways in which justice can be used as an instrument of peace by preventing the repetition of different forms of violence as well as to understand how the attainment of justice can foster reconciliation in deeply divided societies as a result of civil wars. However, the relationship between justice and reconciliation is not obvious. There are serious problems of defining reconciliation as applied to mass scale violence. Therefore, section two addresses these definition problems related to reconciliation. Section three then addresses the main debates on transitional justice particularly the role of retributive and restorative justice, general amnesties and forgiveness for reconciliation. The chapter concludes by outlining the main limitations of the current debates on the contribution of transitional justice to reconciliation and the possibilities for overcoming these limitations by applying a complementary theoretical approach.

#### **2.1. Is peace a preparation for another war?**

In 1941, Franz Alexander wrote in a very pessimistic tone that “since we know that war has always been the usual way of settling conflicts between groups, we might ask how peace is possible at all... as far as the history of ancient and western civilization is concerned, periods of peace were nothing but preparations for a coming war... the history of civilized mankind is a history of wars interrupted by preparations for more wars”

(1941: 505-6). Since the end of World War II, this assertion has remained valid. Despite the historical developments to establish international laws to enforce standards regarding *jus ad bellum* (the decision to go to war)<sup>22</sup> and *jus in bello* (the conduct of battle) as well as the duty to protect civilians and standards with regard to the treatment of war victims,<sup>23</sup> victimization of populations through wars worldwide has not terminated. Mass killings in war continue to be part of everyday reality for a large part of humankind.

Historically,<sup>24</sup> the process of reckoning with an atrocious past perpetrated by a political regime focused mainly on retributive justice as its key instrument, while reconciliation was hardly mentioned. The Nuremberg and Tokyo trials after World War II represent the most important examples of justice in the service of transition from a totalitarian and fascist regime to a democracy and towards the prevention of further eruption of wars of aggression (Taylor, 1949; Tusa & Tusa, 1983). Nuremberg trials were considered historical and moral facts and for this reasons “we have no right to forget” (Taylor, 1949: 352). However, in the time since the end of the last Nuremberg war crimes trials (April 14 1949) and the adoption of the Fourth Geneva Convention (August 12 1949) and their ratification by many countries, these laws have in fact remained largely dormant.<sup>25</sup> The oppressive system of colonialism continued to reign throughout the 1950s and late 1960s in many parts of the world and the post-colonial states were as well featured by extreme violent acts, which went legally unpunished. In the overall, the fear of war and the reality of war destruction continued to take place to the extent that early doubts vis-à-vis the efficacy of the international humanitarian laws to prevent and to regulate behaviour during war could still be raised: “Is there a law, and if so where is it?” (Taylor, 1949: 354).

Only recently, when the ideological bipolarisation of the world through the cold war terminated, did Western countries and international human rights groups from these

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<sup>22</sup> Which is regulated by the 1945 United Nations Charter, Article 2(4), which had been preceded by the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 (also known as the Pact of Paris).

<sup>23</sup> In 1864 it was established the First Geneva Convention known as the ‘Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field.’ Subsequently three other Geneva Conventions were established: the Second Geneva Convention of 1906; the Third of 1929; the Fourth of 1949 (Protocol II, III, & IV); and the Additional Protocol (I, II): 1977. In between the first and second Geneva Conventions it was established in 1899 the Hague Convention, which defined rules of combat. In this regard, in terms of terminology “a distinction was introduced between ‘Geneva law’, the rules dealing with the victims of war, and the ‘Hague law’, the rules governing the conduct of hostilities’ (Tomuschat, 2003: 14).

<sup>24</sup> Elster (2004) goes further back in history of transitional justice focusing on Athens (411 and 403 B.C).

<sup>25</sup> The Mozambican state did not ratify any of the Geneva Conventions and additional protocols (LDH [Mozambique Human Rights League], 2005: 61).

countries begin advocating the necessity for the international community to engage in *jus post bellum* (justice after the war) as laid out by the four Geneva Conventions and two additional protocols, and to put on trial those individuals suspected of having committed war crimes.<sup>26</sup> The *lex talionis* for war-related crimes is perceived as contributing to the process of coming to terms with past cycles of violence and preventing future violence (Roht-Arriaza & Gibson, 1998).<sup>27</sup>

In terms of theory, the strategies adopted for coming to terms with a violent past are currently being addressed as aspects of “transitional justice” (Kritz, 1995). According to Jon Elster (2004), transitional justice can involve several levels: supranational institutions, nation-states, corporate actors, and individuals. The majority of the publications in the field of transitional justice focus mainly on the responses undertaken by supranational and nation-state institutions. Less empirical work is available focusing on the array of responses developed by individuals, families and their local communities who have suffered the direct effects of indiscriminate political violence.

For instance, the first two examples of international and national commitment to transitional justice after the long interregnum that followed World War II took place following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and in the aftermath of the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. In 1993 a United Nations Security Council Resolution<sup>28</sup> created The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to prosecute individuals who had allegedly committed war crimes and massacres during the civil war there (Robertson, 2002). In post-genocide Rwanda, the new government created national and community courts (*gacaca*) to try individuals suspected of actively participating in the genocide. At the international level, an International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was also created in Arusha (Tanzania) to attain the same goals of retributive justice (Eltringham, 2004).<sup>29</sup>

In order to make "peace the continuation of war by other means" (Arendt, 1970: 9), instead of “peace as a period for preparation of another war”, the international community took a major step towards enforcing *jus post bellum* on a global scale through

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<sup>26</sup> The majority of international law dealing with armed conflict focuses on *international* armed conflict. Only protocol II is applicable to *internal* armed conflict. In this perspective, the *lex talionis* with regard to internal armed conflicts is far less evolved when compared to inter-state conflicts.

<sup>27</sup> Similar events that led to the international recognition of trauma are as well registered: "The development of the welfare state and the increasing embodiment of human rights in legislation and social values are a context which has allowed greater focusing on the role of trauma" (McFarlane, 1995: 33).

<sup>28</sup> This was Resolution 827 adopted 25 May 1993.

<sup>29</sup> The Security Council of the UN also created the ICTR through Resolution 955 in November 1994.

the adoption by 120 nation states in 1998 of the Rome Statute creating a permanent International Criminal Court (ICC) based in The Hague.<sup>30</sup> From gender perspective, it is considered that “the Statute of the International Criminal Court is a landmark in codifying not only crimes of sexual and gender violence as part of the ICC’s jurisdiction, but also in establishing procedures to ensure that these crimes and their victims are properly treated” (Copelon, 2000: 217).

In the meantime, and as a corollary of the particularities of civil wars (unlike wars of aggression perpetrated by one nation against the other), various political actors at international and national levels have attempted to incorporate reconciliation as a key strategy for achieving peace and coming to terms with a violent past in various countries. In this regard, the field of transitional justice has also attempted to develop an analytical framework to understand the possible contribution of different forms of transitional justice to reconciliation. In this regard reconciliation became one of its central analytic concepts. Transitional justice has become the main concept for describing an array of strategies ranging from impunity to accountability that a country can adopt in the transitional phase in order to reckon with a violent past and achieve goals such as peace, social stability and reconciliation. Therefore it has become common to read of “reconciliation through justice”, “reconciliation through truth”, “reconciliation through forgiveness”, and so on. The most discussed strategies that are said to play a role in bringing reconciliation to a society are criminal trials of former perpetrators and close collaborators, lustrations (purging or banning perpetrators from public office), truth commissions, reparations, and general amnesty (Ackerman, 1992; Duvenage, 1999; Hayner, 2001). Recently “political forgiveness” as a means for dealing with the legacies of past human rights violations and collective bitterness has also been explored theoretically (Shriver, 1997; Amstutz, 2005).

## **2.2. Reconciliation and the problem of resolution of large-scale violence**

Reconciliation is not an unfamiliar phenomenon for the majority of people in different cultures. Since people are relational beings, their capacity to pursue common or different

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<sup>30</sup> The Rome Statute was ratified by sixty states (including UK, France and Russia) on 11 April 2002, and its jurisdiction came into effect on 1 July 2002 (Robertson, 2002: 346). Currently the ICC is dealing with cases of alleged war criminals from the Central African Republic, DR Congo, Sudan and Uganda. In relation to Mozambique, the state signed the Rome Statute but has yet ratified (LDH, 2005).

interests in life leads inevitably to clashes and conflicts with one another. With this understanding, conflicts are very much part of social life. When people in conflict with one another demonstrate a willingness to become engaged in addressing the sources of their conflicts, a positive outcome may be a resolution that leads to reconciliation.<sup>31</sup> In this basic understanding and usage, reconciliation implies: prior positive relations between two or more people; the breaking up of these relations; and the willingness to reconnect. Reconciliation from this perspective allows people to re-establish contact and interact after a short or long-term period of interruption marked by disagreements and conflicts of various degrees of seriousness. People are said to be reconciled when they manage to address their problems and come together again to establish relationships.<sup>32</sup>

Reconciliation has been debated in various academic fields. The field of transitional justice has carried out more vigorously studies on reconciliation in the aftermath of violent conflicts. This domination of the transitional justice approach in the study of reconciliation probably derives from the fact that numerous countries have been involved in civil wars in the last three decades. It could be argued as well that the dominance of reconciliation derives from the fact that no comprehensive set of laws exists to address the intricacies of abuses and crimes perpetrated during internal wars. The end of these large-scale civil wars, and the numerous quantities of people involved as victims and as perpetrators, poses intrinsic challenges to the practice of reconciliation that differ from those applicable to situations of interpersonal conflicts. That is: what does it take to engage formerly alienated people in reconciliatory practices in contexts of interpersonal conflicts and as part of widespread civil war?

The debates in the field of transitional justice and conflict resolution do not offer a consensual and universal answer to the dilemma of how to reconcile alienated individuals and families in the aftermath of widespread civil wars. Michael Feher (1999: 325) has identified two camps in these debates, which he termed “purists” (mainly composed of non-governmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International) and “pragmatists” (represented mainly by government agencies). Purists

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<sup>31</sup> Presented in this way, reconciliation overlaps with healing. Cited by Wendler (1996: 839), Flexner’s definition of healing includes “bringing an end to conflicts between people or groups” (1987). On other occasions reconciliation is defined as “...the healing of broken interpersonal relationships and the restoration of social harmony and communal solidarity” (Amstutz, 2005: 64).

<sup>32</sup> Reconciliation has a privileged position in the religious field as well. Reconciliation is understood as bringing the sinner closer to his/her God, to confess and repent from wrongdoing and follow God.

advocate prosecution whenever possible. For instance, John Borneman (2002) suggests that reconciliation is a project of departure from violence, and that one way of triggering this departure is through the legal reckoning with the past violence, an invocation of the principles of the rule of law to settle accounts.<sup>33</sup> The pragmatists, on the other hand, put forward a qualified defence of amnesty. Alex Boraine, for instance, arguing against criminal prosecutions in post-apartheid South Africa, made a statement that leaves little room for doubts, “it would have been unworkable... If they [the ANC] had done so [criminal trials] there would have been no peaceful elections. It is as simple as that. The generals of the old regime had made that abundantly clear. It follows that there would have been no democratic constitution and the country would have deteriorated into a state of siege with many more deaths and further destruction of property” (2000: 7).

Both purists and pragmatists share the view that it is necessary to build a democratic regime based on the rule of law. At the epicentre of their disagreements lies the question of prioritisation or precedence: should reconciliation precede or follow the reinstatement of the rule of law (which proclaims the principle of individual accountability)? Feher suggests that purists and pragmatists should move away from this type of debate to engage in trying to address questions related to the “type of reconciliation compatible with the advancement of democracy: who is to reconcile with whom, and on what grounds” (p. 327).

David Bloomfield and his co-authors have attempted to develop a comprehensive approach to reconciliation that surpasses the terms of the debates advanced by purists and pragmatists and that also fits into the complex contexts of sustained and widespread violent conflict. As a starting point they propose a definition that distinguishes reconciliation as a process (action) and as a state (outcome). In principle this division allows a formulation of reconciliation in a broad way. When reconciliation is conceived as a process it suggests the presence of actors engaged in an array of actions, which can lead to specific outcomes. This division also allows the possibility of analysing other available definitions of reconciliation to check whether they emphasise actions or a state.

As a result of these divisions the process of reconciliation is defined as “finding a way that permits a vision of the future; the (re)building of relationships; coming to terms with past acts and enemies; a society-wide, long-term process of deep change; a

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<sup>33</sup> For similar views see Crocker, 2000; Méndez, 1997.

process of acknowledging, remembering, and learning from the past; and voluntary and cannot be imposed” (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2001: 14).

This definition is clearly broad. Yet its breadth appears to have two facets. One is that it represents a limitation, since it may be difficult to implement in any society, and that the various attributes may contradict one another when considered simultaneously.<sup>34</sup> The other side of the definition represents an advantage, as reconciliation is conceived as multidimensional and includes various actors and processes. For research purposes, some of the attributes of this definition can be separated and carefully analysed, addressing for example attributes such as “finding a way to live that permits a vision of the future” or “(re)building of relationships”. Research can try to understand the meaning of “living together or rebuilding relations” after a violent conflict from the perspective of the people involved.

However, one problematic dimension in this definition is that it again raises the issue of the role of accountability—one of the sources of disagreement between purists and pragmatists—in the process of engaging in reconciliation. The definition states that reconciliation must include a process of coming to terms with past acts and enemies, and that it must not avoid facing the horrors of the past (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2003). Returning to the concern raised by Feher about who is to reconcile with whom, and on what grounds, the issue is: what is retribution? And to what extent is it compatible with the goals of reconciliation, which are generally those of restoring relations between formerly alienated people?

### **2.3. Retributive justice and reconciliation**

According to John Cottingham (1979) retribution has various meanings.<sup>35</sup> The most widely used considers retribution as the process of making the offender pay for his or her offence (Cottingham, 1979). This desire to make the offender pay is not so distinct from the desire for vengeance. Neil Vidmar (2001) notes that retribution and revenge are closely related concepts; they may be the oldest, most basic, and most pervasive justice

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<sup>34</sup> For instance, one attribute of the definition suggests the necessity of formal retribution, but the other suggests that reconciliation is voluntary and cannot be imposed. This contradicts the conventional sense of retributive justice.

<sup>35</sup> Cottingham (1979) has identified at least nine meanings of retribution, namely repayment, desert, penalty, minimalism, satisfaction, fair play, placation, annulment, and denunciation.

reactions associated with human social life. However, the difference between retribution and revenge lies in the concept of crime.

Criminal law regards crime to be an act or omission that has previously been declared punishable by an authoritative governmental body; and the administration of punishment or retribution is the exclusive responsibility of governments and not of particular individuals (Van Ness, 1996). In this case retribution is regarded as impersonal. For instance, the agent of retribution does not necessarily have any special relationship to the victim of the wrongdoing for which he exacts retribution; and he or she is committed to general law principles mandating punishment in other similar circumstances (Nozick, quoted by Vidmar, 2001: 38). Revenge, on the other hand, is “often motivated by personal frustration with continued injustice, individuals act to solve their own problems where jural authorities, or the state, will not or cannot act” (Borneman, 2002: 288).

A more impersonal perspective on retribution is offered by the “fair play” theory (Cottingham, 1979). Retribution is enacted in order to preserve justice and maintain fair play. The justification for retribution or punishment centres not on the offender but on the law-abiding citizen and the duties owed to him. As Cottingham (1979) notes, it is not that punishing the offender is intrinsically appropriate, but that failure to punish would be unjust to others who obey the same abiding rules that the offender has breached.

From these various definitions, retributive justice does not seem to bear any direct relationship to reconciliation. As seen above, reconciliation is primarily about the restoration of broken relationships between people (offender and offended), whilst retribution is about punishment of the offender based on various justifications, such as fair play, repayment, annulment and so on. In fact, scholarly debates have reached no consensus concerning the specific role of criminal justice in the transitional phase. For instance, Paul van Zyl asserts that, “Punishment for past wrongs is a very important, but not indispensable strategy in dealing with the past” (2000: 57). Hannah Arendt, by contrast, reporting on the criminal trial of Adolf Eichmann<sup>36</sup> (1961-1962), quoted the judge’s justification of the necessity of punishment in the following terms: “To defend the honour or authority of him who was hurt by the offence so that the failure to punish may not cause his degradation” (1994[1963]: 287).

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<sup>36</sup> He was indicted and sentenced to death in Jerusalem for his direct involvement in the extermination of Jewish people during the Nazi regime in Germany.



The judges in this historical trial did not discursively elaborate on reconciliation. Despite the political controversy<sup>37</sup> surrounding this criminal trial that led to Eichmann's execution by hanging, this trial was an important act for restoring the dignity of victims and for preventing their further degradation as a result of the absence of justice. The enactment of retribution through this trial helped to forge a general feeling that finally "the suffering of the Jewish people was recognized" since there was a general feeling and belief in Israel that "only a Jewish court could render justice to Jews, and it was the business of the Jews to sit in judgment on their enemies" (Arendt, 1994[1963]: 7).

From the perspective of interpersonal reconciliation, the link between reconciliation and criminal trials is hard to establish in post-conflict settings. Martha Minow states that, "Reconciliation is not the goal of criminal trials except in the most abstract sense. We reconcile with the murderer by imagining he or she is responsible to the same rules and commands that govern all of us; we agree to sit in the same room and accord the defendant a chance to speak, and a chance to fight for his or her life. But reconstruction of a relationship, seeking to heal the accused, or indeed, healing the rest of the community, are not the goals in any direct sense" (1998: 26).

Susan Dwyer, who shares similar views to Minow's, is even more incisive in her remarks when she states that, "the talk of reconciliation is merely a ruse to disguise the fact that a "purer" type of justice cannot be realized" (1999: 81) and that "political leaders should not pretend that reconciliation is the same as justice" (p. 91). However, David Bloomfield and his associates (2003) reiterate that retributive justice is indeed related to reconciliation. They note that the failure to establish the link between retribution and reconciliation stems from thinking about reconciliation as a goal and not as a process.

Luc Huyse (2003), writing in the same *Handbook of Reconciliation* as Bloomfield, elaborated on the idea of "coming to terms with past acts and enemies" through retribution. As a point of departure Luc Huyse immediately states that, "Reconciliation and justice are almost twin notions" (p. 97)<sup>38</sup>. In the final analysis, however, the twins seem very different from one another. Huyse only describes the various types of justice and their potential contribution in post-conflict societies. In relation to retributive justice he asserts that its contribution resides in avoiding unbridled

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<sup>37</sup> For details on this controversy see Hannah Arendt, *op. cit.*

<sup>38</sup> The notion of justice used by Huyse refers only to justice in the form of retribution.

private revenge.<sup>39</sup> However, recent empirical research among victims of crime suggests that “perpetrator punishment only partially, and moreover only transitorily, satisfies feelings of revenge among victims of violent crimes... financial compensation for damages, pain, and suffering might have a higher mitigating impact on feelings of revenge than perpetrator punishment” (Orth, 2004: 68-9).

The role of retribution in reconciliation seems very difficult to determine. In fact, in most cases, retribution is seen as potentially contributing to the escalation of further violence, as Boraine (2001) has noted in relation to the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

Justice is not magic. Justice is not the obvious or natural strategy to follow in the post-war period, and justice and reconciliation cannot be strictly considered as twin notions. The enactment of retribution as part of a national reconciliation agenda is chiefly, but not exclusively, dependent on how the conflict terminated, whether with a military victory for one side or with peace negotiations. This factor has historically exerted a major influence on the type of post-conflict strategy that is followed. Examples of this contingency abound in history as well as recently.<sup>40</sup> The Rwandan case can serve to illustrate the significance of a military victory in post-war retributive justice—though in this case the winning faction (RPF) publicly stated that the criminal trials were aimed at bringing reconciliation to the country. The results of this post-war policy are still very controversial and are clouded with the repetition of injustices. For instance, Jennifer Widner (2001: 67-68) states that in this country “Over three hundred survivors, scheduled to testify as witness, were murdered between 1994 and 1997, and paralysis set in”. The real meaning of reconciliation in this context still remains difficult for external observers to apprehend (Molenaar, 2005).

The Iraq case is another example that demonstrates that even when there is a military victory the need for reconciliation can still feature on the agenda of the victorious forces. The United States military forces and their allies defeated and removed

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<sup>39</sup> The other stated contributions of justice to reconciliation consisted in the protection against the return to power of perpetrators, fulfilling an obligation to the victims by individualizing guilt, strengthening and legitimising the democratisation process, and breaking the cycle of impunity (Huysse, 2001).

<sup>40</sup> In the aftermath of World War II the victorious allies (United States, former Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and France) were able to decide, without brouhaha to establish the International Military Tribunal to try Germany’s former leaders because “there was no civil authority in Germany... the allies had acquired total power over Germany... their state had collapsed, their armies had been defeated. By May 1945 no German institutions had survived” (Tusa & Tusa, 2003[1983]: 12-13).

Saddam Hussein and his Bahaa party from power. The main political actors of the former, defeated regime were forced to face retributive justice in ad-hoc criminal courts, and Saddam Hussein was found guilty of crimes against humanity and was hanged, yet none of the war outcomes has managed to bring peace to Iraq. Now the political authorities in the US have begun to appeal for reconciliation in this war-torn country as a way of fostering peace.<sup>41</sup>

In the same way as Michael Walzer (2005) refers to arguments and debates about war as “ongoing,” the debates on transitional justice and reconciliation are “ongoing” as well. In this regard, to debate from a rigid and fixed position is very problematic. Nevertheless the distinguished Egyptian Law Professor Cherif Bassiouni believes that nothing on earth must derogate the attainment of retributive justice. He states that, “the protections afforded to victims and the responsibility befalling perpetrators and their leaders should not be bound by the legal characterization of the nature of a given conflict, nor should they be bound by the expectations of political settlements and peace arrangements” (1997: 18). Similar views suggest as well that, “justice, in respect of crimes against humanity, is non-negotiable” (Robertson, 2002: 307).

A less controversial strategy of accountability discussed in the literature is related to practices of lustration or purges. Purging is a form of accountability because it demands that former “leaders, agents, and supports of the discredited regime must be restricted from politics and even barred from government service” (Amstutz, 2005: 9). When the new democratic regime attempts to develop such a strategy (which is also called “administrative justice”) on a wide scale or even on national level, serious problems can emerge (as in the case of retributive justice) stemming from the possibility that innocent people may be falsely accused of being “collaborators” while many may be mistakenly placed in the category of “righteous gentiles” and may go home free and still manage to take an active part in establishing the new political order. This kind of repetition of injustice in the post-dictatorship or post-war period has occurred in various countries.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> In a recent study group report advising the Republican-led US administration for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Iraq, reconciliation figures as a key goal to attain. *The Iraqi Study Group Report* by James Baker & Lee Hamilton, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> In Portugal after the defeat of Marcelo Caetano’s dictatorship by a military coup in April 1974; after World War II in France, where it is called *épuration* and is considered to have helped Charles de Gaulle to create a myth of national unity (Beevor & Cooper, 1995: 470); in the Netherlands, which was considered to

#### **2.4. Restorative justice and reconciliation**

Restorative justice follows a different path from retribution. The conception of crime, and of the means to right the wrongs, is different. In this respect Howard Zehr, one of the pioneers of restorative justice practices, argues that: “restorative justice views crime, first of all, as harm done to people and communities... A harm focus, however, implies a central concern for victims’ needs and roles. Restorative justice begins with a concern for victims and how to meet their needs, for repairing the harm as much as possible, both concretely and symbolically” (1997: 68).

The main focus of restorative justice is on the victims and not on the breach of the law. This affirmation of the victims’ needs and roles, which derived principally from experiences in victim/offender mediation in the USA, represents a major difference from the process involved in retributive justice. There are various definitions of restorative justice; Tony Marshall proposes a more general definition of restorative justice that it is “a process whereby parties with a stake in a specific offence collectively resolve how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future” (1999: 5). This definition suggests that the attainment of justice involves various concerned actors who must come together to resolve their conflicts and to envisage implications for the future. In cases of conflict, the most directly related individuals are the victims and victimizers.

The potential contribution of restorative justice to interpersonal reconciliation is far more visible than that of retributive justice. The key principles of restorative justice lie in the idea that justice is not the monopoly of the state and its institutions but rather, as Howard Zehr describes it, “crime is a violation or harm to people and relationships; the aim of justice is to identify obligations, to meet needs and to promote healing; and the process of justice involves victims, offenders, and the community in an effort to identify obligations and solutions, maximizing the exchange of information (dialogue, mutual agreement) between them” (1997: 69). Thus bringing together victims, victimizers and the community into a confrontation so that they can collectively resolve their conflict affords agency to the actors in the attainment of justice.

In comparison with retribution, restorative justice seems to fit more directly into the idea of interpersonal reconciliation in the aftermath of violent mass conflict, because of both the agency that is given to the victims and the procedural format. Research on

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have the highest rates of Jewish victimization (Mason, 1952 & 1984). Lustrations took place in post-colonial Mozambique as well, but I do not address these in this thesis.

procedural justice (the fair attribution of participation in trials) demonstrates that when disputants in a conflict are given a voice in hearings and trials, this helps to produce a positive perception regarding the fairness of the procedure and the outcome (Tyler & Lind, 2001). Even though in the case of restorative justice the voices of the victims may not be translated into punishment of the offenders, the fact that a political space is created and a voice is given to the victims is considered by scholars to be sensitive towards the victims' need to be heard.

The possibility of being able to create an official space for victims to express their sorrows, and not just confining them to the narrow frameworks of legalistic approaches, has attracted attention at international level and has subsequently been incorporated into the vocabulary of conflict resolution mechanisms for victims of gross human rights violations and war crimes (Van Ness, 1996). At national levels, some politicians in post-conflict contexts have found this kind of justice to be a very attractive formula to officially “come to terms with past acts and enemies” as part of the reconciliation process. This kind of justice has taken the form of “truth commissions”.

Truth commissions created around the world share the following characteristics: they focus on the past; they investigate a pattern of abuses over a period of time, rather than a specific event; they are temporary bodies, typically in operation for two to six years, completing their work with the submission of a report; and they are officially sanctioned, authorized, or empowered by the state (Hayner, 2001: 14).

It is not the primary goal of truth commissions to indict individuals who have committed war crimes. This could be regarded as a limitation. As Hayner asserts, “truth commissions clearly hold fewer powers than do courts. They have no powers to put anyone in jail, they can't enforce their recommendations, and most haven't even had the power to compel anyone to come forward to answer questions” (2001: 16). Despite these legal limitations, however, Hayner suggests that the broader mandate of truth commissions “to focus on a pattern of events, including the causes and consequences of the political violence, allows them to go much further in their investigations and conclusions than is generally possible in any trial of individual perpetrators” (p. 16). In this regard, truth commissions have the advantage, compared to trials, of usually outlining the full responsibility of the state and its various institutions that participated in gross human rights violations and crimes. And for the victims, besides the creation of an

official and public space for their active participation in bearing witness to the atrocious past, truth commissions represent the first sign of acknowledgment by any state body that their claims are credible and that the atrocities were wrong (Hayner, 2001).

Some of the characteristics of the different truth commissions so far established seem to fit easily with the idea of reconciliation, because of the possibilities of a dialogue between victims and perpetrators. Nevertheless there is no agreement in the debates over the specific role of truth commissions in relation to reconciliation. Crocker, for example, suggests that “the reduction of enmity between former adversaries is less likely to happen through the short-term efforts of a truth commission than when former enemies work together on common projects over a period of years” (2000: 108), while others consider that “truth and reconciliation commission, of the kind established in several Latin-American countries and South Africa, may serve the interests of peace and justice better than prosecution or amnesty” (Dugard, 1999: 1001).<sup>43</sup>

In an attempt to provide a clear framework for the overall understanding of the potential of truth commissions, Hayner (2001) indicates that a distinction ought to be made between individual and political reconciliation. Truth commissions are likely to promote reconciliation more at the national or political level than at the level of the individual. She justifies this assertion by stating that, “by speaking openly and publicly about the past silenced or highly conflictive events and by allowing an independent commission to clear up high-profile cases, a commission can ease some of the strains that may otherwise be present in national legislative or other political bodies. An official accounting and conclusion about the facts can allow opposing parties to debate and govern together without latent conflicts and bitterness over past lies” (Hayner, 2001: 155).

On the individual level, Hayner affirms, “reconciliation is much more complex, and much more difficult to achieve by means of a national commission” (p. 155). Although she also suggests that some individuals can be positively affected by the work of truth commissions, her focus shifts in this case from reconciliation to healing and forgiveness.<sup>44</sup> She states that, “here certainly are examples of truth commission processes leading directly to healing and forgiveness for some individuals, but knowing the global

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<sup>43</sup> Similar views are expressed by Estrada-Hollenbeck (2001: 82).

<sup>44</sup> Apparently Hayner uses the concept of healing and reconciliation interchangeably.

truth or even knowing the specific truth about one's own case will not necessarily lead to a victim's reconciliation with his or her perpetrators" (p. 155).

The distinction that Hayner makes is useful since it draws attention to different but related processes and levels of analysis. For instance, the "re-building of relationships" may require different means at political and individual levels. The second is the idiosyncratic character of reconciliation. This aspect leads to a clear conceptualisation of victims as heterogeneous agents. Hayner affirms, rightly, that "Forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation are deeply personal processes, and each person's needs and reactions to peacemaking and truth-telling may be different" (p. 155). The recognition of the complex intersubjectivities involved in reconciliation processes suggests a crucial need to refocus attention (currently focused principally on the actions of political elites in international and national arenas of power) towards including community-based approaches that give room for the "opinions and ideas of those whose lives have been most directly affected" (Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002: 638). This re-direction of attention is even more pertinent in contexts where the political elites have opted for generalized and unconditional amnesties in the aftermath of civil wars. The reason for the refocusing of attention in these situations is simple: perpetrators and victims have no other exit rather than to share the same scattered social world, and what happens as a result is generally unforeseeable.

## **2.5. Amnesties and reconciliation**

Amnesties are another mechanism that government leaders in post-conflict countries use for dealing with the legacies of the violent past. In the field of transitional justice, amnesty is the least respected strategy. As seen above, the basic assumptions that are used to argue for various options in the pursuit of justice are that their absence might contribute to the degradation of the victims, or that their attainment can relieve victims, or victimized groups, from the need to take justice into their own hands. Since amnesty generally rules out justice and upholds impunity and silence, it can be concluded that amnesty is a recipe for collapse in post-conflict countries.

Amnesty in this context can be defined as a "legal norm which, for an indefinite number of cases, either revokes (or reduces) the lawful punishment of convicted offenders, terminates continuing proceedings or prevents cases coming to court at all"

(Johan Schatzler quoted in Gunther, 2001: 3). This definition suggests that amnesty can be enacted after a case has been judged and the culprits found guilty,<sup>45</sup> or that amnesty blocks the justice system from starting a criminal case against alleged law violators. In the former case the correct terminology is mercy, which is “a decision of the executive power to revoke the criminal sanction of a court verdict in a particular case” (Gunther, 2001: 3). However, in both cases (pre or post-waiver of criminal proceedings) “amnesty presupposes that there is a legal system, which is based on punishment as legal consequence for criminal acts” (Gunther, 2001: 3). The type of amnesty that thoroughly precludes any form of organized justice from reckoning with past crimes is the most common form of amnesty found in transitional countries. In this case, there is no public attribution of guilt through a valid conviction. Yet even if there is no official and public recognition of culpability, amnesty does not mean that the alleged criminals are innocent; rumours will prevail in society vis-à-vis the acts of certain individuals under the service of their political regimes. The serious problem with this type of amnesty is that only knowing that someone is not innocent is not yet justice, neither rumours serves the purpose of justice.

The link between amnesty and reconciliation is a very controversial issue in the international literature on transitional justice. The majority of authors agree that amnesty spoils the process of reconciliation since it denies the right of the victims to truth, justice, and acknowledgement. Amnesty glorifies impunity and contributes to re-victimization of the victims through silence and denial.

In some cases, to counteract these criticisms, local courts in some transitional countries use international law to argue in favour of a legal choice for amnesties. For this purpose they use Article 6(5)<sup>46</sup> of the Additional Protocol II (1977) of the Geneva Conventions (Roht-Arriaza & Gibson, 1998). Roht-Arriaza and Gibson argue that the “International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has concluded that Article 6(5) is inapplicable to amnesties that extinguish penal responsibility for persons who have violated international law. The ICRC interprets this article as providing for “combatant

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<sup>45</sup> For the advocates of the truth as a condition for reconciliation, this type of amnesty offers this possibility.

<sup>46</sup> Article 6(5) of Protocol II states, “At the end of the hostilities, the authorities in power shall endeavour to grant the broadest possible amnesty to persons who have participated in the armed conflict, or those deprived of their liberty for reasons relating to the armed conflict, whether they are interned or detained.” Source: ICRC: <<http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/genevaconventions>>



immunity,” which ensures that a combatant cannot be punished for acts of hostility, ‘including killing enemy combatants, as long as he respected international humanitarian law.’” (1998: 865). For this reason, some authors suggest that amnesty is the worst option that political elites can apply in the transitional phase. Crocker (1998) considers amnesty as morally defective and should be ruled out. He asserts that, “The obvious problem with the goal of forget and move on is that it is difficult if not impossible to execute, at least in the long run and in a reasonably democratic society” (1998: 495).

As a result, Crocker envisages a bleak future for those embarking on this strategy: “Social amnesia fails to give either the perpetrators or victims of atrocities their due. Repressed emotions of rage, humiliation, and fear can be expressed in uncontrolled and harmful ways. Justified indignation gets transformed into irrational vengeance. Public virtue becomes private vice. The goal of forgetting turns into the goal of revenge” (p.496).

From these almost prophetic words it can simply be concluded that amnesty does not in any way serve the purpose of reconciliation. When scholars do consider amnesty as an acceptable possibility (Minow, 1998) they use the example of the South African political transition that did not disavow the past through unconditional and generalized amnesty but traded it with public truth-confessing through their politically created truth commission.

The pragmatists insist on the need to pay careful attention to contextual factors that can shape the decision to opt for one or the other political strategy.<sup>47</sup> For instance, John Dugard (1999), who considers that on the international level amnesty is no longer accepted as the natural price to be paid for transition from repression to democracy, is nevertheless also prudent in recognizing that “in some situations amnesty may still offer the best prospect for peace” (p. 1001). To emphasize this apparent inattention to circumstantial factors, Dugard states that, “international opinion, often driven by NGO’s and western activists who are strangers to repression, fails to pay sufficient attention to the circumstances of the society which chooses amnesty above prosecution” (1999: 1006). In line with Dugard, Booth (2001: 785) suggests that, “an amnesty does not say

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<sup>47</sup> One strong Western apologist for generalized and unconditional amnesties is Bruce Ackerman (1992). He emphasizes forward-looking approaches by means of writing new and liberal constitutions. He asserts that “An emphasis on constitution writing invites citizens to put the past behind them and to think about how they all might contribute to a definition of the new order” (Ackerman, 1992: 70-71).

that (retributive) punishment is underserved but that it ill serves other purposes (e.g., reconciliation).”

The reason why it is generally believed that punishment ill serves purposes such as reconciliation is the fear that retribution can initiate a new cycle of violence and thus threaten the fragile foundations of peace.<sup>48</sup> Yet the fear of new cycles of violence is part of the arguments presented by the advocates of retributive justice as well. Perhaps a less fear-instilling strategy is that of forgiveness—which has only recently been explored as a mechanism to enable countries to deal with their horrendous past.

## **2.6. Forgiveness and reconciliation**

Official authorities grant amnesties, whereas individuals grant forgiveness. In both cases the offender is released from paying for the damage. Conceptually, forgiveness can be said to be one of the strategies related to restorative justice. Yet this inclusion is dependent upon the type of forgiveness that is deployed, as is demonstrated below.

Forgiveness, wrote Hannah Arendt in the *The Human Condition* “serves to undo the deeds of the past” (1958: 237). Yet following this definition the questions to consider are: a) what does it take for the wronged person to cancel the debt? b) Under what circumstances are these debts cancelled? c) What does the wronged person gain by undoing the debt? These are not simple questions to answer. Patrick Boleyn-Fitzgerald (2002) suggests that the meaning of forgiveness is a matter of dispute among contemporary philosophers.

In recent years various western scholars have explored the possible role of forgiveness in national reconciliation processes. However, the problem here is that traditionally in western cultures forgiveness is an act most often linked to religion (Shriver, 1997). Ever since the constitution of the nation-states in Europe in the eighteenth-century, which proclaimed the separation of religion from the affairs of politics and of the state, the affinities between forgiveness and religion have contributed to hampering scholars from the various fields of social sciences in systematically exploring the possible role of forgiveness in politics. In order to change the persistent connection of forgiveness to the language and substance of religion into a politically sensitive definition, Donald Shriver (1997) notes the need to develop a “...more precise,

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<sup>48</sup> For an historical account on escalation of violence in the name of retributive justice see H. Mason (1952) for the Netherlands, and Beevor & Cooper (1981) for other post-World War II European countries.

dynamic, and politically contexted definition...” (p. 7). He proposes a multidimensional concept of forgiveness that is linked to politics: “Forgiveness (...) is an act that joins moral truth, forbearance, empathy, and commitment to repair a fractured human relation. Such a combination calls for a collective turning from the past that neither ignores past evil nor excuses it, that neither overlooks justice nor reduces justice to revenge, that insists on the humanity of enemies even in their commission of dehumanising deeds, and that values the justice that restores political community above the justice that destroys it (Shriver, 1997: 9).

This is a broad definition that addresses several issues. One aspect of this definition that appears useful here is the possible contribution of forgiveness to repairing fractured human relations. However, Shriver’s perspective on forgiveness has been criticized for failing to “confront the inherent tension between justice and forgiveness, punishment and reconciliation” (Amstutz, 2005: 76). To counteract this, Mark Amstutz has in his turn proposed a theoretical elaboration of political forgiveness, which is accordingly “a public response to a collective offence<sup>49</sup> (...) in which offenders and victims move toward reconciliation in the aftermath of a serious moral offence” (2005: 224). In order to develop his theory, Amstutz (2005) initially revised three major theories of forgiveness, namely the classical, virtue ethics, and unilateral theories.<sup>50</sup> Although in the process of building his own theory of political forgiveness Amstutz appears to identify more with the first two theories. For the purpose of this discussion only the unilateral theory is considered here.

The unilateral or therapeutic theory considers the victim deciding to forgo anger toward the offenders without confronting them or receiving—or even demanding—an apology. From this perspective the act of forgiving does not involve the offender or the public. It is an independent act that allows the victim to overcome past injuries by subjectively transmuting his or her memory of past wrongdoing into an accepted and integrated experience.

Although Amstutz recognizes that unilateral forgiveness can offer important insights about the process of forgiveness, he does not seriously consider unilateral forgiveness in his project of building a practice of political forgiveness. He rightly

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<sup>49</sup> “Collective wrongdoing involves offences and human rights abuses that are carried out for political purposes and are perpetrated by state agents or representatives of political groups” (Amstutz, 2005: 224).

<sup>50</sup> Extensive descriptions of these theories can be found in Amstutz (2005: 53-61).

acknowledges that there may sometimes be no better alternative for confronting and overcoming past wrongdoing than to forgive, and that forgiveness should be regarded as an important means that antagonists can use “to overcome their alienation, distrust, and hostility.” Yet unilateral forgiveness is not one of the alternatives that he proposes, since for him there are certain preconditions for the enactment of political forgiveness: namely “truth, public acknowledgement of collective offences, avoidance of revenge, mutual empathy and compassion, and the reduction or cancellation of a debt or deserved punishment” (2005: 224). In order to attain the truth and public acknowledgement of collective offences “legitimate leaders must acknowledge their members’ collective offences, publicly apologize for them, and authenticate remorse through symbolic or tangible reparations” (p. 224). If such a process does not occur, victims are not likely to “begin to develop an alternative view of offenders and respond to them with compassion by offering forgiveness” (2005: 64).

From this definition, the circumstances in which forgiveness can be granted are not very different from those of reconciliation as advanced by David Bloomfield and his co-authors (2001). Both definitions glossed over that dealing with the past cannot be avoided in order for forgiveness (Amstutz, 2005) and reconciliation (Bloomfield et al., 2001) to occur. In the case of forgiveness, the past must be confronted by way of political leaders coming forward to acknowledge their misdeeds, whereas in the case of reconciliation the past is dealt with through different types of legalistic and political approaches. However, major difficulties in dealing with issues of reconciliation and forgiveness, and particularly the role of forgiveness in reconciliation, arise from the fact that people and the societies they inhabit differ from each other regarding their physical and social ecological environment. Therefore, to expect similar phenomena to occur everywhere is very problematic, particularly as offenders seldom acknowledge wrongdoing and express repentance to their victims, as was the case in the aftermath of the civil war in Mozambique. In such contexts of political impunity, is it still possible to engage in the process of reconciliation? What kind of forgiveness can be enacted in these milieus of political impunity? There are no easy answers to these questions and the current debates revised in these chapters are riddled with serious limitations.

## 2.7. Limitations of current debates

The debates presented in this chapter focus mainly on the initiatives developed by political leaders as representatives of nation-states. Very little attention has been devoted to addressing the ways in which victims living in specific devastated social worlds (that is, in a world composed of a specific environment, culture, economics and history) deal with the legacies of past violence. A serious limitation in these debates is the absence of victims' voices.<sup>51</sup> While there is a noble proclivity to emphasise important values such as respect for and dignity of the victims, very little room is granted for victims to voice their own views and judgments. In some instances, philosophers have used arguments about impartiality to sideline victims from their moral right to express their judgments about the wrongs inflicted upon them. The philosopher Arne Vetlesen (2005) is one of those who consider that besides the perpetrator, the "victim is party to the event (or conflict) in question; hence both should be deemed unfit to judge" (Vetlesen 2005: 221). This absence of the voices of victims and, in the case of Vetlesen's proposal, the active suppression of the victim's voice, further complicates the debate. It also gives the impression that victims represent a homogeneous group. It suggests that reconciliation means the same thing to everyone and should follow the same paths, particularly by means of criminal justice. It is problematic to conceive reconciliation concepts and related strategies in a "one-size-fits-all" manner. Attempts to attribute independent values to concepts describing social phenomena run the risk of generating meaningless knowledge about particular post-war societies.

The proposition formulated by Bloomfield and his co-authors (2003) to address reconciliation as a process seems to be widely accepted. What is unclear is the phases of the process and the circumstances in which the various transitional justice mechanisms can be successfully used or not used at all. Rather than taking a comprehensive approach to transitional justice where issues of meaning, relevance and priorities can be put under scrutiny through cross-cultural studies, the current debates are prescriptive in nature.

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<sup>51</sup> A rare exception took place in Algeria through a popular consultation to decide on a specific charter for peace and national reconciliation. Despite the wide participation (97%), opposition groups tried to boycott the referendum, arguing that it whitewashed previous crimes. The consequences of this consultation require further examination. BBC NEWS: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/talking\\_point/4293136.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/talking_point/4293136.stm).

They determine how reconciliation must be enacted and achieved, regardless of the specificities of the society undergoing transition.

There is a clear lack in these debates about the necessity to include local notions and practices of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness. Exceptions are Ifi Amadiume and Abdllahi An-Na'im who argue that "African nations have their own way of achieving resolutions – for example, the use of rituals" (2000: 15). The availability of reception and reintegration rituals conducted for former soldiers as a way of reconnecting to their former alienated communities has been described in the case of post-civil war Mozambique (Honwana, 2003; Lundin, 1998; Schafer, 1999). On the other hand, amnesty and consequent impunity, as Western experts define it, may not always be synonymous for more violence; neither do the cycles of injustice terminate simply because a country in transition adopts concrete measures to combat impunity. As demonstrated above, the cases of various European countries after World War II and post-genocide Rwanda (Widner, 2001) are pertinent illustrations of violence in the service of combating impunity; and the case of post-war Iraq also indicates that the enactment of criminal justice does not automatically lead to peace and reconciliation. Furthermore, outside the realm of the Western ideas and practices of justice, law and reconciliation, impunity may not mean that the culprits are going to be free to celebrate. Ideas and social practices relating to justice that entail the possibility of punishment by the spirits of innocent murdered victims and casting the evil eye, that is, "the belief that someone can project harm by looking at another's property or person" (Maloney, 1976: v), are very important for gaining insight into other ways of dealing with impunity and attaining justice and reconciliation. The current legalistic debates on amnesties fail to incorporate such notions as these that give rise to specific forms of social practices for addressing impunity and actively engaging in reconciliation.

Despite some of the limitations noted here and the nature of the debate itself, characterized by disagreements in multiple aspects, the ideas presented by the various scholars cannot be hastily thrown away "into the canal." They offer important insights that can be translated into specific research questions to be tested in various contexts. In this regard, what seems crucial for overcoming the current limitations is the development of comprehensive descriptions and analyses of the physical and socio-cultural contexts of the main actors, and of how these contextual factors influence their social practices and

the judgments that they make in relation to the measures that are necessary for addressing the legacies of the violent past. There is a need to acquire in-depth knowledge of the social practice of the actors being studied, especially everyday practical strategies geared toward the attainment of locally defined goals (Bourdieu, 1977).

The study of social practices in post-conflict contexts where the political elites have decided for amnesties (with or without trade-offs) is of particular relevance since the immediate result is that there is no other exit for the victims and former perpetrators than to live together at the scene of their violent experiences. Research of this kind into local communities ravaged by wars can help expand the current theoretical debates on transitional justice worldwide.

## **Conclusion**

The mainstream literature on transitional justice does not offer definitive answers as to how to address the legacies of gross human rights violations and war crimes. As Elster (2004) has recognized, it is difficult to develop a “theory of transitional justice” because the context-dependence of transitional justice represents an insuperable obstacle for generalizations. Consequently, the debates are permeated by contradictions. For instance, when political elites opt for legal retribution, theorists and human rights groups complain that it is selective, human rights are not duly respected and sentences are lenient.<sup>52</sup> When political elites opt for truth and reconciliation commissions, the criticism is: The nation and individuals are not the same thing<sup>53</sup>; only a few victims get the chance to tell their stories in public, and very few perpetrators come to confess and to show repentance for their sins.<sup>54</sup> And worse, the clarity of the perpetrators’ confessions of systematic murders

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<sup>52</sup> Mary Robinson, former UN chief of the HRC, criticized the Indonesian Justice authorities because of the lenient sentences given to six individuals indicted with gross violations of human rights in East-Timor in 1999. On her visit to East-Timor stated “they [Indonesia authorities] failed when dealing with the justice of the responsible of crimes against humanity in 1999. The international community and the Security Council of the UN have to do something so that justice can be done for the victims and for the people of East Timor.” Desarme: <http://www.desarme.org/publique/cgi/cgilua.exe>

<sup>53</sup> Wilson (2001) suggests in relation to the South African TRC: “individual psychological processes cannot be reduced to national processes dedicated to ‘healing, since the ‘nation’ is not like an individual at all... Nations do not have collective psyches which can be healed and to assert otherwise is to psychologize an abstract entity which exist primarily in the minds of nation-building politicians.” (p. 15).

<sup>54</sup> Theissen and Hamber (1998) show that in the initial stages of the South African TRC, the majority of white people surveyed by telephone were unconvinced that they had played a role in apartheid abuses, and over 40% thought apartheid was a good idea, badly executed.

and the fact that they return home as free citizens throws discredit on the justice system.<sup>55</sup> And still, when political elites decide to adopt the strategy of amnesty, analysts criticize it using the argument that “reconciliation processes are ineffective as long as the vicious circle of impunity is not broken” (Huyse, 2003: 108). In relation to political forgiveness the debates are still in their infancy. However, the proponents of this strategy suggest that there must be a responsible and engaged commitment from the side of the victimizers vis-à-vis their victims, otherwise forgiveness and reconciliation are not likely to occur. This position is problematic as well, since in countries like Mozambique the political authorities did not climb into the pulpits of power and admit responsibility. Then what can we say of the Mozambican political transition?

If the nation state opts for silence over the past, how can alienated people reconcile with one another? What does reconciliation mean in practice? What is the impact of the presence or absence of formal justice mechanisms on the process of reconciliation? Can people reconcile even if no formal justice mechanism is enacted in the transitional period?

In the majority of cases, the debates on reconciliation are characterized by directive (or prescriptive) measures. The various authors in some way or another categorically affirm that there is no reconciliation without retribution, or without confession of the truth, and so on. Some scholars even state that in the absence of these measures only “false reconciliation” takes place (Méndez, 1997). These kinds of assertions may be considered as sand rather than oil in the wheels of progress of human knowledge. Instead of advancing the exploration of other forms of reasoning about and dealing with reconciliation after extreme violent conflicts, they limit it.

Another important aspect that contributes to the limitations of the current debates on transitional justice and reconciliation is the general absence in these debates of the victims’ voices and their ecological realities (environmental, economic, and socio-cultural factors, including the spirits). The current exclusion of victims’ voices and social practices does not permit us to know the extent of the role which the presence of material, as well as gender, socio-cultural, and spiritual factors plays in the victims’ perceptions

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<sup>55</sup> Borneman (2002: 295) depicted this reality in the following terms: “a serious limitation of many of the truth commissions of the 1990s is that they explicitly delinked telling the truth from any retribution.”



and attitudes towards justice and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. In addition, it leaves us ignorant as to the judgments that victims themselves make of the different politico-legal strategies presented in this chapter.

In order to overcome these limitations in the current debates, I explore a conceptual framework that allows pursuit of a research goal that tries to elicit the contribution of transitional justice to the reconciliation phenomenon. This comprehensive framework should, moreover, create an ample space for the enactment of perspectivism expressing multiple voices and for the social and spiritual practices of the people (men and women) most directly affected by and involved in the violence. The conceptual framework addressed in the next chapter was developed by Georg Friedrich Hegel and was designated as a social project on reconciliation. It was thoroughly presented, analysed, and discussed by the philosopher Michael Hardimon (1994) in his book *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation*.

## Chapter 3: The social world of reconciliation

### Introduction

The study of reconciliation in a society where the official authorities have opted for legal impunity in relation to war-related abuses and crimes of the past requires the exploration of other conceptual frameworks that may help us to understand how people address these legacies without strict legal frameworks. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to develop a conceptual framework of reconciliation that allows the exploration of victims' judgments vis-à-vis different forms of transitional justice, as well as examining the social practices that help them to deal with the challenges of reconciliation in the most basic and fundamental way: victims and former perpetrators living side-by-side on the same sites of their horrific past experiences.

Within this context, Hegelian' social theory on reconciliation is invoked because it provides a framework for the exploration of reconciliation in social contexts where individuals and families and their social relations and cultural practices are the principal elements of analysis. Furthermore, the option for a socially focused analysis of reconciliation bespeaks the importance of observing how social relations unfold or are constructed free from war-related violence. That is, in deeply divided society because of civil wars and coupled with the absence of legal approaches to reckon with the violent past there is a need to analyse what form social relations take. In this regard, it is interesting to explore the extent that concepts such as *social capital* (see below) and its multiple features can be useful for analysing the forms that social relations may take in post-conflict countries.

This chapter is divided into five sections that present Hegel by the hands of Michael Hardimon. This section also presents the main concerns of Hegel that led him to elaborate on the concepts of the "modern social world", "alienation" and "reconciliation". Section two analyses the applicability of the Hegelian' approach for contemporary post-war contexts. This analysis leads to the need to reflect upon the challenges at stake in a social world torn by a civil war and the resources at disposal that can play a role in reconciliation. Section three then introduces the social resources that are necessary to promote reconciliation in a social world divided because of civil war. Social resources for reconciliation are composed of the physical environment (in the form of land, which

shapes the production system), and structural social capital (in the form of institutions for conflict resolution). These resources have been selected for discussion here because the social world as proposed by Hegel has to have specific attributes that lay the groundwork for the reconciliation process to unfold. In this regard, section four explores how the systems of production may contribute to fostering the emergence of features of social capital, since people have to establish relationships in order to engage in collective productive activities. Section five demonstrates that the approach to everyday life is not an over-optimistic one in the sense of reconciliation meaning complete harmony between people due to total absence of conflict. On the contrary, people do become engaged in conflict; but the difference is that the availability of conflict resolution institutions that may still possess certain features of social capital (such as trust) can contribute to a peaceful resolution of conflicts, foster positive social relations between people, and make for reconciliation, peace and social stability in the community.

### **3.1. Hegel's approach to reconciliation**

Michael Hardimon has noted that “Hegel was the first modern thinker explicitly to claim that reconciliation is the proper aim of political philosophy. His is the deepest and most comprehensive philosophical treatment of this problem available” (p.6). Hegel's approach to reconciliation was not at all focused on the need to overcome conflicts in contexts of post-war violence. Hegel lived between 1770-1831, and his philosophical project on reconciliation was developed for his nineteenth-century contemporaries. Nevertheless, Hardimon is right in pointing out that his ideas are still very relevant to contemporary studies of reconciliation in general. As I will demonstrate, some of Hegel's key ideas on alienation and reconciliation are also applicable to contemporary forms of violent conflicts.

One of the problems that Hegel tries to solve is related to the conflicts between individuals and their social world that give rise to alienation. The idea of the social world refers to “the world of the social institutions and practices into which human beings are born, within which they live and in which they die” (Hardimon, 1994: 16-17). The social world, Hardimon points out, “also refers to the particular roles that people have within the central institutions. Thus, for example, Hegel thinks of the modern social world as including the roles of family member, member of civil society, and citizen” (p. 16).

Although Hegel is concerned with the modern social world, which for him consisted of the early nineteenth century European states such as England, France, and Prussia, Hardimon notes that the concept of “social world” is plastic and can be applied to any particular historical era (p.17). The modern social world is composed of people and their central institutions. Yet Hardimon contends that “speaking of the social world in the recommended sense does not commit one to the Hegelian idea that... the central social institutions of the modern social world consist of the family, civil society, and the state; the bare idea of the social world (or, for that matter, the bare idea of the *modern* social world) contains no such commitment” (p. 17). The concept of the social world can always be adjusted to the specificities of the society under study, providing “a useful way of expressing the point that a particular social world may represent ‘the’ social world for the people who inhabit it... the social world into which they are born and carry out their lives” (p.17).

The central aspect of the argument is that in the social world there are interactions between individuals and between individuals and the institutions of their social world. These interactions inevitably lead to the emergence of conflicts. The conflicts between individuals and the different forces of their social world generate alienation among some individuals. This alienation causes some individuals to “regard their central social institutions as foreign, bifurcating, and hostile or indifferent to their needs” (Hardimon, p.21). Alienation in this respect leads individuals to distrust the main institutions of their social world, and not to participate in the building up of individual and common goals. Reconciliation for Hegel, therefore, is “the process of overcoming alienation” (p.2). Hegel also defines reconciliation as both a process and an outcome. As a process, he suggests, it consists in “overcoming the splits that divide the self from the social world, and the attendant splits that divides the self from the self” (p.2). As an outcome, it consists in the result of overcoming alienation, a “state that Hegel characterizes as being at home in the social world” (Hardimon, 1995: 2). There are requirements that must be met in order to experience the social world as a home. The social world is a home “if and only if it makes it possible for people to actualise themselves as individuals and as social members... within the family, civil society, and the state” (Hardimon, 1995: 99-103). The question here is what does the actualisations of individuals in the social world means. The answer Hegel provides is that individuals actualise themselves by participating both

in the domestic sphere and in the society's central institutions. Hegel contends that on the domestic level "a well-ordered family will reward its members for actualising themselves as members of a domestic group by providing them with love, intimacy and understanding" (Hardimon, 1994: 104).

On the state level, Hegel suggests that "A well-ordered state will reward its members for actualising themselves as members of a political community by providing them with a form of life in which they can self-consciously pursue the shared general end of the good of the community and attain recognition as members of the political community"<sup>56</sup> (Hardimon, 1994: 104).

The idea of being reconciled to the social world is very attractive, as it suggests interactions of the individuals with the micro level (family), meso level (civil society), and macro level (the state). Furthermore, these interactions are meant to consist of not passive but active participation. According to Hardimon, "Hegel maintains that in the modern social world, reflective individuals experience "pure subjective alienation". They are *subjectively* alienated because they feel estranged from its arrangements, which they regard as alien and hostile. But their subjective alienation is *pure* (unaccompanied by objective alienation) because, contrary to appearances, the world they inhabit is in fact a home (Hardimon, 1994: 133).

The common "medicine" for this type of subjective alienation is philosophy. Hardimon argues that the subjective nature of alienation propounded by Hegel contrasts with Karl Marx's ideas, since for Marx alienation is indeed an objective problem. Contrary to Hegel, Marx thinks that "his social world is not a home because its mode of production is capitalist" (Hardimon, 1995: 133), and this is an objective reality. In this regard, Marx's conception of the nature of alienation would seem more appropriate than Hegel's to the extent that "he maintains that the form of alienation his contemporaries experience is 'complete' (both subjective and objective). It is his view that their subjective alienation mirrors their true, objective condition" (Hardimon, 1995: 133).

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<sup>56</sup> It is worth noting, however, that this political dimension of participation as the process of actualising oneself, which is in turn an indicator of reconciliation, can be very tricky in contemporary African contexts. In this regard, Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba, reflecting about political contexts of one-party dictatorship and in particular Marxist-Leninist party politics, notes that, "People outside of the Party do not exist" (1992: 31). Yet this politics of alienation is also very much present in the so-called new democratic societies. In principle in these new democracies advertise all sorts of pluralism; however, very often people located outside the well-guarded boundaries of the ruling party are regarded as just one more number, or even as an enemy, with important socio-economic consequences.

Despite Hegel's limitation in considering that the content of alienation is only a subjective experience, his central ideas, as I will demonstrate, can shed light on the analysis of the dilemmas of reconciliation in contemporary post-civil war contexts.

### **3.2. Hegel's reconciliation approach used for contemporary post-war contexts**

There are central ideas of Hegel's that can help us in studying the complexities of reconciliation in post-civil war societies. First, Hegel's view on the form (but not the content) of alienation as originating from the conflict between the individual and the modern social world is a case in point. To wit: war in general, as well as bringing mass destruction and killings, alienates people in various other ways: physical, psychological, social and political. Alienation in these contexts could tend to exclude human participation from the social world, since a compelling feature of modern warfare is that the weaponry used not only destroys the enemy forces but affects and kills many civilians as well. People start experiencing their social world under siege as alien; it becomes characterized by the unpredictability and the extreme, violent nature of the war affecting it.

One of the central challenges of the post-war reality resides from the very beginning in rebuilding the social world and its central institutions from the ashes. Alienation in this context is not subjective but objective. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1974) defines alienation as the feeling and fact of disconnectedness from people and activities. In post-conflict settings alienation is a fact resulting from the destruction of the social world, and from total or partial loss of social relations based on trust—both between former perpetrators and victims, and between victims themselves. One of the most immediate and visible sources contributing to a multidimensional experience of alienation can be registered in post-war contexts where the landscape is crowded with anti-personnel landmines obstructing the possibilities for reconstruction and development as is the case in certain areas of Mozambique (Unruh *et al.*, 2003).

The second relevant idea of Hegel's is his assertion that the process of reconciliation requires a permanent actualisation of individuals through the possibility of accessing and participating in the central institutions of their social world; in other words, the state of reconciliation should allow previously alienated people to experience their social world as a home again. This is precisely one of the central points of the critique

raised in the previous chapter. The participation of those most affected by war has been precluded and silenced in the mainstream debates on transitional justice and reconciliation. The result is an almost total absence in the scholarly literature of knowledge about the real need on the part of perpetrators and victims of war and their families to experience their devastated social world as a home again.

The third very important point formulated by Hegel is his idea that reconciliation does not mean the end of conflicts. As Hardimon states, “Hegel does not conceive reconciliation as a state of “perfect harmony”, a circumstance in which no conflicts whatsoever remain... Hegel maintains that conflict is an integral component of reconciliation with the social world... people will inevitably come into conflict with the modern social world, even if it is well ordered and even if they are reconciled (p. 92).<sup>57</sup> The difference is that these conflicts have to be dealt with in contexts of political transition and regime change, not in a violent way, but under the rules of a new democratic and institutional order (Huntington, 1991).

The ideas of reconciling individuals to their social world (and the simultaneous reality that as a consequence of civil wars the social world itself needs to be rebuilt) and that reconciliation should also address relationships between estranged people bespeaks the fact that social research needs to be grounded in theoretical approaches that offer ample perspectives for the elaboration of knowledge originating from the reality, contingencies and emergencies of communities in the post-war phase.

One of the main challenges in contexts of impunity where victims and former perpetrators have to inhabit the same social world and to actualise themselves counting mostly on themselves consists in the capacity to re-establish and sustain family and social relationships based on trust as well as on the willingness to cooperate and work together. In this regard, attitudes of trust and cooperation as features of social capital become important resources that can play a role in reconciling formerly alienated people.

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<sup>57</sup> The philosopher James Finlayson (1999) has also observed that Hegel’s conception of reconciliation does not rule out the presence of conflicts. He states, “With regard to Hegel’s concept of reconciliation it is a mistake to see it as a state of harmony and absence of conflict (...) [R]econciliation is not a harmonious redemption of suffering. Hegelian reconciliation refers to a resolution of conflict through the continuance of conflict” (Finlayson, 1999: 502-3).

### 3.3. Social capital, the social world and reconciliation

The scholarly literature on social capital presents different definitions of what it is. For some authors, such as Pierre Bourdieu, social capital is a kind of resource available in the network of relations between individuals (Portes, 1998: 3). For others, social capital consists of “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1993: 36).<sup>58</sup> What appears to unify these diverse concepts is the treatment of social capital as a form of instrumental resource.

Norman Uphoff (2000) has made a synthesis of previous definitions of social capital and suggested a more operational concept of social capital that can be applied both to individuals and to groups or societies.<sup>59</sup> He divides social capital into structural and cognitive aspects. Structural social capital refers to the relationships, networks, and associations or the institutional structures, both vertical<sup>60</sup> and horizontal,<sup>61</sup> which link members. Cognitive social capital refers to values, norms, civic responsibility, expected reciprocity, charity, altruism, and trust. This division allows an analytic focus on attributes of social capital that might be in the possession of individuals as well as small or large organizations.

This division makes it possible to address a key problem in post-war societies, namely that cognitive social capital may be severely damaged whereas some features of structural social capital may still be available. Focusing on the analysis on the structural level, particularly on the available institutions that still harbours features of trust, social capital can be considered “a key source of reconciliation and reconstruction in divided societies through the formation of broad and diverse networks” (Colletta & Cullen, 2002: 306).

The usefulness of incorporating social capital (both cognitive and structural) in the lexicon and study of reconciliation in post-conflict countries in general and in Mozambique in particular is that social capital draws attention to two things: first, the quality of social relations and second, the resources that may still be available in the

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<sup>58</sup> Fukuyama distinguishes social capital from other forms of human capital “insofar as it is usually created and transmitted through cultural mechanisms like religion, tradition, or historical habit” (1995: 26).

<sup>59</sup> Social capital is conceived of as “an accumulation of various types of social, psychological, cognitive, institutional, and related assets that increase the amount or probability of mutually beneficial cooperative behaviour that is productive for others, not just one’s self” (Uphoff, 2000: 216).

<sup>60</sup> Vertical relations are generated from unequal relations due to differences in power or resource bases.

<sup>61</sup> Horizontal relations exist among equals or near equals, forming ties within and between communities.



society and the ways in which these resources can help in restoring or improving social relations between formerly estranged people. Positive or good social relations are key ingredients in the process of reconciliation. When war survivors are left on their own to rebuild their social world, cognitive social capital in the form of tolerance towards alleged perpetrators and collaborators on the one hand, and trust and respect for available institutions on the other hand, can gradually reduce social distance and promote social contacts between victims and aggressors, and this may lead to their reconciliation.

For example, community courts can be considered to be a form of structural social capital that can contribute to the emergence of certain features of cognitive social capital. If people still trust and respect these courts they can potentially, though gradually, contribute to repairing the shattered social world in several ways: by reducing family and social tensions through the fair resolution of conflicts; by regulating individual and collective behaviour; by promoting of a sense of communality by leading people towards culturally sanctioned norms and values; and fostering positive and trustful relationships between people. Ultimately the regulatory activities of the local courts can foster reconciliation.

It could be argued that some of the publications on reconciliation in post-conflict settings (described in the previous chapter) also refer to various features of the social organization that are included in the definition of social capital.<sup>62</sup> However, these publications tend to regard such features (trust, norms and social networks) as an end in themselves, and argue that justice and truth, political forgiveness and reparation can play a role in generating these features. An exception is presented by Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, who suggest that developing a reconciliation concept in terms of building trust is crucial “because people are unable to cooperate with each other and work together unless their relationships are characterized by trust” (2002: 200). The need to work together in post-conflict settings brings to the surface possibilities for exploring certain resources that are available in the society, whose utilization intrinsically requires some form of collective cooperation. In the Mozambican context, land for agriculture is just such a resource. Although land is usually an individual asset, its exploitation has a

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<sup>62</sup> In related scholarly works, “trust” is also defined as part of the broad process of rebuilding or recovery after periods of war violence. For instance, Maynard (1997) suggests five steps of psychosocial recovery: establishing safety; communalisation and bereavement; rebuilding trust and the capacity to trust; re-establishing personal and social morality; and the reintegration and restoration of democratic discourse.

profound impact on individual and collective behaviours. Individually, the person has to follow a yearly cycle; collectively, farming requires some forms of social organization even if people do not trust one another. Some authors suggest that where social capital is high, people will have the confidence to invest in collective activities, knowing that others will do so too (Adams *et al.*, 2003; Pretty, 2003). In other contexts we may confront a post-conflict situation in which social capital has been depleted; but land is an asset whose exploitation for survival reasons can lead to the formation of social capital in terms of social bonds and relations of trust and mutual respect, and observance of certain taboos that did not exist when communal activities were re-initiated after the civil strife.

Structural and cognitive social capital is particularly appealing for the analysis of the Mozambican post-war context because it can be addressed as instrumental and non-inflammatory, as a form of capital that can give rise to processes of production and reproduction of social practices that help in the reconciliation process. To examine this, it is first necessary to analyse how reconciliation and the need to start anew were intrinsically linked to the fact that survival could be guaranteed through the local production systems.

#### **3.4. The production system and the production of social capital**

The land and its corresponding production system are resources that do not fall into the category of social capital. This can be stated with certainty. However, two aspects can be taken into consideration in examining how agricultural practice exerts an impact on individual and collective behaviour that is capable of generating certain features of cognitive social capital.

First, according to Stevan Hobfoll's theory of the conservation of resources (COR) (1998), "stress<sup>63</sup> occurs in circumstances that represent a threat of loss or actual loss of the resources required to sustain the individual-nested-in family-nested-in social organization..." (1998: 55). Viewed from the perspective of moving away from war (characterised by a loss of resources and complete alienation from the physical environment) to a scenario of peace where people regain their resources, it is viable to hypothesize that accessibility of resources can potentially function as a source of social cohesion. In this sense, people's access to their physical environment (land for production

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<sup>63</sup> Or social tensions and conflicts, as in the case of Rwanda.

and the land of the ancestors) in agricultural societies can be regarded as potentially able to promote people's reconciliation with their own social world.<sup>64</sup>

Secondly, the intrinsic requirements for the full utilization of these environmental resources may lay a foundation for the emergence of features of cognitive social capital such as collective organizational norms, trust, mutual respect, and dialogue between people. These characteristics that can emerge as a result of agricultural activity can be expected to contribute decisively to reconciliation.

Hitherto no research has been done to explore the possible role that the availability of land and the features of agricultural practice can play in promoting the emergence of those features of cognitive social capital that are so crucial in reconciliation processes. The available studies that try to explore the variable land resources in post-war societies do not directly use reconciliation as a dependent variable. Instead, they attempt to demonstrate that the scarcity of land resources in a agrarian society—such as Rwanda—can trigger and heighten violent conflicts, contributing in this way to depleting important features of the social capital needed for social cohesion and stability in society (Uvin, 1996; André & Platteau; 1998; Diamond; 2005).<sup>65</sup>

There is little doubt that the activities performed during the agricultural cycle are primarily aimed at producing food to satisfy the basic needs of the family and community members. Promoting reconciliation between former enemies is not the primary objective. However, the inference that can be derived from observing the organizational structure of the agricultural activities is that, with few exceptions, the practice of agriculture in many parts of the world is still traditionally based and for self-subsistence. The work is mainly performed with handheld hoes and machetes. A great deal of human effort, participation and coordination is required. Hence, it can be stated that the agricultural cycle is a productive activity that not only facilitates social contact between people, but it also requires respect for communal social organizations. There are two aspects that seem important in relation to this land resource and its contribution to reconciliation studies.

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<sup>64</sup> Hondius (2003) writing about the return of Dutch Jews from concentration camps, suggests a parallel analysis in relation to the role of access to stolen, confiscated or lost property among the Jewish minority groups in the Netherlands after World War II. The failure of the Dutch authorities to initiate the restitution of or compensation for property among the Dutch Jews contributed to further alienating them and leaving them in a state of silence and urgent dissatisfaction.

<sup>65</sup> Other scholars have suggested that social capital captures the idea that social bonds and norms are critical for an effective management and sustainability of common pool resources, because where social capital is high people have the confidence to invest in collective activities, knowing that others will do so too (Adams *et al.*, 2003; Pretty, 2003).

The first is that a scarcity of fertile land can represent an obstacle to fostering social cohesion in post-war communities, because people have to compete in a way that generates serious social conflicts and unrest. Second, when land is available and people practise subsistence and manual agriculture, they are compelled to cooperate with one another in order to grow enough food. On a certain level, agriculture can contribute to binding formerly divided people, and in this case agricultural practice can potentially become a tool for reconciliation. In other words, the agricultural cycle is an ecological resource whose dynamic of utilization can promote certain features of social capital that are crucial for reconciliation. In order to operationalize this hypothesis there is a need to determine the availability and accessibility of land, analyse the working and production processes, and elicit the impact that these processes have upon individual and collective behaviour.

### **3.5. Social capital and community institutions of conflict resolution**

As defined by Uphoff (2000), structural social capital refers not only to relationships and networks between people, but also to associations or social structures and institutions as well. A key institution mentioned in most transitional justice studies is the court system. The propositions presented by most transitional justice experts (outlined in the previous chapter) address the importance of legally reckoning with the past as a way of achieving resolution and promoting reconciliation. Historically and until recently, cases of criminal accountability for past abuses and crimes were tried in ad hoc courts that had a specific mandate for the purpose, functioned only for a certain period of time, and made use of national criminal law or international human rights law. This has recently changed as a result of the creation of the permanent International Criminal Court (ICC).

In countries where post-war governments have rejected any form of accountability for past gross human rights violations (and, as a consequence, victims and former perpetrators must live in the same social world), a key question that needs to be posed is whether in such contexts it is inappropriate to talk about “transitional justice”. I contend that it is not inappropriate to talk in terms of transitional justice. The importance of the local legal order can be deduced from their ability to deal with the litigation that takes place as corollary of the relationships that people develop with one another in the

post-war period. In this regard, the importance of justice can be observed in the ability of the local legal system to stop with cycles of injustices.

It is generally recognised that many countries are characterised by plural legal systems. Santos (2006) asserts that particularly in Africa “the disjunction between the officially established unity of the legal system and the sociological plurality and fragmentation of legal practice is probably more visible there than in any other region of the developing world” (p. 40).<sup>66</sup> The study of these multiple and fragmented legal orders or, as Gulliver (1969) conceptualises them, “processes of dispute settlement”, is the subject of the anthropology of law.<sup>67</sup> Sally Moore (2005: 1) indicates also that “In anthropology, while the “socio-legal” includes formal juridical institutions and their social surroundings, it also encompasses law-like activities and processes of establishing order in many other social domains, formal and informal, official and unofficial”

The field of legal anthropology has generated numerous historical and contemporary studies on the role of local institutions of conflict or dispute resolution in different societies. In general, the purpose of the law is to secure conditions for basic trust in a community by punishing those who violate the laws (Dimock, 1997). The traditional justice system also shares the goal of creating and maintaining basic trust in the community by re-establishing broken relationships and reducing bitterness and hatred and promoting solidarity between members of the community. In some cases the result of breaking the laws or customs is punishment (Gluckman, 1974; Kopytoff, 1961).

If traditional forms of conflict resolution are capable of generating certain features of social capital as mentioned above, the key conceptual effort is to determine the extent to which community or traditional forms of conflict resolution can deal with the challenges of delivering justice in countries that are undergoing political transitions and are characterised by politico-legal impunity for past abuses and crimes. However, the field of transitional justice has hitherto paid little attention to the potential contribution of traditional justice in transitional contexts. This limitation may not stem from the incapacity of traditional justice systems to deal with the challenges that are peculiar to transitional periods, but limitation may be created by two critical factors: the first one is

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<sup>66</sup> As a matter of definition, Griffiths defines legal pluralism as the “state of affairs, for any social field, in which behaviour pursuant to more than one legal order occurs” (1986a: 2).

<sup>67</sup> Without firm argumentation, Gulliver (1969) distinguishes the concept of dispute settlement from conflict resolution. In this thesis I use them interchangeably.

that there is a proclivity of anthropologists not to address human rights from a legal perspective and the second is the narrow definition that is applied to describe transitional justice processes. First, as Ellen Messer (1993: 225) points out, “most anthropologists continue to approach human rights through sociocultural and political economic rather than legal frameworks”. These approaches fail to capture how traditional justice systems can get involved in addressing human rights issues in transitional contexts.

One of the very rare examples that have highlighted the potential contribution of traditional justice in transitional periods is offered by the *gacaca* courts, which were created in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Although in this case the traditional judges or the community in general did not take the initiative for the attainment of justice in the aftermath of the genocide as *gacaca* was until then a defunct institution), the post-genocide government saw in the *gacaca* the virtue of being able to deliver justice to the numerous alleged *genocidaires*. Confronted with both the large numbers of arrested alleged *genocidaires* and collaborators and the incapacity of the formal national and international court system to judge them in a timely manner, the Rwandan government resurrected this institution, provided training to the chosen judges, and instructed them to judge the crimes of genocide as defined by the state (Richters *et al.*, 2005). Transitional justice consists in determining the degree of involvement of the individuals indicted with the crime of genocide and punishing the culprits. These courts are still operating, and short-term systematic research has been taking place to assess different aspects of their efficacy (Molenaar, 2005).

The creation of the *gacaca* demonstrates beyond doubt how adapted forms of traditional forms of justice can serve transitional justice purposes, even in very complex contexts. However, the legal work of the *gacaca* has been carried out within a limited transitional justice framework, which raises some critical questions. The critical points are related to the court proceedings, which fail to strictly guide itself by principles of legal fairness and the concept of perpetrators do not cover all sides involved. Another critical points concerns the limited scope of justice for transition, this is that it is only concerned with specific acts that amounted for the 1994 genocide. Various authors have demonstrated how the scarcity of land and the high population density represented a very serious threat for the social stability at community-rural level in Rwanda (André & Platteau, 1998), and was an important contributing factor in the escalation of the 1994

genocide (Diamond, 2005). In this case, the Rwandan political elites would need a broader definition of transitional justice that could also address the serious land-related problems.

This leads directly to the second critical factor, which is the narrow definition that is applied to describe transitional justice processes. The main temporal dimension of transitional justice is the past reckoned through official policies or strategies for dealing with strict accounts of human rights abuses and crimes. However, during the transitional period there are also everyday practices that give rise to litigious relations, and these require the intervention of the courts too. Moreover, current disputes can in fact have their roots in the past. A comprehensive notion of transitional justice is therefore required; from a strict set of legal interventions designed to deal with a strict set of terrible events in the past to a broader definition that is capable of capturing the various legacies of the past that are expressed in everyday practices and conflicts. This notion of transitional justice should also capture the array of legal interventions designed to: 1) restore and maintain order in transitional settings, and thus avoid the potential explosion of cases of vengeance; 2) prevent the continuing of injustice as had occurred during wartime; and 3) foster some degree of trust among people who are alienated.

Jennifer Widner provides a pertinent example of a broader conception of justice in a context of transition and of the role played by traditional courts. In the aftermath of the Ugandan civil war in 1985, the victorious leader, Yoweri Museveni, created the “resistance council courts” as a strategy to make up for the lack of state courts on a nationwide scale in a way that could address the legal disputes at village level. Widner concludes that despite their limitations, “there could be little doubt that the resistance council courts contributed importantly to an early (if imperfect) restoration of the rule of law in much of the country” (2001: 66). Most importantly, Widner concludes, “restoring forums such as the resistance council in Uganda, the neighbourhood courts in Somalia, and the *gacaca* in Rwanda establishes a foundation for the successful reconstruction of the rule of law” (*idem*). It should be added that alongside the restoration of the rule of law there must be a clear engagement to fight against inequities such as between genders.

Although in the context of post-genocide Rwanda and post-civil war Uganda the state intervened to fight impunity, in the context of Mozambique where the political authorities decided to adopt a policy of legal impunity, it is still possible to empirically

explore the extent to which the traditional courts in community-based settings contribute to transitional justice. Dealing with the past seems important, but dealing with the present is also fundamental in order to prevent the perpetuation of injustices in the present. In the post-conflict period, actual interactions between war survivors inevitably generate conflicts that require legal intervention. In dealing with the conflicts that emerge after mass violence, the traditional justice system, if it is still trusted by war survivors, can play a role in re-establishing relationships and fostering social bonding and social stability. In this context, the traditional justice system can represent a structural form of social capital that promotes the emergence of other forms of social capital among war survivors that are important in promoting reconciliation. In order to test this hypothesis there is a need to study the nature and types of conflicts generated in families and in communities (with a longitudinal approach), the patterns of help-seeking behaviour, and the availability and accessibility of courts and the quality of their responses.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated that the various types of transitional justice analysed in the previous chapter do play a role in reconciliation processes in deeply divided societies as a result of civil wars, but that there are also other forms of engaging in reconciliation. The approach developed by Hegel offers a useful way of addressing reconciliation beyond the strict legal strategies. Besides defining reconciliation as a process and outcome or state, Hegel deserves careful attention because of his idea that the outcome of reconciliation should lead people to experience the social world as a home.

This concept of experiencing one's social world as a home offers ample possibilities to explore among those that suffered most from war, what it means for them to experience their social world as a home. Do legal approaches play a role? Are social and economic approaches necessary for spurring reconciliation? What form does reconciliation take when legal approaches are absent? For instance, when alienated people live in a social world that depends on agriculture to survive, we have to ask to what extent availability and accessibility of land resources play a role in making people experience their social world as a home. Perhaps, this must be the first question that we have to address, instead of rushing to think about criminal justice. Regarding alienation



caused by civil wars, one must also raise the question regarding healing resources as a means to help people experience the social world as a home.

Another important contribution of Hegel to the study of reconciliation lies in the fact that reconciliation does not mean the end of conflicts. The idea of sustainability of reconciliation requires the availability of institutions in society that can effectively adjudicate and mediate conflicts. From this perspective, it becomes clear that it is inimical for reconciliation if the conflicts that permanently emerge in postconflict situations are not properly addressed. Perhaps, the most important assumption to extract from this Hegelian perspective is that adjudication mechanisms may be relevant but not indispensable in addressing the abuses and crimes perpetrated during civil wars. However, these legal mechanisms must imperatively be activated to address present day conflicts in the post-war era. This is so because the idea of experiencing the social world as a home requires according to Hegel a permanent actualisation of people as individuals and as social members.

## Chapter 4: The social world and healing

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on theoretical debates in the field of illness and healing in post-war contexts. The goal is to generate specific questions for studying experiences of suffering and related healing strategies and the efficacy of these strategies in restoring people's health in the aftermath of the Mozambican civil war. Ideas and practices related to health, illness and healing are not universal. They have to be contextualized because of differing socio-cultural beliefs and practices as well as gender factors that give rise to cultural-specific ideas about illness, healing and efficacy. A recent concern particularly in the field of medical anthropology is related to ways in which war violence can generate specific types of health problems, which may require as well specific types of responses. However, in the last thirty years Western psychiatrists have dominated this emergent field of war and health consequences. As a result new concepts were developed that have been exported all over the world regardless of the culture specific responses that may exist in these destinations. Therefore, this chapter starts by addressing rather historical issues related to cross-cultural approaches to illness and healing. Yet, contemporary approaches, particularly about healing cannot eschew from seriously engaging on issues of healing efficacy. This is the theme addressed on section two. Section three then becomes more focused in that I present the mainstream about the effects of war on human health. The most effervescent debates centres around the alleged universality of the concept *post-traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD). For this reason, I engage also on these debates on the following two subsections and in the last subsection I present the main critical approaches to PTSD. These criticisms serve to build the bridges to engage on a different set of ideas to conceptualise the consequences of war on human health. This is done on subsection four, which introduces the approach of suffering as a social experience. The analysis of suffering as a social experience creates ample room to return to the initial discussions on cross-cultural approaches to health and illness. That is, one of the cross-cultural modes of experiencing and conceptualising the consequences of war is through spirit possession.

This overview of the literature is useful for formulating culture-sensitive questions that are applicable for studying the healing processes in the post-war Mozambican context.

#### **4.1. Cross-cultural approaches to illness and healing**

The study of experiences of illness and healing strategies requires a comprehensive approach to the socio-cultural system of beliefs and practices related to illnesses, the nature of the illness experience, and the array of means that are sought to restore health in a given society (Fabrega, 1974; Feierman & Janzen, 1992). This is necessary because cultures provide “patterns of belief about the causes of illness; norms governing choice and evaluation of treatment; socially-legitimated statuses, roles, power relations, interacting settings, and institutions” (Kleinman, 1980: 24).

The aetiology and expression of illness are somehow related to the position cultures attribute to “the self” in society. Broadly defined, the position of “the self” can be conceived of as either independent or community oriented (Triandis, 1988). In collective-oriented cultures, it is suggested, behaviour is “determined largely by goals shared with some collective, and if there is a conflict between personal and group goals, it is considered socially desirable to place collective goals ahead of personal goals.”

In self-oriented cultures, by contrast, behaviour is “largely determined by personal goals that overlap only slightly with goals of collectives, such as the family, the work group, the tribe, political allies... When conflicts arise between personal and group goals, it is considered acceptable for the individual to place personal goals ahead of collective goals” (1989a: 42).

This division into independent and community-oriented selves must not be perceived in a rigid way. There are overlaps, and according to different situations the individually oriented or collectively oriented self can be more prominent. Yet the description of the self as collectively oriented is somehow consistent with beliefs and social practices in various Sub-Saharan African human groups. In many of these groups, illnesses are not regarded as an individual experience; rather, the illness experience involves an extended group network that can include other living as well as dead kin and the community members in general (Feierman, 1985). In these societies, illnesses are experienced as poly-determined by conflicting social circumstances, conflicts between

living and dead people (spirits), disrespect for the ancestors and the incurring of punishment thereby, witchcraft, and sorcery (Gillies, 1978; Sussman, 2004). This multiplicity of causes and agents negatively influences “the harmony between physical, social, and moral being, and sets in motion the search for reconstitution” (Comaroff, 1985: 369).

The way in which the aetiology of the illness is understood influences people in their choice of which process to turn to for healing. In this context, healing is also very much influenced by the patterns of beliefs offered by the culture to which the person belongs. The concept of healing was originally applied in the context of ill-health issues; however, in contemporary literature the word “healing” is applied in various fields to describe different processes of dealing with various human problems.<sup>68</sup> Hence it is not uncommon to find titles such as: “healing relationships,” “healing nations,” “community healing,” “cultural healing,” “political healing,” “environmental healing” and the like. To avoid the confusing connotations attached to the concept of healing, it is useful to establish the level of specificity with which it is to be used. In the broadest sense, healing is a response to general conditions of life that are considered problematic; at a specific level, it consists of the application of a particular remedy to a specific and limited health problem (Csordas & Kleinman, 1990).

Laurence Kirmayer (2004: 34) takes the definition further than “the application of a particular remedy” by asserting that healing also involves “a basic logic of transformation from sickness to wellness that is enacted through culturally salient metaphorical actions... At the heart of any healing practice are metaphorical transformations of the quality of experience (from feeling ill to wellness) and the identity of the person (from afflicted to healed)”.

One interesting aspect of Kirmayer’s approach to healing is its intrinsic link to the cultural reality, that is to the fact that metaphoric actions do not hold independent value but rather their logic is inscribed in the socio-cultural, religious and historical reality of the place in which they are produced (Sargent & Johnson, 1990). Healing considered as the application of specific interventions generated by the culture, and as the transformations occurring in the transition from sickness to wellness resulting from these interventions, provides a useful framework for studying the processes involved in the

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<sup>68</sup> The list is vast and the concept of healing is rarely defined, which generates some confusion and ambiguity.

cultural production of the healing phenomenon. The study of illness and the processes involved in healing cannot be separated from attempts to explore the efficacy of healing interventions.

#### **4.2. Efficacy of healing interventions**

One of the contributions of medical anthropology to the study of the various aspects of illness, health and healing consists in the understanding of the efficacy of healing in various socio-cultural contexts. Healing practices can accompany the process of social transformation by providing responses aimed at maintaining an ordered relationship between individuals and their socio-cultural world. Healing from this dynamic perspective has been studied alongside the influence of rapid socio-economic and political changes to health (Janes, 1995; Luig, 1999; Taylor, 1992), as well as the influence of political or war violence to health (Bolton, 2001; Englund, 1998; Green, 1999; Honwana, 1996; Igreja, 2003b; Marlin, 2001).

In relation specifically to the issue of efficacy James Waldram states that, “Medical anthropology continues to be vexed by the issue of efficacy of traditional medical systems and practices” (2000: 603). This is the case because “There is no singular view of efficacy. It is a complex concept, and there is a tendency to speak too glibly about it without excavating the biases and intricacies that form it. The efficacy of traditional medicine is still a contentious issue among medical anthropologists, many of whom seem unable to escape the influences of biomedical science and many of whom lament the relativist, some say postmodern, influence on ethnographic research and writing” (p. 619).

From his revision of various medical anthropological sources on efficacy, Waldram concludes that, “Medical anthropology inquiry needs to return to the field, to explore and comprehend how efficacy is understood within traditional medical systems themselves” (p. 619).

Thomas Csordas and Arthur Kleinman (1996) raise criticisms similar to those of James Waldram. They put forward the concept of “therapeutic process”, and Csordas introduces the concept of “incremental efficacy” (see below) as a way of mitigating the contradictions inherent in the study of healing efficacy in transcultural settings. Accordingly, the therapeutic process encompasses “all the meaningful activity that

mediates procedure and outcome” (1996: 8). Procedures consist of the actions taken to deal with illnesses.<sup>69</sup> Discussions about procedures address questions related to “who does what to whom with respect to medicines administered, physical techniques, or operations carried out, prayers recited, symbolic objects manipulated, altered states of consciousness induced or invoked” (p. 8). This level of activity is generally related to the work of the healer. The process is to do with the nature of the participants’ experience with respect to encounters with the sacred, episodes of insight, or changes in thought, emotion, attitude, meaning, and behaviour (Csordas, 2002). The outcome “refers to the disposition of participants at a designated end point of the therapeutic process, with respect to both their expressed (high or low) satisfaction and to change (positive or negative) in symptoms, pathology, or functioning” (p. 9).<sup>70</sup>

This general division of healing activities into procedures, processes and outcome is useful since it provides clarity and systematisation as to which level of analysis is being addressed in pursuit of an understanding of healing effectiveness: procedures as enacted by healers and assistants; processes that patients and their associates go through, and the outcome from the perspective of the patients and associates. However, the therapeutic process also needs to be adapted to specific healing contexts. As seen above, definitions and practices of healing vary according to the socio-cultural system of beliefs that generates it. The way the cultural group defines the position of the individual in society, and the reciprocity relations between its members, may exert an influence on how the therapeutic process is defined and performed. For instance, in individual-oriented societies the therapeutic process may seem relatively simple to study since in most cases it primarily involves a healer-patient dyad.

In contrast, in collective-oriented communities, the illness experience and the health-seeking behaviour is generally part of a collective endeavour. In this respect, John Janzen (1978) describes one very common phenomenon in many Sub-Saharan African countries in responding to illnesses, which he terms the “therapeutic management group.” Accordingly, this group reaction “comes into being whenever an individual or set of

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<sup>69</sup> A similar definition of action refers to the ‘health actions’ which consist in “any set of activities whose primary intent is to improve or maintain health” (Murray & Frenk, 2000: 718).

<sup>70</sup> Csordas considers that out of the three elements that characterize the healing activity, “the therapeutic procedure has been treated exhaustively in many empirical studies and comparative works. Therapeutic outcome has only recently begun to be treated systematically by anthropologists” (2002: 12).

individuals becomes ill or is confronted with overwhelming problems. Various maternal or paternal kinsmen, and occasionally their friends or associates, rally for the purpose of sifting information, lending moral support, making decisions, and arranging details of therapeutic consultation. The therapy managing group thus exercises a brokerage function between the sufferer and the specialist” (Janzen, 1978: 4).

The management group can provide social support that seems crucial in attaining effective healing, or they can be in discord to the extent that they demonstrate conflicting interests that may hamper the effectiveness of a given healing intervention. The therapeutic process involves various actors and stages; it is comprehensive to the extent that the study of healing efficacy cannot be reduced to a simple equation of healing to cure. In this regard, Csordas has suggested a complementary concept for studying efficacy, namely that of “incremental efficacy”,<sup>71</sup> in contrast to “definitive cure” (Csordas, 1994a; quoted in Csordas and Kleinman, 1996: 19). The term draws attention to a gradual process of change as accounting for efficacy, as well as allowing for control of these changes by the various participants in the healing process. The idea of incremental efficacy and inconclusive effects (Csordas, 2002) also calls attention to the different perceptions that the people involved in the therapeutic management group may have in different stages of the therapeutic process.

### **4.3. War violence, health consequences, and healing**

The therapeutic process in this research is characterised by two important contextual factors. One is that illness and healing are shaped by a plural system of beliefs and practices. This multiplicity of belief sources influences how people express and interpret their ill-health experiences and the resulting health-seeking behaviour. Another contextual factor for this research is the extreme war violence that ravaged Mozambique for almost three decades. War violence is generally considered to generate profound traumatic consequences for the health of individuals and their families and their ways of living (der Kolk *et al.*, 1996; Marsella *et al.*, 1996; WHO, 2002), and healing is required to address the health needs of those who suffer from its impact. The questions to consider

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<sup>71</sup> The concept of incremental efficacy resembles the definitions of recovery found in recovery literature. For instance, Anthony (1993) contrasts the emphasis placed on the struggle for cure with the idea of recovery being a process in which ill-health people manage to live a satisfying, hopeful, and contributing life even with limitations caused by the illness. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one’s life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of mental illness.

are: how do people express their suffering as a result of war exposure? How is it to be diagnosed? and how are effective healing strategies being developed? There are no simple or unanimous answers to these questions.

Two perspectives have dominated the debate on understanding the health consequences of war and the development of healing strategies. One of these is the Western psychiatric perspective, which suggests that as a result of war people can develop mental health problems, designated as Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The PTSD diagnostic approach is individual-oriented, as are the healing interventions, and PTSD rapidly captured the attention of mental health experts all over the world. The other perspective is provided by some transcultural psychiatrists and medical anthropologists who have advocated the necessity of focusing on how people in different cultures approach both the effects of war on health and the array of resources that are mobilized to assuage its ill effects. Other transcultural experts have also propounded collective approaches to human suffering, and these have been applied in addressing the health needs of groups of refugee patients from different cultures, as well as in ethnographic research in several war-ravaged societies.

#### **4.3.1. Trauma and PTSD**

There is considerable accumulated knowledge on the harmful effects of war on psychological well-being in western psychiatry (Foa *et al*, 2000). Yet it was only in 1980 that the American Psychiatric Association (APA) officially recognized this harmful relationship in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III). Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), generally speaking, is the recognition that certain violent characteristics generated in a social environment have the potential to negatively affect the psychological well-being of individuals exposed to these conditions.

This official recognition was to a great extent influenced by socio-cultural and political realities in North America during and after the American-Vietnam War (van der Kolk *et al.*, 1996; Young, 1995). The classification “PTSD” was created to provide a response for the growing psychosocial problems of the American-Vietnam war veterans settled back in America. Their extreme effort in the war against the Vietnamese had generated psychological trauma among some of them. In general this war had not captured public support in the USA. On their return, the former soldiers found that the



general public did not acknowledge their service in the war. Some veterans felt that they were marginalized and alienated from society. In this regard PTSD represented a way out, since it acknowledged their suffering and “it offered a legitimated victimhood, moral exculpation, and a disability pension through a doctor-attested sick role” (Summerfield, 1999: 1450).

Since the official recognition and adoption of PTSD in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (APA, 1980) as a specific category of mental disorder, the study of PTSD has attracted a vast number of psychiatrists, psychotherapists and researchers to develop consistent knowledge grounded in medical-based-evidence in order to demonstrate how significant, sensitive and applicable it can be at the individual level (Herman, 1992; van der Kolk *et al.*, 1996).

The first PTSD conceptualisation appeared in the DSM-III (APA, 1980). It was subsequently revised, and the initial definition regarding the events that can lead to PTSD was broadened and included in the DSM-IV (McFarlane & de Girolamo, 1996). In the DSM-IV, PTSD refers to “the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one’s physical integrity... (Criterion A1)” (1994: 424). The PTSD diagnostic instrument is completed when Criterion A1 leads to the development of reactions and symptoms observed in the three subsequent Criteria. These are: intrusion (recurrent and intrusive memories of the traumatic event, nightmares, dissociative flashback episodes, or extreme physical reactions); avoidance (avoiding people, places, thoughts, or activities associated with the trauma and a numbing of general responsiveness) and hyper-arousal (sleeping problems, irritability or outbursts of anger, difficulty concentrating, hyper-vigilance, and an exaggerated startle response) (DSM-IV) (APA, 1994). These possible reactions following exposure to traumatic events can be acute, chronic or delayed.

PTSD is regarded as an illness of memory. The reason why the person develops the post-traumatic reaction is the person’s inability to process the memory of the past experience of fear so that he or she keeps reliving it through intrusive thoughts, feelings, actions, or images (McFarlane, 1988). The individual is unable to integrate an upsetting experience into autobiographical memory and s/he loses control over his/her feelings and actions (van der Kolk *et al.*, 1996). This failure to process and integrate the traumatic

experience is considered to reflect either a previous vulnerability to fear or exposure to extreme fear (Foa & Kozak, 1986). A positive diagnosis of PTSD is an indicator for the necessity of treatment (APA, 1994).<sup>72</sup>

#### **4.3.2. PTSD and healing**

The extensive available literature regarding this type of trauma suggests that important advances in the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD have been made since 1980. Various modern therapies are considered useful for dealing with this condition: group counselling, hypnosis, transcendental meditation, eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (Shapiro, 1989), pharmacotherapy, psychoanalysis, and cognitive behaviour modification. In order to achieve effective results in the treatment of PTSD two aspects have to be taken into account: first, the deconditioning of anxiety; and second, altering the way victims view themselves and their world by re-establishing the feeling of personal integrity and control (van der Kolk *et al.*, 1996: 420).

Despite the major developments that have taken place in the psychiatric diagnosis and treatment of PTSD, there has also been recognition of various limitations that remain. First, many of the specific treatment techniques for victims of trauma remain intuitive and dependent on clinical wisdom (Turner *et al.*, 1996). Second, trauma recovery is a complex process and there is no one available treatment technique for dealing effectively with all types of distressful posttraumatic reactions; and systematic investigation of what constitutes effective treatment is still in its infancy (van der Kolk *et al.*, 1996). Third, little is known about the after-effects of war trauma exposure in developing countries or of the potential use of the PTSD model to diagnose and to develop effective interventions there (Foa *et al.*, 2000).

Following the development of the internationalisation of the human rights discourse, the need for psychosocial healing of war survivors in developing countries has begun to receive increasing attention from humanitarian organizations, government

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<sup>72</sup> Further research into the health implications of PTSD demonstrated that PTSD is not limited to psychological symptoms. PTSD is associated with several ill health conditions: increased risk of depression, anxiety, and abuse of psychoactive substances potentially harmful for health (Kessler *et al.*, 1995). Among adult survivors of childhood abuse, PTSD was closely associated to high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, severe obesity, ischemic heart disease, cancer, and liver disease among the general population in the United States (Felitti *et al.*, 1998). As the process of diagnosing PTSD has expanded to include correlations with other mental and physical diseases, the study of healing techniques has also received major attention.

authorities in post-conflict countries in Africa, and institutions such as the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO has endorsed the need to assess the long-term psychosocial consequences of armed conflicts and natural disasters among exposed populations and has also shown interest in the search for culturally sensitive and cost-effective interventions to address the long-term effects of prolonged and multiple trauma exposure (WHO, 2002; Mandlhate, 1996). Yet the lack of transcultural models has been one of the main stumbling blocks in the implementation of programs to address the mental health needs of trauma survivors in developing countries. For instance, until 1996 only 6% of the studies in the field of trauma had been carried out in non-western countries (de Girolamo & McFarlane, 1996). This scenario has gradually changed in recent years. A growing body of studies has been carried out in non-Western societies using PTSD as a central conceptual tool (de Jong *et al.*, 2000; de Jong *et al.*, 2001 & 2003; Igreja *et al.* 2004b).

At first glance, the PTSD framework appears to be useful for recognising the potentially disruptive effects that different forms of violence can have in people's lives and facilitating communication between experts and non-experts about the psychological consequences of violence. It would also seem important for providing acknowledgment of the suffering of trauma survivors and their eligibility for health care. As a result of the trauma discourse, the consequences of trauma no longer go unrecognised (as occurred, for instance, after World War II). In some cases, PTSD can also help to establish the parameters for financial compensation for the victims. Within this context the PTSD concept was rapidly and easily transferred from the clinical setting and into the vocabulary of the general public, through repeated coverage in the media and statements by experts who advocate its applicability to non-western populations as well (Friedman & Jaranson, 1998).

Despite the growing popularity of PTSD as a concept, outside North America, Western Europe and Australia the debates over the real capacity of PTSD to explain the impact of violence on mental health are not unanimous. The prevailing and controversial epistemological questions are as follows. First, why do only some trauma survivors develop PTSD? (McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996). Second, given that “theories of disease and healing practices are part of the culture of all human groups, and medical systems are one adaptive response to disease and illness” (Nanda & Warm, 1998: 352), how then can

the PTSD framework, which was developed according to a Western socio-cultural system of beliefs, be valid for populations that have a different system of socio-cultural beliefs about health, illness, healing, and the position of the self in society?

In relation to the first question, arguing as early as the 1950s about the relationship between potentially traumatic events and the resulting effects, Georges Devereux (1980) made useful remarks that can shed light on this issue. He suggested that the ways in which people perceive the effects of trauma are not universal; people in different cultures experience what he termed the “atypical” in different ways according to the availability of cultural defences. Therefore, an atypical event and the resulting trauma cannot be understood without an examination of the availability of resources for counteracting the event’s harmful impact. Devereux (1980: 9) distinguishes between the term “stress”, which is the harmful forces that impinge upon the individual”, and the term “trauma”, which is “the harmful results of the impact of those forces.” He states that “It is one of the main faults of psychiatric thinking that it considers only the absolute intensity of the stress-producing impact and forgets that the individual may have valuable resources at his disposal for resisting and overcoming the impact he has experienced” (1980: 9). This assertion is extended to include resources at the cultural level. He adds, “Stress is atypical if the culture has no mass-produced defence available for relieving or buffering the shock” (Devereux, 1980: 9).<sup>73</sup>

Devereux does not provide an explicit definition of the atypical stress that has the potential of becoming traumatic according to various circumstances. He does, however, give some examples to help substantiate his understanding of the atypical. One of them relates to the consequences of a “Kalahari Bushman falling into deep water”. Devereux says that a bushman of the Kalahari Desert seldom if ever falls into deep water; Bushman culture, therefore, probably does not provide a culturally standardized defence against the culturally atypical strain resulting from falling into deep water: The Bushman child is not taught to swim. Hence, if a Bushman falls into deep water, he will have to try to get himself out of his predicament by going through a series of idiosyncratic motions, such as calling for help and churning the water as best he can. In brief, falling into deep water is a trauma in Bushman society. It is not a trauma in Polynesian society, where every small

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<sup>73</sup> Although Devereux does not dwell upon the ‘buffer’ theory, the proponents of this theory suggest that social support (which can be found at micro- and meso-levels) functions as a buffer or shield to protect people from the stresses of life (Cassel, 1976; Cobb, 1976; Caplan, 1974).

child is provided by culture with the “swimming defence”. From this and other examples<sup>74</sup>, it can be understood that it is not only the intensity of the event that will determine the outcome. Contextual variables play a role in mediating the impact of trauma exposure. Drawing on Devereux’s approach, some of these contextual variables refer to the availability and accessibility of resources for effective responses. Yet it is well known that even among people of the same socio-cultural group, violence generates differing impacts according to gender asymmetries (Mazurana, *et al.*, 2005).

In relation to the second question (namely how the PTSD framework can be applied for populations that have a different system of socio-cultural beliefs about health, illness, healing, and position of the self in society), attempts to answer it have given rise to numerous critical approaches to the applicability of the concept of PTSD in other cultures. It has also inspired the development of ethnographic research aimed at trying to demonstrate how socio-cultural, religious and political differences shaped the way individuals and families deal with the effects of extreme war violence.

#### **4.3.3. Critical approaches to trauma and PTSD**

The basic etiological principle of PTSD is the exposure to a traumatic event, with the implication that the greater the exposure the higher the risk of developing acute or delayed PTSD. Following this reasoning and taking into account the fact that in many contemporary wars defenceless civilians are the main targets of different forms of brutal violence, it can be concluded that most of these victims and war survivors would easily match at least Criteria A and B of the PTSD diagnosis (see section 4.3.1).

Yet when the question of context or mediating factors is raised, criteria A and B of PTSD rapidly become problematic, as do the other remaining criteria of symptoms. As noted above in the introductory discussions on culture and health, anthropology has contributed to the accumulation of knowledge about human diversity and how this socio-cultural diversity influences the way people deal with health, illness and healing. Following this anthropological approach, Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman have articulated these ideas in relation to the effects of violence. They argue that “There is no single way to suffer; there is no timeless or spaceless universal shape to suffering. There

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<sup>74</sup> To substantiate his model, Devereux posits various other examples. Some of them are worth referring to here for the purpose of clarification: “An ordinary rifle bullet can penetrate the thin skin of a tiger and kill him, but it will only bounce off the back of a crocodile”.

are communities in which suffering is devalued and others in which it is endowed with utmost significance” (1997: 2). The meaning that the members of the culture give to certain violent events shapes the way they perceive their wartime experiences.<sup>75</sup>

Against these criticisms, Friedman and Jaranson (1998 [1994]) argue that the classification of PTSD is applicable to refugee populations, and assert that “the PTSD model appears to offer a useful approach for conceptualising the psychological impact of traumatic exposure on refugees” (Friedman & Jaranson, 1998: 219). Although Friedman and Jaranson (1998) recognise the role of ethnocultural and religious factors, they also suggest that such factors can be controlled through the use of a sensitive cross-cultural approach that can improve the quality of the diagnostic process and to dictate treatment and prognosis. In fact, after being technically adapted for studying the effects of violence in different societies (Marsella *et al.*, 2001), the PTSD framework has been increasingly used for research purposes in war-ravaged communities in and from developing countries (de Jong *et al.*, 2001; Igreja, 2004b; Somasundaram, 1996), among refugee populations living in camps for displaced people (de Jong, 2000), and in refugee centres in western countries (Silove *et al.*, 1997).

Another contentious theme in the debate over the cross-cultural validity of PTSD concerns the differentiated nature of the manifestations of distress and of the moral pitfalls that PTSD seems to fail to capture in the face of human rights violations (discussed below). In relation to the manifestation of symptoms it is suggested that the way individuals distinguish a symptom from a non-symptom derives from the illness models currently available within a given socio-cultural context (Shorter, 1992). These cultural processes of distinguishing symptoms are very important for establishing the relevance of PTSD. Another important factor in understanding the attribution of meaning to what does or does not represent discomfort is the fact that the meaning-giving processes lead to the development of specific health-seeking behaviour. Help-seeking processes, which follow culture-specific pathways, are defined as “the sequence of contacts with individuals and organizations prompted by the distressed person’s efforts,

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<sup>75</sup> Devereux gives some examples to illustrate this idea: “An Athenian mother was more traumatized than the Spartan mother by the loss of a son in battle, because the latter was conditioned by her culture to take pride and comfort in sacrificing a son to the city-state... or it is one thing for a father to lose a son at war, but it is another to lose nearly all fifty of his sons” (Devereux, 1980[1956]: 9).

and those of his or her significant others, to seek help as well as the help that is supplied in response to such efforts” (Rogler & Cortes, 1993: 555).

Critical observations have also been made in relation to the moral dilemmas that PTSD evokes. PTSD is said to contribute to transforming human suffering into a medical disorder, and thus to de-contextualise the experience of human suffering. One example of this type of criticisms suggests that “the person who undergoes torture first becomes a victim, an image of innocence and passivity, someone who cannot represent himself, who must be represented. Then he becomes a patient, specifically a patient with a quintessential fin de siècle disorder (i.e., posttraumatic stress disorder)” (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1997: 10). This transformation, Derek Summerfield argues, “is not just a conceptual issue, but also an ethical one, given the danger of misunderstanding and indeed dehumanising survivors via reductionist labelling” (1999: 1454).

Summerfield also raises critical questions regarding the individual approach of PTSD in the diagnosis of war survivors, as well as the fact that war and its effects are also about justice. He argues that, “Posttraumatic symptoms are not just a private and individual problem, but also an indictment of the social context that produced them” (1997: 18), adding that “the notion that war collapses down in the head of an individual survivor to a discrete mental entity, the ‘trauma’, that can be meaningfully addressed by Western counselling or other talk therapy is absurdly simplistic” (1999: 1455).

These criticisms do not seem to be directed against PTSD in itself as it is applied for Western populations. The winds of disagreement around the concept and its ethical implications relate to its exportation to non-western societies affected by extreme forms of war violence. Underlying the discussions and criticisms is the principle that people in different cultures have their own ways of dealing with the effects of war violence. However, two issues are important to emphasise. The first is that non-western cultures are not homogenous. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa the dichotomy between rural and urban settings is very important when dealing with issues of belief systems and the way that they are shaped by war violence. When one takes a closer view, rural settings are not homogenous either. There are competing belief systems, and people in general make use of these without experiencing major distressing conflicts. Some urban citizens may find comfort in diagnostic systems that shed light into their own internal psychological problems rather than locating them in the realm of the supernatural.

Second, the criticisms raised by Kleinman and Kleinman, Summerfield and various others (e.g., Allan Young, 1995), are very important as they suggest that suffering, particularly suffering generated by war, is not only about individual or collective experiences of ill health. Suffering needs to be addressed in its multiple manifestations, and an essential key for a positive pedagogy for those who provide assistance “is that the voices of those for whom they [programmes] are intended can properly be heard, and that their knowledge and priorities can be the basic frame of reference within which offers of assistance are shaped” (Summerfield, 1999: 1461). From the perspective of research, ethnographies can also help to discover how socio-cultural, religious, legal, and political factors influence the perception, manifestation and strategies for dealing with the multiple effects of war violence in different societies.

The debates over the effects of violence in society have shifted between individual and social dimensions, between psychological symptoms and issues related to politics and morality that contribute to the irruption or emergence of these symptoms. Yet what seems to unify these different approaches is the experience of “pain” and “suffering” (Candib, 2002). The overwhelming majority of medical anthropological studies clearly indicate that what drives the help-seeking behaviour of sick people and their close kin across cultures is the intolerable experience of suffering. In order to develop a comprehensive approach for addressing the consequences of exposure to extreme violence, the concept of *social suffering* has been put forward.

#### **4.3.4. Suffering as a social experience**

As a contribution to the current debates on suffering, and drawing from a long tradition in anthropological study, Arthur and Joan Kleinman (1997) have suggested the concept of *social suffering*. The origins of social suffering result “from what political, economic, and institutional power does to people and, reciprocally, from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems”. The central idea of this concept is that social processes that exert a negative effect on people cannot be regarded as individual problems. They have to be located in the social realm so that the root causes can be clearly discerned.

Suffering as a social experience is conceptualised in two forms. In the first, “collective modes of experiencing shape individual perceptions and expressions”, and in



the second “social interactions enter into an illness experience” (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1997: 2). As presented, the concept of social suffering is consistent with numerous previous ethnographic accounts regarding cultural representations of illness experience in various non-western societies (referred to above). These studies have long demonstrated that a disorder is at the same time psychic, somatic, familial, social, and religious (Nathan, 1999 [1988]); and the healing process is regarded as a social matter whereby to heal the individual, there is a need to involve the social group and to worship the spirits of dead (Chavunduka, 1978; Janzen, 1992). Despite the multiplicity of factors involved in the explanation of the causes and manifestation of an illness, it is important not to underestimate individual psychological needs. Suffering should also be regarded as an individual experience. Very often individuals endure the same events, but this does not mean that they experience the same trauma.

What is appealing about the concept of social suffering is the recognition of the multidimensional character of violence-related suffering as well as the breaking-up of a long history of anthropological neglect of the study of violence and its effects. As Suárez-Orozco and Robben (2000: 12) points out "when anthropologists found themselves in contexts of violence, for the most part, they chose not to work with the materials." In cases where they did study war violence, they were most often interested in understanding how ethnicity and social exclusion played a role in shaping the dynamic of local violence (Geffray, 1990).

In this regard anthropology, the discipline of contextualization *par excellence*, can play an important role in the study of contemporary forms of war violence in two ways. First, it helps to determine the extent to which local cultures are able or unable to recognize its multiple pervasive effects, creating what William Ogburn (1964) refers to as “cultural lags”. The concept of cultural lag refers to processes of cultural change in which “one of two parts of culture which are correlated changes before or in greater degree than the other part does, thereby causing less adjustment between the two parts than existed previously” (1964: 86). Applied in the context of post-war violence, a cultural lag could be observed for this reason: war exposure (independent variable) creates specific harmful effects on health, and if the established medical system (dependent variable) cannot recognize these effects, it cannot provide specific responses for the war survivors in need. Hence, their war-related health problems remain unrecognised, creating maladjustment

among war survivors. The cultural lag stems from the fact that war creates new types of illnesses, and the existing medical systems are not prepared to provide specific responses. Under these conditions a cultural lag occurs. Examples of cultural lag stemming from war and the failure of the health systems to incorporate the new illnesses in the medical taxonomy abounded in particular after World War II, when suffering due to war events was not properly diagnosed (see Bramsen, 1995; Kirmayer, 1996).<sup>76</sup>

Second, anthropology can also play a role in the study of the effects of violent processes by applying what Terence Ranger (1993) refers to in the context of the debates on African historiography as “a model of creative and resilient pluralism,” in opposition to a “model of a tribally homogenous, intrinsically stable, ritualised, traditional, local religious world who has been the invention of administrators, missionaries, African organic intellectuals, and African ‘religious leaders’ themselves” (p. 72). The model of “creative and resilient pluralism” suggests that African religions were always multi-layered and dynamic, with a history of contradiction, contestation, and innovation (p. 73). As an example, the contested nature of certain African religious practices can be observed through the description made by I. M. Lewis of former slaves in the Somali Republic: “when these ex-slaves dance in the possession rites they carry as insignia whips which, though they are of course no longer used today, enable them to present themselves not as slaves, but as masters of slaves” (2003[1971]: 92). These practices can also reach the level of innovation by transferring violent aspects of the past into the field of medicine through spirit and spirit possession practices.<sup>77</sup> Such a model, Ranger concludes, “helps to explain the remarkable adaptability of African societies and individuals during changes of colonial capitalism” (1993: 73). Similar or approximate patterns of collective and individual adaptability can be applied to the specific contexts of war violence and its serious consequences for health. Such forms of adaptability can be studied by uncovering specific responses that local communities are able to generate in order to recognise the effects of extreme war violence and develop successful responses to help individuals and families in great need.

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<sup>76</sup> Hondius (2003) observes that, “After suffering many negative reactions and a clear lack of understanding of their experiences, most Jews decided not to talk about them, and a long silence descended, not only between Jews and non-Jews but also within the Jewish community itself... a major reason for the Jews’ silence was their failure to find an ear for their stories” (2003: 156).

<sup>77</sup> One example is the *cipaios*, who were the very violent police officers under Portuguese colonial rule. In a late stage and upon the death of the *cipaios*, their spirits were adopted as healing spirits among the different cultures in central Mozambique.

There is general agreement in psychiatric as well as medical anthropological literature that the availability, accessibility and quality of local resources play a vital role in the recovery process of traumatised individuals and families. Thus, the responses provided by traditional healers, social support, self-help groups and religious leaders have generally been regarded as a critical vehicle for trauma recovery (Turner *et al.*, 1996; de Vries, 1996; Hiegel, 1994). These resources are considered essential in non-Western societies because of the prevalence of local forms of expressing and articulating extreme forms of suffering, and in particular the wider presence of embodiment of spirits and spirit possession.

#### **4.3.5. Spirit possession, embodiment and healing**

Spirit possession is a temporary replacement of the individual's identity by the spirit of another entity, living or dead. During the experience of spirit possession, the possessed person embodies and enacts features of the behaviour of the spirit. Erika Bourguignon (1976) has suggested an heuristic division of possession into two kinds: non-trance possession and trance possession. Possession exists in a given culture, she stated, if its members "hold that a given person is changed in some way through the presence in or on him of a spirit entity or power, other than own personality..." (Bourguignon, 1976:8). While in the possession-trance "the individual experiences an altered state of mind, the individual loses his or her identity for the duration, an identity which is replaced by that of one or several other personalities, wills, or spiritual entities" (Bourguignon, 1976:46). This distinction is useful since people can be identified as being the target of spirits that can manifest through bad dreams, different illnesses or even strange body movements, but the spirit is not revealed to the public. In the case of trance-possession, there is a clear materialization of the presence of the spirit, completely replacing the mental state and behaviour of the host.

Spirit possession is an individual phenomenon to the extent that the same spirit cannot possess two individuals at the same time, but it is also a collective experience in the sense that spirits manifest themselves to the public and convey a message that is of interest for the collective. The main target of the spirits' appearance is the collective. The study of spirit possession has a long history in the field of religious anthropology (Crapanzano & Garrison 1977; Giles 1987; Janzen, 1992; Lambek 1981; Sharp 1993;

Spring 1978; Walker 1972). Historically, possession studies have been characterized by approaches that emphasize descriptions of spirits as representations of something: psychological, social, political, and historical processes. Current trends in spirit possession studies have argued for the necessity to consider possession as “a holistic reality [and] its province is meaning” (Boddy 1989: 136). One fruitful way to capture the holistic features of spirit possession requires sensibility to the agency or “factuality of spirits” (Boddy, 1989: 139) as well as the necessity to investigate the cultural logic and practices of spirit possession (Brown, 1991; Masquelier, 2001).

This thesis follows these recent approaches of ethnographic studies. I locate relationships between spirits and hosts “within the wider system of meaning” (Lambek, 1981: 60) in which it is created and reproduced. This approach has been applied in various ethnographic accounts of spirit possession, and the necessity of capturing the various postures of spirits has been suggested (Boddy, 1989; Brown, 1991; Lambek, 1981; Masquelier, 2001; Stoller, 1995). It is important, for example, to focus on what is actually done and said during episodes of spirit possession (Placido, 2001) since “possession is constituted by a practice and politics of voice” (Lambek, 1993).

Generally these studies have to various degrees tried to explain the aetiology of spirit possession in terms of social processes. These processes can be social conflicts or social inequalities, mechanisms to gain authority and control, adaptation to rapid socio-economic changes, and embodiment of meaningful historical events particularly colonialism (Behrend & Luig, 1999; Stoller, 1995).

Violent human processes such as wars and their effects articulated in terms of spirits and spirit possession have until recently received very little attention in the anthropological literature. It has been recognised that “to date, anthropology has not been in the forefront of the study of collective violence, terrorism, and especially violence in state societies...” (Nagengast, 1994: 112). However, more recently some anthropological work has been devoted to understanding experiences of extreme war violence and their consequences among population groups from different societies.

In contrast to the numerous PTSD and related psychotherapeutic studies carried out in northern-hemisphere countries, social and medical anthropologists have carried out only a few ethnographic studies in various southern-hemisphere societies torn by extreme forms of violence, with the aim of eliciting local manifestations of war-related suffering

and responses to it. Some examples are the work of Harrell-Bond and Wilson (1990), Honwana (1997), Englund (1998), Zur (1998), Green (1999), Perera (2001), Mueggler (2001), Zarowsky (2001), Bolton (2001), and Argenti-Pillen (2003).

These ethnographic works explicitly demonstrate that local communities that experience extreme forms of individual and collective suffering in the wake of political and war violence do not remain indifferent in the face of violence and its consequences. War survivors suffer tremendously, but in tandem they try to find solutions. These solutions could be said to be effective on a general level, that of the collective struggle of victimized groups to comprehend and engage in finding solutions to their plight.

The responses found in the above-mentioned publications, with the exception of Zarowsky's study, refer to a greater or lesser extent to the articulation of suffering through idioms and practices of spirits and spirit possession, and/or through the embodiment of suffering in violence-related multiple ailments. Spirits and spirit possession in the cases reviewed above bear witness to the mass war disruption, expresses war-related individual and social suffering, and promote healing practices (Honwana, 1996; Igreja, 2003b; Marlin, 2001; Muegler, 2001). Particularly in relation to southern Mozambique, Alcinda Honwana describes how as a result of violent encounters in the nineteenth-century "interactions between the Nguni, the Ndau, and the Tsonga transformed local Tsonga sacred representations and gave rise to personal embodiment and social incorporation of new categories of foreign, spiritual beings. Possession by these new spiritual entities induced practitioners into a deep a trance, a practice that had not arisen before. Divination sessions no longer merely relied on the use of oracles or divinatory bones but also trance" (Honwana, 2003: 72-3). However, what is still lacking is a comprehensive research model sensitive enough to determine the healing specificity and efficacy of spirit possession in dealing with war-related suffering, a condition, which (as seen above) some medical anthropologists have termed "social suffering". Social suffering incorporates "conditions that simultaneously involve health, welfare, legal, moral, and religious issues" (Kleinman *et al.*, 1997: ix). War trauma is one condition that has multiple implications, and multidisciplinary perspectives are required in order to comprehend and elicit them.

The other common aspect referred to in the recent ethnographies of post-war communities is the body albeit it is not central to in the analysis. What brings the body to

the forefront is spirit possession. With the exception of ghosts that can inhabit physical spaces (Perera, 2001), spirits need human bodies to embody. The body is the locus where spirits struggle to convey different messages to the sufferer him/herself and to the public, as well as the locus for expression of symptoms directly related to the wartime suffering experiences. In trying to establish a sentient relationship between spirit possession and the body, Paul Stoller (1995) suggests a sensorial approach to spirit possession, “an orientation that considers spirit possession as a set of embodied practices” (1995: 16). He asserts that “although the major theorists on spirit possession make significant contributions to social theory, they fail to consider adequately the centrality of the sentient body in possession, the relationship between bodily practices (spirit possession) and cultural memory, and the political power that devolves from embodiment” (1995: 20).

According to Thomas Csordas “the body is a productive starting point for analysing culture and self” (1990: 39). Embodiment in his approach “begins from the methodological postulate that the body is not an *object* to be studied in relation to culture, but is to be considered as the *subject* of culture, or in other words as the existential ground of culture” (1990: 5). Bodies produce culture, replicate culture and change culture, and are oppressed by their own cultures. Csordas suggests that “recognizing that our bodily being is a product of culture no less than of biology has the potential to transform our understanding of both body and culture... if the body can be shown to be the existential ground of culture and self rather than simply their biological substrate, the way would be clear for understanding the body as not only essentially biological, but as equally religious, linguistic, historical, cognitive, emotional, and artistic” (2002: 3-4).

In contexts of massive violence, transmutations surrounding the body have to do with “the very meaning of being human as being a body that can experience pain and self-alienation” (Csordas, 1994: 3). The body can also serve to bear witness to such experiences of extreme pain and suffering (Green, 1999; Marlin, 2001). The process of bearing witness to violent historical processes is not performed solely by verbal discourse but also through “music (sound), praise-poetry (sound), specific perfumes (smell), and dance (movement)” (Stoller, 1995: 22).

Within this context the study of healing is about identifying the different forms of post-war ill effects in the domain of health as well as the ways in which war survivors

develop general and specific responses to deal with these. On a general level, healing is understood as the process of actively procuring available resources and the capacity to apply them in order to effectively counteract the various ill-health effects stemming from prolonged and repeated exposure to war violence. On a specific level, healing is related to dealing with human bodies, spirits, and possessed bodies. In the central part of Mozambique, for example, a post-war spirit has emerged, named *gamba* (plural: *magamba*) (Igreja, 2003b; Marlin, 2001); this will be extensively discussed in chapter 14.

To engage in the study of healing of ill health, there is a need for a comprehensive model that can capture and depict the different healing processes running simultaneously on different levels and in multiple social settings of the same war-torn communities (Dreier, 2000). There is also a need to develop a systematic assessment of case studies based on emic perceptions and practices of what it means to have effective results after a healing intervention.

## **Conclusion**

It is no longer a matter of serious dispute to argue that ideas and practices about health, illness and healing strategies must to be contextualized if the meaning of these dimensions of human experience is to be clearly understood. Health, illness and healing are shaped by socio-cultural, gender, political, economic and historical factors. For this reason, attempts by mainstream psychiatrists and psychotherapists to universalise PTSD as a result of war or violence in general, were generally received with serious criticisms particularly from medical anthropologists and transcultural psychiatrists. Although war violence is a universal phenomenon the health consequences that it generates are not universal. Even if on many occasions the ill health of war survivors around the globe may be in general consistent with the PTSD symptoms, these symptoms are not enough to portray the magnitude of people's suffering and sorrow. It is important to add the spiritual, family and community dimensions that cause havoc in the lives of war survivors living in different social worlds under siege.

In this regard, the concept of social suffering, because of its broadest scope, offers a useful way of studying the multiple effects of war violence on human lives across cultures. We can start by inquiring about the form that social suffering takes in particular societies that have gone through violent processes. Some of the available medical

anthropological literature demonstrates that one prevalent form of war-related social suffering is expressed not through psychological symptoms, but through spirits and spirit possession. This is a strong indication of the need to study how people themselves give meaning and respond to the effects of war violence in their lives. Of particular importance to societies deeply divided because of civil war is to try to understand in what ways local ideas and practices of healing engage with healing not only in the strictu sensus but as well in the latu sensus. That is, the form that healing takes beyond the curing practices of different types of locally categorized symptoms in the body. In this way, it is important to find out the extent that healing processes afford “privileged insight into the relationship between individual experience and the socio-cultural order, a relationship which lies at the heart of social transformation more generally” (Comaroff, 1985: 369). The idea of a more encompassing dimension of healing appears very crucial in the overall study of the multiple effects of war for one important reason: Relationships constitute one dimension that is at once seriously affected by war and closely features in healing practices. Therefore, one strategy to study healing efficacy has to combine an analysis of the effects in the human body and in the social relationships.



## ***PART III Research Approach and Methodology***

### **Chapter 5: An ecological model as a research approach**

#### **Introduction**

As indicated above, the two main conceptual orientations in this research are reconciliation and healing. The ecological model will be used to place the processes of reconciliation and healing in a context characterized by multiple factors. These factors include the protracted war violence, a failure on the part of those responsible for the indiscriminate violence to deal with its legacies, and a variety of socio-cultural factors at grassroots level. Most importantly, this context is characterized by the availability and accessibility of resources that help to repair the social world by facilitating reconciliation and healing processes. The principal resources under investigation are the agricultural cycle and the traditional justice system in the domain of reconciliation and healing, and traditional medicine in the domain of healing and reconciliation.

The questions that are raised to guide the enquiry on reconciliation and healing are addressed by following two strategic paths: the structural-analytical path and the path of themes. On the structural-analytical path, I apply the ecological model of human development as constructed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) and an adapted version of the ecological model developed for the study of processes of post-war social reconstruction (Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002).

The basic drive of the ecological perspective is an attempt to understand the interrelationships between individuals and their ecological environment and how these mutual influences foster change. Bronfenbrenner conceives the *ecological environment* “topologically as a nested arrangement of concentric structures,<sup>78</sup> each contained within the next. These structures (also called systems) are referred to as the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems” (1979: 22). In this definition, the elements that compose the various structures or systems establish dynamic transactions across structures and exert influence upon one another. In this regard, the ecological environment refers the concrete material and social milieu in which human and supernatural forces establish direct or indirect (distant or closer) relationships with one another. It is also extended to incorporate

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<sup>78</sup> In other ecological literature, the concept of ‘nested structures’ is designated as a *social system*.

external influences emanating from the larger macro-systems. For the purpose of this study only the natural environment, the micro-, meso- and macro-systems are considered, and the exo-system is excluded.

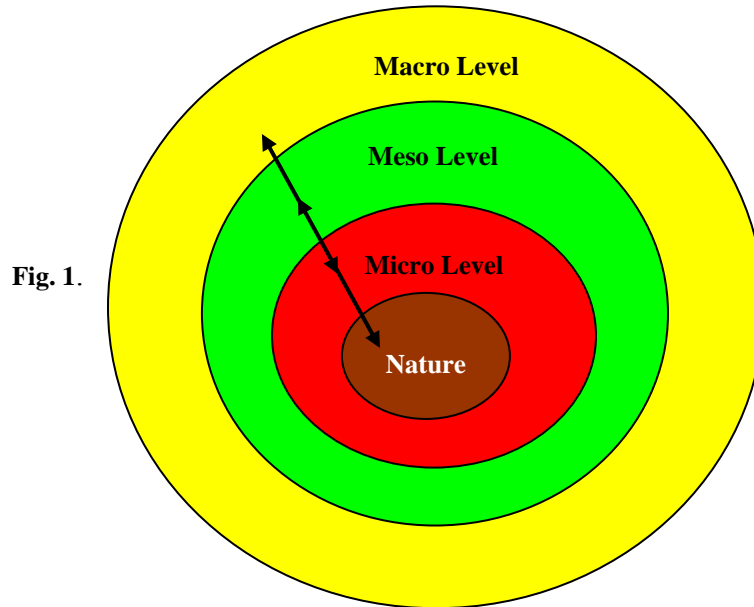


Figure 1 presents a graphic visualization of the dispositions of the various system-levels in the ecological environment. The natural environment where life unfolds or where these various levels (micro, meso, and macro) exist plays an important role since it can contribute, to a certain degree, to determining the type of economic production activities and social practices in which people engage. In turn, these activities and practices shape the type of relations that people develop with one another in their ecological environment. The impact of the activities of production on individual and collective behaviour is important for further exploring the role the production systems play in the processes of reconciliation, particularly at the micro- and meso-levels.

The micro-system is defined as “the pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 22). The setting is conceived as the place where people can readily engage in face-to-face interactions: home, neighbourhood, playground, leisure sites, sports grounds, fields, healing centres and so on (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The types of activity engaged in, roles, and interpersonal relations constitute elements of the micro-system.

The meso-system represents an increment of complexity in the ecological web. It comprises “the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates” (p.25). The meso-system is thus composed of a series of micro-systems; the person interacts not only with family members but also with other meaningful persons and institutions outside the micro-system setting. An example of the meso-system would be the relations among the home setting, work setting, and the health setting. The person actively participates by establishing interrelations in two or more settings, while not actively participating in other social institutions; but events occurring in these social institutions can exert an influence on his or her behaviour. For example, community institutions such as courts and health centres relate to corresponding provincial or even national macro-systems; the individual does not actively participate in these macro-systems, but what happens within them can indirectly influence the organization of his or her life.

The last level is the macro-system. It consists of an array of cultural and religious values and norms, laws and policies that engulf the totality of the ecological environment (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Although macro-systems or macro-level forces exert a powerful impact on people’s behaviour, the ecological model still attributes agency to the individual. Agency is expressed not so much when people are acting individually as when they are organized in groups defending specific interests; and macro-level forces can be influenced as a result.

The key aspect of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model is that change occurs as a result of mutual influences between persons and the various aspects (nature, political, economic, and cultural) of their environment. Persons or individuals are not portrayed as passive and homogenous. Individuals are heterogeneous and actively participate in their near-at-hand and distant settings by exerting influence on one another over time.

The dimension of time in ecological thinking is significant. Bronfenbrenner introduces in his model the concept of *ecological transition*, which “occurs whenever a person’s position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting, or both” (p. 26). There are various processes that can lead to metamorphosis in the ecological environment, and these changes can occur on any of the different levels of the ecological environment.

Framing this study within an ecological model draws attention to processes of social metamorphosis that were instigated by extreme war violence. How does war change people's roles and status through processes of alienation? How does war impact upon the organization of the ecological environment, and how can the resulting impact be gauged in the various system-settings? The ecological model is useful also because of its recognition of the mutual influences between various actors and settings. Individuals and their families are considered as active agents who establish various social interactions and mutual influences as part of the process of establishing relationships. The ecological model offers a comprehensive approach for uncovering the patterns of these interactions and mutual influences and for determining under which circumstances they may play a role over time in transforming relationships between alienated people. For instance, how has the disposition of the physical environment shaped the way people establish their priorities, which have in turn influenced their actions, in the post-war period? The ecological model also helps us to observe the location of meaningful resources on the various setting-levels and the processes of transference from one level to another that people engage in to rebuild the shattered social world.

The ecological environment of the fieldwork in this study is a community. The main focus of analysis was the processes unfolding in the micro, meso, and macro systems. Two types of macro-systems are considered: the macro-system of the community and the macro-system of the community as part of a national territory, that is the community as a sub-system of the national system.

The macro-level system of the community, which were the subject of in-depth analysis, were the socio-cultural and spiritual beliefs that shape the organization of the social world of the Gorongosa people. The analysis of macro-level system in the community (as a sub-system of a national territory) relates to the actions of national political authorities only in connection with the enactment of national laws that generated various effects in the organization of post-war communities. In this context, the national macro-level system is not central to my analysis. One reason for this lesser attention given to the national political forces here has to do with the ways in which the Mozambican peace settlement was achieved, namely by general and unconditional amnesties for former soldiers. This precluded any official policy of reconciliation at grass-roots level, and no specific war-related health programs were developed. The

absence of these political macro-level forces meant that individuals, their families and their communities had to develop their own strategies to engage in reconciliation (through the agricultural cycle and traditional justice) and in healing (through traditional medicine). The other reason for only marginal attention being given to national political forces in this thesis relates to the fact that other scholars have specifically investigated and analysed the politics of transition among the national official authorities.<sup>79</sup>

### **5.1. War violence and the ecological model of reconciliation and healing**

As noted above, Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed his model in order to study the ontogenetic development of an individual. However, the ecological model is also applicable to a multiplicity of studies of various other human phenomena. In these studies, the basic aspects of the model—i.e., the focus upon different levels of multivariate interacting factors, featuring interactions of mutual influence between actors and between processes, and the occurrence of changes that can be observed over time (WHO, 2002; de Jong, 2002; Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002, 2004)—remain intact and comprehensive.

One relevant ecological model that was conceived to study post-conflict societies was developed by Laurel Fletcher and Harvey Weinstein (2002), which they designate as a model of “social breakdown and social reconstruction.” The model is a framework for understanding social breakdown and the variety of consequences it entails, and for identifying critical elements of social repair (Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002: 580). Social repair or social reconstruction consists of “(1) justice; (2) democracy; (3) economic prosperity and transformation; and (4) reconciliation” (Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002: 623). In their ecological model these processes of social reconstruction are integrated on multiple levels (state, community, family, and individual) and in multiple sectors (economic, cultural, social, and political).

The background discussion that led to development of this ecological model was in the field of transitional justice, in which several authorities have suggested in a prescriptive manner that “international trials may be the single most appropriate response to communal violence” or that “international criminal trials are the centrepiece of social repair” (Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002: 578). Fletcher and Weinstein do not exactly dissent

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<sup>79</sup> Examples include Abrahamsson & Nilsson (1994); Chan & Venancio (1998); Manning, (2002 & 2005);

from the main assumptions of transitional justice; but they locate justice not in international trials alone but in the whole web of possible interventions, and they argue that trials alone are not sufficient for the work of social repair. In this context, Fletcher and Weinstein's contribution is not to the field of transitional justice as such. Their major contribution lies in the affirmation that social repair in the aftermath of mass violence requires both multidimensional approaches and a serious consideration of the voices and articulated needs of families and communities. They insist that the criminal trial approach must be complemented with capacity-building measures such as "humanitarian assistance, democracy building, and economic development..." (p. 580). In this regard, their model is comprehensive since it considers the background factors that may lead to social breakdown; it also regards the process of social reconstruction as encompassing multiple intervention levels and actors.

The principal levels of intervention considered in this model involve the state, communities and individuals/families. At the state level, the legitimate political authorities are responsible for the restoration of the central political, economic and social institutions. The state is responsible for developing legal interventions as well, principally through retributive justice or through alternative processes such as truth commissions.<sup>80</sup> Because of the profound effects wrought by mass violence, Fletcher and Weinstein suggest that "social repair should focus on the community as a separate unit of analysis" (p. 632) because "supporting a community in identifying and realizing its needs is the foundation for community regeneration" (p. 633).

At the community level various interventions can be generated, particularly by non-state actors, which should primarily tackle "those factors in the collective that led to the fragmentation and destruction of the community, even given the current imperfect state of knowledge" (p. 633). This remark needs to be contextualized; it stems from Fletcher and Weinstein's model of social breakdown, which consigns responsibility for the process of fragmentation and destruction to the communities themselves. In some cases this may be true, whereas in others it will be different; fragmentation and destruction of the community may also be the result of fierce antagonisms between

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<sup>80</sup> Although in this respect Hayner (2001: 88) argues that "truth commissions should not be seen as a replacement for prosecution, nor as a second-best weaker option when 'real' justice is not possible, as human rights advocates have sometimes suggested. On the contrary commissions can, and probably increasingly will, positively contribute to justice and prosecution".

macro-level forces which then descend to the community to completely disrupt and destroy social life.<sup>81</sup> In such contexts, the factors that led to the breakdown are most appropriately addressed at the political level, while at community level there is a need to address the legacies of the war destruction that can themselves entail further violence and social chaos. In this respect Fletcher and Weinstein are right when they suggest that efforts must be increased to “engage communities themselves in articulating their needs around community regeneration” (p. 633).

At the micro-level, individuals and their families must be the focus of post-war strategies of social repair in order to help them deal with loss, grief, and psychological trauma. Whatever the interventions envisaged, however, “it is critical that societal context be considered in applying these strategies” (Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002: 631). Accordingly, from the ecological perspective there must be a concerted effort to incorporate these psychosocial interventions within the overall strategy of social repair.

The Fletcher and Weinstein model is helpful in several ways. First, the process of social breakdown needs to be understood before assumptions about repair can be advanced. Second, social repair is not limited to a single intervention (an intervention only on the psychological level, for example) or initiated by a single actor. Various interventions are required on different levels of the ecological environment, where different actors can perform an array of interconnected initiatives over time. Most importantly, there must be a clear understanding that each intervention has consequences throughout the ecological environment. Third, the authors consider that the role played by meso-level processes (community level) is crucial and that the focus should be upon enabling local communities to develop and implement responses that represent their aspirations for social repair.

Despite these strengths, the model does not go far enough in certain aspects. One is the question of reconciliation, which in fact constitutes a key concept in the model. The model does not clarify what form justice takes to the extent of contributing to reconciliation in formerly ravaged and divided societies. A wide range of possibilities for strengthening the process of social repair is considered, but the authors do not attribute a

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<sup>81</sup> Although they recognize that these macro-level forces represented by a limited group of individuals play a role in the escalation of mass violence, Fletcher and Weinstein nonetheless attribute the ultimate force for violence to group power. In this case, they fail to consider that when rebel leaders or even state leaders do not have popular support, one key strategy that they apply is to force people to support them by means of methods of collective terror.

specific contribution to transitional justice (which, as noted, is one of the background debates that led to the development of their model). Fletcher and Weinstein rightly dispute the role of retributive and restorative justice in social repair; yet they do not consider or articulate the potential role that community institutions such as traditional courts or healing resources such as traditional healers can play as a part of transitional justice and reconciliation processes.

Combining the general features of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and using some aspects of the model of "social breakdown and social reconstruction" developed by Fletcher and Weinstein (2002), I have defined the key variables to be elicited through an ecological approach.

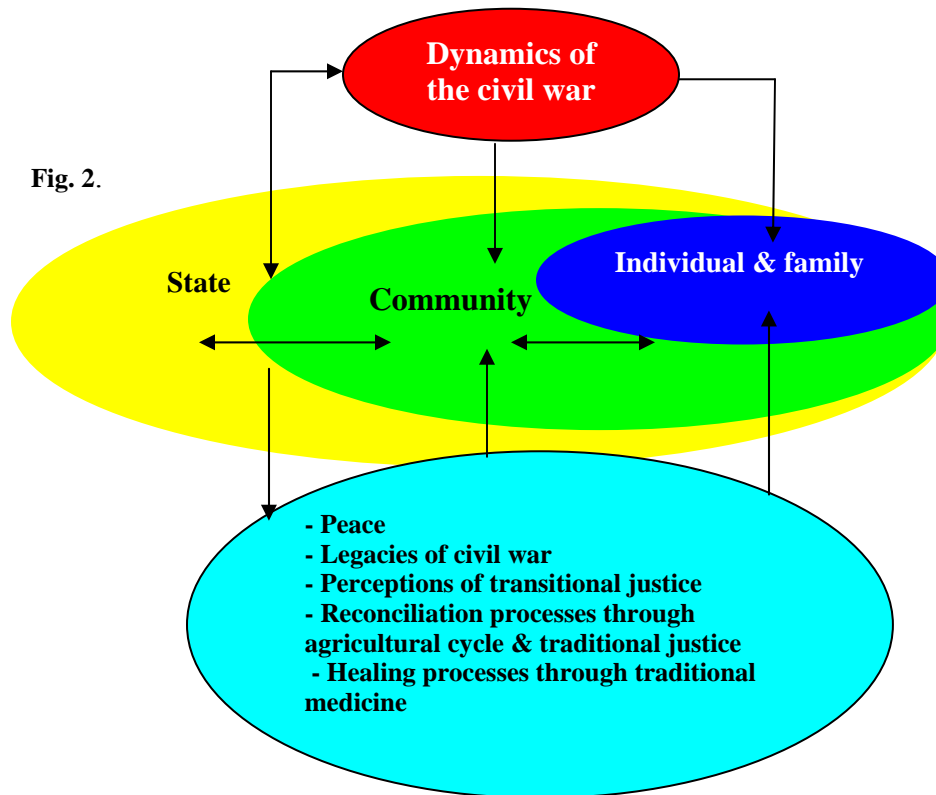
Figure 2 (below) shows three variables and the various level settings where they can be observed and studied. The first variable is the "dynamic of war violence". Although the model shows macro-level forces represented by the state, my fieldwork focused solely on the effects of fierce power struggles between macro-level forces that generated specific dynamics of war violence at community and family level. That is, the fieldwork sought to discover how violent political antagonisms between macro-level forces descended to grass-roots level, ravaging communities and causing extreme suffering among ordinary people.

The second, third, fourth and fifth variables concern the "peace process", the "legacies of the civil war", "perceptions on various types of transitional justice" and the "processes of reconciliation and healing". The ecological model indicates that macro-level forces were responsible for the peace agreement, which created the social conditions at the individual, family and community levels for addressing the legacies of the civil war through the development of reconciliation processes through the agricultural cycle and traditional justice on the one hand and healing processes through traditional healing practices on the other.

Although the state is a key actor, this study only considers the various political and legal processes that the state developed in order to deal with the legacies of the civil war.



## Ecological model of the dynamics of the civil war

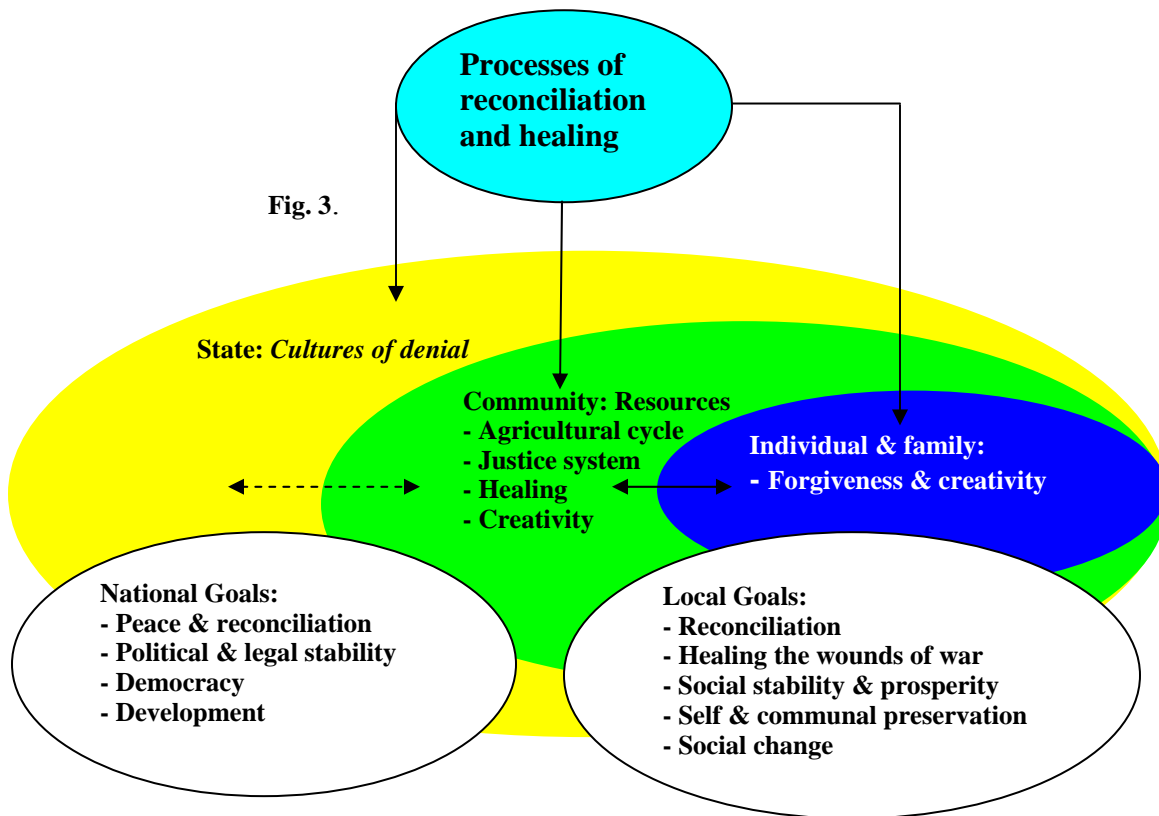


### 5.2. Ecological model of reconciliation and healing as applied in this research

Figure 3 (below) shows an extension of the ecological model that specifically addresses the theme of the reconciliation and healing processes. The model identifies the strategies and key resources available at the various levels to address the legacies of the civil war. It also describes the goals to be attained when addressing the legacies of the war. At the state level, the model shows that the key strategy for addressing the legacies of the war consisted in the development of *cultures of denial*; and the goals to be attained were: 1) peace & reconciliation; 2) political and legal stability; 3) democracy; and 4) development. Since the state strategy and its stated goals did not include specific processes for reckoning with the gross human rights violations and crimes perpetrated during the civil war, war survivors at grassroots level were left on their own to address the legacies of the war and to set their own goals. On the individual and family level the analysis shifts to the interplay of agency and structure. In this interplay the key resources identified are creativity and the capacity to forgive; these are elicited through an

investigation of people's perceptions of the role of different types of transitional justice in reconciliation and healing.

### Ecological model of reconciliation and healing



The greatest variety of resources is located at community level. Because of both closer proximity and a higher level of interdependency in relations among individual, family and community levels, the goals to be achieved when addressing the legacies of the civil war coincide; that is, the main goals are reconciliation through the agricultural cycle and traditional justice and healing through the traditional health care system.

This study of reconciliation and healing processes from an ecological perspective will demonstrate how the scarcity of resources at certain system levels and the availability of resources on other system-levels generate consequences throughout the ecological environment. The overall analysis will help to explain under which circumstances war survivors at grassroots level were capable of engaging in reconciliation and healing, thus contributing to the overall process of repairing their shattered social world.

## **Chapter 6: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The research presented in this thesis is the continuation of a community-based research project that was initiated in 1997 under the generic heading of war memories and recovery strategies after the civil war in Mozambique. It is a longitudinal research in that for almost ten years I have systematically done research on the same region. In 2002 I was granted a scholarship to develop this PhD project. There are two general aspects that unify the various research protocols that have evolved over the intervening years. First, the studies are essentially focused on the same population group; and second, the key concern in both was to understand how people were affected by their high degree of exposure to a protracted and very violent civil war.

What makes the subject of this study distinct from the previous work is its focus not only on experiences of suffering but also on the various local processes that war survivors initiated in the aftermath of the civil war in order to repair their shattered social world. Another aspect that sets this study apart from the initial research is the use of ethnographic methods. In order to describe the complete methodology used during the fieldwork, this chapter is organized into eight sections. The first section presents the geographic location of the setting and the various ethnic identifications imposed upon the Gorongosa people. In section two I describe the reasons why I selected Gorongosa for the study of processes of reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of the civil war. Section three outlines the research goal once again. Section four presents the research questions that guided the fieldwork. Section five describes the initial phases of my entry to Gorongosa. Section six and the two following subsections present a list of the qualitative and quantitative methods used, along with a brief discussion of the complexities of conducting ethnographic work. In the last two sections (seven and eight), I discuss the sampling procedures, the data collection, the research team and the language used during interviews.

### 6.1. The setting: Geography and ethnicity

The main site where the research was conducted was Gorongosa district.<sup>82</sup> Gorongosa is one of the ten districts of Sofala<sup>83</sup> province in the centre of Mozambique (see appendix 1 & 2). The district has experienced fast and steady population growth. For instance, Portuguese figures indicate that around 1905 Gorongosa had 17, 572 inhabitants.<sup>84</sup> By 1930 it had increased to 22,309 people<sup>85</sup> and was continuing to grow; in 1949-1950 the population was registered as 28, 246 people.<sup>86</sup> By 1970 the population had almost tripled to reach 60,836.<sup>87</sup>

In the post-colonial period a comprehensive population census was carried out, after the civil war in 1997. These figures indicate a relatively slow population growth rate of 34,2% as compared to the census of 1970. In 1997 92,555 inhabitants were registered; of these, 3% (51) were women and 48.7% were men, distributed in 18,515 families. The average family size was five persons.

The district is composed of three main villages: Vila Paiva (capital of the district) and two Administrative Posts: Kanda and Vunduzi (appendix 3). The majority of the population is concentrated in Vila Paiva with a total of 47,745 (made up of the villages of Tambarara with 44, 537 and Pungue with 3,208); Kanda has a total of 23,854 (distributed between the centre with 15,505 and Kudzo village with 8,349); and Vunduzi has a total of 20,956 (13,621 in the centre and 7,335 in Casa Banana).

Through almost a hundred years of rule the white Portuguese settlers never really succeeded in classifying the ethnicity of the Gorongosa people. Sometimes the Gorongosas were categorized as belonging to the Vanhai and Tonga or Bitonga ethnicities<sup>88</sup> and speaking the Chi-Sena and Mateves languages;<sup>89</sup> on other occasions the

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<sup>82</sup> In previous interviews in Gorongosa some interlocutors said that *gamba* spirits originated in Barue district (Igreja 2003b). I made a three-week research visit to Barue as part of my enquiry into the origins of the *gamba* spirits and to check the geographic consistency of these assertions. During this trip I took the opportunity to systematically enquire among the people about their views on transitional justice as well.

<sup>83</sup> Gorongosa is located in the extreme northwest of Sofala province, between the parallels 18° 45' and 19° 15' in the South, and between the meridians 33° 30' and 34° 45' East. It is the fifth most populous district of Sofala province and is located almost 200km from Beira city. The district borders on Maringue district in the North, Nhamatanda district in the South, Cheringoma and Muanza districts in the East, and Manica province (the districts of Macossa and Gondola) in the West (Map 2).

<sup>84</sup> In *Anuário do Território de Manica e Sofala*. Compiled by João Baptista Barreiros, 1907. Beira: Biblioteca Municipal Calouste Gulbenkian.

<sup>85</sup> In *Anuário de Lourenço Marques-CO. de Moçambique*. 1907. Maputo: AHM.

<sup>86</sup> In *Anuário da Colónia de Moçambique, 1949-1950*. Maputo: AHM.

<sup>87</sup> *Anuário da Província de Moçambique, 1970*. Maputo: AHM.

<sup>88</sup> In *Anuário de Lourenço Marques-CO. de Moçambique, 1930*. Maputo: AHM.

Portuguese considered the Gorongosa region to be inhabited by Gorongosa, Sena<sup>90</sup>, Macaia, and Barúe people speaking Chi-Gorongose and Chi-Sena.<sup>91</sup> Yet the local people do not regard themselves as Ma-Sena or Mateves or any of the other ethnic groups just mentioned. First, they do not attach any particular importance to ethnicity in their discursive practices; and second, if the issue is raised in conversation, they tend to classify themselves as “Ma-Gorongosianos”, i.e., people with their origins in the vast constellation of mountains called Gorongosa. Older people in particular will sometimes say, “*nós os Ma-Gorongosianos*” (we the Ma-Gorongosianos) to emphasize that they come from the mountains of Gorongosa. Their identification with a place rather than an ethnicity has to do with the mystical powers that are attributed to the Gorongosa Mountains. Historically it is said that the name Gorongosa was born out of local conflicts in which one group managed to reach the top of one of the mountains and began to drop heavy stones down after them. The stones hit many of the members of the group that was chasing behind and killed them. Some of the survivors rushed to the very few Portuguese settlers to report this, saying, “*Goro kuna ngozi*” (there is danger up there). Since the Portuguese could neither understand the words nor pronounce them correctly, they just said, “Gorongosa!” This is not a well-known story in Gorongosa, but those who know it use it to illustrate the powers associated with the mountain and the origins of the name Gorongosa.

## **6.2. Why Gorongosa?**

For many years, and particularly in the mid 1980s, news about Gorongosa district was prominent in the national state mass media in Mozambique. The reason for this was that the central base of “the enemy”, Matsangaissa or Renamo, was in that region, in the area of Casa Banana. On the one hand, the usual content of the news was about how “the enemy” had created a reign of terror in that region through mass cold-blooded killings of innocent people. The official media would also describe Renamo as involved in mysterious witchcraft and cannibalistic practices as part of their “kingdom of terror”. On the other hand, the news also emphasized—in excess and with a heroic tone—how the

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<sup>89</sup> Idem, 1940. Maputo: AHM.

<sup>90</sup> Yet descriptions of certain socio-cultural practices of the Sena people by Barbara and Allen Isaacman (1979) indicates certain similarities with the people from Gorongosa.

<sup>91</sup> In *Anuário da Provincia de Moçambique*, 1959-1960, p. 846. Maputo: AHM.

Frelimo-led government army, in partnership with the Zimbabwean army and using modern weaponry, had managed to destroy the central Renamo base. This defeat of Renamo was considered an important step on the road to victory against armed banditry. Yet the destruction of Casa Banana, which Samora Machel referred to as “*a espinha dorsal do inimigo*” (the backbone of the enemy), did not end the war in 1986. The Frelimo-led government had to get involved in peace negotiations that culminated in a peace agreement six years later (in 1992).

It was these descriptions featuring the intensive use of modern weapons of destruction (not only by the national army but by regional armies as well) combined with the mysterious character surrounding portrayals of Gorongosa as being the centre of the armed banditry and witchcraft activities—the alpha and omega of the evil, so to speak—that drew my attention to this place. Under these circumstances Gorongosa sounded appropriate for an endeavour to understand how local ideas of human existence, social relations, health and sickness, death, spirits and ghosts had been affected by extreme war experiences. Gorongosa also seemed an appropriate and unique place for studying contemporary human processes of rebuilding a shattered social world after a devastating and protracted civil war, on the basis of people’s own resources available.

### **6.3. Research goal**

The general goal of this thesis is to address the extent to which the forms of officially planned abandonment and neglect described above are indeed potentially harmful and represent a recipe for the collapse of war survivors who have to struggle to repair their own lives amidst shattered families and communities. In particular, this study explores the ways in which war survivors, amidst the extreme legacies of war and the post-war official neglect of these legacies, have been able to make use of locally available and accessible resources to develop strategies to engage in and to attain reconciliation and healing. Furthermore, the effectiveness of some of these strategies is studied.

### **6.4. Specific research questions**

The specific research questions are an extension of the previously presented general questions (1.5). These questions were formulated to address the phenomena of

reconciliation and healing in the post-civil war period. They have been organized into three parts. First, background questions:

- a) To what extent gender differences played a role on the degree of exposure to the civil war? Particularly, how were women bodies considered as specific targets during the civil war?
- b) How did the war affect families and relationships between people in Gorongosa villages?

Second, questions addressing people's perception of various forms of transitional justice and reconciliation strategies and resources:

- c) What kind of judgments do war survivors make of post-war justice in terms of retribution, truth-confession, public apology and financial reparation, and why do they make them?
- d) How are these judgments influenced by socio-cultural, gender and religious factors?
- e) What is the extent of the role that the different types of transitional justice mechanisms are considered to play in the reconstruction of the social world?
- f) How do objective features of the social world (the availability and accessibility of land and legal resources, such as the traditional justice system) shape the meaning of reconciliation?
- g) To what extent do the agricultural production system and the traditional courts play a role in rebuilding social capital, and how effective is this agricultural production system in maintaining peace and social stability at a local level?

Third, questions addressing the health consequences of war and the availability of local resources:

- h) How and to what extent did the war affect the health of the people in Gorongosa?
- i) What is the socio-cultural, gender and historical basis for healing practices in Gorongosa?
- j) How is the civil war related to the emergence of new spirits and healers?

- k) What is the role of traditional healers in helping people who suffer from war-related health problems? And how effective are they?
- l) In what way do war-related spirits and healers in combination with other types of traditional healers contribute to the promotion of peace and social stability in Gorongosa?
- m) How do war-related spirits inform broader theoretical discussions about the politics of memory, truth and reconciliation, impunity and silence, suffering and resilience, and gender social change?

### **6.5. Entering the area and the selection of field research sites**

Before departing alone to Gorongosa to do this research the place was unfamiliar to me; I knew nobody, and most of the information (and misinformation) that I had had been broadcast by the official media. For some of my interlocutors in the capital of the country (Maputo) about Gorongosa it was a marginal place; and the little that they knew was the association of Gorongosa with witchcraft practices, the production of *suruma* (cannabis sativa),<sup>92</sup> war, and the region's functioning as Renamo's military base during the war. For other interlocutors the name of Gorongosa triggered feelings of fear; it was like a "danger zone". These interlocutors had been exposed to stories ranging from dangerous witches to cannibalism.

I entered the place for the first time in April 1997. At that time Gorongosa was still a very isolated region, a kind of no-go area; but for those who were living there it was like a no-leave area. The roads connecting Beira to Inchope were in very bad condition; but the worst route was the road linking Inchope to Vila Paiva, which had been totally destroyed. Under these conditions the *Chapa Cem*<sup>93</sup> owners were not at all willing to risk their cars on that road. There was only one proprietor who felt sorry for people and decided to risk his *Chapa Cem*, a Tata bus, to transport them. There was only one trip a day and the bus was often extremely full of people and all sorts of goods including living goats and chickens. Missing the bus in Inchope was like being locked in an open-air prison, and to escape to Gorongosa central village was an impossible mission. A person who missed the bus would have no other choice than to sleep in miserable conditions,

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<sup>92</sup> Someone even told me that I would see cannabis everywhere, since the belief was that it grows naturally: "even when people set it on fire and burn it, it grows back".

<sup>93</sup> Private transport that used to cost Cem Meticais per trip.



without proper water and with no basic sanitation, fighting against the legion of mosquitoes all night for an unknown number of nights in Inchope while waiting for the next transport. From Inchope to Gorongosa is about 70km; however, owing to the calamitous condition of both the road and the Tata bus, the trip used to last at least thirteen hours.

On my arrival in Gorongosa, the administrator of the district was absent and it was a police officer who received me. The first thing he showed me was a rather small white house. He told me that the house belonged to the SISE (*Serviços de Informação e Segurança do Estado*, the Mozambican secret services). Before going to Gorongosa, I had already travelled to various rural districts but this was the first time I had seen such a secret institution in a village. I was surprised and asked myself: What were the secret services doing in a rural district in the middle of nowhere? Did the Gorongosa population represent such a threat to the Mozambican state that it had to install an office of the secret services there? And why was the first place the police officer showed me this? What message was he trying to pass on to me? Did he have second thoughts, making him decide to threaten me by warning me off, or did he perhaps think that I had come there to buy soft drugs? I was struck by the fact that a poor state was capable of installing a secret service office instead of building more schools for the younger generation and hospitals for the sick. The only reasonable conclusion I could reach at that moment was that even five years after the end of the civil war (that is in 1997), Gorongosa was still a “problem place” or a “danger zone” in the eyes of the central government. This situation prevailed in Gorongosa until roughly 1999.

Some days later the Administrator returned and I met him to present the objectives of the research project.<sup>94</sup> I found out that he had only recently moved to the district. I showed him the same letter from my university that I had already shown to the police officer. The meeting served also for obtaining further information about the dynamics of the war (in the most and lesser affected areas) and the present situation of the different zones in terms of: the geographic location of the villages; their accessibility by road; the location and distribution of landmines in the ground; the estimated number of people in the different zones; the availability of food and water; the names of the

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<sup>94</sup> This is an official procedure that must be carried out as soon as the researcher arrives at the research site in order to obtain the cooperation of the official authorities.

different zones and their traditional chiefs; and the need to collect another letter (in this case from the administration) to present to the traditional chiefs in their zones of influence. Such information was not available anywhere else, and had to be collected at the research site. The information I was looking for was very useful for me as it played a very important role in the initial selection of the villages for the data gathering.

On my first meeting with the administrator I was very curious to hear his opinion about my research objective. I expected him to react negatively, saying that talking about war events would not be a good idea as the war had just finished and it was not healthy for people to talk about these issues. Quite the contrary; he raised no objections and even started telling me about his terrible wartime experiences in another district in the centre of Mozambique where he had been working. He also told me of his recurring nightmares about the war. He had fallen into an ambush when travelling to Beira, and he was on the point of death; this experience sometimes comes back when he is sleeping. I was surprised that the administrator should start disclosing aspects of his past and present without really knowing me. Later on I found out that his behaviour was quite consistent with what I encountered in the various communities where I did the research. As soon as a conversation started, the war was an inevitable topic that just mingled in.

In relation to my search for preliminary information I found out that the Administrator was also at a disadvantage. He knew as little about his district as I did, and he ended up lamenting that “When we won independence in 1975 we burned all the books that the colonialists had left. So we know too little about our own people”. He had only been recently appointed to be the Administrator of Gorongosa, and clearly he could not be a key interlocutor for me. However, he was a frank person, and asked one of his subordinates living in Gorongosa to answer some of the questions that he could not answer himself.

Some of the information with which these two men provided me would help me to make the initial selection of the research sites. However, the administration staff insisted that for the type of research I wanted to do, the Administrative Post of Nhamadze, also known as Kanda, would be the best place. After considering various other locations they were sure that for research aimed at understanding the suffering of the people, Kanda was the right place to start.

As I had little contextual information on the basis of which to refuse and suggest a different place, I followed their advice. After two months of intensive data gathering, new information began to flow and other locations became options as research sites. The perceptions of the people whom I was interviewing in Kanda were that I should also do research in Mucodza and Casa Banana communal village, and in the Administrative Post of Vunduzi. People told me that the war had been much more violent in these areas than in Kanda. I had already heard about Casa Banana but not about Mucodza communal village or Vunduzi.

Only later did I understand that the authorities had chosen Kanda for at least two reasons. First, Kanda, compared with other war-zones in Gorongosa, was the one that remained longest under Renamo control. Even after the war, Renamo still had more political influence there than the local government authorities did. This implied, for example, that the Administrator could not go out dancing and tinker with his car like a normal citizen in Kanda with the same enthusiasm and happiness as in Mucodza. The Administrator could not organize public meetings in Kanda to entertain the people with his government's promises of a "better future" with the same certainty that the people would show up as in Vunduzi. To summarize, the Administrator did not have the same political power and legitimacy in Kanda as he apparently had in other locations. For this reason, in administrative eyes, the people of Kanda had suffered more from war than any other people in Gorongosa, and the official authorities wanted to use me to see how much information I could squeeze from them. In their words, Kanda people still had a "war mentality".

Second, one year before my arrival in the area, some VIPs from the government (Agriculture Ministry) and from the main foreign organization in Gorongosa (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* GTZ) made a visit to Kanda and the male population had expelled them, threatening to use violence if the Mozambican and GTZ authorities did not withdraw from the area immediately. This being the case, the official authorities were using me to test the extent to which the political climate had changed in Kanda. I was going to be their barometer. If the people expelled me too, it would mean that the situation had remained the same in Kanda. The assumptions of the government authorities would once again be confirmed: *"people in Kanda were brainwashed by Renamo and that is why they do not respect the authorities...they still have a war*

*mentality*". If the people of Kanda did not force me to withdraw from the area, this would mean that I was going to bring useful information that would help the authorities to understand the situation of that particular location better.

The main traditional chief (*nhakwa*) of Kanda received my assistants and me very well and authorized us to pitch our tents in his yard. At the end of every day after work he would ask me how the work was going, and it continued this way during our first stay in the area. In general the people in Kanda received my assistants and me very well. We spent two months travelling to different areas of Kanda to collect data. Apparently the signs of political instability had gone at that time, and I never heard any more about any kind of human upheavals after that time. Nevertheless, the authorities were not certain about the possibility of following in my footsteps. On one occasion they told me that "*we are going to organize a public meeting in Kanda but we are not sure if the people will come to the gathering*"<sup>95</sup>. They were still afraid of people's reactions to their presence in Kanda. The authorities have political power, but they seem to lack legitimacy in the eyes of the ordinary villager.

From then on the field research evolved and over the years Gorongosa changed a lot. Gorongosa is no longer an isolated area. The road between Inchope and Gorongosa that used to take thirteen hours to travel was repaired in 2003 to become one of the best roads in Mozambique. It is now the main corridor connecting the central and northern regions of the country. Nowadays there is plenty of public transportation on this route. Recently, in 2004, the district capital (Vila Paiva) started to have electricity twenty-four hours a day.

As my research unfolded during these years (1997-2005) I managed to gather a fairly representative sample of people covering most of the villages of Gorongosa, namely Vila Paiva, Kanda, Sa-Kudzo, Mucodza, Vunduzi, Casa Banana, Piro, and Tsiquir. I also did research in various high and low altitude locations of the Gorongosa Mountains.

## **6.6. Methods**

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was applied. Before listing these methods and the themes covered in my field research, and because ethnographic

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<sup>95</sup> Field notes taken during informal meetings with administration officers.

techniques are among the methods I used, I will dwell for a moment on reflections made by Johannes Fabian (1990) on informative and performative ethnography. Fabian argues that, “it seems to be a truism bordering on the trivial that an ethnographer is out to collect information and that he can get it from those who have it” (p. 6). This is not to suggest that members of different cultures do not have information at all. What Fabian wants to emphasize is that in “large areas and important aspects of culture no one, not even the native, has information that can simply be called up and expressed in discursive statements” (p.6).

What the ethnographer should do instead is to bear in mind that knowledge is constructed communally (by the member of the cultural group and the ethnographer); Fabian calls this epistemological procedure “performative ethnography“. He suggests that ethnographic knowledge can be “represented—made present—only through action, enactment, or performance” (p. 6). In this way, performance is the “more adequate description both of the ways people realize their culture and of the method by which an ethnographer produces knowledge about that culture” (p. 18). If we approach ethnography as a performance, then the member of the local culture is no longer regarded as an “informant” but as an interlocutor.

These insights are relevant and to a certain extent overlap with Bourdieu’s view of perspectivism. However, I think that these views cannot be applied to the whole process of ethnographic work. (Only in certain aspects does performative ethnography seem to make sense.) In my case, thinking of ethnography as a performance well depicts my exploration of the war survivors’ perceptions of different types of transitional justice. For instance, when someone is asked whether the former perpetrators of violence must be punished or not, does he or she have ready-made answers to give? The answers that a person gives are to various extents shaped by factors such as: 1) his or her personal experiences of the past; 2) his or her present situation; 3) his or her individual interests or the interests of his or her collective; 4) the way the researcher poses the question and the setting where the question is posed; and 5) the attitude of the researcher towards the performances of the interlocutor (i.e. is just a “yes” or “no” answer enough? or are further questions posed to elicit more knowledge?)

Reflecting seriously upon these issues convincingly demonstrates that “performances (...) although they can be asked for, are not really responses to questions.

The ethnographer's role, then, is no longer that of a questioner; he or she is but a provider of occasions, a catalyst in the weakest sense, and a producer (in analogy to a theatrical producer) in the strongest" (Fabian, 1990: 7). I would rather think that the ethnographer *sometimes* could indeed act as a catalyst. I say sometimes because a similar designation of performative ethnography cannot be made in cases where (as for instance when war survivors undergo healing by spirits) the ethnographer does not seem to provide any occasion or to catalyse anything. The war survivors themselves create such spaces and occasions; they themselves catalyse the emergence of moments through appropriate swansongs (e.g. drum playing etc.) so that the past can emerge in the present. In this way I, as a researcher, was attracted to the sound of the drums and went there to observe and to register these moments in which diagnosis and healing were taking place. It is interesting to note how certain dimensions of ethnographic work are in fact aleatory, i.e., the researcher happens to be in a particular place when local people are about to start performing a ritual, or a burial, or a conflict resolution. Under such circumstances the researcher joins in these moments rather than creating them. In the specific case of Gorongosa, people generally have no problem with questions being raised during diagnosis and healing. Thus I was able to speak to spirits in order extract information that I thought was useful for understanding the process of healing in Gorongosa. To sum up, I think it is more in tune with the complexity of reality to consider that what happens during field research is both informative and performative ethnography, and not solely performance as Fabian suggests.

Ethnography is complex and it works through a dialectical relationship between informative and performative approaches. The methods that one uses are far from being complete in themselves. On many occasions there is a necessity to integrate various types of methods. Within this context, apart from my being there and sometimes acting as "a provider of occasions", my work was also a product of occasions created by the Gorongosa people themselves. In order to capture these moments I had to combine different methods.

In relation to qualitative methods I used the following: in-depth interviews (individual and collective), oral life history, focus group discussions, participant observation, self-reports on war memories, informal talks, and gathering of proverbs and tales in the community. Records of court cases and healing sessions as well as people

working in their agricultural fields were made through the use of a tape-recorder, a video and photo camera. Official documents were gathered in the form of law resolutions and political speeches that addressed issues related to reconciliation and social stability in the aftermath of the civil war. These qualitative methods were complemented with quantitative methods, which consisted mainly of structured questionnaires.

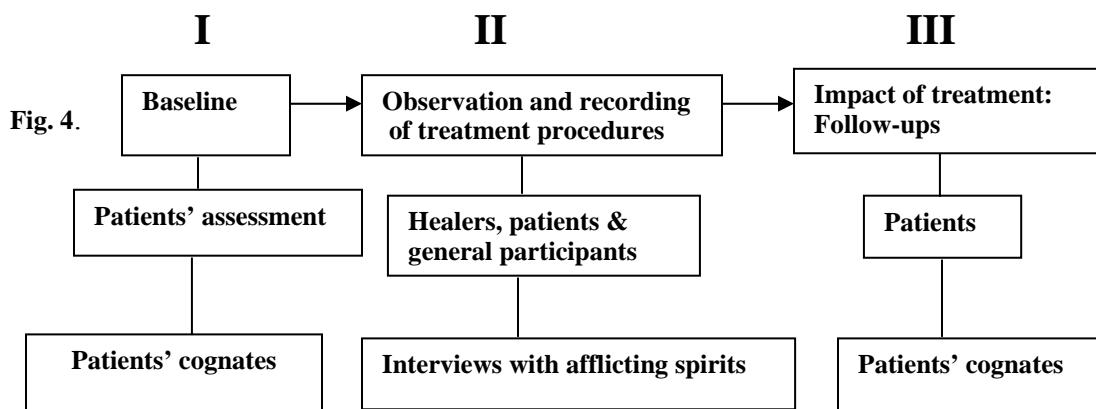
### **6.6.1. Qualitative methods and research themes**

In-depth interviews were carried out to map contextual knowledge. It covered the following themes: 1) the local socio-cultural, political and legal institutions and the people's socio-economic status (see appendix 4); 2) oral life histories of individuals and the community and of the cultural practices that regulate life in different age periods and with the respective tasks: (a) infancy (*goeiro* and *mambira* stage); and (b) marriage; 3) the ways people suffered and dealt with their war experiences, and people's perceptions and interpretations of the changes brought about by the civil war in their family and social lives, and of the things left unchanged.

In-depth interviews were also used to address the theme of post-war transitional justice and reconciliation (appendix 5), in terms of: 1) people's perceptions and interpretations of the role of retributive justice (trials and financial reparation); 2) people's perceptions and interpretations of the role of restorative justice in reconciliation (forgiveness and the demand for apology); 3) reconciliation strategies applied in general; 4) the impact of socio-cultural, gender and religious factors on people's perceptions of the various aspects of transitional justice; and 5) the types of resources available that promote reconciliation, particularly the agricultural cycle (appendix 4) and traditional courts (appendix 6).

In the domain of the effects of the war on health, the in-depth interviews covered the following topics (appendix 7): 1) people's perceptions about war-related health problems; 2) the way these health problems are expressed and dealt with, particularly afflictions by *gamba* spirits; 3) the role of gender in the manifestation of these health problems; 4) the impact of war-related health problems on the family; 5) health-seeking behaviour and the role of the therapeutic management group; and 6) the role played by traditional healers, particularly *gamba* healers.

The research design for studying the interventions by *gamba* healers consisted in the following three steps (portrayed in Figure 4). Patients and their relatives were systematically interviewed during the baseline study. Data gathering was also carried out during phase 2, which consisted of the treatment procedures. Patients and healers were interviewed as events unfolded. Documentation of this phase was also made by video and photo camera. These two devices captured the whole scenario of the healing sessions, the actions of the various participants, body movements, and songs. These elements were included to complement the description of the procedures during the diagnosis and healing phases.



The last stage consisted of post-intervention assessments. These were aimed at determining the extent to which the treatment had exerted an effect on the health problem. This was done in four periods: immediately after the treatment, in 3-month, 6-month and 12-month periods after the treatment, and then in a follow-up after two years. The content of the assessments consisted in developing brief narratives of the health problem as it existed at the time the baseline study was done, and the health status of the person at the specific time of the follow-up assessment. For example, at the 3-month follow-up of the patient, the assessment begins in the following way: “When I met you for the first time 3 months ago, what was your health problem?” The person describes it. Then another question follows: “How is your health at this moment?” A similar procedure is followed with the patients’ relatives.

Focus group discussions were carried out to address themes related to wartime experiences, particularly: *gandira* and the rape of women; strained relations between men and women and between generations after the civil war; transitional justice and the role



of punishment, revenge, confessions of truth and apologies; and memories of war and forgetfulness.

Participant observation was carried out in people's agricultural fields to register the various phases of the agricultural cycle. One goal was to study the agricultural cycle and the types of activities developed in the various phases; the other key goal was to register the participants' behaviours toward one another in the working process. This observation process made it possible to note the behaviours attached to agricultural activities that promote reconciliation through togetherness and by reducing the social distance between people.

Participant observations were also conducted during traditional court sessions in the houses of traditional chiefs and in conflict resolution sessions in the community courts, so as to observe the functioning of the court and dispute resolution of various settlements. In addition, participants were observed: at social and drinking gatherings; in community rituals to interact with the spirits of the ancestors; and in peoples' houses, yards and granaries. The division of labour between men and women was also observed.

Self-reports on the dynamics of war violence and war memories were as well collected from primary and secondary school teachers. Informal talks and the recording of local proverbs and small stories were carried out systematically during the whole research period. There were no criteria for the collection of these proverbs and small stories. Every phrase or song that the interlocutors employed to convey a proverbial message was collected.

### **6.6.2. Quantitative methods**

Structured questionnaires were conducted to gather background data about: 1) the main characteristics of the population group: socio-economic conditions, cultural and religious practices, and family relations (appendix 8); and 2) people's judgments of various types of transitional justice (appendix 5). Structured questionnaires, which are currently still being used, were also developed to gather data in two different community courts about the following: profiles of the plaintiffs and defendants; the type of case; a brief description of the case; and the process of conflict resolution. However, the most complete set of data used in this thesis was generated by only one of the courts.

## 6.7. Sampling procedures

The initial plan was to develop a random selection of interlocutors. As communities are small, however, the people who were not selected to take part in the study complained about it. This problem had already been observed in a previous study, which sought to develop a controlled intervention strategy involving index and control groups. The participants collaborated in a positive way but they could not understand the reason for the existence of a control group, hence everybody wanted to take part in the intervention (Igreja *et al.*, 2004).

Therefore in this study every eligible individual and his or her family was eventually included. The inclusion criteria were: adult man or woman, born in the region and having survived the war while living within the regional war zones. Former refugees or displaced persons from other regions were excluded.

The main sample resulting from the communities survey was composed of 392 adults. There was a balanced gender division in that N=194 (49.5%) were men and N=198 (50,5%) were women. The analysis of these data is presented in two chapters: the chapter on the perceptions of the various types of transitional justice and the chapter on the agricultural cycle.

The second sample in this study is composed of the group of persons with ill-health conditions. These patients were identified through networks of information as well as through a large-scale household survey<sup>96</sup> on the community prevalence of spirit possession conducted in various communities in Gorongosa. The networks of information were established with various individual healers as well as with people working in the former headquarters of the Mozambican Association of Traditional Practitioners (AMETRAMO). The agreement was that when a patient arrived in the house of the healers they were to inform me so that I could identify the patient and interview him or her and his or her relatives before the diagnosis and subsequent treatment began. Another network of information used was the traditional or community courts. Some patients reported their cases in the courts because their relatives were refusing to cooperate in the healing process; the judges informed me about them, and systematic data collection of their cases was initiated. The patients identified through the household survey were in the throes of spirit possession afflictions, and a follow-up of their health-seeking behaviour

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<sup>96</sup> The quantitative results of these surveys are not presented in this thesis.

allowed systematic collection of their cases. The total number of this sample was 40 patients. The majority were women N=32, and only N=8 were men.

The last sample was composed of people who brought suits in different traditional and community courts. Data were systematically collected in only one particular court (Location A), from the period of 2002 until June 2006. For this thesis I use the systematic data of that one court covering the period from 2003 until 2006. During these three years more than three hundred people presented their cases before the court.

### **6.8. Data collection, research team and language**

One important part of data gathering in these kinds of research projects is to obtain the permission of the local authorities—not only the state administration but also the traditional and religious leaders. Once the local state officials had granted us permission to carry out the study, it was necessary also to establish contacts with the traditional and religious authorities as well as with the people in general.

The traditional chiefs include *nhakwa* (chief of the zone), and his assistants known as *m'fumo* (plural: *mafumo*) and *cabo terras* as well as the *secretarios*.<sup>97</sup> They are the real gatekeepers; they provide access to the people, or sometimes withhold it. They open the doors for outsiders to get into the “people's pockets”, as they say, and explore what is in there.

The largest group is composed of general interlocutors. Even when the authorities grant permission, there is always an ethical duty to ask individuals for their permission. This is particular imperative with female interlocutors, where is also always a need to ask the permission of the husband or another male relative.

The most extended period that was spent explaining the objectives of my research to the various leaders and the people in general was in early 1997 and 1998. In these early stages I first explained my objectives to the traditional chiefs and interviewed them. Based on my questions they could clearly perceive my intentions and could easily explain them to their assistants, and the assistants in turn could explain to the people in general. In each community the *nhakwa* organized a meeting with his close assistants (*m'fumo*) to

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<sup>97</sup> Further descriptions of the traditional structure of power and authority can be found in chapter 13.

explain to them that he had received guests in his house and that we had come to do research. After his words I had to explain to them the objectives of my work and that we would require their co-operation. The next procedure was to organise a meeting to explain to the community in general the same things that I had explained to the official authorities. From then on, together with the local leaders I set up a plan of visits. Each *m'fumo* had the responsibility to inform his people that I would arrive in their community on a specific date to do the interviews. As soon as the objectives were clear to everyone, each *m'fumo* went to his area to inform his people. Every time I arrived in an area, I first had to present myself to the *m'fumo* and had to be installed in his yard. From then on, I could begin the household survey and the interviews.

The first meeting organised by the *nhakwa* accompanied by his *mafumo* was very important for the development of the fieldwork. When I arrived in a different area the *m'fumo* would already know me from the first meeting and so the contact between us was much easier. In the beginning I needed the company of the *m'fumo* so that people could receive me and talk to me in their households. Usually I used the company of various *n'fumos*' for the first five households interviews. For the remaining ones it was no longer necessary, since word had already been passed on and I could move around in the company of my assistants without the presence of the *mafumo*.

The majority of the Gorongosa people do not speak Portuguese, the official language of Mozambique. Most of the interviews were carried out in the local language, Shi-Gorongose. Initially I did not know the language and my assistants translated all the interviews and conversations. In the later stages of the research I could understand a lot of Shi-Gorongose, but could only speak on a basic level. Hence I used assistants for most of the research period.

My assistants were numerous and the team changed over the years. However, two assistants, Américo and José, worked with me for the entire period of the field research. At one time I worked in the company of three assistants: two men and one woman. Several other people worked with me transcribing recorded tapes and collecting proverbs and small stories in different villages. I found most of my assistants through informal contacts. For instance, I got to know Américo through the deceased pastor Jofrisse from the Assembly of God church. Pastor Jofrisse was one of the very first interlocutors that I sat down with to interview in April 1997. I took that opportunity to ask him whether he

knew people who might be interested in working with me. He promised to look around in his church. When I returned he introduced me to one of his sons and Américo. Jofrisse's son was a young man of around 25 and Américo was already in his 40s. He was married to one wife and had six children. Unlike Jofrisse's son, Américo had experienced the war intensively. From his endless list of dramatic war events, one was retold whenever a conversation on the topic of the war surfaced: he had fought against a soldier of Matsangaissa (a Renamo soldier) who wanted to kill him. It was a fierce fight, but Américo was heroic. He dominated the "wolf" and took away his AK-7. As a result journalists interviewed Américo, his voice was heard on the radio, and the administrator of Gorongosa at the time, Chivavice, promised to give him and his family a house in a different area because they feared that the Matsangaissa soldiers would return for revenge. Neither thing happened: he did not get a new house and the Matsangaissa soldiers never returned to scene of their aborted murder attempt.

Initially I worked in the company of both Jofrisse's son and Americo, but after some weeks in the forest, Jofrisse's son got terribly sick. He disclosed for the first time that he suffered from diabetes and he had not brought enough medication with him. How could he survive in the middle of the mountains and far away from home or from a health post? Jofrisse's son was disqualified on health grounds from doing this job in the conditions that prevailed in Gorongosa.

I kept Américo, and through a local teacher I had met I got to know another young assistant. He spent some weeks with me, but then he had the possibility of working on another project which was much better paid. Through these series of informal contacts I worked with many different assistants. It was possible to work with Américo much longer than with the others because he had a relatively stable life and every time I returned to Gorongosa he was available to start working immediately in any of the various villages.

The case of José was rather different. I got to know José because he was the only person who could read and write reasonably well in one of the villages in which the traditional courts were still very active at the beginning of my research. I wanted someone from the area who could register the cases in the traditional courts. When José returned from Maputo to Gorongosa in the end of the 1990s he started recording the cases in the traditional courts. However, with the enactment of law no. 4/92 that created the

*tribunais comunitarios* (community courts) and was enforced in Gorongosa in 2000, José was chosen to become the president of the court in his village. Despite his presidential functions he still works as my assistant registering the cases in his court.

## *PART IV Results*

### **Chapter 7: The civil war and collective experiences of suffering**

#### **Introduction: “War was our culture...”<sup>98</sup>**

This chapter addresses in general terms the ways in which people in Gorongosa experienced extreme forms of social upheaval due to the civil war.<sup>99</sup> The goal here is to outline general patterns of violence and to demonstrate how the war between the Frelimo-led government army and the rebel forces (Renamo) was waged and sustained over the years in Gorongosa by manipulating and abusing the civilian population.<sup>100</sup> However, Gorongosa was not only affected by the horrors perpetrated by the soldiers of both armies. There were also periods of severe and deadly drought, which people variously call “*o crime do sol*” (crime of the sun), “*o crime da seca*” (crime of drought), or “*o crime da fome*” (crime of famine). This type of event, which the locals persist in calling a “crime”, occurred in Gorongosa at two different times and generated a lot of suffering and death. People died “like tobacco leaves”; numerous piles of corpses lay waiting for the strong and courageous to bury. If there were dogs and hyenas around, they could eat them and reduce the task of burying; but, as people saw, “the dogs and hyenas were the first to die of fear, thirst, and famine”. The combination of these experiences was like a double bullet, killing instantaneously. The prophecy repeated itself: “from dust man came, and to dust he will return”.

Despite the extreme violence of the war and the violence of the narratives that convey the experiences, the civil war in Mozambique was not experienced uniformly throughout the country but had different local dynamics in different parts of the country. It is therefore necessary to look carefully into the ways in which the war manifested itself differently from one region to another. Even within the boundaries of Gorongosa district,

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<sup>98</sup> See section 7.6

<sup>99</sup> Although Portuguese colonialism with its system of *mutarato* (forced labour), the Frelimo-led anti-colonial war against the Portuguese, and the short-lived experience of the post-colonial Marxist-Leninist state may have left profound consequences among the Gorongosa, I do not systematically address these experiences in this thesis, though I sometimes refer to them. The chapter does not explore views on the origins of the Mozambican civil war. Various scholars and political leaders have done so in the past and continue to do so into the present through speeches, debates and writings. Among the well-known publications in the history of the civil war are: Cabrita (2000), Geffray (1990), Hall & Young (1997), Hanlon (1984), Minter (1994), Nordstrom (1997).

<sup>100</sup> Individual experiences of war traumatization are presented in the next chapter, which focuses specifically on experiences of sexual violence against women.

a microanalysis of the dynamics of violence is required to understand how suffering was unequally distributed among different individuals, genders, and communities.

This description of the local contexts of war violence is necessary for an understanding of the degree of individual and collective exposure to war and of how the violence and deadly drought wrought severe damage on the social world of the people in Gorongosa. Most importantly, the context of the violence serves to highlight the magnitude of the challenge that war survivors were called upon to face in the aftermath of the civil war (from October 1992): to rebuild their own social world, relying only upon the local resources.

This chapter is organized into ten sections. Section one demonstrates that instead of the peace that should have arisen in the aftermath of Mozambique's gaining independence (June 1975), the people in Gorongosa entered a new cycle of political violence. Section two describes Renamo's initial military strategy, which in certain parts of Gorongosa was known as *piça wega* ("burn it yourself", described below). Section three shows how *piça wega*, implemented in 1981, marked the beginning of Renamo military supremacy in Gorongosa over a period of three years (1982-1985). Section four presents discursive and practical reactions of the Mozambican government in relation to Renamo's military supremacy. Section five describes the new cycle of violence and traumatization that resulted from the government's major military offensive in Gorongosa. Section six presents the experiences of people living in the war zones that led some to affirm that the war had become "their culture". Section seven describes how people interpreted their experiences of living inside the government-controlled communal villages. Sections eight and nine examine the social suffering caused by the presence of landmines and by the severe drought and famine that exacerbated the region's suffering amidst the civil war. The last section presents the main conclusions of the chapter.

### **7.1. The post-colonial state: Rumours and vestiges of a conflict, 1976-1979**

The Mozambican civil war can be seen as the prolongation of violence whose outset can be traced back to the tribal wars in the early nineteenth century and Portuguese colonial domination and resistance at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>101</sup> In June of 1975

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<sup>101</sup> The Portuguese affirmed in this respect that "Gorongosa is one of the regions that created a lot of trouble for the Companhia de Moçambique through the rebellion of the Cambuembas, father and son, and through musungo Luiz Sant'Iago [and they were] arrested in 1902..." In *Anuario do Territorio de*



Mozambique became an independent country, free of Portuguese colonial domination. The challenge in the post-colonial period was to build a new state that could respond to the aspirations of the majority of Mozambicans led by the Frelimo party.

Yet the roots of a serious post-colonial conflict had already started to take shape in the first years of independence. The Frelimo-led government banned the formal existence of local chiefs and created the so-called re-education camps throughout the country. The local chiefs were stripped of their formal power and authority and in order to try to fill the gap this created, the Frelimo leaders replaced them with *secretarios*.<sup>102</sup> Of the camps, the most impressive in Gorongosa district was located in the area of the *Nhakhwawa* (traditional chief) Sa-Kudzo. Local informants who lived in the area at the time of the installation of the camp estimate that at least two thousand people of all ethnicities (black, coloured and white) were placed in this camp. Probably one of the most important prisoners in the camp was Andre Matsangaissa, who would later become the leader of the rebel movement known as Renamo.<sup>103</sup> Between 1976 and 1978 Matsangaissa<sup>104</sup> organized a group of other prisoners and completely destroyed the re-education camp of Sa-Kudzo. In the company of other prisoners Matsangaissa took refuge in Rhodesia where they received military support from elements of the Rhodesian army and then returned to set up a base in the Gorongosa Mountains. It was in this period that the name of Matsangaissa began to capture people's attention. Matsangaissa and his soldiers initiated peaceful recruitment of the young men living in the area. One of these young men, among many others, was Tobias (Chap. 13; sec. 13.5.2). He told me that "Initially I joined Matsangaissa and I received military training in the mountains in early 1979. Later on when I saw that the issues in the war were not clear. I deserted and I went home."<sup>105</sup>

The real signs of the war surfaced when in 1979 Andre Matsangaissa and his soldiers made their first attack on Gorongosa's chief town (Vila Paiva) in an attempt to

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*Manica e Sofala*. Compiled by João Baptista Barreiros, 1907. Biblioteca Municipal Calouste Gulbenkian, Beira.

<sup>102</sup> This was a political structure created by the government to control people inside the communal villages. The position of "*secretário*" was created as part of the policy to construct the New State, replacing the system of traditional power and authority known as "*regulado*" (Chieftdom).

<sup>103</sup> Renamo is an acronym of the Portuguese name Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance), which has become a proper name.

<sup>104</sup> André Matsangaissa was the first leader of Renamo.

<sup>105</sup> Interview, Gorongosa.

assault and take control of the main governmental headquarters.<sup>106</sup> The Government army managed to stop the incursion and Matsangaissa<sup>107</sup> was fatally wounded. His soldiers withdrew from Gorongosa region, only to return at the Christmas of 1980.

In the aftermath of this failed battle the government army, accompanied by the local officials of the Frelimo party in Gorongosa, initiated a serious witch-hunt. They wanted to uncover who had been giving support to Matsangaissa when he had settled in the mountains of Gorongosa. The soldiers raided various villages and kidnapped many men and women, who were placed on trucks and taken away to various locations. Many men were severely tortured to make them confess and many of them never came back home, having presumably been executed; the women were first taken to Beira prison and then re-located to other districts.<sup>108</sup>

As the Frelimo government's policy of persecution proceeded on the pretext of eliminating all remnants of Matsangaissa's forces,<sup>109</sup> the government began to implement a policy of creating communal villages throughout the country.<sup>110</sup> Several communal villages were set up in Gorongosa.<sup>111</sup> This policy of communalisation of the rural areas was not acceptable for farmers in many respects, and many people did not easily embrace it. The Portuguese administration managed to implement the *aldeamentos* (resettlement villages) during the anti-colonial struggle because they had used military force to compel the people. In this case too the Frelimo-led government would have to use force, as people did not want to abandon their *madembes*, and that is what they in fact did.

The policy of the communal villages did not evolve further because of the civil war, and the initial purpose of creating communal villages for the economic development

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<sup>106</sup> This first attack occurred on 17 October 1979. João, Primary School Teacher. Self-report on war memories. Vila Paiva-Gorongosa, 07.03.1997.

<sup>107</sup> From this early period of the war until today, Matsangaissa's name remained more commonly used in some villages of Gorongosa than that of his military movement, Renamo. Nearly twenty years after his death, war survivors systematically use the name of Matsangaissa in their narratives to refer to various war events and experiences.

<sup>108</sup> Some of these prisoners only returned to Gorongosa as a result of the signing of the General Peace Agreement (AGP) in October 1992.

<sup>109</sup> After the defeat of Matsangaissa in his first attack, there was a period of peace. Viagem, Primary School Teacher. Self-report on war memories. Vila Paiva-Gorongosa, 07.03.97.

<sup>110</sup> The creation of communal villages was one of the economic and social directives approved during the Third Frelimo Party Congress in 1979. These villages were a strategy to concentrate many people in the same place. Frelimo's politicians believed at that time that the communal villages were the best way to organize the life of the people in rural areas to guarantee a fast improvement in their living conditions. *TEMPO*, No. 333, 20/02/1977. Maputo. In reality, our research suggests that during the war, these communal villages were used as a military strategy to prevent contact between Renamo soldiers and the general population.

<sup>111</sup> Communal villages were installed in Vila Paiva, Tsiquiri, Kanda, Mucodza and Vunduzi (in Cavallo).

of the rural areas was transformed to the new circumstances of the war. Now the strategy was to make all the people live in communal villages so as to control the movements of Renamo soldiers in the bush and to eliminate Renamo's base of support among the people.

The main question that remains in relation to Mozambique's recent past is whether or not these violent conflicts that emerged in the post-colonial period were the main factors that led the country to a nationwide civil war. There are no easy answers to this question. Listening to the voices of some individuals in Frelimo and Renamo and people in general generates different insights. Some of these insights are described in the introduction to this thesis. The reason I cite this here is to demonstrate that whether one engages in the debates about the genesis of the war or an analysis of how the war violence shaped and affected people's lives, the outcome is contentious. Yet there *was* a war, and the majority of rural Mozambicans had to deal with it. In Gorongosa, *piça wega* marked the outset of the real state of war.

## **7.2. *Piça wega*, the re-emergence of Renamo and the civil war, 1981**

The period of relative calm that followed the defeat of Matsangaissa's soldiers (October 1979) was shattered by large-scale violence in December 1981 when Renamo soldiers returned to Gorongosa. War survivors from certain regions of Gorongosa commonly call this return *piça wega*, i.e., burn it yourself. Renamo soldiers destroyed various communal villages such as Tsiqiri, Nhataca, Kanda, Vunduzi and Mucodza. The destruction of these villages happened almost in sequence. In each village visited by the soldiers, they would order the people to take their belongings out of their huts and then compel them to burn the huts, saying *piça wega*, "burn it yourself—and run away back to the *madembe*". Many people carried the few possessions they could carry and did indeed flee back to the bush, while others run away to the main village (Vila Paiva de Andrade) as Renamo soldiers had not attacked it.

The reason behind this forced destruction, people say, was that Renamo soldiers were afraid of the spirits that the huts were believed to harbour. They thought that if they burned the huts these spirits might haunt them and compromise their security in the war. But if the people burnt the huts themselves and the fire destroyed the property of the spirits, the people themselves (and not the soldiers) would have to deal with the spirits.

The other reason for *piça wega* might have been that Renamo wanted to force the people to abandon the communal villages once and for all by making them participate in destroying them. This did not happen, however, since the government troops were using their own violent strategies to force the people to come back to the villages from the bush.

*Piça wega* marked the beginning of the real civil war in Gorongosa. From that time, Renamo began controlling most of the villages of the Gorongosa district, and the government soldiers' control was limited to Vila Paiva. Contact between the different villages was no longer possible. Families were divided, living in either Renamo or government-controlled areas. The common denominator in both areas was the presence of various forms of extreme violence, with rape at the centre of the violence. I specifically address this issue in chapter eight on violence against women.

### **7.3. Gorongosa 1982-1985, “Enemy territory”<sup>112</sup>**

From 1982 onwards the Gorongosa district was clearly divided between Renamo and government-controlled areas. Apparently because of Renamo military's supremacy in this district, the Mozambican Governmental authorities classified Gorongosa as “*enemy territory*”. Renamo, for its part, regarded places that were under government control (such as communal villages) as enemy territory too. For a systematic understanding of the dynamic of violence in Gorongosa there is a need to look at both Renamo and government-controlled areas, particularly between 1982 and 1985 when the systems of control in terms of security were rather stable. When security conditions deteriorated in 1986, the zones of control became more fluid and unstable.

#### **7.3.1. Life in government-controlled areas**

The district as a whole lost contact by road with the central Government in Beira, and occasionally Renamo would make raids against Vila Paiva. People lost their freedom of movement. To get into Gorongosa or to leave was extremely difficult because of Renamo ambushes along the way between Vila Paiva and Inchope (the main road that gives access

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<sup>112</sup> This supremacy was recognized by high-ranking officials of the Mozambican Armed Forces (FPLM) after the destruction of Renamo's main headquarters in Casa Banana in 1985. At that time, an authorized FPLM source, in a comment to *Notícias*, the official newspaper of the state, described Gorongosa in the following way: “in military terms we can say that Gorongosa was the territory of the enemy”. *Notícias*, Maputo, 09.09.1985. P.1.

to Gorongosa). To travel from Gorongosa to Inchope is almost 70km, but the lorries could take eight days or even more on the way because of Renamo's systematic ambushes. As one survivor noted, "many civilian people died in these ambushes".<sup>113</sup>

In the main town (Vila Paiva), the population continued to be organized in communal villages. New neighbourhoods were created to receive the people who were coming from the villages that had been destroyed to seek refuge there. In order to better control these people, they were placed according to their villages of origin, and each neighbourhood received the same name as that of their village of origin.

With almost the whole of Gorongosa district (except for Vila Paiva) under Renamo supremacy, the district authorities set up a military strategy known as "self-defence", which consisted in providing military training to civilians so they could defend the main town. Both men and women had to undergo three months of intensive military training so that they could be ready to undertake evening patrols and respond to Renamo raids at any time. Various secondary school teachers I spoke with described how overwhelming it was to teach during the day and to patrol the school at night in the company of their students.<sup>114</sup>

After completing these three months of formal military training, men were usually incorporated in the militia and given weapons. Their mission was to defend their neighbourhoods and the various roads that give access to Vila Paiva. Every night militia groups were placed in different strategic positions to defend Vila Paiva. Although women received military training too, they were not used as practically as men but for the most part remained at home. Military combat as such consisted in the launching of heavy weapons, mainly from the military quarter located in Vila Paiva, into the Renamo-controlled areas.

When war survivors talk of their experiences in the communal villages they refer to the villages as "corrals for pigs". Living conditions were extremely bad. Too many people were collected in very small spaces. It was not possible to practice agriculture because there was not enough land. But to farm even two or three kilometres outside the communal village was a serious risk because Renamo would be there. Whenever Renamo found a person outside the village they would just kidnap him or her and take him or her

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<sup>113</sup> Viagem dos Santos. Self-report. Vila Paiva, 07.03.97.

<sup>114</sup> João, self-report. Vila Paiva, 07.03.97.

to live in the area under their control. Under these conditions, the majority of the people living in the government-controlled areas relied on humanitarian aid to feed themselves.

### **7.3.2. Life in Renamo-controlled areas**

In Renamo-controlled areas the population continued to live in their *madembes* and they did not receive any formal military training. The Renamo soldiers created a quasi-military structure to control the population. This structure was composed of what they called *majibas* and *blocos*. In hierarchical terms, the *majibas* was the chief and the *bloco* was his subordinate. These two categories of civilian chiefs replaced the traditional system of authority that had hitherto prevailed in this area. *Majibas* and *blocos* had the mission of making sure that none of the people under their control could leave from a Renamo-controlled area to a government-controlled one. They had to keep a look out to see if any strangers were arriving without their knowledge, and control the schedule for food collection and distribution to the soldiers. They also had the duty of controlling and organizing *gandira*,<sup>115</sup> a system of forced labour aimed at providing logistical support for Renamo's war efforts.

In other words, the *majibas* and *blocos* were a kind of Renamo police officer. However, *majibas* did not seem to have any privileged rights vis-à-vis the Renamo soldiers. Relationships between Renamo soldiers, their *majibas*, and the population in general were not always peaceful. *Majibas* and the population in general could be punished and tortured by Renamo soldiers with the same intensity and severity if an indictment of treason was brought to their attention. I spoke with several former *majibas* who had been punished and tortured because civilians had complained to Renamo soldiers that they had been stealing food that the people had given to the soldiers. The opposite also occurred: Renamo soldiers tortured several civilian people whom I interviewed because *majibas* had accused them of not supporting the Renamo war effort or of collaborating with the enemy (Frelimo).

The system of control over the populations in Renamo-controlled areas was very intense and strict. The soldiers would apply different ways of regulating population movements within their area of control. These included searching for strange or

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<sup>115</sup> Because of the close connection between *gandira* and the rape of women, *gandira* is thoroughly addressed in the next chapter (8).

unfamiliar footprints<sup>116</sup> and controlling the spoken language used by the people. Militarization by language consisted in forcing the people living within their areas to use the *chi-Ndau* language instead of *chi-Gorongose* or Portuguese as a means of communication. Various war survivors said that if Renamo soldiers heard someone speaking Portuguese, they could classify the person as an enemy. When they wanted to greet someone they would not do it in *Chi-Gorongose*; instead, they would give the greeting in *Chi-Ndau*.<sup>117</sup> If the person did not reply in *Chi-Ndau* they would immediately know that he did not belong to the area and that there was a problem.<sup>118</sup>

The remnants of this experience are still visible in some communities of Gorongosa. The aftermath of this compulsory acculturation process correlates with the high degree of Renamo exposure. I have observed that where Renamo had a strong influence and a longer duration on the ground, people still have a tendency to use *Chi-Ndau* on some occasions. This is particularly true in the region of Kanda. When they greet each other, people do not always use *Chi-Gorongose* as in other communities, but will sometimes use *Chi-Ndau*. In addition, people are still suspicious when they see someone coming from outside the village.<sup>119</sup>

### **7.3.3. Resist the enemy by aligning with the enemy**

Everyday life in Renamo-controlled areas was not an easy challenge. As a way of resisting the soldiers, some civilians applied the principle of “*resist the enemy by aligning with the enemy*.” This consisted in forging alliances with Renamo soldiers in order to gain their sympathy and some privileges. People used to police one another and their surroundings. If they saw something that seemed strange to them they would immediately inform the Renamo soldiers and the soldiers would not hesitate to carry out the necessary measures. In return for their efforts to collaborate with Renamo soldiers, these people

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<sup>116</sup> Once one of my interlocutors managed to penetrate into the war-zone coming from the city and he was wearing a type of shoe that no one owned in that area. The Renamo soldiers saw his footprints on the ground and followed them to his house. He was caught, taken to prison, and tortured.

<sup>117</sup> “*Muarara, muarara ce*”, meaning “good morning”.

<sup>118</sup> Focus group discussion: seven war survivors (5 women & 2 men). Mandjundjundjo-Kanda, 07.01.1997.

<sup>119</sup> For instance, Kanda was the village where I had to spend the most time to gain the confidence of the population in general. Although I had very good relations with the traditional authorities, it nevertheless took me more time than in other communities to begin household visits without any fear from the population.

were regarded favourably and received better treatment and consideration from the soldiers.

Various people in Gorongosa lost one or more of their family members or their daughters were raped—and one had his left ear cut off<sup>120</sup>—because their neighbours had deliberately misinformed Renamo soldiers that the family was collaborating with Frelimo soldiers. During one focus group discussion, a woman called Marta narrated a very sad story of this kind of violence. It was difficult to understand how people who knew each other very well could become “wolves” to one another. She told us that Renamo soldiers killed her two brothers because of salt. Neighbours apparently saw her two brothers carrying salt, but Marta says that this was a lie. Salt was a very scarce product. Perhaps the neighbours got hallucinations that triggered feelings of jealousy. They rushed to inform the Renamo soldiers, who hurried to capture Marta’s two brothers. They were executed some hours later behind a nearby mountain. This case was not an isolated one. Several other people were killed for possessing cooking salt. The mechanisms of control and of instilling mistrust among people were very pervasive. As Marta and others present in this focus-group discussion revealed,

(...) If someone received a visit in their house while the neighbours were watching, the neighbours would tell the Renamo soldiers: ‘we saw them, they arrived in that house, they went to fetch Frelimo and bring them here’ (...) our neighbours knew us very well. They knew us even by our voices. If they heard a strange voice in a nearby house they would rush to tell the soldiers (...) <sup>121</sup> Everyone was jealous of everyone else. To lie against each other was a dirty strategy to survive. All kinds of people, and not only the *majibas* and *blocos*, were forced by circumstances to make alliances with Renamo soldiers to better cope with Renamo's rule and the horrors that they used to perpetrate.

On the other hand, however, there were places in these same Renamo areas in which the people were treated in a completely different way. In these areas the relationships between the civilian population and the soldiers were not of hostility and repression but rather of apparent cordiality and understanding. This military strategy of “privileged places” conceived by the Renamo leadership was only applied in and near the surroundings of the Renamo main headquarters in Casa Banana (Nhazwicasse). They

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<sup>120</sup> The case of Gubudunbo in 10.3.

<sup>121</sup> Focus-group discussion with: Marta, Zarina, Lolinha, Fernando, Rotafino, Lolinha, Isabel & Albino (traditional chief). Mandjundjundjo-Kanda, 01.07.97.



were not forced to do *gandira*. One of my interlocutors described their experiences in the following way:

We used to live like this: the leader of Renamo, Afonso Dlhakama, said that all the people living in the surroundings of Casa Banana were exempt from *gandira* and our work should only be to cut stakes to build houses, work in their fields, and carry ammunition when it arrived by plane on the Casa Banana runway to the headquarters in Nhazwicasse (...) Though we didn't do *gandira* like other people, we suffered a lot there because we didn't have salt, clothes, or blankets.<sup>122</sup>

The government army did not have enough resources to destroy Renamo's supremacy in Gorongosa by its own means. For their part, it seems that Renamo did not have enough men and military structures or equipment to gain absolute control over Gorongosa district either, which would entail the takeover of Vila Paiva, the last stronghold of the government troops. Government troops very seldom made raids into Renamo-controlled areas. They mostly limited their actions to launching heavy weapons from Vila Paiva into Renamo areas or to bombarding through military aviation. Renamo systematically made raids on Vila Paiva in the evenings and civilians were always caught in the crossfire.

#### **7.4. "Make Sofala and Manica provinces the graveyards of the armed bandits"<sup>123</sup>**

The Casa Banana military base was one of the key sites of the war. It was from this base that Renamo coordinated their military operations connecting the northern and southern regions of Mozambique. In August of 1985, a joint force of Mozambican and Zimbabwean soldiers (locally called *Komeredes*) attacked and destroyed Casa Banana base. This was one of the most important military battles that occurred during the entire period of civil war in Mozambique. The government authorities believed at the time that Renamo had been totally defeated. The late Mozambican President and commander-in-chief of the Mozambique's Liberation Popular Forces (FPLM), Samora Machel described this apparent victory in the following terms:

We took over Gorongosa and five hours were enough (...) The snake's back had been broken (...) During the operation against this enemy base, one hundred armed bandits were put out of action. Four hundred other armed bandits tried to escape but they were intercepted and annihilated by the combat helicopters.<sup>124</sup>

During the week of this bloody battle, the whole country was focused on Gorongosa district. The newspapers, television, and radio did not stop glorifying the effects of the

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<sup>122</sup> Interview with Aniva. Mucodza. 21.07.97.

<sup>123</sup> Samora Machel, in "Notícias", 07.09.85, Maputo. P.1.

<sup>124</sup> S. Machel in "Notícias", 07.09.85, Maputo. P.1.

snake's broken back.<sup>125</sup> Far from the battlefields, one could get the impression that the war was about to terminate. Yet it was far from being over; rather, a new cycle of horror was initiated against the civilian population. Renamo had lost Casa Banana and its hegemony on the ground, but not the war. The government authorities were apparently conscious of this. Machel stated:

Casa Banana represents an important victory but that does not mean the end of the armed bandits (...). Make Sofala and Manica provinces the graveyards of the armed bandits.<sup>126</sup>

This statement had terrible implications for the civilian population because Renamo soldiers had the tendency to mingle side by side with civilians. To turn these two provinces into a cemetery for the "armed bandits" would logically mean that the government troops would cause significant civilian casualties while trying to find Renamo soldiers. And that is what happened. The war philosophy of both armies was that the civilian population living under the control of the other army was also to be treated as an enemy. This philosophy was based on the principle that within the war zones there were no civilians.<sup>127</sup> The principle can be illustrated by a military proverb that states that, "if someone has a pot that he likes very much and then a snake gets in, what does the owner do to kill the snake? Even if the owner likes the pot very much, he will have to destroy the pot to kill the snake".<sup>128</sup> This principle determined the way in which the soldiers dealt with the civilian population living under the control of one side or the other in the war.

The conquest of Casa Banana marked a new period in the local dynamic of the war. Thousands of people living in Renamo-controlled areas were taken to the former communal villages that had been created soon after independence as part of the development policy for rural areas. These people were designated as "*recuperados*"<sup>129</sup> (retrieved). The government troops began to re-open the old communal villages in Kanda, Vunduzi-Cavalo, Mucodza, Tsiquiri and Sa-Kudzoz, and a new communal village was

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<sup>125</sup> The media were very effective in spreading this type of misleading propaganda. One week after they had taken over Casa Banana base, confidence that Renamo was finished was so high that apparently the government authorities did not make any special effort to protect the base. Renamo soldiers returned and captured the base again, but not for long as the joint forces took it over permanently.

<sup>126</sup> S. Machel, in *Notícias*, 07.09.85, Maputo. P.1.

<sup>127</sup> In fact, the only visible distinction between the civilian people and the soldiers was that the former did not have uniforms or weapons.

<sup>128</sup> As recounted by Bento and Nhangumbo (ex-soldier). Interview, 27.08.1997. Vila Paiva-Gorongosa.

<sup>129</sup> They were called *recuperados* because the government authorities considered that they had been in the hands of the enemy (Renamo) without their own free will.

opened at the Casa Banana runway to receive the *recuperados*. Probably because of fear and uncertainty over what would happen after Renamo's defeat, civilians did not readily consider giving themselves over to the “new owners of the ground”. With the re-opening of “the territory of the enemy”, the government authorities perceived an urgent need to depopulate the “bush” to prevent and eliminate the social bases of support for Renamo once for all. For that, people were intensively mobilized and those who resisted were forced and, in some cases, eliminated.

### **7.5. New disposition of forces, new cycle of social suffering, 1986-1992**

The new disposition of forces meant that Renamo had lost their main headquarters in the country and their control and hegemony over the greater part of the territory of Gorongosa. It also meant a new cycle of suffering for the civilian population.

There was an urgency to depopulate the bush, and the Zimbabwean troops disseminated loud verbal messages from their helicopters for this purpose. However, despite the mobilization efforts to depopulate the bush, the process of repopulating the communal villages was not peaceful. Not everyone wanted to leave their *madembe* to go to a communal village, even though this strategy was a war imperative. For this reason, the Zimbabwean soldiers had to use force. They began to threaten people with death, and they burned people's houses and granaries to compel them to go to the communal villages. Many people described these war experiences as frequent from 1986 onwards:

When they destroyed Casa Banana we were living in our *madembe* in Piro. The *komeredes* came to our house to take us to the communal village (...) The *komeredes* beat me; they said I was living in the bush to feed Renamo soldiers. They burned my house; they burned my bike, my tape recorder and my granary... That day I thought my life was over and I was very sad...<sup>130</sup>

There was disagreement among my interlocutors over the role played by the Zimbabwean troops on the ground. There were people who did not want to leave their *madembes*, and these people had to be forced and were threatened to death. There were also people who received the Zimbabwean troops as liberators and celebrated the end of Renamo oppression. For this group of people, there was no need for forced mobilization. At the first sign of the presence of Zimbabwean troops at their hiding places, they went voluntarily to give themselves up. The *komeredes* would transfer people very quickly to

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<sup>130</sup> Narrative No.307. Fombe. 22.07.98. Casa Banana-runway.

the different communal villages in order to better control the population and to eliminate Renamo's source of logistical support.

The recognition by the government authorities that the war had merely changed its dynamics reinforced the need to maintain the former Renamo-controlled areas under the joint forces at any cost. The communal villages would serve this purpose. Civilian people in the settlements began to pay higher costs for this military strategy than ever before. Usually war survivors recall these experiences using the following metaphors: "*from that time, we began to die like rats*" or "*after a raid, corpses would pile up like sheaves of tobacco leaves*". Here I should stress a couple of aspects. When the joint military forces were trying, at any price, to keep control over the former Renamo areas, it seems that they were forgetting three factors. First, Gorongosa district is a vast area. It was a difficult if not impossible mission to place sufficient soldiers in all of the recovered areas to fully protect the people and be constantly prepared to respond to Renamo's raids. The government army did not have the necessary strength and resources to implement this strategy. Second, the particularities of guerrilla war meant that Renamo did not need many soldiers to disrupt a whole battalion.<sup>131</sup> Coming from the darkness of the bush it is easy to undertake a military raid with a high degree of effectiveness. Third, the so-called '*recuperados*' were uncertain on who to rely and where to stay in order to survive. These people, who had already been living with Renamo soldiers, were not sure whether the communal villages would guarantee a better life than their *madembes* in the bush. For this reason, after living with the label of '*recuperados*' for a time, they began to run away back to their *madembes*.

The government authorities went ahead with their strategy. They placed their own soldiers in every communal village, although in very insignificant numbers of military personnel. The Zimbabwean troops were initially placed only in Casa Banana communal village. Soon, the new cycle of violence was effectively ignited. Renamo soldiers began to raid the communal villages and the civilian population were their main targets. Renamo wanted to recover their bases of logistical support, and for that purpose they created a climate of real horror in the communal villages. As long as Renamo continued to attack, the failure of the government soldiers to protect their own people in all of the communal villages remained evident. Consequently, people began to run away to other

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<sup>131</sup> According to various soldiers I spoke with a battalion is usually composed of five hundred soldiers.

communal villages where the security seemed to be better, or they fled back to their *madembes*, which meant they would be living under Renamo's control again.

Due to the intensity of Renamo raids in communal villages, some communal villages soon began to lose their population and simply had to be closed and abandoned. The communal village of Kanda is a pertinent illustration of this reality. It was the first one to be burned and destroyed. The Government soldiers located in that region could maintain it under their control because the people all ran away to escape a Renamo strike. From that time, the region fell back under Renamo control. One informant, a female healer who at the time of this attack was living in Kanda communal village, told of her experiences in the following way:

I was hit during the war. It happened when they [Renamo soldiers] attacked the communal village here in Kanda. They began to fire shots from *Obuses* [heavy weapons] that fell near to where we were. I was hit in the leg, stomach, and chest. After that, my life changed completely.<sup>132</sup>

Kanda stayed under Renamo control much longer than any other region in Gorongosa district, and the government troops were never able to establish effective control of this area. The local dynamic of the war after 1986 shows a gulf between the whim to keep most of the territory under government control and the capacity to fulfil this objective. The irreconcilable contradiction between the numbers of soldiers necessary in order to protect the geographical reaches under their control and the government's incapacity to provide logistical support to their military personnel on the ground was another stumbling block that the government authorities were never able to overcome during the years of civil war.

The civilian population were very well able to perceive these contradictions and limitations among the military personnel. On several occasions government troops organized open protests against their high-ranking commanders because they had had to spend several weeks and months without receiving food supplies or their meagre salaries. The difficulties for the soldiers were worst for the ones who were deep in the front lines. One interlocutor even described how the soldiers actually fired their weapons on one of their *comissário politico* who had come by plane from Beira city in order to boost the morale of the soldiers in the frontlines of Casa Banana.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Interview with Faliana Ketché. Traditional healer. Kanda, 22.06.97.

<sup>133</sup> Three-year follow-up interview. Amadeu Melo. Casa Banana, 15.09.99.

The government army was poor and it became weaker and weaker. The soldiers had lost their morale. Facing protests from their soldiers almost everywhere, the government authorities gradually had to reduce the areas under their control. Therefore, after Renamo's intensive raids against all of the communal villages, the communal villages of Tsikiri, Vunduzi-Cavalo, Sa-Kudzo, and Maringue were abandoned. These areas fell back under Renamo's control again. Some people went back to their *madembes* and others ran away to Vila Paiva or to Mucodza and Casa Banana, the only two communal villages that remained under government control until the end of the conflict. In fact, although Renamo had lost their main and most important military base in Casa Banana, after some time they managed to recover control of most of the Gorongosa territory. The government-controlled areas were confined to Casa Banana runway and Mucodza communal villages as well as Vila Paiva.

#### **7.6. War for breakfast, lunch and dinner**

Is it true that war can become someone's culture? What does mean to live in a culture of war? The new disposition of forces that emerged as a result of the destruction of Casa Banana did not mean an improvement in people's security. On the contrary, this deteriorated even further, with the most affected people being civilians. It was the horror that was characteristic of this period that made Assuate, a man blinded in the war, to say that, "The war was our culture; we used to have breakfast, lunch and dinner with Renamo".<sup>134</sup>

Renamo regarded the communal villages created by the government as their number-one enemies; hence they used maximum force to destroy most of them. Renamo had the advantage of the bush, and the government had the limitation of too many people accumulated on the same place. Militarily it was easy for Renamo to disrupt any time they wanted, and so they did. They started perpetrating massacres and killing in an inexplicable manner.<sup>135</sup> Renamo soldiers applied three strategies to force people to stay living under their control or to force those who were already living inside the communal villages to flee: fierce observation and control of their region and killing anyone suspected of trying to escape or found on the way towards a communal village;

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<sup>134</sup> Interviews, Mucodza, 07 & 10.08.98.

<sup>135</sup> For example, the case described by Julieta in Chapter 8, Sec. 8.3.

destruction of communal villages; and psychological warfare inside the communal villages.

One interlocutor recounted how he lost his brother when they were trying to run away from their *madembe* to go to Mucodza communal village.

(...) I was living with my brother and he wanted to leave our *madembe* to go to the communal village... On the night we left, I had forgotten to pack up my dishes. My brother did not wait for me. He went in advance with four women and three other men (...) Our neighbours went and told the Renamo soldiers that we were running away (...) The soldiers ambushed us on the way, as there was only one way to the communal village. They caught my brother, who was in front (...) The Renamo soldiers said my brother was a “*capricornio*” (traitor) (...) the soldiers killed him immediately on the spot and the others were killed in Nhamacala area. I heard three shots and I began to run away through the bush with my family (...) When my brother died, I felt that I had no value anymore. My wife advised me to forget that and to get our hoes to work in the field to produce food...<sup>136</sup>

These were more than simply acts of violence. The Renamo soldiers wanted to make sure that the people under their control got the message that “the wages of sin is death.” Yet even knowing of the risks, for some people their state of despair acted as a kind of vaccination against fear, which randomly led them to try to reach or leave the communal villages. In this regard an informant stated that “People were no longer afraid; they just thought, “*indafa kale, indafa kale; inda gumana nahombo wanada kundiulaia wanandi hulaia*” (I died a long time ago, I died a long time ago; if I meet the soldiers and they want to kill me, let them kill me)”<sup>137</sup>.

When people succeeded in reaching a communal village, this was not end of the story for Renamo. Renamo also applied a kind of psychological warfare there. Based on their network of informants, as soon as they were informed that a certain individual or family had run away to a communal village, they would start a process of false denunciation. This consisted in spreading papers anonymously with the names of the men in the group that had run away to the communal village, in order to falsely compromise them. Armindo, the father of Almeida (Chapter 14; sec. 14.1.4) recounted this experience in the following way:

If a person succeed in reaching the *aldeia*, Renamo soldiers would put letters on the road or inside the *aldeia* saying that person X or Y was a former Renamo soldier and he had hidden his weapon somewhere and they wanted it back. The person wasn't a soldier; that was just a strategy. Then

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Ernesto Fombe. Mucodza, 08.08.98.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Jose Maria Mero. Diacono Igreja Amor de Deus; Tsiquir, 06.10.03.

Frelimo would find the letters and torture the person and kill him. For this reason we, the people, were afraid to run away from the Renamo-controlled areas to the Frelimo-controlled areas. We were afraid of being killed.<sup>138</sup>

It was a kind of blind alley: Renamo persecuted them to death; but if the government troops found them, rather than rescuing them they would kill them. Furthermore the strategy of the anonymous false letters or false denunciation was used by government troops as well; some informants reported that their relatives had been killed by Renamo soldiers in the same kind of circumstances.

For people who were already living inside the communal villages the struggle was to wake up alive every day, Renamo attacked continuously. One war survivor explained what it took to live inside Mucodza communal village:

(...) Here in Mucodza the war was too much, Renamo used to fire on us because they wanted us to leave this communal village and go back to our *madembes* (...) My wife was fatally hit by a bullet from a weapon called “*bazuka*”. Then we ran away to Vila Paiva but we came back again because the district Administrator, called Zandamela, said “You are running away from there to come here; but will the war end because you are moving from there to here? Wherever you go, the war will follow you. What if I were to say ‘let’s go to Nhamatanda, from there to Beira, and then from there to the beach’? Do you know how to swim? No, you have to return to Mucodza”. We had no other option but to return to Mucodza (...) It was very hard. When the Renamo soldiers came here to attack, they didn’t look for their enemies, they just began to shoot where there were civilians (...) If you had children with you when the attack began, there was no time to pick them up and carry them; the only thing was to run away, run away from death. How can we forget this war? (...) <sup>139</sup>

Many people from Mucodza had a relative who died in one of Renamo's attacks. It is possible that without the government’s persistence in maintaining control over Mucodza, many people’s lives could have been saved. Even though Renamo raids were causing many civilian casualties due to the weak capacity of the government troops to properly defend these communal villages, the government authorities summoned that the villages not be abandoned.

### **7.7. Communal villages: Corrals for pigs or dehumanisation camps?**

The communal villages of Casa Banana and Mucodza did not have the same strategic military value as Vila Paiva. The former was located almost 60km away from Vila Paiva

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<sup>138</sup> Interview with Adelino Comuqueze. Ametramo, Vila Paiva, 01.11.03.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Aniva Jemusse Combua. Mucodza, 21.07.97.



and the latter only 12 km away. Although Casa Banana had a runway, which was used by Renamo between 1982 and 1985 to receive logistical support from South Africa by plane, the government authorities and Renamo seem to have been more concerned with Mucodza. There would seem to be at least three reasons why the government authorities refused to abandon Mucodza communal village: first, they wished to avoid the perception that Renamo was winning the war; second, the village served as a massive source of easy recruitment of young men for the government army; and third, it could serve as shield of protection for the main village. The following paragraphs will elaborate upon these three points.

Many people in Gorongosa understood that the situation with Mucodza was part of a dirty political game. As one war survivor wrote:

Everyone knew that if the population were to withdraw from Mucodza it would show that the government troops were not resisting. It would be a shame for the government soldiers because it would mean that Renamo was winning more ground. The Government soldiers in Mucodza received support from additional troops, but it was not enough. The people continued to die like rats.<sup>140</sup>

To discourage the perception that they were losing ground to Renamo the authorities insisted on staying, even if their presence was just symbolic. Renamo soldiers would attack at any time of day or night. Whenever they attacked, they could easily get inside the village and into people's houses to kill or kidnap men and women. Every time the administrative authorities sent humanitarian assistance (lorries full of food and clothes) to distribute to the people, one of two things would happen: the lorries would fall straight into Renamo ambush, or they would arrive safely in Mucodza. If they arrived safely, Renamo soldiers would attack the village that same night and steal everything—despite the fact that there were Government soldiers protecting the village. While the district authorities insisted on maintaining Mucodza communal village under their control, they were at the same time indirectly functioning as one of Renamo's main sources of logistical support in that region. Both armies were taking advantages of this dirty and deadly game.

Second, the authorities needed Mucodza as a source of military recruitment. As the population was gathered in one place, it was easy for the government troops to recruit young men to feed their army. Most of the demobilized soldiers I met had been forced to

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<sup>140</sup> Self-report by João Fava. Primary school teacher. Vila Paiva-Gorongosa, 03.07.97.

join while living in Mucodza. With the help of the so-called *secretários da aldeia*, the government troops would organize public meetings in the middle of the village and would recruit the young men from there. These men were immediately transported in lorries to the main military quarter in Vila Paiva.<sup>141</sup> Usually their training lasted six months, after which they were sent back to defend their places of origin. The majority of demobilized soldiers I talked with in Gorongosa had fought the war in their native place. In this way, it was very common to find brothers who were fighting in the two opposite armies. Some families were geographically divided, with some members living under Renamo control and others in the hands of the government. The government needed people in order to demonstrate that they had the country under their control. Renamo needed people to support their war efforts.

Third, the authorities needed Mucodza in order to provide a protective shield for Vila Paiva. The destruction of Mucodza would mean that Vila Paiva would become the sole target for Renamo's destructive war, and the local political authorities were not interested in having such a scenario. Yet I should stress that even with the existence of Mucodza this does not mean that Vila Paiva was not systematically attacked, even given the fact that it was far better protected than anywhere else in the district. One of the government's reasons for persisting with Mucodza was to prevent the instability from increasing because all of Renamo's small bases in the region would concentrate and join their forces to destroy the main village. However, there are very few indicators to support the idea that Renamo's army actually had enough power and human organization to assume the military control of Vila Paiva. But maintaining Mucodza under government control meant that the Renamo army had to spread their forces between the two villages and in this way only one of them would suffer most (i.e., Mucodza). In other words, Mucodza served to divert Renamo's soldiers instead of leaving them to focus on Vila Paiva as their only target to destroy and to kill. Even so, the destruction and mass killings were not confined to Mucodza.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> In the beginning of the war, the authorities used to transport the new recruits to receive military training in the "Centro de Preparação Político Militar de Boane" which is located in Maputo (south of Mozambique). In the middle 80s when the war was very intense, they used to take the young men to receive training in the "Centro Militar de Dondo" which is located in Dondo District (Sofala province).

<sup>142</sup> In Casa Banana the security conditions were somewhat better. The wartime secretary of this *aldeia* explained that since the creation of this communal village in late 1986, "We only had two major attacks here in Casa Banana (...) since this village was built, Renamo soldiers never succeeded to get in. They always fired their weapons from outside and both our soldiers and them put landmines on the paths to the

The government troops tried to take control of the situation by engaging in a kind of race against time. They advised the people that when a Renamo strike began, the government soldiers would wait fifteen minutes before responding. The Government soldiers believed that if they waited at least a few minutes before responding to the attack this would allow the people to run away and hide in a safe place (normally close to the government soldiers' base). But this strategy did not appear to work. Renamo soldiers always had an advantage for creating disorder and killing, as they were covered by the darkness of the night and the bush, and they were usually able to mingle with the civilians as they tried to run away as soon as the raid began. In addition, as the civilian people were so numerous, they could not always all wake up with their children in the middle of the night to run away and hide within fifteen minutes. As the Renamo soldiers had usually managed to penetrate the middle of the village by the time the government soldiers responded to their attack, civilians were always caught in the crossfire. This being the case, both Renamo and government soldiers were killing civilian people. The victims had a hard time accepting the killings perpetrated by the government troops, since these troops were there with the mission to protect and not to kill their own people. There are considerable numbers of war survivors in Mucodza who lost one or more relatives in these circumstances. Even some former government soldiers who were based there confirmed that on several occasions the bullets that killed their own relatives came not from Renamo soldiers but from their own weapons. An ex-government soldier described how his own colleagues killed his father:

When the *Komeredes* went back to their country, Renamo launched a huge attack on this village (...) It was the middle of the night, it was raining and the shelters were full of water (...) That night, the Renamo soldiers forced people to go in front so that they could hide behind them and then try to reach our headquarters. When we saw the people moving we thought it was the enemy coming against us, but it was our own people. The people started being killed by both sides. From the back there was Renamo shooting. We were in front, and the people were in the middle (...) We began to shoot and kill our own people, and our own soldiers murdered my father. My father was hit with a bullet in the back while he was trying to run away. He fell down and he died (...) I was very sad; I could not eat in the following days. I thought of killing myself as I could no longer continue to watch suffering.<sup>143</sup>

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fields and to the river". Two-year follow-up interview with Amadeu Ricardo Melo, Secretary of Casa Banana communal village since 1989. 24.07.98. Casa Banana.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Bechane. Ex-government soldier. Mucodza communal village, 10.08.98.

Under these doubly desperate conditions, people ran away from Mucodza to the main village (Vila Paiva), where the security conditions were somewhat better, but the administrator of the district would not accept them. Surprisingly, the administrator agreed to close the communal villages located in Tsikiri, Kanda and Cavalo-Vunduzi but not Mucodza. The justification presented by the official authorities was that Vila Paiva was already crowded with people and there was not enough space there to accommodate all the people from Mucodza. They insisted that in Mucodza there were soldiers to protect the village and so people should move back there. So the people had no alternative, and they returned to Mucodza.

### **7.8. "There is no medicine against hunger"<sup>144</sup>**

In addition to the deadly Renamo raids in the surroundings of the communal village and the permanent danger of the “silent killers” (landmines), there were periods of severe drought that claimed even more lives. Experiences of drought in peacetime may be harmful, but drought in the middle of an already extreme civil war is catastrophic for the human condition. If escaping from the violence of weapons was a complicated task, escaping from the experience of drought and consequent famine was an even more complicated—if not impossible—mission. There were no food reserves anywhere in Gorongosa. The main rivers dried up completely. One traditional chief from Mucodza communal village described this experience in the following terms:

The worst year during the war was during the year of drought in 1990. Every river dried up: Nhadue, Vunduzi, and Mucodza, all of them were dry. Our great-grandfathers had never told us of these rivers ever going dry. There were a lot of conflicts because of hunger, and many people would steal from other people's homes.<sup>145</sup>

There were very few strategies and resources to cope with the drought and the subsequent hunger. The population had no safe choices. If someone moved from one place to another to look for food and water, he was putting his life at great risk because as soon as he was caught he could be publicly humiliated, tortured and executed by the soldiers. On the other hand, if someone did not move to search for scarce food and water, he was

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<sup>144</sup> Expression used by Costa to refer to the fact that in some cases hunger was so serious that there was no escape from death. There was no medicine available to fight against hunger, i.e., there were no effective mechanisms to cope with this experience. Informal talk, 20.10.1999. Vila Paiva - Gorongosa.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with traditional chief Djona. Gorongosa - Mucodza communal Village, 17.07.97.

condemned to die of hunger and thirst. In some cases, the thirst was so severe that people had to drink their own urine as a coping strategy to remain alive:

When the Zimbabwean airplanes began the bombardments we ran away, but there was no water because the Nhadue River was completely dry... We began walking in the morning and walked until the evening; the following day we did the same thing... Many people died of thirst, so we decided to drink our own urine. I couldn't stand it any more, and there was a time when I wanted to leave my two children behind; but my husband forbade me to do it... Everyone was drinking their own urine. My children were drinking mine...<sup>146</sup>

On an almost daily basis, people had to face the idea that death might be inevitable. Drought aggravated the poor sanitation conditions and there were several outbreaks of cholera, diarrhoea, and malaria. These epidemics probably claimed more lives than the totality of the war. In particular, many children and elderly people died.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of this chapter was to present the general patterns of violence and to demonstrate how the war between the Frelimo-led government army and the Renamo rebel forces was waged and sustained over the years in Gorongosa through the use of the civilian population. The support which Renamo received from the former Rhodesia of Ian Smith and South Africa under the Apartheid regime could never have been enough to wage a war on a nationwide scale; neither could the support that the Frelimo-led government received from the Soviets have been sufficient to defend the country in its entirety. Renamo and Frelimo both needed to use the people to achieve their stated and undeclared war objectives. The difference between the two sides may have been that Frelimo might have needed the people less because of its possession of resources, particularly in the early stages of the war, and because in the immediate years following independence there was general support from the people for the values embodied by independence. Renamo may have had obvious, though localized, support in the very beginning when Matsangaissa initiated the mobilization in their re-education camps at Sa-Kudzio and in the mountains of Gorongosa of those who were discontented. Yet as the war violence escalated, it became imperative to use extreme violence as a means of recruiting local people in order to wage and maintain the war on a nationwide scale.

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<sup>146</sup> Interview with Joanita, 13.10.1999. Nharoi-Vunduzi-Gorongosa.

Listening to people's narratives about the war and the drought gives the impression that these experiences left people in a condition of complete helplessness. Faced with the horrors perpetrated by the soldiers, no civilian could plausibly counteract with measure of success. The only way to get some sort of control, even minimal, seems to have been to show compliance with the soldiers by working for them or demonstrating sympathy for their cause, or still through acts of resistance as described in the following chapter.

However, the strategy of showing sympathy to the soldiers entailed the “burning” of one’s own neighbours, friends and family. In this context, the civil war and the various violent processes that constituted its make-up generated profound legacies among the Gorongosas in terms of the erosion of relations of trust, solidarity ties and reciprocal relations among family members. In the aftermath of the civil war, the officially sanctioned culture of denial meant that the Gorongosa war survivors, though now free of violent conflicts, were faced with the major challenge of addressing the legacies of the war.

## **Chapter 8: Violence against women**

### **Introduction: “Tell everyone: tonight we will come and touch women’s breasts”**

The previous chapter presented some aspects regarding the local dynamic of war violence by describing patterns of collective experiences of suffering that took place in both government and Renamo-controlled areas. This chapter deals with specific experiences of violence, emphasizing the ways in which the war was fought in homes, the contenders being the soldiers among themselves and the soldiers against the civilian population. Within their own households families, and particularly women, became a key target of the soldiers. Violations of women’s bodies through experiences of serial sexual violence became part of everyday life in the war zones. The transformation of women’s bodies into sites of sexual siege severely traumatized not only the women themselves but also their parents and husbands, who were often unable to develop effective protective strategies.

Despite the magnitude of the sexual violence, any talk of rape remains by and large a taboo. What is clear from listening war survivors’ narratives is that there was a closer link between Renamo soldiers than government soldiers with the process of victimization of women through sexual violence. Government troops also raped women, but it was on a far lesser scale than for the Renamo soldiers.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section describes the violence of government troops vis-à-vis women. The second section addresses experiences of *gandira*, a strategy that was closely linked to rape and forced marriages of women, which are presented in section three. The war was not only about violence and destruction and victims and suffering; it was also about resistance strategies, and these are described in section four. The chapter ends by analysing some of the most controversial legacies of *gandira* and how it contributes to perpetuating the insecurity and dependency of women in society; ultimately this fragility leads to new cycles of suffering in women’s lives.

### **8.1. Rape of women by government troops**

Eliciting experiences of rape, regardless of the identity of the rapist, is difficult because of the high degree of suffering and humiliation involved and the socio-cultural taboos surrounding these experiences. Every time I raised the topic of sexual violence with my

interlocutors in Gorongosa, everyone (both men and women) told that they had witnessed rape events. Almost everyone had seen or heard about rapes, but apparently no one had experienced rape him or herself. In cases where a person reported having a wife or other relative who had experienced rape, very often the victim was no longer alive, or they were already divorced. Moreover, I noticed that every time rape experiences were brought into our conversations, another event would come to the surface too, namely *gandira* (discussed below).

In almost six years of research I was only able to explicitly talk to ten women about their personal experiences of rape. Although there are no exact estimates of the numbers of women who were raped, the narratives of both women and men suggest that both government and Renamo troops victimized women through sexual abuse and rape. The difference may be that the estimates of rape victims by governmental troops are less than the numbers of sexual violations perpetrated by Renamo soldiers.

Alesta, a woman of around 29 years old, was one of the first women who on her own initiative decided to tell me of her experiences of rape perpetrated by government soldiers. At the time of these experiences she was living with her husband in the *madembe* in Maringue, a northern neighbouring district of Gorongosa. As part of the government troops' process of wiping up the enemy (Matsangaissa and his vestiges) from the villages, the husband of Alesta was kidnapped and murdered under the allegation that he was supporting Matsangaissa soldiers. Alesta hardly had time to mourn her husband because the government troops kidnapped her as well and took her to their military base. That is when her violent sexual experiences started.

First Frelimo soldiers killed my husband then they were about to kill me too because they accused me of being the wife of Matsangaissa. Frelimo soldiers arrived at my house (...) and told us to follow them (...) That day we were fifteen women and one man in total. They took us to a very distant place in Maringue Post (Furquia) (...) I suffered sexual violation several times (...) During the day, we had to pound maize grain and we cooked for the soldiers. When it was getting dark, they called us. There were different soldiers. They threatened us with death. One of the rapists was called JM and he said he wanted to marry me. They used to threaten us with death. I was taken to a dark room. I was very afraid. I thought I was going to die. Then, I agreed to what he suggested as a way of saving my life. He said, "Where I come from I left my mother and my wife; if you say no I am going to kill you". (...) When he had finished he sent me away. On the following day,



another soldier called me again; then a third soldier came. He raped me and then he told me I had to be his “wife” so that other soldiers could not rape me anymore...<sup>147</sup>

In order to escape the violence perpetrated by the government soldiers as a group, Alesta accepted the ‘marriage proposal’ of the soldier JM. But this was not a marriage in the socio-cultural sense at all. Alesta accepted because she thought “better one rather than the whole collective of soldiers” who had targeted her for sequential evening rapes. This terrible experience only terminated when Renamo raided the Frelimo base in the area and everybody from the region of Maringue escaped.

Besides abusing the women who were under Renamo control and whose husbands were accused of being collaborators, the government troops also raped the women living inside the communal villages under their control. Melissina is one example of this reality. She was divorced and living in a communal village with her three young children. As the war unfolded her husband developed extremely jealous feelings and started getting violent against Melissina. One day he accused a government soldier of entertaining himself sexually with his wife. The case was resolved, and her husband lost the case. He divorced Melissina and she began living alone. Around the mid 1980s, government troops summoned the people living in the communal villages to open up holes in the ground to serve as shelters; these are locally known as *macava*. One night, when Melissina was with her children in the shelter, a government soldier seemed to be passing by; but on a whim he wanted to come into the hole.

I tried to run away from the *macava*, but I couldn’t because I had my three children with me. Then he came closer to me; I tried to scream for help but he threatened to kill my children and me. He seized me, he beat me, he pushed me to the floor and my children started crying. He threatened that he would kill my children, so I had to tell them to keep quiet. He seized my clothes and raped me while my children were standing there in the *macava* and watching.<sup>148</sup>

As the conversation proceeded, it became evident that Melissina had been traumatized not only by the act per se but also by the fact that her children witnessed the event. Although it was dark and the children were still young, Melissina strongly believes that they saw and understood what happened. Ever since this horrific event occurred Melissina has not been able to find words to talk of it with her now grown-up children. Silence prevails within the family. One possibility that could contribute to creating a social space to talk about it, even in an implicit manner, would be spirit possession. In

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<sup>147</sup> Interview, Gorongosa, 23.07.98.

<sup>148</sup> Melissina, Gorongosa, 23.10.03.

fact, Melissina's daughter suffers from spirit possession. Yet the problem is that she only does *ku tekemuka*, a kind of possession in which the spirit does not talk.<sup>149</sup> In state of *ku tekemuka*, Melissina's daughter re-enacts very strange movements on the floor as if she is fighting against some invisible creature, but the spirit does not manifest to the public to voice the injustices at stake.

As noted at the outset of this chapter, experiences like Melissina's and Alesta's were apparently not so numerous compared with those of women who lived under Renamo control. The system of *gandira*, its organization, control and performance meant a large-scale, powerful subjugation of women's bodies and a total disruption of the socio-cultural norms that regulate relations between husbands and wives, parents and daughters, men and women, and women and the community in Gorongosa.

## **8.2. *Gandira*: When people become “war lorries”**

One of the most traumatic experiences that the majority of the people went through at the hands of Renamo was known as *gandira*. In order to demonstrate the extremely violent aspect of *gandira*, a woman told me that “with Frelimo we used to suffer but not a lot; but with Renamo we lived as though we were their enemies”.<sup>150</sup>

*Gandira* was a system of forced labour that included four compulsory tasks to be carried out by civilian men and women: 1) work in the fields for the soldiers; 2) give part of what was produced to the soldiers, and carry it to where they wanted to go; 3) transport any kind of goods that the soldiers needed, in particular military ammunition from Casa Banana (where the runway for small planes was located) to different military quarters; and 4) (for women) work as sexual slaves. In addition, people would be kidnapped to carry meat (mainly hippopotamus meat) from the National Park, where soldiers used to hunt, to different destinations. *Gandira* disrupted individual, family, and community relations. Alece described her personal experience of *gandira* in the following way:

Because of *gandira* I used to walk long distances. I used to climb the mountains with baggage on my head (...) They used to threaten me: “you, grandmother, carry this baggage...” If I took a long time carrying it they used to threaten me saying “you are abusing...” I could walk two to three days and nights. They gave me luggage that was not of my age<sup>151</sup> (...) The soldiers would arrive at my home and knock on my door and they used to shout, saying “Wake up grandmother, wake up!”

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<sup>149</sup> This is fully addressed in Chapter 14.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Eva, Gorongosa, 24.10.2003.

<sup>151</sup> Meaning ‘not suitable for my age.’

They would force the door of my home to get in, and one day they stole my seeds that I had kept to sow. We used to dig holes in the ground to hide the maize that we had produced but when they arrived they would jump on the ground and they could tell by the sound that there was something hidden there. They would open up the holes and take our food.<sup>152</sup>

When I asked Alece what had been the longest distance that she had been forced to go while doing *gandira*, she told me that she once spent four days and nights walking in the bush without knowing her whereabouts.

*Gandira* was compulsory. It was forbidden to refuse, otherwise the person could be punished or, in the worst case, killed. Very often *gandira* involved the separation of family members. Civilian people would be away and far from their homes, families and villages for long periods of time, sometimes weeks or months, walking from one place to another with luggage on their heads or backs. Under these conditions, women turned into easy targets for rape. *Gandira* was an extreme event that pushed people far beyond the threshold of what is acceptable for human beings. If a person was physically weak, he or she was not excused but had to find the energy to handle *gandira*. If a person was strong, his or her strength was used and abused to cross the limits. I spoke with several informants whose relatives died while doing *gandira*. The mother of Maria, an interlocutor now living in Mucodza communal village, died while doing *gandira* because she was old, sick and malnourished. While they were walking to an unknown destination, she fell down on the ground because she could no longer keep up with the other people in the line. The Renamo soldiers left her lying there, and some hours later she died. Maria and her father were informed about this event some days later and they managed to find the body to bury it. Maria recollected this experience with tears in her eyes:

In 1987, there was a drought and a lot of hunger. I was living with my parents in an area called Nhamutchururo but because of the famine we moved to Kanda (...) One day, Renamo soldiers came to my house and they took my mother to do *gandira* (...) She was old and she couldn't walk properly. She was carrying a heavy load; she fell down and other people in the same group went on, and she stayed there alone stretched out on the ground (...) She died in the middle of the path.

When we found her body my father and I were very sad. We spent all day crying.<sup>153</sup>

*Gandira* can be regarded as one of the most traumatizing and humiliating experiences perpetrated by Renamo soldiers against the civilian population in Gorongosa. In order to express the severity *gandira* exposure and its consequences, it is very common to hear

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<sup>152</sup> Interview with Alece, woman, ± 50 years old & widow. Casa Banana-Runway. 22.07.98.

<sup>153</sup> Around 30 years. Mucodza communal village. 07.08.98.

war survivors saying that, "we were lorries for the Renamo soldiers", "I did *gandira* until I lost the hair on my head" or "I carried a weight heavier than my age". Apart from the exhausting physical work attached to *gandira*, forced marriages and rapes of women became closely associated with the phenomenon as well.

### **8.3. Murder, rape and forced marriage by Renamo soldiers**

People's experiences at the hands of Renamo soldiers were appalling. Sometimes Renamo's military incursions against ordinary people defied understanding. Government troops continuously forced people to move into the communal villages, but Renamo in its turn did not want people to live in them and would perpetrate the most gruesome acts there in order to force people back to the bush. On one occasion, Julieta,<sup>154</sup> a well-known woman in the village because of her midwifery practice, was unable to eat or to think clearly for three months because of something she and other war survivors had seen in the communal village. She narrated it as follows:

These Renamo soldiers were very bold. One night they raided our village. They destroyed the village and then they shot and killed a pregnant woman; after killing her they knifed her belly, extracted the foetus, cut it in pieces, and then they put the pieces inside their pots of drink. I kept asking myself, "what is the meaning of this action?" This was an evil thing; the war cannot justify it. On the following day, the men started drinking that alcohol. Then they realized that there were pieces of the foetus inside the pots of alcohol.

This was a terrible act perpetrated against a pregnant woman, a village and its entire people. Everyone I spoke to in this village remembers very well the night when this macabre act was committed and no one, including Julieta, was able to develop any explanation as to what the soldiers wanted to achieve by opening the belly of this pregnant woman.

In cases where the Renamo soldiers did not kill them, they would kidnap and rape women who were living inside the communal villages as well as the women who were under their control. Sexual violence would take place in the homes of the victims as well as while women were performing *gandira* or were pounding grain and cooking for the soldiers at the military bases.

Melita, like the majority of women in Gorongosa, does not know her age. Yet at the time when she was kidnapped she was still young since she remembers that she was

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<sup>154</sup> Around 55 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 01.09.2003.

menstruating for the fourth time and had just started growing breasts. Despite her young age Melita was already married, but she was still a virgin as her husband was absent and working in Beira. She and her family were living in a communal village and around 1991, when there was a severe drought and consequent famine, there was nothing to eat there. Therefore in the company of two other women and two men they went out of the communal village to look for *massambas* (leaves) to feed themselves. But going out of the communal village meant entering a Renamo-controlled area. Many people did this in order to look for food, but on that day Melita and her colleagues encountered trouble. Renamo soldiers kidnapped all of them and took them to their base in an area called Nhatue (Boto). On the same day that they arrived in the vicinity of the Renamo military base Melita tried to escape, but she was caught. She was severely beaten and then tied to a tree. After this episode she was transferred to another base, in an area called Manondo near to the Gorongosa National Park. It was at this Renamo base that Melita lost her virginity through rape.

The soldier threatened me saying that if I refused he would stab me with his bayonet. I was crying but he didn't care ... *owo indio wada ndicasar* (they are the ones who took my virginity) I stayed on this base for a year and three soldiers raped me.<sup>155</sup>

One year later, as a result of the Mozambican general peace agreement Melita's brother started searching for her, and he succeeded in finding her. But one of the rapists, a Renamo soldier, wanted to take Melita to Maringue, a neighbouring district of Gorongosa. Melita wanted to go home with her brother but the soldier would not allow it. There was a major fight with the Renamo soldier and he threatened to kill Melita and her brother, but they both resisted and, with the help of a Renamo commandant, succeeded in going back home together. Melita realized that if her brother had not made the effort to look for her and find her she would have been lost forever, because one of the rapists had threatened her on various occasions that if she refused to go with him to Maringue he would kill her. When they arrived back home, her husband, who not been the one to take her virginity, initially refused her: "You are a wife of Matsangaissa". His relatives systematically advised him that Melita had not lost her virginity at the hands of the soldiers of her own accord. He eventually agreed to be reunited with Melita and they continued to live together.

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<sup>155</sup> Interview with Melita, Gorongosa 06.10.2003.

This experience was not unique. It mirrors the experiences of many young women who lost their virginity through rapes perpetrated by the soldiers. Unlike Melita, Fariana was not virgin when she was raped. She was already married and had just given birth to her first baby when Renamo soldiers kidnapped her. As she recollected,

I was kidnapped during the time of famine. There were three of us: my husband, a woman called Zeneva and me; we went to the *matoro* [lower fields] to look for leaves to eat (...) When we were on our way back to the *aldeia* Renamo troops caught us; we walked for a while and we came across three more people that had been kidnapped. Then there were six of us kidnapped by Renamo, and they took us to their base. My breasts began to get swollen and the soldiers asked what was happening to them. I told them that I had left a small baby who was still breastfeeding. They didn't care; they just said, "If you play with us you will get inside the cannon of the weapon".<sup>156</sup>

Even though Fariana told the soldiers that she had left a newborn baby at home and that as a result the baby could die and she herself could suffer health complications as her breasts were becoming swollen, the soldiers did not care at all. Fariana, her husband and the other people were taken to the Renamo base so that they could be engaged in the *gandira* system while they were imprisoned. Fariana said that she did *gandira* many times until she lost the hair on her head. But the most horrific experience was the rape, which was almost witnessed by her husband. The soldiers ordered Fariana to go down to the river; and every prisoner knew that when the soldiers ordered women to go to the river, they would rape them.

When I arrived at the river he threatened to eliminate me if I refused to have sex with him. There was nothing I could do (...) The second time another soldier ordered me to enter his hut. My husband was tied by the arms and legs and placed outside the hut. The soldier raped me while my husband was listening to everything that was happening inside the hut.

Fariana said that five soldiers raped her in total. On no occasion did the soldiers use condoms, but until the time of the interview she had not been infected by any sexually transmitted disease. Her husband was completely humiliated, but could not do anything otherwise he could be punished and even killed. He was the first to escape from the base where they were both being held. Fariana only managed to escape after a year. Another soldier suggested an exchange of sex for the possibility to escape. Fariana and three other

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<sup>156</sup> Interview with Fariana, Gorongosa, 07.10.2003.

women had sexual intercourse with three soldiers and by this means managed to run away from the Renamo base. The escape was extremely difficult as well:

Because men are men, my husband did not stay a very long time at the base; he had managed to run away very early on (...) We ran away during the evening. We walked a lot, but the problem was thirst. There was no water to drink. We decided to drink our urine; we tried to drink it but it was bitter, then we decided to continue walking. We slept three nights on the way and we arrived on the fourth day. When I arrived home I was very thin and I was close to death.

Women like Fariana experienced famine, war, rape and the extreme conditions of escape— and then when they arrived home there was still the challenge of persuading their husbands not to reject them. For Fariana there was no way out; she could not remain silent or lie to her husband that nothing had happened to her, since he had witnessed the rape experiences. When Fariana arrived home her husband did indeed reject her. It was his mother, a healer, who advised him not to proceed in that way. She managed to get some traditional medicines to heal them both so that they could re-establish their marital life. His positive decision to continue living with Fariana was also influenced by the fact that their baby had survived the forced year-long absence of its mother.

According to various testimonies of war survivors, in cases where Renamo troops decided not rape a woman they might opt for humiliating her and her husband by compelling them to engage in sexual intercourse in front of them. That was the case narrated by Amelia.<sup>157</sup> One day, the government army, represented by Frelimo, compulsorily recruited Amelia's husband to become part of the militia. He served without glory as he was defending the village against the deadly raids perpetrated by his fellow Mozambicans who had been incorporated into the Renamo army. After various heavy raids, the Frelimo soldiers stopped resisting and they vanished, leaving the people behind. Renamo continued the attack on Amelia's village and managed to gain control of it. Before long, the same eavesdroppers and gossips loaded with fantasies about threats with which they had fed the Frelimo troops started circulating their rumours under the new lords. Gossiping alerted the Renamo soldiers to a former Frelimo militia member living in the area newly under their control. Renamo soldiers had a weak instinct for mercy, so the worst was soon to come for Amelia's husband. He did not want to continue

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<sup>157</sup> A woman  $\approx$  40 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 15.07.2004. For Amelia's perceptions on post-war retributive justice see Chapter 10 (Sec. 10.3).

serving in a militia so he had decided not to escape along with the other Frelimo soldiers at the time of Renamo's assault. Instead, he had stayed in the Renamo-controlled area, expecting to be able to live a normal and quiet life together with his family. He buried anything that could identify him as a militia member, and became *povo* (civilian person) again. But when the Renamo soldiers arrived at Amelia's house, they possessed something very dangerous: information.

Amelia vividly recollected this episode, which ended in a humiliating and dehumanising manner and with serious psychophysical consequences for her husband.

The Renamo soldiers met my husband in the middle of the path; they tied his arms behind his back and ordered him to return home... When they arrived at our house, the Renamo soldiers started beating my husband a lot and he fainted several times.

After severely torturing Amelia's husband in front of her, the Renamo soldiers were still not convinced that it was enough. Their desire to brutalize seemed hard to satisfy.

The soldiers took off all my husband's clothes. They also compelled me to take off all my clothes. Then they ordered, "*nhenganane apa!*" (have sexual intercourse here). I refused; one of the soldiers took a bayonet and stabbed me on the leg. I started *erererere* (bleeding). Then I lay down in *madede* (on my back). My husband was still being beaten. For a man to manage to be a man, his body needs to be in good shape. But he had been beaten a lot. I was also being beaten a lot; and my husband couldn't have sexual intercourse with me. But the soldiers were compelling him, "*kwatama penepa bass, nhenganane* (just lie down over her and have sexual intercourse). They were threatening us, "*hita basse muchobo wenei*" (just do this thing), while they were laughing and beating us, "*hita cane, hita basse, uli ngomwa cane!*" (Just do it, just do it, are you sexually impotent!)... Then, they ordered us to stop and they said, "*nbabude ndi ngomwa ai bari* (leave it, this man is sexually impotent, he's not going to make children). When they finished beating us there, they took all our possessions that we had at home, and then they took my husband; they started pushing him and they were saying, "*ife tirecuienda kia mutemera ku estrada na nbadzo iatchei*" (we are going to slash him on the way with his own axe).

The sole purpose of the Renamo soldiers was apparently to demonstrate their limitless power through dehumanising and severely torturing Amelia and her family. Although in the end they did not kill Amelia's husband, the injury caused by the bayonet stab in his back left a profound handicap.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> These types of injuries are particularly overwhelming for war survivors living in a manual agricultural society with no health insurance or continuous medical care. Amelia's husband can hardly cultivate the land; during cloudy days he feels a lot of pain that prevents him from moving around. The injury in Amelia's leg also provoked by the Renamo bayonet stab is bearable since it does not prevent her from doing agricultural work.



As in the case of Amelia and many other women and their families, there were strategic attempts to avoid the traumatization perpetrated by Renamo soldiers. For instance, some people ran away from the Renamo-controlled area; in cases where people continued to live under Renamo control they would hide their daughters in the forest for long periods of time or adopt a strategy of allying with the enemy in order to get some, even if only a little, control over the soldiers' behaviour. On very rare occasions some men even tried to challenge the authority of Renamo soldiers by daring to fight against them. The following section discusses these strategies in more detail.

#### **8.4. Strategies to prevent sexual violence**

As the war unfolded, the system of *gandira* entailed the abduction of young women from their homes to Renamo military bases to pound maize and cook for the soldiers. This process often resulted in sexual violence against them. Others were forced to marry soldiers and spent several years in captivity living away from their homes. It was extremely difficult to escape. Even girls who were still very young in the last years of the war were socialized with stories of how the war brutalized the life of many young girls and their parents. One interlocutor stated, "because of the war, many of our parents died without 'eating' the *mabatiro*" (a girl's sanctioned loss of virginity, whereupon the parents ask for a gift). In response, parents tried to protect their young daughters against abduction and rape. Their strategies included the following: 1) male relatives sometimes fighting against the soldiers; 2) premature marriage of girls; 3) hiding girls in the forests; and 4) *ku toera mabota* ("going after the boots", that is complying with the soldiers).

##### **8.4.1. Challenging the soldiers' authority**

The strategy of challenging the soldier's authority by fighting against them was not very common. The reason is rather obvious: it was very risky as the soldiers could decide to kill the person if they wanted to. However, some men were courageous enough to fight against the soldiers in order to protect their female relatives from sexual violence. This was the case with Ilidio,<sup>159</sup> who fought against a Renamo soldier who wanted to rape his virgin sister. Ilidio narrated this episode as follows:

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<sup>159</sup> Around 40 years. Sa-Kudzoz, 10.11.2003.

It happened to my sister. At that time I was working as a *nfumo* [traditional chief] and Renamo soldiers used to come to my house as part of the coordination of *gandira*. One night a group of Renamo soldiers travelling from Nhacassoro to the Gorongosa Mountains arrived at my house and asked for a place to sleep. I gave them a place to sleep. Then they asked my younger sister to fetch water from the nearby river because they were thirsty. My sister went to the river and brought water for them. Then they asked for more water. When she went down the river again, one soldier chased her. Then that soldier started to threaten my sister saying that he wanted to have sex with her. My sister started to scream and she ran away. I rushed to meet her to find out what was happening. She told me about the soldier's threat and I started arguing with him. There was great confusion; then I started fighting against the soldier who wanted to hurt my sister. I threatened to report them to their commandant. Then the other soldiers separated us and they started criticizing the soldier who had wanted to rape my sister. They promised not to hurt anybody in my house. The following morning the soldiers continued on their way to the mountains.

Ilidio was indeed a brave man, since the Renamo soldiers were all armed with lethal weapons and they could have killed him. But perhaps he succeeded in protecting his sister because he was working for the Renamo army as a *nfumo* and this made him somehow fearless of the soldiers in general. However, as he further told me,

After this event, I took my sister to the house of my brother-in-law and told him that it was better that he made her his wife now; otherwise she could lose her virginity through rape, and we did not want to have problems because of that. Then my sister started living with her husband and she is living with him up to today.

#### **8.4.2. Premature marriage of young daughters**

As a result of the extreme social unpredictability and parents' intense fear that their daughters would lose their virginity through rape, many parents adopted the strategy of early marriage and began to accept the marriage of their daughters at a younger age (7-9) than what was culturally and physiologically expected. It is important to stress that socio-culturally the promising of girls in marriage is not strange in this culture. In the chapter on socio-cultural practices, I described the system of *mambira*, which consists in the socialization of a girl in the house of her parents-in-law-to-be. During this period, which could last several years, sexual relations were not part of the socialization process. The civil war corrupted this in a very traumatic way, bringing about early sexual penetration of the fiancée.

During the civil war, the strategy of prematurely handing daughters over to lose their virginity was aimed at getting rid of the almost unbearable feeling of humiliation

and self-contempt resulting from the incapacity to defend their daughters from the soldiers' importunate sexual desires, and also to guarantee that the parents would receive the money incurring from the official loss of virginity (*mabatiro*). The parents would hand their young daughters over at a very early age so that they would become the responsibility of their fiancés. In such cases, many girls lost their virginity at a very early age as they were no longer under their parents' control and their fiancées were afraid that the soldiers would rape them.

Gustina narrated how, together with her husband, she gave their daughter to her fiancée:

We delivered our daughter saying, "*mukwambo* [son-in-law] Look, the situation is bad; it's better that you take your wife. The war is getting worse; it's better that you take your wife so that you can do *ku pinda naie nhumba*".<sup>160</sup> Many parents did the same because otherwise they could lose the *mabatiro* (...) If the girl did not have a fiancé yet, then the parents would have to hide her all the time in the bush *qui, qui, qui, qui* (in the bush). The girl would eat her porridge in the bush. That is how we used to try to protect our daughters. They used to hide the girls inside the house with the door closed, *di*, they were afraid the soldiers would take the girls.<sup>161</sup>

These results are, of course, intriguing and highly contentious. It is debatable whether this strategy really protected the girls against rape or was not just a way for the father to get his share (financial or in terms of prestige) from the daughter's official marriage. It can be argued that what the girl experienced at the hands of her fiancé was another form of sexual violence, since at the time that she was deflowered she was not physically ready. It seems that parents had somehow become numb to their own common-sense knowledge that "*dois males não fazem um mal menor*" (two wrongs don't make a right). In this way they could secure the *mabatiro*, since if the girl lost her virginity while her fiancé was responsible for her then her parents would not bear the responsibility for the case.

If soldiers found the girl, then they would take her to their base and she was unlikely to escape sexual violence. When girls returned from the bases they did not usually disclose what had happened to them. There was silence on the part of both the parents and the girls. The parents would only discover that all was not well with the girl when she was taken to the review to check her virginity. As Gustina recollected, "We

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<sup>160</sup> "To enter with her in the house" meaning "to deflower her".

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Gustina, Gorongosa, 15.07.04.

used to find that the majority of the girls *wa kula kale*” (“had already ‘grown up’ long since”, meaning they were no longer virgins).

#### **8.4.3. Hiding girls in the forest**

The strategy of premature marriage was complemented by the strategy of hiding girls in the forest. Many parents and their daughters told me how they used to do this. Eva related how her parents hid her and her sister in the forest for more than two years to protect them from the soldiers.

My father used to hide us in the forest. He would choose a part of the forest that did not have tracks through it, an area of forest no one knew about; that’s where we used to hide. My parents used to bring food to the place where we were hiding. We would go to hide very early in the morning and then we would return at the end of the day when it was getting dark. During the daylight we had to hide inside the forest. When we saw that it was already dark, then we moved back to hide inside our house.<sup>162</sup>

It was possible for them to sleep in their home because Renamo soldiers did not usually move around people’s houses during the evening. The exception was in cases of specific popular denunciations, in which case the soldiers would go to a specific house to look for a girl. Based on this strategy, Eva said that she was able to marry her husband and it was him who took her virginity, so her parents ate their *mabatiro*.

Given that people knew one another and could denounce their neighbours to the Renamo soldiers, hiding girls in the forest was not an infallible strategy. Neighbours would disclose each other’s secrets to Renamo soldiers in order to spread the victimization. Some parents felt extremely humiliated that their daughters had been raped when their neighbours’ daughters were successfully hidden. Instead of developing a chain of unity to protect as many girls as possible, neighbour sought to denounce neighbour to the Renamo soldiers. In order to catch the girls, these soldiers would make ambushes by arriving in people’s houses in the middle of the night. As a result of the soldiers’ dehumanisation of the girls and their families, many parents complained to the Renamo commandants. The commandants said that if a soldier raped a girl, the parents or husband should denounce the perpetrator at the base. But who had the courage to do that? There

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<sup>162</sup> Interview with Eva, Gorongosa, 29.09.03.

are some stories of parents and husbands who dared to report such cases to the commandants and the rapists were punished as a result; but these cases were very few.

#### **8.4.4. *Ku toera mabota* or the girls that go after the boots of the soldiers**

Another strategy that was employed in the hope of gaining some kind of control over the experiences of sexual violence was known as *ku toera mabota*, i.e., going after the boots of the soldiers. This experience in the war remains very concealed and controversial. Usually people do not easily talk about it; and when they do, its meaning can change according to who is speaking about it. Some men accuse women of having established complicity with the soldiers in order to survive, whereas the women refute this accusation by saying that they had no way out other than to accept what the soldiers wanted, i.e., sex. In order to substantiate their position the men refer to *ku toera mabota*:

Women practised *ku toera bota*. During the war the women didn't want to live among the people because the people were suffering and Renamo soldiers liked recruiting women a lot. These women used to go after the soldiers so that they could suffer less; at the bases they could eat, while in their homes with their parents it was difficult. These women even used to sing for the soldiers as a way of giving them courage; they used to sing to raise the morale of the soldiers, their husbands.<sup>163</sup>

The various testimonies I collected from both women and men on this issue were unanimous in confirming that the phenomenon per se existed. There are even many songs known by both men and women depicting the phenomenon.<sup>164</sup> What is controversial is the question of volition: did the women flirt with the soldiers because these soldiers were better men than their own husbands or fiancés? or had they no alternative than to try to secure an easier life in the hands of the soldiers?

One of the men who fiercely disavowed the women's traumatic experiences of rape was a Christian religious leader. He affirmed that, "The women that were raped were raped of their own free will". I asked him how could he say something like that when the majority of women I had spoke with had talked with sadness about their terrifying

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<sup>163</sup> Interview with Bernardo, Gorongosa, 11.06.2006.

<sup>164</sup> *oie aoie, ie oi, na chefe Nhangá, uia mai uia, toera bota mai, Chimpala mai, naienda ndega, naienda tence kwa chefe Nhangá; mai inda paramira pa chimpala; mai, inda ona nhatua mai; ie, iao mai, oioro io, ioro ieio; (oie aoie, ie oi, Chief Nhangá, come, Mother, come; to go after the boots, Mother; in Chimpala Mother, I will go alone; we will go together to the chief Nhangá; Mother, I suffered in Chimpala; Mother I saw suffering mother, ie, iao mai, oioro io, ioro ieio).*

*gandira* experiences and had mentioned witnessing other women being raped during *gandira*. He was direct in his answer and did not blink a single time:

Some women were raped of their own free will. Others were raped against their will. I don't accept that the women were raped against their own will. The women could refuse at first but some minutes later they would agree to sleep with the soldiers. Do you really think that Renamo soldiers were threatening the women to make them sleep with them? No. The women would agree to sleep with the soldiers of their own free will; since the soldier is a man and he does not have a wife, if he needs one, what happens then? He sleeps with her. This used to happen. We lived in the *aldeia* and we saw Frelimo soldiers doing the same thing. The women were not being compelled; they agreed to sleep with the soldiers. When a soldier found a woman they liked, they slept with her. Our women were taken to do *gandira*, but if she was a woman who wanted to protect her body the soldiers could not do anything.<sup>165</sup>

My conversation with this religious leader went on and on. He appeared vexed, as if he was feeling accused of something. In between he laughed at me because I told him I was sympathetic with what women had told me about rape being an everyday practice. I even mentioned to this interlocutor an awful story that another religious leader who was living in a Renamo-controlled area had told me about sexual violence,

(...) The girls used to say to the soldiers that they were having their menstrual period, but the soldiers would not accept it. They used to get a basin of water and force the girls to sit down on it with their legs open. In this way, as the soldiers said, they would see if the girls were really menstruating or not. The girls could not usually escape sexual violations. The soldier who used to do it was the brother of commandant Mavuramite. He is the one who used to do it. This one committed many crimes with the girls.<sup>166</sup>

My interlocutor did not seem impressed with the story. From talking about other people's experiences I wondered about his own experiences, and asked whether his own two wives had done *gandira*. He answered in the affirmative. Then I wanted to know whether his wives had been raped. He got annoyed and said peremptorily that he did not know because they had never told him what had happened during their *gandira* journeys. This pastor was not aware of his own foolishness; I could have laughed at him just as he had laughed at me. Interestingly, he "knew" that other men's wives were enjoying intercourse with the soldiers—but he did not know what had happened to his own wives in wartime.

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<sup>165</sup> Interview, Sa-Kudzo, Gorongosa, 27.07.03.

<sup>166</sup> Interview, Gorongosa, 23.08.97.

What this type of viewpoint suggests is that many men tried to cope with the extreme war stress generated by their real incapacity to defend their wives against sexual violence by blaming the women for the rape experiences instead of pointing the finger at the soldiers as the aggressors. By seeking refuge in the belief that the women were not victims but active collaborators in sexual contacts with the soldiers, the men were free to send their wives easily away, “*ndoko*”. In this way, the violence of the soldiers in combination with the denial of the husband created the conditions for the long-term devaluing and distrust of women in society.

The majority of women and some men as well completely refute the allegations of this religious leader. The women say that it was compulsory to go with the soldiers. Some men even say that the songs about *ku toera mabota* were not aimed at praising the Renamo soldiers but quite the contrary:

As we were being tortured we used to sing these songs. It was compulsory to sing them. The soldiers used to come and then they would give orders to make drinks; they would recruit all the women to go there to sing so that they could dance.<sup>167</sup>

It may be that these songs had a polysemic character. For the women they were a disguised form of protest; for the Renamo soldiers they were a source of entertainment and a morale booster; for the husbands they were a recognition of the women’s vulnerability to suffering and the fact that in order to escape, the women opened themselves to the Renamo soldiers. Society at large believes in the human capacity to endure, and sometimes this belief is culturally expressed in a proverb: “The rabbit does not leave his place because of thirst”, i.e., a person does not abandon his or her house because of suffering. In this instance, the women did the opposite when they allegedly joined the soldiers for the sake of relief. The women’s behaviour is the grounds for further outrage since the belief is that “The pumpkin does not roll in the direction of the pig,” i.e., the girl does not choose or look for a boy for marriage; rather, it is the boy who chooses. Hence when the men accuse women of “going after the boots”, they are indirectly insulting them as being prostitutes. Yet women feel that these labels are not fair because the men pretend to ignore the political and historical conditions that gave rise to the phenomenon of *ku toera mabota*. These experiences left profound consequences in the lives of the women, their families and communities.

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<sup>167</sup> Interview with Zé, Gorongosa, 12.07.2006.

### 8.5. The legacies of *gandira*, rape and *ku toera mabota*

The legacies of *gandira* and sexual violence can be observed on two levels: the situation of the young, virgin girls, and the relationship between men and women in general.

When the war was over, parents and society in general did not reflect about the way forward in the education of the new generation, particularly the girls. The pattern of fear that was characteristic and legitimate during wartime did not disappear. On the contrary, it appears to have increased; and efforts to control girls' virginity are being made on various fronts, at home as well as in public places like churches, markets, in the street, in the fields and by the rivers. Parents exert tremendous control over the lives of their young daughters to make sure that they do not lose their virginity in the bush, as used to happen during the war. They still hand their daughters over to their fiancés prematurely without first socializing the girl and the boy through the process of *mambira*, as had been the case before the civil war. The result of these hastened marriages is visible in the degrees of conflict between fiancés and fiancées, which very often ends in divorce.<sup>168</sup> It could be argued that divorce is the norm in any society; however, the problem in Gorongosa is that the engagement of the girl to her future husband has pervasive practical consequences in her life.

A marriage agreement at an early age deprives her of various liberties: to play around with her friends, to wait for adulthood to make her own choice of partner, or to gain access to school. And when the relationship is broken, it is not the end of the story. It might happen that the girl is no longer a virgin, but her fiancé will often refuse to admit that he is the one who deflowered her; the girl and her parents will have to look for financial resources to pay compensation for the breach of the agreement. The act of looking for money means that the family—or the girl herself—must find another male candidate to pay the previous fiancé. The parents' fear of loss of launches their young daughters, who later become adult women, into a vicious circle of dependency and vulnerability that is extremely difficult to break out of.

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<sup>168</sup> The word divorce may not sound appropriate, as the couple are not yet married. Locally it is called *ku lambana* (divorce) because during the period of engagement the boy does *ku fewa* (work for the fiancée's parents) to make his commitment to his fiancée clear. In its turn the fiancée demonstrates her obedience and loyalty to her future husband. When this process is interrupted it is called divorce, as theoretically they were been married.



The legacies of *gandira* and its related traumas are also visible in the relationships between men and women, and women and society as a whole. At the time of the war, both women and men knew that *gandira* was inextricably linked to rape. However, there were no ready-made words for talking about this very humiliating experience. In the majority of cases there was a conspiracy of silence. When a husband looked at his wife or wives after their return from *gandira* he suspected what might have happened, and the wife suspected that her husband knew—and did not know—how *gandira* had violated her, but there was very little that he could do since he did not have the capacity to confront the armed soldiers.

There is little doubt that *gandira* transformed relations between men and women in that women lost respect from their communities because they had become every soldier's sexual property. Nobody, man or woman, managed to make sense of these experiences; and for some men the belief in the idea of *ku toera mabota* seems satisfactory. Hence their insistence in saying that, "Many young girls and married women were not raped; they went after the soldiers to have sexual intercourse with them in exchange for some measure of comfort and protection" or "*mukadzi akando pendeca akando nhengua*" i.e., if the woman was inclined [meaning "prone"], the soldiers would have sex with her.<sup>169</sup>

One might expect that the peace agreement would put an end to the climate of sexual violence and marital suspicion that was typical of wartime, since there is no more *gandira* or sexual violence on such a large scale. Yet this did not happen. Men became very suspicious towards women, and women towards other women. The radical changes brought about by the war violence have affected relationships between people in these communities;<sup>170</sup> that is, people have little trust in one another, and *gandira* broke with an

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<sup>169</sup> Interview with Paulino (former *mujiba*), Gorongosa, 19.07.2006.

<sup>170</sup> In addition, it could be argued that other factors such as the increasing contacts between the sexes as a result of colonial and post-colonial population forced resettlement policies in some areas, and through schooling, may also be contributing to the disruption of the relations between men and women. There would seem to be logic in this as historically people inhabited the land in dispersed patterns that safeguarded a physical distance between people in general. The *aldeamentos* built by the Portuguese and succeeded by *aldeias comunais* (communal villages) under the Frelimo leadership, contributed to reduce the physical distance between people who started living at very close quarters in some areas. The intensity of contacts between people, in particular boys and girls, was also increased by the introduction of schools and the promotion of girls' access to formal education. The influence of the school as one more source of knowledge acquisition generates a negative perception since it demystifies other forms of knowledge, particularly taboos on sex outside wedlock. While the distance between the genders has reduced, contact has increased, and the veracity of certain sexual taboos has been threatened, society has not created any

old taboo that regarded woman as chaste Penelope figures and reservoirs of purity, and reconfigured the image of woman as liars, unreliable and simply possessed by sexual lust.

It is possible to speculate that since there was never any debate (either locally or on a nationwide scale) in the aftermath of the civil war to address the problem of violence against women during the war, a conspiracy of silence prevails. The silence is not about the acts themselves, since everyone recognizes that sexual violence occurred and was painful. Rather, the silence is over the responsibility. Men, even if they failed to fulfil their responsibilities to defend their wives, refuse to accept that their wives were victims in the odysseys of *gandira*; they treat them as accomplices instead. This is a very complicated war legacy because of the magnitude of its effects. In the context of peace, men have developed a dysfunctional perception over the closer contacts that exist between them and women. What most of them perceive whenever they reflect upon women in society is just sexual intercourse (*ku nhenga basse*). This should not be interpreted as an obsession with sexual experiences. It is a dysfunctional perception that informs a belief that women are having sex somewhere and endlessly. This belief makes men extremely suspicious of the actions of women. The relationship between men and women is no longer of gender complementarities, but of confrontation and open antagonism. The process of dealing with these confrontations and conflicts constitutes the greatest part of the case-load of the community judges in Gorongosa.<sup>171</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The goal of this chapter was to outline some individual experiences of serial sexual violence against women. Soldiers from both the government and Renamo armies raped young girls and adult women in Gorongosa. The narratives of war survivors suggest that there was a higher frequency of sexual abuse of women by Renamo soldiers than by government soldiers. The violence occurred in the women's homes as well as while they were doing *gandira* or pounding maize and cooking for the soldiers during captivity. The parents of the girls and husbands of the women were not usually able to protect them. The various protective strategies described above are impregnated with controversy. At

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effective means of interpreting and regulating these closer contacts or interactions. In failing to act accordingly to deal with the social changes, the post-war societies have generated the *cultural lag* referred to by William Ogburn (1964) (Part IV, Sec. 4.2.4).

<sup>171</sup> Addressed in Chapter in 13.

one point the strategy seems to protect the girls or women in general, but at another point the same strategies appear to be another form of violence against the very people they were designed to protect.

A further factor that complicates the issue of rape is that it is enshrouded in silence and secrecy. With the very rare exception of those women war survivors who shared their personal experiences of rape, the majority of men and women only talk about sexual violence by referring to *gandira*, or by saying that they had only witnessed or heard about it. In this context, the extremely violent experiences that the women went through are not validated and acknowledged by the community in general. On the contrary, there are pervasive perceptions and rumours circulating, particularly among men, which claim that during the civil war women were only raped because they wanted to entertain themselves with the soldiers. This often undeclared belief holds that when the Frelimo-led government signed the preliminary protocols of the general peace agreement to withdraw the Zimbabwean troops from Mozambican soil, two groups of people celebrated. First, the Renamo soldiers shouted loudly from the Gorongosa mountains, saying that “Tell everyone that we will come and touch the women’s breasts tonight because the Zimbabwean troops are no longer here to protect you”. Then, the story goes, women were so happy to hear this announcement that entire villages of women slept with no *ndanda* (panties) to wait for the soldiers’ arrival. These often unspoken tropes cultivated by the men contribute to perpetuate an extremely distorted image of women in post-war Gorongosa. In turn, these images have had a pervasive effect on the stability of the marriage institution. Couples divorce so readily and with such ease that the majority of people (men and women) in Gorongosa remain without answers as to how to tackle this very complicated war legacy.

## **Chapter 9: The people, economic and social practices and the impact of war**

### **Introduction: “A farmer dies with his or her hoe”<sup>172</sup>**

This chapter tries to trace back some key features of the social world of the Gorongosa people as they may have existed before the civil war. The chapter also addresses some of the legacies of the civil war.

The social world of the Gorongosa people is composed of a specific landscape that gives rise to specific economic practices. It is also characterized by cultural, political and legal practices. The study of these geographical and human dimensions is important in that it helps us to understand how the civil war could be waged and sustained partly because of the availability of local resources, and that in the post-war era the remnants of these same resources can potentially be used to help people to attain justice and to foster reconciliation between formerly estranged people, peace, and social stability.

The civil war unfolded among people who had, and have, their own ways of living. The importance of highlighting these *modi vivendi* lies in what Marteen de Vries has observed: "to understand how culture is disrupted by trauma, we should first look at how cultures work under conditions of relatively normal stress" (1996: 403). I will describe some features of the Gorongosa people's lives in terms of subsistence activities (particularly agriculture) and socio-cultural practices related to the most important human development stages in ontogenesis and the foundations of marriage. I will also outline the political system (which is controlled principally by traditional leaders), religious and medical beliefs, and traditional justice. Historical and anthropological dimensions are combined to provide a comprehensive view of the structural and dynamic aspects of the socio-cultural realities of the Gorongosas. I will describe how society and culture were organized and functioned in the past, and how these realities were reconfigured by the protracted civil war. This approach is of vital importance for an understanding of the people's extreme suffering because of the war and drought, as well as of the disintegration of some socio-cultural structures and systems of support in the community that offered protection to its members in periods of social harmony.

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<sup>172</sup> It means “a real farmer dies during his or her duty in the fields”.

### **9.1. The economy**

In most communities of Gorongosa there is no official employment. Agriculture is the people's main activity, and it is in the centre of the economy of the region. Contributing to this is the richness of the fertile soil and the abundant hydro resources. The district has 129, 000 arable hectares and the population is so far using only 40-45, 000 hectares.<sup>173</sup> The district is crossed by at least seven major rivers (namely Pungué, Urema, Nhadué, Mocumbedze, Vunduzi, Nhandar, and Chitunga), complemented by other small rivers.

Agricultural activity functions through an annual cycle (discussed below) and in each family both men and women (married, single widowed) have their own fields for production. In some cases each of them also has his or her own granary. Sometimes a couple will share the same field and both participate in the work. The social division of work between men and women establishes that there are specific activities for each gender, although there are also activities that are shared by both men and women. This division is based in some cases on the physical demands of particular activities and in other cases on the culturally specific roles that men and women have inside and outside the household, that is in private and public places.

People grow different types of grains. If the harvest yields a substantial quantity, the surplus is sold; but even if the harvest is not enough the people still have to sell grain in order to obtain cash. The financial income from this trade is used to buy goods that cannot be produced locally. As a consequence of the war, however, and until recently (2000), the agricultural commercial infrastructure network was very unstable and did not function properly (as it had in the years prior to nation's independence).<sup>174</sup> Although the farmers produced enough food to sell, they were unable to trade the surplus systematically because most of the roads had been destroyed. People from the cities (the main buyers) did not have access to the rural areas to buy the surplus. The scenario has gradually changed, and nowadays there are better roads connecting the main town centres. Yet the issue of agricultural commercialisation remains a complicated problem since the farmers do not generally control the prices in the market. Many people feel that they are being exploited, and this contributes somewhat to perpetuating a situation of deprivation and their sense of it being difficult to control their own destinies.

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<sup>173</sup> Interview with District Director of Agriculture, Vila-Paiva, Gorongosa, 21.07.2006.

<sup>174</sup> The Portuguese had built a system of agricultural commercialisation and systematically penetrated into even very remote areas of Gorongosa to buy the surplus.

When people do manage to sell their surplus, the prices are not high enough to cover the production costs. I must stress that the selling of the surplus is mainly a male activity; only sometimes do the women have the possibility of selling their own surplus and getting access to cash. Usually women have to depend entirely on their husbands for money for their own needs. In this sense, the socio-economic condition of women is poor.

With the income that the men get from trading they buy goods such as salt, soap, cooking-oil, dried fish, and clothes for their wives and children. Such goods are sold in small markets, where the products are set out on stalls. The activity of selling in the market is on a small-scale basis and is aimed at increasing the family income. It is common to find women selling in the local markets, but it is the husband who controls the money. Some people also sell tobacco and a traditional drink called *nipa*.<sup>175</sup> The income generated from selling these products is very meagre, however; and sometimes the customers do not even pay in cash but just with a promise to work in the vendor's fields.

In fact, it is generally believed in Gorongosa that the consumption of *nipa* is contributing to impoverishing people even more and eroding relationships between vendors, customers and the community in general. In houses where *nipa* is sold the gathering will very often terminate with verbal insults and physical aggression, which has a negative effect on the life of the community. These cases often end up in the community courts. In this regard, the consumption of *nipa* represents an obstacle to the improvement of the socio-economic status of many families. A seasonal *nipa* addiction is a very common problem in Gorongosa. Gender differences do not play a significant role; both men and women are involved in this type of "self-medication" using alcohol, which in many cases results in family and community tragedies.

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<sup>175</sup> *Nipa* is the name of the local beer. It is very rich in methanol and a person does not need to drink more than one glass to show signs of psychological disruption. Cases of near-suicides when people have jumped into a fire while under the effects of *nipa* have been reported.

## 9.2. Socio-cultural practices

### 9.2.1. Family organization

Gorongosa is a patrilineal society with patrilocal rules of residence. The family constitutes the basic unit of society and the man is at the centre of the family. In general, families have been polygamous and extended. There are no cultural limits on the number of wives allowed; men can marry as many women as they wish as long they are able to support them. However, the current tendency is more towards monogamous marriages than polygamous. Both in polygamous and monogamous families, the man is the head of the household.

In polygamous families there is a tendency for the husband to share the responsibility of the homestead with the elder wife. This responsibility is most evident when the husband is absent. The first wife is also in charge of teaching the new wives about their husband's habits. As the “chief” of the household, it is the man's responsibility to take all the decisions concerning family problems. From his wives he expects obedience and loyalty; and from him the wives expect that he care for all of them in the same way and with the same degree of respect. For this reason he has to treat all his wives and their children equally. Every wife has her own hut, built by the husband in the same yard. To fulfil his obligations in the same way to all his wives, the man usually makes a schedule to spend the same length of time (for example one or two weeks) in each of his wives' huts.

All the children belong to the *dzindza* (family origin) of the father. The exception to this rule is *makuio* children (that is children who belong to the family genealogy of the mother),<sup>176</sup> but this change of status only occurs when there is a spirit-related problem and an elder person must do *ku himirira*, that is assume responsibility for the child particularly in the house of the healer. In such cases, the elder relatives of the mother must actively participate in the resolution of the health problem. Otherwise, both *makuio* and non-*makuio* children are their father's responsibility until they reach the age to get married. From a socio-cultural perspective a person's growth is regulated not only by their physical development but also by a set of communal beliefs and practices that are

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<sup>176</sup> The only declared *makuio* person in this study was Almeida. His case is described in chapter 14.

considered to contribute to healthy development. These stages are *madzawde* (ritual for children) *ntsanganiko* (ritual for the dead), *mambira* and marriage (discussed below).<sup>177</sup>

### 9.2.2. Gendered socialization: *Goeiros* and *mambiras*

The education of the younger generation is gendered, and boys and girls are not educated in the same manner. In the past their roles were intended to be complementary in order to secure the reproduction of the society. The process of teaching children was called *tchiwara*, i.e., the education of the new generations around the nightly bonfire. As Fernando Cozinha, a *n'fumo* (traditional authority) and religious leader asserted,

A long time ago the elders used to tell us that if we had sex with a woman we would become ill. They used to say the same to the girls in the *tchiwara* too (...) We didn't have sex with the girls; we were afraid. The boys and girls were afraid of each another. *Mukazi massuco kugwa nkabe kuienda na mwamuna* (The breasts of the girls would grow and fall without knowing the boys) and the boys would grow up without knowing the girls.<sup>178</sup>

The gendered socialization of the boys and girls involved various life issues in order to foster respect and trust between parents and children and among the peer-group. When children reached the age to understand some of the expectations that society had of them, their parents would build them a *goeiro* (a hut built for boys and girls from the age of around seven to eight years old). Socio-cultural norms do not allow the older sons and daughters to sleep in the same hut as their parents. It is said that this is to make sure that young adolescents do not intrude upon their parent's privacy (locally called "secrets"). From this period onward they have to sleep in their own huts, which are built in their parents' yard, until they reach the age to marry.

In this period (from the age of seven or eight until marriage), boys and the girls were also introduced to the manual work of farming, and the process of marital engagement was also set in motion. The parents of the boy and the girl were responsible for making arrangements for their children's engagement. In the case of a successful agreement, the girl would become a *mambira* and the boy would begin to do *ku fewa*.

*Mambira* refers to the stage in which a young virgin girl (*nhamankunda*) was expected to spend several years being socialized both in her home place as well as in the

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<sup>177</sup> A fourth stage, *ntsanganiko* has been described elsewhere (Igreja *et al.*, 1999) and is not discussed here. In brief, it is a burial ritual that terminates in sexual intercourse between a couple that belongs to the family of the deceased.

<sup>178</sup> Interview, Tsiquir, Gorongosa 05.11.04.



home of her future parents-in-law before marrying into the family. *Ku fewa* is the equivalent for boys, who also have to do various kinds of work in the house of their parents-in-law-to-be. In practical terms boys and girls do the same thing, but there are different consequences for them in the case of a breach of the agreement or “divorce”.<sup>179</sup> After the war this practice continued to be followed, though with some changes. The tendency is now for boys not to work for their would-be parents-in-law but to buy different kinds of goods for them along with a lot of alcohol for the father-in-law.

At the time when the *mambira* practice was still widely practised, the fiancée would move back and forth between her parents’ house and her future in-laws’ house. This period allowed the girl and her parents-in-law and fiancé to get to know each another well before marriage and future life together. Apparently the *mambira* stage was relatively free of risk in terms of the girl losing her virginity without formal consent (that is before the marriage had taken place) because while she was at her in-laws’ home she would sleep with her future mother-in-law or sister-in-law. The education of boys and girls in the *tchiwara* meant that they did not disrespect the rules and that, as cited above, sexual contact between boys and girls was rare. It meant also that parents would wait until their daughter’s fourth or fifth year of menstrual cycle before considering her ready to marry and start her own family. It was also in this *mambira* period that the girl’s maternal grandmother would instruct her about sexual matters and provide her with knowledge about running family affairs, and at least once a month the grandmother would do *ku tchidza* (that is take the girl into the bush to check and verify that she is preserving her status as a *nhamankunda* or virgin).<sup>180</sup>

Almost every woman over 40 to whom I spoke had been a *mambira* before marriage. In the wake of the civil war, however, this practice was gradually eroded and few parents in Gorongosa have recuperated it. Hardly any girls go through the process of *mambira* nowadays. Only the *ku fewa* practice remains in vigour. Some months after a girl begins to menstruate, the father incites the mother to exert strict control over her by watching her movements, and to guard against what is known as “marriage in the bush”—the loss of virginity in the bush without marriage and without the payment of *mabatiro* to the parents—as had become the norm during the civil war. The war is over

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<sup>179</sup> This is addressed in Chapter 13.

<sup>180</sup> A *Nhamankunda* is a virgin girl who has already begun to menstruate; this is the last developmental stage before entry into the world of adults (that is marriage and procreation).

now, but instead of reflecting upon these issues in order to find the best way to educate the new generation, parents have begun to rush to marry their young daughters off prematurely, as used to happen during the war. If girls are studying, parents can even remove them from school for fear that they will lose their virginity to a boy or a teacher.

It is very hard for girls to resist these pressures. Only seldom does a girl manage to confront her parents to avoid being given away in an early marriage without her consent. In the majority of cases, particularly in the more remote areas, the bounds are extremely strict. Girls are forced by their parents or close relatives to marry as soon as they begin menstruating. A girl in such circumstances can hardly exert any agency. She has to marry because of her parents' worry and fear that someone will take their daughter's virginity and they will lose the *mabatiro*.

This current reality has had tremendous consequences in the lives of girls in the post-war period: First, girls grow up in a very authoritarian system (their parents' home), where the parents watch them very closely and establish very strict rules of movement. Second, early in their lives, and without any prior socialization period (*mambira*), they are transferred over to another system of authority (in the *ku banja* or *ku misha*, the house of the parents-in-law), which is no less authoritarian. In her *ku banja*, the girl is a stranger, and she faces two major challenges: to deal with her parents-in-law and sisters-in-law (whom she does not really know), and to deal with her fiancé (whom she does not know very well either).

### **9.2.3. Marriage practices**

Two types of marriage practices exist in this society: early engagement, as described above (in which the girl is called a *mambira* and takes up residence in her in-laws' home but without marriage or sexual relations taking place) and marriage proper, in which the marriage is consummated after a very complex marriage ceremony. Usually, the daughters (the first to marry) and the younger sons leave their parents' home after marriage; the eldest son still lives in his father's yard after his marriage.

The most striking socio-cultural aspects that were eroded as a result of the war were (as noted) not so much marriage per se as the set of preparations that used to take place before it, in the form of *ku fewa* and *mambira*. I wish to stress here that over many generations the institution of marriage constituted a long and complex process that

involved numerous rituals of respect (*makodzo*) before the couple could be considered married.<sup>181</sup>

Most of these rituals of respect vanished with the war. The soldiers disrupted communities by systematically targeting the basic unity of society, that is the family. They not only traumatised individual women but also trivialized the concept and image of family by turning women and their bodies into every man's commodity. Nobody can say how this damage is to be repaired. Only a few remnants of the traditional marriage process are still in place: *ku tchidza*, *mabatiro*, *ku tussira mutombo* (outlined below), and to a certain extent *ku lola* (outlined below). All the other rituals and ceremonies are gone. If the fiancée is allegedly *nhamankunda* (virgin) then *ku tchidza* will take place in order to check the veracity of the virginity status.<sup>182</sup> If she is established to be a virgin, her parents can start thinking about the amount of *mabatiro* they will demand (that is the sum that the parents—principally the father—will receive from the son-in-law in return for taking their daughter's virginity). *Ku lola* is the money that the son-in-law had to pay in order to get full control of the paternity of his children. The post-war reality, however, is a struggle to make the son-in-law admit that the children actually belong to him. Often they refuse, arguing that their wives were extra-maritally involved with other men and that the child belongs to someone else.

One important dimension of the war suffering lies in the fact that many parents died not only in shame at not having received the *mabatiro* resulting from the deflowering of their daughters but also in fear of the consequences. In the normal functioning of this society a fiancée's loss of virginity of a must be accompanied by a ritual to liberate her from the state of pollution, which is believed to be particularly harmful for her parents. This ceremony, called *ku tussira mutombo* (to throw medicine), is to prevent pain coming to the girl's parents. It is extremely important for the Gorongosas. If this ceremony is not performed, the girl will be at odds with her parents and this unleashes a set of family reactions and conflicts in which the girl loses access to her parents' house. Most importantly, the absence of this ceremony leaves everyone in a

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<sup>181</sup> Most of these phases are peaceful, but some are symbolically violent. For an external observer at least, this symbolic aspect of violence appears ambivalent; for the local people, however, it is a reaffirmation of the socio-cultural norms that guided the union of different families and the possession of the fiancée by her fiancé.

<sup>182</sup> However, it should be stressed that neither in the past nor in the present was virginity the sine qua non for a woman getting married.

state of vulnerability: it opens the family's invisible gates to strikes by all sorts of witches. The war disrupted all these practices, and the soldiers did not care about these socio-cultural rules; they would just rape girls without observing even the most minimal rules of respect. This in turn had a tremendous impact upon relationships between people. The consequences of these violent disorders can still be observed among the Gorongosa people, not because the former rituals have lost their importance but because not everyone shares the same vision in relation to their performance. Birth, infancy, marriage and death are very often enshrouded in violent conflicts. A rare exception can be observed among Christian religious groups, who have re-introduced most of the cultural processes within their churches, but under different names.

#### **9.2.4. Divorce and *ku patizana* (reconciliation)**

Historically both divorce (*ku lambana*) and reconciliation were practised among married people. These possibilities have not changed in contemporary Gorongosa. A husband or wife can ask for a divorce if any part of the marriage alliance is not seriously corresponding with mutual expectations. In the past, people would divorce in cases where the husband was unable to provide proper care for his wife or wives, if the husband was violent (*vinga*), if extra-marital sexual intercourse took place (by either husband or wife), or if the wife was lazy and did not properly care for the house and the children. These reasons for divorce have not changed much. What has changed, however, is the ease with which the war and post-war generations divorce. This reality is statistically demonstrated in Chapter 13.

In the past, in cases of proven extra-marital sexual intercourse (principally on the part of the husband), there was a need to perform a cleansing ceremony to reunite the couple. This ceremony is called *ku patizana* (or *ku batizana*). It is from this ceremony that the word "reconciliation" originates in the *Chi-Gorongose* language. The belief and practice is that as a result of illicit coitus the person who committed the act becomes polluted and can communicate diseases to his or her close kin. In order to prevent such contamination and in order to reconnect the person with his or her kin, there is a need to perform *ku patizana*; there is a need to reconcile or reconnect the person with the group so that all of them can eat together again. The healer boils an egg mixed with roots of

various trees. When it is ready, both husband and wife must eat together in order to re-establish the connection free of pollution.

Some war survivors reported having witnessed the use of this type of ceremony for the cleansing of married women who had been raped by soldiers, while others said that women remained silent in relation to their rape experiences because they were afraid that their husbands would send them away. *Ku patizana* seems problematic when applied to contexts of rape, since the underlying belief among men is simply that illicit coitus took place, with no consideration of the circumstances under which it occurred. *Ku patizana* generally only expresses the willingness of the husband to reconnect with his wife after she has been unfaithful; it does not take into account her lack of volition. This type of reasoning also foregrounds the idea among men that during the war their wives would have sex with the soldiers of their own free will, and serves to corroborate men's perceptions that women are *hure* (prostitutes).

#### **9.2.5. Religious and medical practices**

The main religion of the people in Gorongosa is the ancestor worshipping.<sup>183</sup> Despite five hundred years of Portuguese colonization associated with a strong Catholic Church influence that began in the 1930s, the majority of people in Gorongosa do not consider God as their main focus of worship. Although they may believe in the existence of a Supreme Being (variously called *Mulungo* or *Muari*: God), they worship their ancestral spirits as part of their religious practice. Even under the short-lived but extreme influence of Marxism-Leninism, the majority of people did not abandon their ancestral system of beliefs.

The spirits of the dead and their various hosts are believed to be part of the same human condition. People believe that success in all dimensions of life is a function of good relationships with their spirits, because the spirits have the power to influence the course of life in the realm of the living. Spirits can make contact with the realm of the living through dreams or through diseases that they can send to one or more members of a family. For their part, living people can make contact with their dead loved ones through mediation by a traditional healer, by themselves at home through a session of worship, or through a family member's possession trance.

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<sup>183</sup> This is addressed at length in the chapter 14 on traditional medicine.

In parallel with ancestor-worshipping practices, different versions of the Christian religion are also part of the social world of the Gorongosas.<sup>184</sup> In some cases, Christian churches had to adapt to local traditions in order to gain members from the community, such as allowing them to drink alcohol, smoke tobacco or be polygynous. They tried in a peaceful manner to eliminate the local beliefs of ancestor worship in order to convert the locals to the belief that God is the only (and best) source of help in the resolution of all problems.

### **9.3. Organization of the political system**

Gorongosa people live in a vast territory made up of various villages. The management of the territory is under the responsibility of a group of people who have acquired socio-cultural power through family inheritance. The chief of an entire territory is known as a *nhakwa*.<sup>185</sup> As has been described for the Sena political system (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1979), the chiefs in Gorongosa have secular and religious responsibilities to safeguard the ancestral land and the sole right to alienate territory within their polity.

As Figure 1 shows, there are two branches of organization in the structures of traditional authorities: political and legal. The *nhakwa* governs his vast territory with the assistance of his subordinates, namely the *n'fumos*, who are the heads of the various villages. Both *nhakwa* and *n'fumos* are assisted by a group of traditional judges (*watongui*)<sup>186</sup> and another group of (usually young) men who, in terms of the work they perform, can be compared to a kind of local police (*cabo terra*). The legal side is also connected to the field of traditional medicine, particularly with the *paza* (plural: *mapaza*) healers. Although the *paza* healers are not an integral part of the *nhakwa*'s staff (they are independent), they are systematically referred to in conflicts that involve the realm of the invisible. The separation between the political and legal branches is not rigid. Although it can happen that judges might be a distinct group of individuals whose sole task is to mediate in conflict resolution, several members of the political structure also in fact work as judges, including the *nhakwa*.

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<sup>184</sup> Although the role of this resource was studied during my fieldwork, I do not describe the full results in this thesis. That data are related to the perceptions of various types of transitional justice, and will be discussed in detail in a separate article.

<sup>185</sup> The Portuguese colonialists called them *regulos*.

<sup>186</sup> The role and modus operandi of these judges is addressed in the chapter on the traditional justice system.

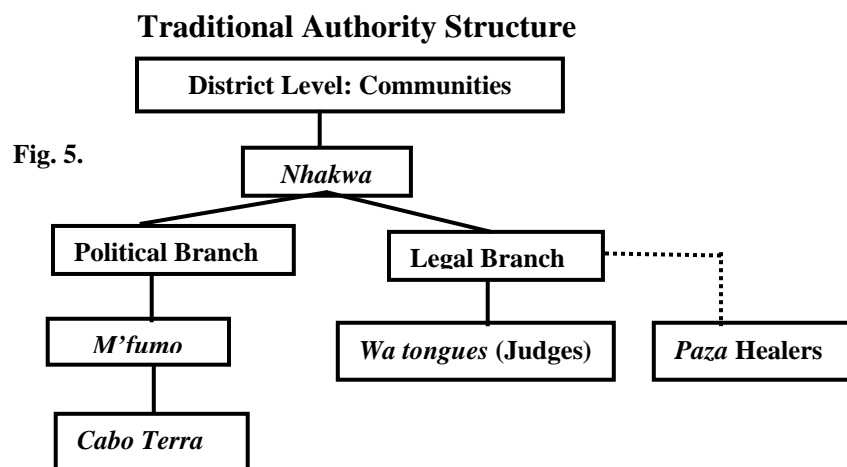


Fig. 5.

The responsibility of the *nhakwa* and *n'fumos* is to manage to the organization of daily life in their territories. These local chiefs are known to be responsible for establishing the broad connections between the living people under their control and the world of the ancestral spirits (known as *muzimos* or *waseculos*). Each family has its own spirits that are worshiped in the homestead. In the village, which is under the command of the *n'fumo*, there are the spirits of the zone (known as *muzimo wapatchisso*). During collective ceremonies at village level the *n'fumos* lead the proceedings by evoking the *muzimo wapatchisso* and the people participate to receive visits from their regional spirits. When a ceremony is related to the entire territory, it is the *nhakwa* who leads it by evoking the territorial spirits or *muzimo wadziko*. These territorial spirits, which have specific identities, are very important symbols of the polity; they also serve as geographic markers of the limits of the territory and guarantee the peace and social stability of the whole territory and its people.

### 9.3.1. A brief historical account of the traditional authorities

In the last hundred years the traditional political system has gone through several metamorphoses. Their history cannot be separated from the entire history of colonial domination, the post-colonial state, and the civil war. The Portuguese colonial authorities played a dual role vis-à-vis the traditional authorities: to fragment and control them, and to use and abuse them to exert and extend their own colonial influence in the Mozambican territory (Lundin & Machava, 1995). The Portuguese administration did not fight for the eradication of the local leaders; rather, they used their own military superiority and exploited the local conflicts among the various chiefs and their people to

subject and change the local systems of governance. In accordance with Portuguese colonial ambitions to control and rule, they used the traditional political authorities for their own ends by legally recognizing their powers, determining their geographical areas of influence, and defining the set of tasks that they had to perform in terms of the interests of the colonial state administration.

Thus despite the resistance of various local chiefs, the power of the Portuguese army enabled the colonisers to establish their political order in the territory.<sup>187</sup> The Portuguese modified the local system of governance by introducing the figure of the “chief of the zone” and the local police, named *cabo terra*. The chief of the zone was placed in between the *nhakwa* and the *nfumos*, and became responsible for controlling the *nfumos*. In practical terms this meant that the *nhakwa* lost direct control of the administration of his territory, because the *nfumo* is the leader that is in direct contact with the people (locally, people say, “the *nfumo* is the one who knows the people”). This modified version of the local system of governance was integrated in the colonial administration, hence the traditional chiefs officially helped the Portuguese and contributed to their achieving their ambitions of dominating the colonized people. This form of administration was in force until 1974, the beginning of the decolonisation of Mozambique.

When the struggle for independence began, the traditional chiefs were caught between the Portuguese colonizers and the Frelimo-led liberation movement. Many local chiefs bequeathed Frelimo in the struggle for independence against the Portuguese; but some aided the Portuguese by working as their informants and betraying the movements of Frelimo warriors in their regions of influence.

### **9.3.2. Alienation of traditional chiefs by the post-colonial state**

In the process of setting up the post-colonial state, the Frelimo party opted for a Marxist-Leninist ideological orientation, attempting to create a modern state and society based on the principle of “unity of thought” (Cabrita, 2000).<sup>188</sup> The traditional authorities, including traditional and religious healers, did not fit within this conception of a modern

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<sup>187</sup> A bibliographic sketch published in 1905 (in memory of the celebrated Portuguese Captain-Mór Manoel Antonio de Sousa), quoted news published in a newspaper in 1896 portraying various uprisings by the local chiefs in the regions comprising Gorongosa and Barue against the presence of the Portuguese settlers.

<sup>188</sup> In 1977 Frelimo transformed itself into a political party and adopted Marxist-Leninist ideology.



state. The Frelimo cadres purported not to care that the Mozambican history of the eighteenth century is replete with stories of violent resistance by local chiefs against the Portuguese colonial occupation.<sup>189</sup> In the post-colonial order, using the fact that these chiefs had served the Portuguese colonial administration (mostly as a result of force), Frelimo cadres preferred to follow their revolutionary instincts and simply accused the traditional chiefs of being “enemies of the people”, *lesa-patria*, and therefore inimical to the Frelimo-led revolution. By turning the traditional chiefs into pariahs, Frelimo perverted history and alienated themselves from a certain part of their own people in the process. The Frelimo cadres even ignored the fact that some traditional chiefs had been their close allies in the struggle for independence and lumped all of them together as part of the oppressive colonial machine. This policy generated dissatisfaction among the traditional chiefs and the people and interests that they represented. To replace these traditional chiefs, Frelimo created a post-colonial authority structure designated *grupos dinamizadores*. These were composed of individuals who had fought in the armed struggle for independence as well as persons who had manifested a public affinity for the Frelimo Marxist-Leninist ideology. The *grupos dinamizadores* were hierarchically composed of a chief, called a *secretario* (secretary), followed by an adjunct secretary, and then the chief of a unit (a kind of enlarged neighbourhood). These post-colonial chiefs were placed in every village and they had the mission to control the people in the locations under their responsibility.

Despite the Frelimo government-led attempts to eliminate the pluralistic nature of Mozambican society in order to build a new and modern post-colonial state, the various socio-cultural segments remained, as the civil war had divided the country between government and Renamo-controlled areas. From the early days of the civil war until the end, Renamo took advantage of Frelimo’s disregard of history and exploited the traditional authorities’ disenchantment to make them support their war efforts.<sup>190</sup> In this regard, some traditional chiefs continued to exert some influence among the civilian population in Renamo-controlled areas. Renamo created a space not only for the traditional chiefs but also for traditional healers and Christian religious groups.

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<sup>189</sup> See Liesegang (1996) for the history of Ngungunyane, the king of the Gaza State (1884-95) and Domingos de Rosário (1996) for the history of Makombe’s resistance against the Portuguese.

<sup>190</sup> Christian Geffray (1990) was the first academic to explore the local dimension of the Mozambican civil war based on his study of the violence in the northern district of Eráti, Nampula province.

In the mid 1980s the Frelimo-led government initiated political reforms in an attempt to improve the extreme miserable condition in which the country was ensnared. These reforms culminated in the adoption of a new constitution in 1990. This represented a significant rupture with the colonial past as well as with the short but disastrous Marxist-Leninist experiment. Individual citizenship rights were granted to the people and the diversity of the Mozambican people was legally recognized.

As part of the peace negotiations between Frelimo and Renamo, Renamo managed to secure, for the first time in the post-colonial state's history, specific legal recognition for the traditional chiefs who had been operating under their authority in the areas formerly under their control. In Protocol V, "Of guarantees", it is stated that, "The Government promises to respect and not to antagonize the structures and traditional authorities where de facto they are actually exercising such authority, allowing their replacement only in cases demanded by the inherent procedures of the local tradition".<sup>191</sup> Frelimo lived up to their promise, and in the post-war period the traditional chiefs continued to operate while a new cycle of legal reforms was brewing.

### **9.3.3. Legal recognition of traditional chiefs after the civil war**

As a corollary of the legal recognition of the traditional authorities through the General Peace Agreement (AGP), another legal initiative took place that exerted a direct impact on how socio-political life is organized at village level. This was Decree Law (15/2000)<sup>192</sup> that formalized the recognition not of the "traditional" authorities but of the *Autoridade Comunitária* (Community Authority). Although at first glance this may appear to be just a question of terminology, it has had very important consequences in practical terms.

Law 15/2000 defined the community authority as "the people who exercise a certain form of authority over a certain community or social group, such as traditional chiefs, neighbourhood or village secretaries and other leaders legitimated as such by their respective community or social group". This important legal initiative could be interpreted as part of the observation made by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2006) that

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<sup>191</sup> Chapter III on "Specific guarantees (...) from the cease-fire until the realization of the elections", parag. 9, line (e). General Peace Agreement, Law no. 13/92, 14 October. I SÉRIE- No. 42, Boletim da República.

<sup>192</sup> Decree Law No. 15/20 of June 20 of 2000 establishes the ways of articulation between the State local organs and the community authorities. *Boletim da República*, No. 24.

“the centrality of the state resides now, to a great extent, in the way in which the state organizes its own loss of centrality” (p. 44). However, state actors are not so naïve as to dig their own graves, and this law (15/2000) is a pertinent example of this fact. The term “community authority”, which does not suggest a process of legitimising power and authority, was chosen over “traditional authority” because of the breadth and ambivalence of the former in relation to the latter. It was this breadth and ambivalence that paved the way for the so-called *estruturas do bairro* (neighbourhood structures) composed of *secretários* (secretaries) created under the Marxist-Leninist policy to replace the traditional chiefs, to be officially accommodated and recognized by Law 15/2000.

The term “traditional” suggests a process of legitimisation of power. The traditional chief legitimises his power through lineage descent, through territorial governance, and through the people who live within the boundaries of his area of governance. From this conceptual perspective the *secretários* could never become community authorities, not only because their authority is not forged through historical family lineage but also because they do not have a territory to govern or people to rule; and the crucial question in politics is, how can a chief be a chief without people to rule?

The term “community authority” as specified by this law was not a naïve choice on the part of the legislators. By replacing the term “traditional” with “community” the Frelimo-led government probably had two undeclared objectives. First, they wanted to widen the space and the nature of power legitimisation in order for other agents in the communities to participate in community affairs. Frelimo was afraid of doing community business only with their former enemies, the now rehabilitated traditional chiefs; and they knew that it could be extremely difficult to gain support from their former enemies after so many years of deliberate politics of alienation and estrangement.

Second, the exclusion of the term “traditional” from the law could be interpreted as forming part of the long-term Frelimo reluctance to recognize its own political failures. In this way, the Frelimo cadres wanted to avoid giving the impression that they had committed a serious mistake when after independence they had banned everything that was associated with the manifestation of traditional power and authority.

Since the position of the *secretários* was created to control the people under the auspices of the Frelimo party, in the new political dispensation and through Decree Law 15/2000 these *secretários* could continue to exist and operate in order to secure a safe

interlocutor in rural areas, particularly during election periods. In this regard, although these laws are important (as they restored the formal power of the traditional chiefs and they specify some of the areas of intervention, the tasks they have to perform and their rights and privileges),<sup>193</sup> there is also a downside. The opening up of the community space meant in reality their fragmentation, so that Frelimo could better exert control over them. The Frelimo chiefs created these laws for the wrong reasons and in *má fé* (bad faith). In any case there was a need to legalise these *secretarios* as a part of the community authorities. They could have been banned, as the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary goals had faded away, or they could have continued to work in the new political order but as local members and local leaders of the Frelimo party and not as community authorities.

Another deficiency of this law is that the concept of traditional authority only recognises the person of the principal chief, the *nhakwa*. In fact, and as the popular saying says, “one leg cannot dance to the drums”, i.e. the chief cannot rule alone. Traditional authority is a system composed of various degrees of power and authority, which are represented by the corresponding people (see fig. 5 above). These various structures of the traditional leadership would be enough to work with as local partners of the State for the benefit of local development. This consciously induced confusion of the law generated a lukewarm response from the traditional chiefs.

The result of this law is that in most rural communities there is a “traffic-jam” of community structures. There are traditional chiefs, now called community leaders, while their close subordinates are not recognised. There are the *secretários*, who also have their adjuncts, and are now also called community leaders. It is difficult to discern the real responsibilities of some of these community leaders. They do not understand one another and on various occasions they clash over legitimacy issues; there is a strain between the socio-cultural forms of legitimacy reinforced by laws and the legitimacy obtained solely by legal decrees. The question that exercises them is: who is who? Who owes what to whom? Who is responsible for what? And which chief should the population listen to and obey?

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<sup>193</sup> For instance, community authorities in different villages received uniforms and medals and the Mozambican flag was placed in the yard of their houses.

#### 9.3.4. Legacies of war, conflicts of interest and sly chiefs

Two examples can illustrate the seriousness of the legacies of the political violence in local structures of power and authority. However, the way in which these conflicts are peacefully resolved demonstrates the positive contribution of many traditional chiefs to everyday forms of community formation in post-war Gorongosa.

The first example is related to a common dispute between the state-created structure and the traditional authorities. A conflict arose between an adjunct of a local *secretário* and an adjunct of a local traditional chief. The central question of their dispute was the problem of hierarchical subordination. Is it the *secretario* who gives orders to the traditional chief or vice versa? In politics, the one to give orders is the one who has the people behind him, so in this case it would be the traditional chief. However, the adjunct of the *secretario* started interfering in the everyday practices of the village by giving orders that were emanating not from the traditional chief but from the *secretario* himself. The chief did not appreciate this and aired his disagreement to the *secretario*. In his turn, the *secretario* thought that he had the legal powers to rule, and thus the fight started. These two authorities could not stand each other although they lived in the same village. There is a saying that when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers most. The result in this case was that the health workers who were engaged in vaccination campaigns had a hard struggle gaining access to the people because the gatekeepers were waging a war between themselves. In the end the health workers gave up because the people seemed to be refusing, while in reality the problem was with the community authorities. The salient fact here is that this was not an isolated event. The community authority as created by law is plagued with intrigues and serious conflicts, an end to which is hard to see.

The other example is a conflict related to the traditional chiefs themselves. With the government's promulgation of the Decree Law (referred to above) in which the recognized community chiefs received some material benefits, the conflicts between the chiefs intensified and some of them became violent. The case of disputes between some local chiefs in the region under the influence of *regulo* Tambarara is a case in point. Eleven years after the end of the war<sup>194</sup> these dilemmas are not yet over, and I witnessed attempts to resolve the case of the chiefs Suamera versus Taimo, and Francisco versus his *mudoko* (younger brother).

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<sup>194</sup> The case was addressed on 20.09.2003.

The background is familiar. People were displaced by the war; some fell into the hands of the Frelimo army in the communal villages, and some fell under Renamo control in their *madembes*. Sumaera, who was a local chief (*n'fumo*) during the colonial occupation,<sup>195</sup> ran away with some of his family from their *madembe* to a communal village, fearing that if Frelimo soldiers caught them in their *madembe* they would be killed. Another part of Sumaera's family ran away to hide in the forest, where Renamo was in control. After some time of separation, the family members who had sought refuge in the bush asked Sumaera to return to their *madembe* in order to continue exercising his leadership amid the civil war. He refused and told them to find a relative to replace him. Popular discourses during the wartime period conveying the idea that "war has no age", or that "war is for everybody" were simply not enough to convince Sumaera to return and assume his leadership position under Renamo control. He whispered to his family, "In the middle of a war, I cannot handle the work of *n'fumo* or I would die because of the war".

Sumaera's family replaced him with Taimo. Taimo was the right man for the right job in the right wartime period. He was young and full of energy and he could collaborate with the Renamo soldiers without many difficulties.<sup>196</sup> In the case of a Frelimo military strike, he could easily run away and hide in the bush; in the case of a direct fight with a Frelimo spy, he could handle that too. There was no problem; he was young. This was a situation where Sumaera could not thrive; war is for the young and strong, for the fearless and brave. Sumaera's time was past.

When the war was over, both Taimo and Sumaera had survived. Sumaera was not one of those people who say, "The most important thing is that I survived" or "it's enough to be alive". No; times change, and so do circumstances and wishes. Sumaera had apparently recovered the bravery of his youth: he wanted to be chief again. The problem was that Taimo's wishes had not changed and he had no plans to give up power.<sup>197</sup> Taimo stated that,

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<sup>195</sup> Sumaera Nota inherited the position of *n'fumo* from his late father. His father had also inherited the position from his elder brother, Samo Matanga.

<sup>196</sup> The main tasks of the traditional chiefs under Renamo control were to do *ku sonkessa ufa* (collecting maize) as part of the *gandira* system, to spy on everyone's homes to make sure that they were not collaborating with the enemy (Frelimo), and if they found collaborators to transfer them to the Renamo military bases in the region so that they could receive the deserved punishment: torture or death.

<sup>197</sup> The initial resolution of this case by another chief (regarded as a 'false chief') decided in favour of Taimo. Sumaera was not happy so he continued to fight in order to get his position back.

I don't want to pass this position on to my uncle because I suffered a lot during the war holding this position. You told me to fill this position during the war because you wanted to see me dead, didn't you? Now that the war is over you want the position back. I won't agree.

By evoking his wartime suffering, Taimo apparently made a big mistake in the eyes of the other senior chiefs. The other chiefs had also suffered in the war, so they did not appreciate this line of reasoning. As well as the reality of a shared past of suffering among the chiefs and their communities there was also the fact that the national official authorities had indicated that war-related conflicts were buried with the AGP. However, these same politicians did not clarify how to deal with the ghosts of the past.

To replicate Taimo's style of reasoning, in which he evoked the ghosts of the past, one of the traditional judges said,<sup>198</sup>

Mr. Taimo, Mr. Taimo, don't you know that during the war many people suffered? Many people were working for Renamo as *majibas* and they used to call themselves *n'fumos* while in reality they were not *nfumos*. You should not refer to the war suffering because all of us suffered in the war. What we want is for you to tell us if you recognize that the position of *n'fumo* belongs to Sumaera or not. If you don't know, then your father is to be blamed.

The other chief was even more vehemently against Taimo's argument. He said,

I was a soldier and I suffered a lot. All of us sitting here, we suffered in the war. The war is never for just one person. When war arrives in the *mudzico* [country] it's for all of us: children and adults, they all have to suffer in the war. There is nobody here who does not know what war is. You cannot say that you don't want to pass the position of *n'fumo* back to Sumaera because you suffered in the war; that is not possible. You, the elders [the chiefs in this session], have to reach a solution.

Though the traditional judges vigorously criticised Taimo for invoking the war suffering as an excuse, their insistence that everybody suffered in the war did not solve the problem either. The question is that during the war Renamo gave legitimacy to the traditional chiefs. Because many chiefs were afraid of dying they abandoned their positions to hide in relatively safe places or to secretly spy for Renamo in Frelimo-controlled areas. In Taimo's understanding he had made a huge sacrifice by not running away from the Renamo-controlled areas and holding the position of traditional chief so that it would remain under the control of his lineage. That is why he brought to the surface this fact

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<sup>198</sup> Since he was handicapped in both legs because of poliomyelitis, he shortly recollected how he had suffered with war by saying, "You are saying that you suffered with the war, but I left from Maringue on foot until Sena to get the last train. This was because of my job as a teacher."

that no one could deny: that you cannot simply skip stages by pretending that these things did not happen. Taimo, although he did not say it, was in need of acknowledgment for what he had courageously done.

The proceedings went further and there was a general understanding that “*dois galos não podem mandar na mesma capoeira*” (“two roosters cannot be in command in the same poultry-yard”), otherwise there is always fighting over control of the hens; and to complicate things even further, after the war the hens had become more rebellious than before. “These people no longer listen to what we say”, complained one chief in a desperate tone because of his difficulties in convincing his people to pay government taxes. Indeed, the conflict was becoming unbearable since the region under the influence of Taimo and Sumaera had on many occasions not performed the tasks that were expected of them because the two chiefs were disputing with each other. The chiefs who participated in the hearing of this case gave their verdict, in which it was declared that: one, according to historical knowledge, Taimo was wrong; two, according to the war argument, Taimo was off the mark, hence he was wrong again. There was an interim decision to hand back the position of *n’fumo* to his uncle Sumaera, and Taimo was offered the position of working as a traditional judge. It was an interim decision because the final resolution (*ku gwandira micero*) had to be enacted by the *nhakwa*, Tambarara, who was absent on that day.

The case of Francisco and his *mudoko* (young brother) was also very serious. They had declared a state of war against one another and had threatened to kill each other so that one of them could assume the position of *n’fumo*. The chief who presented the case described it in the following terms:

In relation to the case of Francisco, the majority of the people living in his area of command will not work. Even when we ask them to make a contribution, they do not agree because their chiefs are fighting. One says ‘these people are mine’. The other also says, “these people are mine”. This is because there is a lack of understanding between the two brothers. Now we are about to start collecting taxes, and I wonder if these people who are at each other’s throats will manage to collect the taxes for the government.

However, the proceedings did not go any further because Francisco’s *mudoko* was very annoyed that he had not come to attend the meeting. But Francisco was indeed there, barefoot and wearing very dirty clothes as usual, and smoking tobacco like all the other men. Although he appeared to me to be a useful *n’fumo*, gossip in the village concerning



his state of personal hygiene, and that his wife ruled in his house, was destroying him. Since he was already in a state of war with his brother, the chiefs decided that the case had to be transferred to the house of the *nhakwa*, as only he had the authority at that stage to address this conflict.

Both of these cases were complex, and they reflect one of the legacies of the Marxist-Leninist experiment and the civil war violence at the level of the community leadership structures. However, since the local structures still maintain important features of social capital, particularly trust and certain taboos, which allow them to create social spaces for listening and dialogue, they play a key role in peacefully managing these conflicts that could otherwise ignite continuing cycles of violent conflicts.

The contribution of the traditional authority structures is furthered evidenced by the fact that conflicts over power and control do not affect only the chiefs at the lower level of the leadership pyramid. Those in the higher ranks of political control have also been ensnared in the web of these intricate legacies. *Regulo* Kanda was fighting his brother for power. *Regulo* Sadjundjira was in the same situation and was suffering from *mawewe* (very frightening nightmares) in which his rival was trying to behead him. The *regulo* Sa-Kudzo (now deceased) quietly managed to shake up his adversary, but ended up in jail because of rumours that he was trafficking *suruma* (local cannabis) denouncing him to the government authorities. This respected *regulo*, whom the Portuguese colonialists had taken to fight the war in Goa (India) during the 1940s, was incarcerated in 1997 in a Gorongosa prison cell like a common criminal. Three months later he was released without trial because of a lack of solid evidence. He got no compensation for his imprisonment despite his innocence, and no official apology for his damaged reputation; he simply returned home in a diminished state. He recalled that, “When I came out of prison I did not even know what to think of myself. I was no longer a person”.

### **9.3.5. Local chiefs and their survival strategies**

Despite these continuing cycles of violent vicissitudes, the traditional chiefs are not sitting on their hands but are developing strategies to survive and continue to exert their power and authority in the vast areas under their influence. One common strategy is to accumulate social capital, being at the same time for instance a *regulo* (which is a symbol of ancestral power) and a protestant church leader, while also publicly pretending to be a

member of the Frelimo party. In turn, a brother or cousin of the *regulo*, who is his ally, might secretly become a member of the Renamo party and publicly work for the local state administration.

By means of this logic, which Georges Devereux in another terrain of analysis has called “antagonistic acculturation (...) adopting the means used by the enemy in order to frustrate his ends” (1980: 10), the local chiefs have managed to deceive the urban political elites without a lot of confrontation. An illustration of this phenomenon is provided by one very important former chief from the Frelimo party who told me how confounded he was when he heard the results of the 1999 national elections, which gave a victory to Renamo in certain zones of Gorongosa. He was so confused on that day that he almost had a car accident, because during the election campaign he had received 100% assurance from the local chiefs and his people that “*Nós estamos com a Frelimo e com Tchissano*” (“we are with Frelimo and Chissano”). For several days they had sung and danced together as if they were united and they had guaranteed that the whole village was going to vote for Frelimo.

Although this strategy of disguised trust is apparently successful, as it avoids direct confrontation with the official political elites (people vested with too much power to put in question the leadership of the local chiefs), it also appears to have serious limitations in the long term for local development. Fruitful cooperation for local development requires a politics of honest engagement from all actors involved. For this reason, the relationships between government officials, non-governmental organizations and the local chiefs, which so far remain enshrouded with hidden agendas, mutual accusations and misunderstandings, represent a serious stumbling block for local development. What seems unaffected by these politics of opportunism, however, is the management of the daily business of the internal affairs of the local communities. The local chiefs are able to exercise their authority in the vast communities through the help of their subordinates and through the justice system mechanisms.

#### **9.4. Organization and functioning of the justice system**

The legal system was connected with the power of the chiefs of the various territories. In his study entitled “Indigenous of Mozambique” (dated 1901), Manuel Feio described various aspects of the functioning of the traditional justice mechanisms among the people

inhabiting the central regions of Mozambique. Because of the influence of Portuguese colonialism and the further influence of post-colonial policies, the justice system in Gorongosa (as in many regions of Mozambique) became pluralistic or hybrid. There is the traditional justice system and there is also the national legal system, which is represented by the official court.<sup>199</sup>

The traditional justice system recognises two types of law: The ancestors' laws and human-made customs, which are being constantly actualised.<sup>200</sup> When someone is offended, he or she has the right to report the complaint to the *watongui* (judges), who set up a date for the trial. *Ku hirindzira* (revenge) is not allowed.

The customary justice system is part of the community. It is divided into three parts: the household, *watonguis* (judges) and *mapaza* healers. The judges operate in a physical space that could be categorized approximately as a court whereas the *mapaza* healers do not have a fixed physical space. Clients consult the *mapaza* healers in their own houses. When conflicts are resolved within the household, people call this simply “*ku gara pance*” or “*ku gazicana pance*”, which literally means to sit down on the floor and talk, in order to reach a consensus for a problem. If consensus is not reached at this micro level, people take the case to the community authorities operating at the meso level.

The courts of the traditional judges function in different locations: at the home of the *nhakwa* (regulo) or of one of the *m'fumos* (his assistants). If the traditional chief is well organized, the legal disputes in his court will be solved in a specific place called *matchessa*. Otherwise, the arbitrations take place beneath a mango tree in his *madembe*. Varying from village to village, the courts function on specific days or according to the urgency of the cases requiring resolution. This system has its own internal means of referral. The referral is made from the bottom of the pyramid (that is the court that functions in the house of the *n'fumo*) up to the top (the court that operates in house of the *nhakwa*). From this level, if the *nhakwa* fails to solve a case, he will transfer it to the official court.

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<sup>199</sup> The official courts only operate in the district capital, but they also cooperate with the community courts through a system of mutual referral. Cases of blood crimes or cases that the community judges will not accept are transferred to the official court. In the reverse direction, cases of divorce and other small-scale family conflicts are referred to the community courts.

<sup>200</sup> The marriage institution is founded upon the practice of bride-price. But the specific values and amounts involved vary according to the historical period and contemporary socio-economic circumstances.

One key aspect of any legal system is the procedure for building up the evidence. The concept closest to “evidence” is *tchakade*, which literally means “right”. In legal terms, the local concept of evidence has two dimensions, one material and the other invisible. In material terms people even talk of *kuita tchakubata namandzango*, i.e., to get hold of the truth with one’s hands. When this form of evidence (i.e., the culprit having been caught red-handed) is not available to present in the court, and if the legal hearings only yield *upoca* (systematic denial of guilt), the evidence is regarded as invisible to the judges and visible only to the one who committed the illegal act. The case is then referred to a specific type of traditional healer: the *paza* (*mapaza*, in plural). To avoid arguments over manipulation of the evidence, the judges refer to a *mapaza* healer who is not known to the injured party or defendants.

The *mapaza* represent an elite class of healers who have the power to uncover the final, concealed truth in a case. As a result of colonial influence, the *mapaza* healers have undergone various transformations. Historical narratives affirm that formerly they would disclose the truth by giving the complainant and the defendant a portion of poison to drink. If one of them died, this was the confirmation that he was the one at fault. Nowadays, *mapaza* healers no longer use this type of strategy to determine the truth. Instead, they use a *paza* (hoe; plural: *mapaza*) which they cover with a mixture of water and oil and then put in the fire. If the *paza* releases a huge blaze, this means that the defendant is symbolically burning and that he or she is guilty.

In general the courts are composed of judges who are older men; very few women work as judges. In the course of my research I met only six female judges in all the locations where I did the research. One of them explained to me that the reason women were working as judges was that sometimes they receive delicate cases involving women which require the presence of a female judge to provide a separate hearing space. In cases of accusations of marriage infidelity, for example, a female judge is needed to allow the women’s issues be explored in detail. When the case presentation is made separately before a female judge, then this judge will bring the result before all of the judges so that a sentence can be presented. The laws are not written down, so the judges make their decisions based on custom and their own personal experience.

#### **9.4.1. Modus operandi and the principle of presumption of innocence**

The modus operandi of the courts follows a combination of procedural, restorative and retributive justice. There are no lawyers: only judges, defendants, victims, family members, witnesses and the community in general. Each individual represents him or herself. Although the main protagonists in a trial are the plaintiff and the defendants, the trials are collective in that family and community members take part as well. Gender divisions are markedly evident from the beginning: men sit on one side and women on the other. However, this gender division does not interfere in the proceedings of the court; each individual, regardless of gender or age, has the right to speak until he or she announces to the court that the testimony is over. Mastery in rhetoric is a very important resource during the proceedings. The judges open and close the trial and also closely mediate the proceedings. The opening consists in a brief presentation by the main judge regarding the case that has been reported. The injured party is given a turn to describe the occurrence: what happened, and when and how it happened. When the complainant's testimony is done, the judges can ask some questions for clarification, and then it is the defendant's turn to speak.

The passing of the turn to speak from one participant to another is always intercalated with handclapping by everyone present, which gives a sense of solemnity to the act of resolving conflicts. Most importantly, this handclapping during the transferring of the turn to speak between the defendant and the complainant is in fact an enactment of the principle of presumption of innocence. Clapping the hands every single time each person has presented his or her part of the case is a powerful way of treating both the aggrieved party and the defendant on an equal basis of respect. This procedure also indicates that the court relies much more on argumentation rather than power of the aggrieved or defendant to determine the outcome of the case. This is very interesting because one gets the impression that the outcome of the dispute is really an enigma. When culpability has been determined, the judges will ask the injured party to prescribe the form of reparation required; and in their turn, the judges determine the punishment if they regard the infraction as very serious. In the end the chief judge utters some words advising the contenders that they should cultivate *ku verana* (understanding, or a harmonious relationship) in the place where they live. This advice is intended to avoid resentments on the part of the culprit and to foster feelings of forgiveness (*ku lekerera*) in

the victim. As a result, it can happen that the injured party and the guilty party will shake hands in front of the audience.

## **Conclusion**

The incredible influence of both the short-lived Marxist-Leninist political ideology promoted by the Frelimo party in the post-colonial period and the protracted and very destructive civil war, took place in a society that has specific economic, family, social, political and legal organization, and religious beliefs and practices. It is certain that as De Vries (1996: 401) points out, “trauma (...) profoundly alters the basic structure not just of the individual, but of the cultural system as a whole: Society will never be the same again”. Despite these very destructive influences and forces, the social world of the Gorongosa people, their main religious beliefs, social organization and economic practices was not entirely lost.

Through the various accounts of the war survivors and my personal observations, it was possible to determine that different aspects of the people’s family and social organization were drastically changed and fragmented whereas others resisted the pernicious impact of the political violence. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the post-civil war period is that the process of recovery has to largely rely solely on what is still available or is being endogenously created in the society. Since one of the mechanisms of the resolution of the conflict was enacted through an amnesty law (referred below), this position differs from many other countries, which have been the focus of studies on transitional justice and its contribution to reconciliation and healing. In this context, Mozambique in general and Gorongosa in particular offers a privileged or special site to study the local perceptions on the potential role of various types of transitional justice to reconciliation, the analysis of available strategies or the ones that are created to respond to the needs of post-war reconstruction at the level of reconciliation and healing, and how these strategies are shaped by the prevalent socio-cultural and gender factors and economic, political and legal circumstances. Under these circumstances the Gorongosa case offers interesting possibilities to study the short, medium and long-term effects of the locally available mechanisms and strategies that survived the civil war and the ones that are being created to promote economic prosperity, social stability, reconciliation and healing.

## Chapter 10: Perceptions of retributive justice and reconciliation

### **Introduction: “*These people deserve to be punished*”**

In previous chapters that focused on the theoretical debates on the role of different types of transitional justice in reconciliation, views from various authorities were cited that bespeak the key importance of having some form of official justice as a way of coming to terms with a past cycle of abuse and gross human rights violations. There were suggestions that the absence of state justice can create a fertile breeding ground for the perpetuation of violence and revenge among victims of human rights abuses. Other authors suggest that “any understanding of reconciliation profits from beginning with an examination of the beliefs, values, and attitudes of ordinary people” (Gibson, 2004: 5). Following these debates, the subject of this chapter (and the subsequent one) is the exploration of the perceptions of retribution and reparations that war survivors in Gorongosa hold.<sup>201</sup> Specifically, this chapter presents the results of various conversations with war survivors in which they reflected upon the potential role that retribution and reparation can play in the process of post-civil war reconciliation and the overall process of rebuilding the devastated social world.

The results are organized into three sections. The first section presents basic demographic characteristics and the quantitative results of household surveys on two key aspects of justice: retribution and reparation. The second section complements the quantitative data by presenting various kinds of qualitative data, in which information is provided about some aspects of the traumatic past of the interlocutor. This background information is important for providing context for how the person’s past experiences of victimization shape his or her view about the utility or irrelevance of retribution and reparation. The interlocutor’s perceptions, interpretations and judgments regarding the same themes of justice are then presented. The chapter ends by drawing the main conclusions that pave the way for the analysis of other aspects of transitional justice explored in the next chapter.

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<sup>201</sup> Next chapter explores perceptions about transitional justice through ‘forgiveness’ and ‘demanding pardon’.

## 10.1. Demographic characteristics

Table 1 provides a summary of some of the characteristics of the people who participated in the survey. The results are organized according to the gender, marital status, type of family, and religious orientation. These variables were chosen to give an indication of some of the general characteristics of the people who participated in this study. Specifically, the variable “gender” is used to determine the extent to which being a man or a woman shapes an interlocutor’s perceptions vis-à-vis retribution and reparation. A similar choice was made in relation to the variable “religious orientation”. The relevance of eliciting this variable is that it provides clues to the role played by beliefs in spirits or in Christianity in shaping survivors’ perceptions of various types of post-war justice.

<b>Marital status, family characteristics and religious orientation</b>						
	<b>All Participants</b>		<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>	
	<b>N = 392</b>		<b>N = 194 (49.5%)</b>		<b>N = 198 (50.5%)</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Marital Status:</b>						
Married	320	81.6	182	56.9	138	43.1
Widow	49	12.5	3	6.1	46	93.9
Divorced	13	3.3	7	53.8	6	46.2
Single	9	2.3	1	11.1	8	88.9
<b>Type of Family:</b>						
Polygamous	126	32.1	60	47.6	66	52.4
Monogamous	211	53.8	124	58.8	87	41.2
Other	55	14	10	18.2	45	81.8
<b>Religious group:</b>						
Christian	264	68				
Non-Christian	126	32				

**Table 1.**

The gender ratio of the participants was fairly balanced, and the majority (82%) were married. The monogynous type of family is the most prevalent, with 54% of the participants, against 32% (n=126) who belong to a polygynous type of family. A large number of the participants, 68% (n=264), indicated that they take part in Christian religious groups, while 32% (n=126) were not involved in any type of religious denomination. This is just a general indication that they may practise ancestor worship. The division should not be regarded with rigidity because some people who state that they are Christians sometimes also worship their ancestors as a way of seeking resolution for a specific problem.



## 10.2. Retributive justice and gender

Table 2 presents the quantitative results of the war survivors' positions vis-à-vis two types of transitional justice and their distribution according to gender differences. From the total number of 392 people, 44% (n=145) were against retributive justice whereas 34% (n=112) of war survivors indicated positively that criminal justice for the former perpetrators would be the best way to deal with the legacies of the war.

Reparation was the theme that gained the greatest consensus among the survivors. 60% (n=196) stated that the authorities should repair the damage suffered during the war. Only 18% (n=59) considered such a measure unnecessary.

<b>Retributive justice and gender</b>							
<b>All Participants: N = 392</b>							
		<b>(+)</b>		<b>(-)</b>		<b>(?)</b>	
<b>Retributive Justice:</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>(%)</b>	
<b><i>Punishment</i></b>	112	34	145	44	36	11	
Men	20	18	82	57	10	28	
Women	92	82	62	43	26	72	
<b><i>Reparation</i></b>	196	60	59	18	38	12	
Men	74	38	33	56	5	13	
Women	121	62	26	44	33	87	

**Table 2.**

For both items there was a group of war survivors that I have designated as “indifferent”. They indicated that they did not know what to think about these aspects of transitional justice and that they did not care what the fate of the war criminals should be. In this sample 36 (11%) were indifferent to the issue of punishment and 38 (12%) were indifferent in relation to reparation.

When controlling for the perceptions toward punishment and reparations with the gender of the participants, the results demonstrate that men and women in this study do not share the same view vis-à-vis these two types of justice. Significant differences were observed between the two genders regarding punishment and reparation. The majority of war survivors who called for the punishment of the former perpetrators were women. 82% (n=92) demanded punishment for the former perpetrators, against only 18% (n=20) of the men. A somewhat similar pattern was observed in relation to reparation. More women (62%) than men (38%) indicated that they thought compensation was necessary for the damage inflicted upon them during the war. A similar pattern of gender asymmetries was observed in relation to the group of indifferent war survivors. The

majority of the people who did not have a judgment were women: 72 % (N=26) of women against only 28% (N=10) of men were indifferent to punishment, whereas in relation to reparation 87% (N=33) were women against only 13% (N=5) men.

These gender differences raise intriguing questions that deserve serious attention. What makes men and women think differently in relation to dealing with the legacies of the civil war violence? Why is it that women shifted between two extremes, demanding accountability and being indifferent to these issues? Why is it that the majority of men declared that they were against retributive justice? When controlling for the variable “marital status” against gender and punishment, one possible clue emerges. The majority of those in the “widowed” category are women, 94% (n=46), against only 6% of the men. In addition, within the group of widows, the majority of them at 67% (n=32) were in favour of punishing the perpetrators. This cannot be the most important explanation, of course, since the number of widows is significantly small in relation to the number of married women, and there were also a fair number of married women endorsing the necessity for punishment, counting for 29% (n=74) of the married women. Further explanations of these differences are explored in the final section of this chapter.

At this point, what seems important to emphasise is that these quantitative results indicate that the majority of war survivors hold clear positions in relation to retribution and reparation in the post-war period, and that men and women in general did not always corroborate the same positions. Yet from the quantitative data it is not possible to know the motivations that drove people to opt for one choice or the other. What follows next is an explanation of these results by allowing war survivors to voice their justifications as to why they assumed the different positions described above.

### **10.3. Individuals’ views on retribution**

War survivor’s views of retribution consisted in determining whether or not the former perpetrators of indiscriminate violence against *povo* (civilians) should be indicted, prosecuted and, if found guilty, convicted. Reflections on punishment evolved to consider how punishment could be enacted as well as considerations on taking revenge through both human and spiritual agents, particularly through the spirits of the dead victims and through the spirit of God.

I will begin with Amelia, the woman whom Renamo troops forced to have sexual intercourse with her husband in front of the soldiers and her young children. She is brave, having survived the war; and she is victorious, still being able to cultivate the land to feed an entire church. The only blot on her life was imprinted in the war, as described in Chapter 8 (Sec. 8.3). What most strikes Amelia, however, is the memory of Renamo soldiers compelling her husband and her to have sexual intercourse in front of all the soldiers and her two children. She has not been able to find any explication for such a brutal and domineering deed. Yet Amelia is sure of one thing:

*Ninga zwi naita, podia kwa punir* (If it would be possible these soldiers should be punished). If they are punished, then tomorrow they will be afraid to punish people who are not soldiers. The things that the soldiers did to us were very bad (...) Even my two elder children were present; they were standing in front of us. The soldiers compelled my children to come near, “*uiane mudjeze zwiri cuita bamboo wano na mai wano*” (come to see what your father and mother are doing). This was shameful (*shi nhadzo*); it was very bad. I think that these soldiers should be punished, because that is not war.

Although Amelia wishes for retributive justice, and despite the refusal of the official authorities to deal with these matters, neither Amelia nor her husband has thought of revenge. They both placed their sorrows and agonies in God’s hands and continued living.

Next, I will present the views of a man. His name is Gubudunbo.<sup>202</sup> I cannot say that he suffered more than Amelia, rather that he is a war survivor like her. Both of them experienced the war through their own bodies. Like Amelia, he too is able to cultivate the land, and the capacity to cultivate turns this war survivor into a small hero in his yard. I say small because he is not complete: there are three things missing in his life. One is his right ear; two, he cannot hear properly; and three, up until the present there has been no justice to repair the damage that completely overturned his life. In the end, the worst thing is that he will die without ever obtaining any of these.

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<sup>202</sup> A man of around 50 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 01.11.2004.

It was the chance for “ethnographic postures”<sup>203</sup> that led me to Gubudunbo. His granddaughter was telling me how she had managed to escape a Renamo soldier’s attempt to rape her. Gubudunbo had tried to interfere. In the context of war, by refusing a soldier’s order, no matter how extreme the order was, Gubudunbo was committing an unforgivable sin. His audacity almost cost him his life, but his granddaughter was not raped and she managed to run away to a government controlled-area where she felt relatively safe.<sup>204</sup> I found Gubudunbo resting in his field after some hours of intensive farming work. He was not afraid of retelling his past experiences and presenting his views on justice. Yet one little detail was strange. His story did not exactly match his granddaughter’s version of the events. He recollected:

The Renamo soldiers cut off my ear because of my son. My son was a government militiaman. He was in Vila (a government-controlled area) and I was here (a Renamo-controlled area). Renamo said that my son used to come here at night to give me salt ... Renamo soldiers came to my house. I was in my field, just leaving to go home to eat. They seized me and took me to another house where their commandant, Mutanda, was waiting. Mutanda shouted at me, “your son is bringing salt here. Your son is bringing oil here to give to you”. But it was not true. They wanted to kill me and then they cut off my ear and then they said, “*irdja cutu uli*” (eat this ear). They forced me to eat my own ear. I started to chew but I couldn’t because of weak tooth...

Severing Gubudunbo’s right ear was not an act of war, which is generally defined as a fight between two enemy armies. Gubudunbo was nobody’s enemy; he had no weapons and he was fighting nobody. The mutilation of his ear was an act of terror against a defenceless civilian. Eventually Gubudunbo managed to run away to a government-controlled-area where he received minimal medical treatment and survived the war. Unlike Amelia, Gubudunbo had strong feelings about retribution. When I specifically asked him about justice, he did not shrink and exposed his thoughts:

These soldiers must be punished because they cut off my ear and ordered me to eat it. Can I call these people brothers? These people are not brothers... I cannot accept that cutting off an ear is war ... I think these soldiers deserve the same treatment they gave me; they should have their ears cut off too. If I had the chance to have a say to the authorities, I would say, “Cut off their ears too”.

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<sup>203</sup> In the field, the ethnographer visits different villages and he or she is curious about certain events and raises questions. The ethnographer also makes events become visible through a manifested interest in accessing certain interlocutors. An example: when Gubudunbo’s granddaughter told me about Gubudunbo and how he had lost an ear, I asked her where her grandfather was. She told me and I started looking for him. This is what I mean by ‘ethnographic postures’, which are also greatly shaped by the ethnographer’s luck.

<sup>204</sup> From one thing she was unable to escape: the Renamo soldier stabbed her in the leg with a bayonet and left her with a huge scar.

Despite the official authorities' orders to put the past behind, feelings and thoughts about punishment prevail among some war survivors. They did not disappear. For Gubudunbo, Renamo soldiers had crossed over the threshold of the tolerable, hence his rage that led him to state that justice means to cut off the ears of the soldiers who did the same to him. However, he did not indicate that he, the one who was injured, should do it; his reference to the government authorities suggests that only the official authorities would be responsible for doing something about it.

I will now present the case of another woman: Barazabiba.<sup>205</sup> Her story is very complicated and is loaded with unimaginable episodes. War created much confusion in her life. She still has the physical and psychological strength to cultivate the land with vigour, but the consecutive wars disrupted her life overwhelmingly. She suffered both during the anti-colonial struggle and the last civil war. During the civil war she suffered at the hands of both Renamo and Frelimo political authorities and also their puppets. She was widowed twice in war and, as she asserted, "I was still young at the time of both killings, and I could have had many children, but I did not". The first husband was killed during the anti-colonial struggle. Barazabiba was not sure who killed him. It was around 1973; they were living inside the *aldeamentos* controlled by the Portuguese authorities. Outside the *aldeamentos* there were the liberators, Frelimo warriors. Barazabiba's husband was found lying dead on the ground after a fight between the two armies. It was over for him, and he became dust after the funeral.

Then came the second war. Barazabiba was living with her new husband and family in a Renamo controlled area. One day Renamo soldiers kidnapped her son-in-law and killed him in the Gorongosa Mountains. Barazabiba and her husband managed to flee to a government-controlled area. They were living in the village along with everybody else until the day that a Frelimo *secretario* (secretary) killed her second husband. It was early in the morning and her husband was coming back from the nearby field. He had been there to deal with the monkeys that like to steal crops. The Frelimo *secretario* shot him and buried his body in a hidden place. After days of searching, someone saw the remnants of the deceased's clothes, and the investigations led to the conclusion that a well-known Frelimo *secretario* had killed him. Initially Barazabiba did not take the case to the authorities because, as she narrated,

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<sup>205</sup> A woman of around 45 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 24.10.2003.

We were war nomads, we did not have a fixed place; we were just running away from one place to another to escape the bullets. Plus, when my husband was killed his kin were not here. Even if I had gone to the police myself as a woman, what could I have done? I was alone and a woman.

Later on, and through the encouragement of her war neighbours, Barazabiba was able to disregard her female condition and took the case to the official authorities in search of justice. It seems that Barazabiba was acting naively. Would the government authorities judge and condemn an official who belonged to their ranks? Would the authorities waste their time on a case presented by a civilian and—worse—a woman? Who seeks justice in wartime and is ignored? And who follows and respects the laws in peacetime but is condemned? It is the poor; it is women; it is non-Frelimo members. Barazabiba recollected what the authorities had told her in relation to justice,

The authorities told me “*mai* (mother) Barazabiba, go home. Even if we dig up your deceased husband to check his clothes, will he be resurrected? Leave it at that. It’s war...” The authorities said more: “even if we put the culprit in jail, will your deceased husband come back to life? The culprit will eat *ntsim*a (porridge) in prison; will your deceased husband eat it too? There is no point in doing something against the culprit”. I went home and my husband’s murderer also went back home free. He continued working as a *secretario*.

The reason why this *secretario* killed Barazabiba’s husband was never clear. There were only rumours circulating in the war villages and since the culprit was never forced to disclose them, the reasons remained floating in the air and no one could ever really apprehend them. When I asked Barazabiba for her thoughts about post-war justice and the punishment of the perpetrators, since they are still neighbours, the answer was intriguing. She was not assertive like Amelia and Gubudunbo, but had mixed feelings. There had been gross miscarriage of justice already during the war. Nevertheless she unconfidently asserted,

Sometimes I wonder inside my heart if it is not possible to punish the soldiers who used to torture us. I think that the leaders who used to give weapons to the soldiers should be punished. Yet other times I really don’t know anything. If I say that these leaders should be punished, then these leaders will come to me and accuse me and then I will have problems again... I got poor because of the war. During the first war I became poor because my husband was killed. During the second war it was the same thing. I don’t know if I have a bad spirit who is causing this problem... Now I feel very nervous.

The case of Barazabiba is atypical as she lost two husbands in the same circumstances: war violence. In her perception, the simple laws of cause and effect could not explain such a tragedy. Only a deeper set of causality laws could provide an explanation: spirits.

The war threw her future into complete disarray to the extent that she was afraid to marry again because she feared there was a curse upon her. She feared that her third husband would meet the same destiny as her previous ones. She remained a “two-time war widow” living in loneliness. Her comfort seemed to me to stem from the perception that apparently the spirits of her deceased husbands were carrying out their own justice, the so-called “justice of the spirits”.<sup>206</sup> This justice was particularly effective from the spirit of her deceased second husband, whose murderer was well identified. She articulated her thoughts with some reservations:

These things should not be talked about. These things happened long time ago (...) The person who was killed, the one who was murdered, if he did not do anything wrong against this man [the *secretario*], if he was killed innocently, if he is right, then he alone will go there [to the house of the culprit] and bring about his own justice... The person who was killed, since he is a spirit, will go there himself to get justice. Now I am hearing that the killer is loaded with problems in his house.

War survivors expressed the necessity to punish the ex-soldiers not only because of the violent events that happened to them personally but also because they had witnessed atrocities that the ex-soldiers had committed against other community members. This was the case with Julieta (8.3), who had witnessed a most barbaric and emotionally appalling act. She had no doubts about what to do with the perpetrators:

These soldiers must be punished. They were not receiving orders to kill innocent people; the order was to kill between the two enemies. Instead they left their enemy and killed us, *povo*. For this reason I think these soldiers must be punished. What is the meaning of killing a pregnant woman and then stabbing her belly? These soldiers have to be punished.

The narratives of the above interlocutors leave no doubt as to what they had lost and how they had lost it; their lives were completely uprooted because of wars. The war is no longer there but their lives will never be the same again. Their stories demonstrate that both sides in the conflict and their respective military allies perpetrated mass killings and destruction in the villages. Their narratives also express their ardent desire to see retributive justice enacted.

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<sup>206</sup> This type of justice is addressed in Chapter 14, as judges cannot deal with cases related to spirits.

### 10.3.1. Why punishment? And how to punish?

Among the war survivors who propounded the necessity for post-war justice, punishment was considered the best way of dealing with the former perpetrators of alleged war crimes. However, I wanted to know from them why they thought that punishment should be the solution to address the crimes of war and how punishment could be enacted. Amelia, Julieta, Gubudunbo and Barabaziba did not explicitly answer this question in our conversations, although Amelia confirmed the necessity of doing justice in order to deter others from repeating the same brutalities in the future. It was Gatacuza<sup>207</sup> and Pedrechato,<sup>208</sup> both also war survivors, who explicitly stated how the actions of some former soldiers had excessively and systematically breached the laws of war. Gatacuza said the following,

I think that these soldiers should be punished because they were doing bad things. Their behaviour was against the *mutemo* (rules) of war. A soldier has to kill a person who has a weapon like him. A soldier must fight against another soldier like him. A soldier should not arrive in someone's house and then kill him without a reason, or simply because the victim has refused to hand over his daughter to be deflowered through rape. This was against the rules. For this reason I think that these soldiers should be punished, together with their chiefs ... These soldiers would cut off someone's head and throw it away in the street. This is not an act of war; it is against the rules of war.

Pedrechato corroborated this view by reiterating that “The soldiers used to break the *mutemo* (rules) of the war. They would abduct and rape women while their husbands were watching...” Although Gatacuza and Pedrechato are country people and never studied further than primary school, their ideas are in line with some of the principles of the Geneva Conventions on the protection of victims of war. The mass violations, abuses and crimes against civilians that occurred during the war in Mozambique systematically breached these laws. On this basis, after the war, according to my interlocutors, those responsible for these deeds should have been held criminally accountable and punished if found guilty. Yet war survivors did not agree about the type of punishment to be given to the former perpetrators. Angelina<sup>209</sup> suggested imprisonment.

These soldiers used to kill people, with no control... I would like these soldiers from Frelimo or Renamo to be punished. That's it... Not kill them, but send them to prison.

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<sup>207</sup> A man of around 45 years. Interview, 29.09.2003.

<sup>208</sup> A man of around 35 years. Interview, Gorongosa 28.11.2003.

<sup>209</sup> A woman, 35 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 28.11.2003.



Other war survivors suggested a more socio-cultural oriented type of punishment. Some affirmed that the soldiers should work in the *machambas* (crop fields) and what they produced could be used to help war orphans, while others said that the ex-soldiers should repair the roads as a punishment.

Like Gubudunbo, who suggested that his former perpetrators should also have their ears cut off, other war survivors went further to suggest more serious punishments. Arnaldo<sup>210</sup> was not coy about determining the fate of the former perpetrators: “the criminal soldiers deserve to be punished or even to be killed too.” Unlike Arnaldo and Gubudunbo, however, there were other war survivors who were unable to say what kind of punishment they thought should apply to former perpetrators, and there were still others who referred to the government authorities as the legitimate institution to pronounce on this issue. Castigo,<sup>211</sup> a Zion pastor, was compelled in the war to witness his mother being raped and subsequently killed. When I talked to him he was still so upset by what had happened to his deceased mother that he was unable to imagine what punishment such predators could deserve.

*Epa!!* As long as I live, I think that these people were doing very bad things. They were not applying the rules of the army... They raped my mother in front of me and then killed her without any reason. I can't think what kind of punishment these people deserve. My thoughts are not solid; they are moving around.

Perhaps it added to his upset state that he had no internalised rules on how to deal with individuals who commit such gruesome crimes, and so his thoughts were still jumping around. Zacarias,<sup>212</sup> who stepped on a landmine and lost his right leg, indicated how complex the wartime experiences were, and how various factors were at stake so that only the government could decide on the issue. He stated,

The soldiers who committed crimes should be punished because we are suffering even today (...)  
It is difficult to say how they should be punished, because some of these ex-soldiers are our family members, they are our *seculos* (grandfathers). The authorities are the ones who know how to punish these ex-soldiers.

For some war survivors the absence of criminal justice creates a sense of continuing and systematic postponement of the settling of accounts. As one survivor stated, “If no justice is done, my suffering will only end when I die.” Yet of equal key importance in all this is

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<sup>210</sup> A young man of around 30 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 01.11.2004.

<sup>211</sup> Man, 40 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 30.10.2004.

<sup>212</sup> Young man around 30 years. Interview, Gorongosa 04.11.2004.

the fact that these war survivors, who are seriously thinking about a formal punishment for the perpetrators, some even suggesting the death sentence, are not sinking into “degradation” as it has been suggested victims of violence will do if the guilty are left unpunished.<sup>213</sup> The majority of the Gorongosa war survivors do not seem to have become mired in the past; they have not built walls of lamentation and remained stuck beside them; they have not exchanged the willingness to live and work for full-time rumination on their woes. For instance, Amelia and her disabled husband are engaged in Christian religious activities. Amelia’s husband is even the pastor of a church. Above all, these war survivors are engaged in subsistence agricultural practice. This hard manual labour shapes their priorities: namely to put the past aside and concentrate on the agricultural cycle. They have to prepare the land in the present for good harvesting in the future. Even those war survivors who had strong ideas about revenge did not take their wishes any further.

### **10.3.2. Ideas of revenge among war survivors**

As seen above, war survivors defended the necessity to attain state justice where the relevant institutions and their agents would be the principal actors. Despite the absence of retributive justice, more than a decade after the war there has been no indication of revenge killings performed by war survivors against the former perpetrators and vice versa. However, my research shows that there are war survivors who still harbour very strong feelings and thoughts of revenge, and some of them have ended up in the community court to seek a resolution for their case (see Chapter 13).

I first heard of cases of revenge that took place immediately after the war. It was Marcochuta<sup>214</sup> who recollected, that soon after October 4 1992 some war survivors would drink *nipa* and then start fighting:

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<sup>213</sup> During the trial of Alfred Eichmann, the judges justified the necessity to punish by arguing that the failure to punish the perpetrator could cause the degradation of the victims (Arendt, 1994[1963]). “Degradation” was not prevalent in Gorongosa, with the possible exception of Zacarias, who had lost his right leg, which significantly impairs him from engaging in the recovery process. It is difficult for him to move around and work like other community members. Even in this case, it is the disability rather than the absence of justice that causes these difficulties.

<sup>214</sup> A young man around 35 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 03.10.2003.

“*uio andidi ku mu ona, nada, uio andidi ku mu ona, nada*” (that one, I don’t want to see him, no; that one, I don’t want to see him, no). Then the traditional authorities started to advise these people not to behave in this way and as a result of this these acts completely stopped.

Marcochuta related various events he had witnessed where violence had resulted. However, there is no indication that anyone died as a result of these acts of revenge, and these were apparently localized acts. War survivors and former perpetrators still drink together without resorting to physical violence because of their history of bloodshed. What my research found was feelings and thoughts of revenge rather than actions.

This type of revenge was expressed through the views of Jotagota and Macaricochino. The case of Jotagota is long and laden with intriguing episodes.<sup>215</sup> Before his tragedy, he had a life. For the country people in this research *ter vida* (to have a life) means more than just to be alive: Jotagota had work in the city and used to buy clothes and other goods for his extended family and even brought cash home. When the war began, his countdown to disgrace began too. Before telling his story he asked me for a cigarette. I gave him one and he asked me for permission to smoke. I do not smoke but I had no problems that he did. Someone brought light and he lit his cigarette. Then he continued:

We were living in our *madembes*... One night a group of *majibas* [Renamo police] arrived in my house while I was asleep with my family. It was Augusto and Batista—and Cendiari, the commandant of *majibas* in this area... They accused me of being a *capricornio* (traitor) because someone had told them that I was taking information from here to Vila... *ku nhepa bass* (just lies). They took me to the house of the nearby *nfumo*. In consultations with the *nfumo*, the *majibas* decided that I should fight against another man whom they had also abducted. We started fighting while they were watching... Then they seized me, they beat me a lot; it was Augusto who beat me a lot. My whole body was covered in blood (...) Then they said it was enough and that my problem was over. They summoned me to go home and they told me not to report this case in the base or they would kill me.

The course of decline in Jotagota’s life is long. Many people crossed his path and left profound scars in his life. Although he does not remember the names of all of them, he remembers Augusto, Batista, and Cendiari very well. I saw Augusto myself several times, passing by near my tent as if he was looking for something. Various interlocutors in different encounters repeated his name with the same disdain, “*este homem não vale*

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<sup>215</sup> A man around 45 year. Interview, Gorongosa, 26.10.2003.

*nada*” (this man is worthless). For what I heard about his past deeds this actually seemed a complement. Jotagota said the following about revenge:

Now we sometimes drink together with the *majibas*, but in my heart I do not forget their bad actions. If I was a clever man, or if I was strong man, I could create a lot of trouble here; everywhere we meet to drink together we could fight... If I had poison I could poison these people so that they would die. But I do not do it. I don't even make any trouble for them.

For Jotagota, apparently, two things are still missing in his deep wishes for revenge: cleverness and strength. Probably his strength would be boosted if he found support from other war survivors who feel the same way as him. While this does not happen, his feelings of vengeance remain dormant although the names of his predators are very well stored in his memory and he can easily retrieve them when he wants to. In the meantime he believes in two things: “when we meet at the drinking gatherings they feel afraid of me because they know what they did to me, and they know that I have not forgotten what they did to me,” and “I hear that some of them are suffering with spirits; they are offering their young daughters to the spirits in order to pay for their war crimes”.

The other war survivor who conveyed ideas about revenge was Macaricochino.<sup>216</sup> He grew up in a somewhat different way from many war survivors. He was *n'fumo*. Very early in life he learnt the art of commanding other people's lives. By giving one order here and another order there he became a chief of his village. However, war is like alcohol; it makes all people equal. And Macaricochino had experienced both tragedies: war suffering and alcohol abuse. He felt useless as a result. There is no worse thing for a chief than when he loses power not because of incompetence but because of outside interference. First it was the revolutionary Samora Machel with his Marxist-Leninist ideology, and then the civil war. Both harmed him. He became powerless to prevent the murder of his beloved son-in-law, who was killed by Frelimo soldiers. His son-in-law left three widows and a blind daughter.

My son-in-law had three wives. One of them was my daughter. We were all living in Kudzo under Renamo control. One day *matropa* [Frelimo soldiers] arrived in my son-in-law's house. Some of these *matropa* had covered their faces, while others had not. It was the group commanded by Chibanga and they came from Vila. The sons of Dinamite were also in Chibanga's group but they had not covered their faces. They accused my son-in-law of being *Matsangaiissa*... *Matropa* abducted him to the bush and killed him. *Matropa* fired one bullet (...)

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<sup>216</sup> A man around 55 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 12.11.2003.

The murder of Macaricochino's son-in-law was not a peculiar event when compared to the killings of many neighbours in identical circumstances. What really struck Macaricochino was his strong belief that his murdered son-in-law was innocent. His killing left three widows in complete misery. Macaricochino's daughter had given birth to a blind daughter only a few months before the killing. Since one tragedy often announces the upcoming of the next one, the prophecy of suffering came to pass: Macaricochino's daughter died three months after the death of her husband. It became the responsibility of Macaricochino and his wife to nurse their blind granddaughter. After the war, Macaricochino did not stop thinking about his deceased son-in-law; he did not forget the perpetrators, and he harboured very strong feelings of revenge in his heart.

If these soldiers were present they should be punished; my son-in-law died and these soldiers are still alive today. That's not fair; my son-in-law is gone.

Then I asked what kind of punishment he thought the former perpetrators deserved. He was as clear as possible, leaving no doubt:

Death. They should be killed. Was my son-in-law that they killed a not a person? Besides my son-in-law, the other people they killed were people too. The soldiers deserve death.

Later on in our conversation Macaricochino went even further with his views by saying,

If I met the soldiers who killed my son-in-law I would not talk to them. If I had a stick I would beat them to death... The war is over but this problem is not over; for this reason the soldiers who committed these crimes are not living well either.

Despite these strong wishes for revenge, revenge without action is only psychology. Other war survivors made less aggressive declarations about revenge. Ragatichopa<sup>217</sup> (whose brother Renamo soldiers killed, leaving his body to rot in the street) asserted,

Renamo killed my brother, whom I liked very much. Nowadays I don't want to meet Renamo soldiers, *basse*; how could the war have killed him when he didn't have a weapon? No, for this reason when I meet Renamo soldiers I don't want to see them. I feel rage against these soldiers...

Jeremias, whose brother was assassinated by Frelimo soldiers because he deserted from the army, articulated his own way of exacting revenge:

I only fear that my children will grow up and marry the sons of those who killed my brother, and I don't want that... I don't want it, *basse*. I will forbid my children to mix in marriage with the

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<sup>217</sup> A man of around 40 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 06.11.2003.

children of my brother's killers. I will not allow this to happen... I will inform my children about what happened so that they know who killed their uncle.

The common ground among these war survivors is their keen desire for punishment of the former perpetrators. They differ in that some war survivors favour an institutional form of justice while others expressed the desire to do justice with their own hands, lacking only the boldness and determination. Since the majority of war survivors do not engage in revenge, this group of men that still harbour rage and a willingness to retaliate apparently contain themselves by mimicking the behaviour of the majority of war survivors. The belief that the spirits of the victims are carrying out their own revenge (see below) as well helps to contain violence. The case of Jeremias is somewhat different from the rest of the group because he introduces a new form of vengeance: forbidding his offspring to marry the sons or daughters of his brother's killers. I considered this form of revenge novel since most of the former soldiers both from Frelimo and Renamo have integrated back into the communities by marrying the daughters of their former victims.

The overall analysis of war-related revenge is that it is not a common practice in Gorongosa, and the war survivors who have a strong desire to attain justice from the state will have to sit down and wait until the state agents formally summon them to testify to their own truth. Whether or not that will ever happen remains an enigma.<sup>218</sup>

### **10.3.3. Images and thoughts of revenge: Spiritual agents**

The story of Barabaziba (above) introduced another concept in the lexicon of justice. Besides human justice, there is justice of the spirits of the war victims. The spirits have the capacity to punish those who injured them. The particularity of these spirits is that they are free to act however they wish, i.e., to take revenge. If men and women do the same, i.e., kill their perpetrators, this is also called "revenge", yet human laws forbid revenge. No matter how many injustices a person suffers, he or she must not rush to exact retribution with his/her own hands.

In Gorongosa people believe that the spirits of the dead victims are capable of attaining their own justice. The basic assumption is not that the justice of the spirits is triggered because of the failure of the secular justice system to right wrongs. Socio-

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<sup>218</sup> Perhaps it is not even an enigma; most likely it will happen as it did in the case of Chile. Neither those who gave up revenge nor the ones who cried out for state justice got anything in the end. Alfred Pinochet, for some a violent dictator and for others a patriot, lived and died a free man.

culturally there is a belief that when someone innocent is killed, his spirit is capable of returning to realm of the living to avenge his death.<sup>219</sup> The return of the spirit is neither subordinated to nor regulated by human laws. The revenge of the spirits is manifested through spirit possession, mental illnesses (*ku penga*), deadly diseases, and instability among the family of the alleged culprit.

Jacinto,<sup>220</sup> a former Government' soldier, stated that, "Some of these soldiers are not living well in their homes, they are always suffering from bad spirits because of the bad things they did during the war". Albino,<sup>221</sup> a war survivor, affirmed, "The ones who committed crimes are now meeting their dead victims. Don't you see that some of them are going crazy?" Apparently the victims who were killed are coming back as spirit to harass their oppressors. Rosita,<sup>222</sup> another war survivor articulated her beliefs in the following way:

When the soldiers were demobilized, some of them who had committed crimes, when they arrived home, didn't live more than one month, or they didn't live more than two months. They died because of the crimes they committed during the war. The spirits of the people they had killed during war started avenging their unjust deaths.

Despite this widespread belief that spirits are coming back to avenge past abuses and crimes, I only saw two cases of former soldiers going through a very serious affliction whose aetiology was imputed by my interlocutors to the spirits of their victims. These were in Casa Banana. The first involves an ex-Renamo soldier returned from the war. As he was receiving the demobilization subsidy, he bribed a young virgin girl to marry him. Some time later, he began to stay standing up for the whole day. His relatives would ask him to sit down but he would continually refuse. He just wanted to remain standing. His health problem evolved to the extent that he used to disappear into the bush. His relatives would look for him but couldn't find him. After some days he would return home. One day he disappeared for two months and everyone thought him dead. When he finally returned home again he was completely mentally disturbed. He could no longer take care of himself. His relatives took him to the healers, and the person responsible for his health-seeking behaviour died mysteriously. Another relative who tried to help him also died in strange circumstances. The healers concluded that the spirits of the victims of his

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<sup>219</sup> Similar beliefs and practices are prevalent in the south of Mozambique as well (Honwana, 1996).

<sup>220</sup> A man around 35 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 24.10.2003.

<sup>221</sup> A man around 65 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 08.11.2004.

<sup>222</sup> A woman around 40 years. Barue, 31.07.2004.

violence in the war were so angry that they wouldn't let anyone to help the object of their revenge. They wanted to slowly punish their host until his death. Apparently there was no solution for this demobilized soldier. His relatives fed him and tethered him inside the hut to prevent him from running away to the bush. The local interpretation of this case was straightforward: this demobilized soldier had killed many innocent people during the war. As result the spirits of these victims are taking their revenge.

The other case of post-war revenge by spirits upon a former soldier was less dramatic. The former Renamo soldier used to drink alcohol excessively for an entire week without stopping. While he was drunk, besides becoming very violent, he used to do something very familiar to everyone: he would re-enact wartime experiences. He would crawl, run, jump, and mimic the sounds of weapons; he used to scream and insult everyone in the village. Because of his violent behaviour, three women had already run away from him, and his only son roamed around in the village as if he did not have a family. The war survivors said that the spirits of the innocent victims were punishing this ex-soldier for the crimes he had committed in the war.

#### **10.3.4. God will punish these criminals**

The views of war survivors on justice were also shaped by their religious beliefs and practices. For the group of war survivors who believe in the power of God there is no need for the state justice system to do something about the crimes of the past. The belief is that there is a God's justice. Anita,<sup>223</sup> war survivor and member of the Assembly of God church stated,

These soldiers tortured us a lot... God will give the sentence so that these soldiers will suffer. God will punish these soldiers because they caused us suffering.

Carlos,<sup>224</sup> who was severely tortured both by Frelimo and Renamo soldiers, also expressed the need to remain calm and to be patient because God is capable of delivering justice. He stated,

Sometimes I think in my heart that these people beat me until I was about to die, though I was innocent. These people did evil to me. I know the ones who hurt me and I continue to see them even now... Sometimes I think about it because I suffered a lot. I think about it but *prontos* (just it), since these are things of the past, *prontos*; it's better to have *paciência* (patience). The Bible says that we must not do *ku hirindzira* (revenge), God is the one who resolves conflicts. Those are

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<sup>223</sup> A woman around 40 years. Gorongosa, 11.11.2003.

<sup>224</sup> A man around 45 years, Gorongosa, 01.10.2003.



the thoughts that I have. I cannot do something bad against these people like they did against me. If I did the things I was accused of, God will punish me. If I did not do these things, God will punish them.

War survivors who believe in the power of God were always very assertive when talking about God's capacity to punish sinners. However, when I wanted to know how God would punish their former aggressors, they were no longer so sure about it—not that I raised doubts about their faith in God, but their initial assertiveness did not remain for long.

Despite this indeterminacy about the content of the divine sentence, war survivors holding this belief seemed less angry and less inclined to take revenge than the war survivors who believed in the justice brought about by the spirits of the victims and whose idea of punishment seemed more concrete: spirit possession, a plague of diseases, and family instability. Being a member of a religious group and actively participating in various religious activities gave people something more than just the comfort of witnessing the former perpetrators emerged in serious afflictions allegedly caused by spirits.

#### **10.4. Reparation... money... goods... construction of houses...**

In relation to my question on reparation, war survivors were asked to express their thoughts on whether or not they deserved to be compensated for the damage that had been inflicted upon them. This is the component of justice that mobilised the most war survivors in a consensual direction. The great majority of war survivors expressed the necessity for the official authorities to repair the damage caused by the war based on one single fact: they had suffered a lot during the war. Most stated that reparation could be in different forms, such as money or material goods. Other war survivors suggested more structural forms of reparation such as the maintenance of peace and stability, and the creation of jobs in order to develop the country.

Despite this major positive consensus on reparation, other war survivors felt uneasy and were sceptical about such a possibility, while still others, like Gubudunbo (10.2.1) and his wife Francisca (11.2.1.), recoiled because of the pain that they still feel. For this couple and others who feel the same, the war legacies are far from being resolved and no reparation can undo the damage that they still carry with them every day. Other war survivors simply refused the idea of reparation based on the pragmatic knowledge

that reparation would not resurrect the dead from the graves, or else they simply saw no reason to be compensated for damage that took place during wartime. Yet one thing was striking in the attitude of some war survivors towards reparations: indifference. Their indifference was simply expressed: “If they [official authorities] feel sorry about us and then decide to compensate us because of the suffering that we went through, that’s fine. If they don’t feel sorry and they don’t compensate us, that’s fine too. We will always continue to live”.

#### **10.4.1. I have the right to be paid...**

Reparation is a potential means for attaining justice since whatever the person receives, it represents a way of acknowledging the suffering that the person went through; it signals the idea that the suffering was not in vain; and it helps the victim to confront the damage to himself or herself in a positive way. Reparation as such is not alien to the local community justice system. If one person hurts another there is always a strong possibility that the judges will allow the victim to ask for compensation according to the local customs. In the context of this research, the demand for reparation was the strongest among those who had become disabled during the war.

Marcelino,<sup>225</sup> who was tortured with injuries to his mouth until his teeth were severely damaged and then was later hit on the right arm during an ambush when he was trying to leave Gorongosa to seek refuge in Beira, adamantly stated the following,

I have the right to be paid because I can’t chew anything very well now; when I try to do it I feel a lot of pain in my teeth... But since Renamo is not paying for it, I am just living like that. I don’t complain that I suffered during the war because I have no place to go to report my case. The people who are being helped are the former soldiers—but I was not a soldier.

Zacarias (10.3.1.), who had stated that the war was still not over for him and that he never wanted to see a former soldier, corroborated Marcelino’s position. He expressed his views while making an effort trying to remain standing with the support of an old, rusted crutch:

The authorities need to see how we are suffering a lot so that they can reach a conclusion about the best way of helping us. They could decide to build houses for us; or they could give us money so that each person can hire someone to build his own house so that we can manage to live well.

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<sup>225</sup> ± 30 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 29.09.2003.

When war survivors did not use their own suffering as the point of reference to justify the need for reparation, they would refer to the plight of the war disabled or war orphans. Being physically disabled in these agricultural and manual-labour based communities with very strict gender work divisions represents a major setback to anyone. Physically disabled people, however serious their disability, must still perform physical work in order to survive. In this regard Pedro said, “A person suffers a lot if they are *tchirema* (disabled)... There is no cure for this poverty. If someone is ill we send them to the hospital and he receives treatment and he gets cured; when you get cured you continue to live. But in the case of disability, as there is no medicine, if the disabled person does not die then it’s a big problem to survive.” Since according to the gendered division of labour men are the ones who build the roof of the huts, a disability is a serious stumbling block for them in terms of the fulfilment of one of the male roles. It is not incidental that Zacarias (10.3.1.) said early on that he had to “cry” (meaning beg) to other men in the village to help him carry the *estacas* (a wooden stakes and grass) from the bush to build the huts in his yard. For this reason various war survivors insisted on the necessity to compensate the war-disabled survivors. One of them was Gasete.<sup>226</sup> He affirmed that,

They [government] must pay for its people because they created orphans due to this war. These orphans would also have liked to grow up with their fathers and mothers but they were killed. The government must pay for this. These people were killed without being guilty of anything. The soldiers would kill people thinking that they were finishing off the problem, but these problems were not finishing; instead, they were creating even more problems. They were not leading the people; they were destroying the people.

I asked Gasete about the kind of help he had in mind for the orphans and disabled war survivors. He promptly said,

The government should build houses for them. They could also receive money every month... The government must pay the school fees of the orphans so that they can study.

No doubt a monthly subsidy would make a considerable difference and facilitate the lives of those who were physically disabled in the war violence or those who became orphans. So far only the former soldiers have received (and some of them are still receiving) financial assistance from the official authorities as part of their retirement. Assuate<sup>227</sup> is an example of how financial assistance boosted his recovery process despite

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<sup>226</sup> ± 55 years. Interview, Barue, 02.08.2004.

<sup>227</sup> ± 35 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 07&10.08.1998.

his serious handicap. He was blinded during the war in an explosion when he was trying to detonate a landmine. He said that he was lucky because the government did not forget him; otherwise he would be lost owing to his complete blindness and the fact that he was not originally from Gorongosa. Financial assistance helped him to the extent that he was able to marry two wives, one of whom was blind like him.

#### **10.4.2. Negative views of money as a form of reparation**

Some war survivors clearly expressed the view that any form of reparation is undesirable. Gripa<sup>228</sup> was one of them.

It's very difficult for them to pay us all, because there are a lot of us. There is also no need to pay us anything. The most important thing is that this suffering, war suffering, never happens again. It's a big task for them to pay us all one by one. If the government can be lenient towards us so that we can live with peace then we will manage to forget the wartime experiences, *basse* (that's it).

For some war survivors the priority for the post-war period is simply that the political authorities do not engage in another war. By not making war they are sparing the people and allowing those who usually suffer most from the effects of war to live in peace and to try to forget their bad experiences. Campira, who in the next chapter (11.2.1.) talks about the *spirit of forgiveness*, indicated that money would bring confusion rather than what is most needed: peace.

If the government engages in paying war survivors it will be very complicated and confusing. One person after the other will endlessly come and say that he or she suffered from this problem, and the government will have to pay. It will only create lots of problems; for this reason I think there is no need to do it. Its better to leave as it is, *ha zwina ndawa* (there is no problem).

Other war survivors rejected the possibility of compensation because of their belief that “water that has been spilt cannot be recovered”, i.e. the violation of the norm cannot be undone. For instance, Jeremias (10.2.3.), who right at the outset had expressed the desire for a particular form of revenge in order to honour the memory of his beloved brother who had been killed, stated that,

Even if the government pays or gives something as compensation, will I be able to see my brother again? No. I cannot accept it; this cannot be done (...) I would only accept if they wanted to cover

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<sup>228</sup> ± 40 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 02.11.2004.

the expenses of my late brother's children. This I can accept, because these are his children. For me, I don't need compensation; I need my brother.

This refusal of the possibility of compensation was somewhat intriguing to me. The examples illustrated in the literature emphasise the importance that victims usually place on reparation: around the globe victims complain loudly, queue up at length to get their share, and hire lawyers to fight for reparation. That was not the case with some of the war survivors in Gorongosa. Even among those who reiterated the necessity for reparation, they did not seem prepared to block the roads in order to attain it or at least to call attention to their plight. The question is: why not? Why, after suffering so much, did war survivors simply refuse the possibility to be compensated? There are at least three interrelated reasons that can shed light on the war survivors' reaction: a preference for structural forms of reparation that can repair the collective as whole; the availability of resources, such as land to cultivate for themselves and not for the soldiers any more as used to be the case under the *gandira* system; and the ending of the cycle of injustices by systematically addressing the post-war litigations of whoever is involved in the locally available traditional courts. The first reason is discussed below; the two latter reasons are addressed in later chapters.

### **10.5. Structural reparation: We want peace... jobs... and development**

For the majority of war survivors who dismissed any form of reparation, what they had in mind, even if they did not explicitly state it, was a kind of structural reparation. At least three war survivors, Castigo (10.3.1), Roberto (11.1.8.) and Alece, outlined such a form of reparation in a very clear way. Castigo stated,

(...) The government should feel sorry about the people that suffered in the war and help them. I am not sure if the government can help every person; I think that the best help that the authorities can give is to provide jobs for the people. When I have a job I will forget all these bad experiences of the past. In this way they will be paying for my suffering. But now it's not happening. How can I survive without a job when I have children at home? For this reason, we are always saying that this government is doing very badly; it is better that they give us jobs so that my memory can *arrefecer* (cool down) (...) When they create jobs then my heart will get better...

In his turn Roberto, without mentioning the creation of jobs, affirmed,

If the government has the idea of paying someone, even if they fill up a house with money it will not be enough to pay all the people, because all of us suffered... What we want is the development of our country.

Alece<sup>229</sup> also emphasized structural aspects of reparation and, in my view, in a very particular way. For her, reparation is thus:

They don't have to pay. We just want to live in peace. Any person who wants to work can work without any fear or hindrance. When we can live in peace, this means that we are already being paid.

Alece did not mention the government's responsibility to create jobs or engage in the development of the country as such and, between money and material goods to repair the war damage she did not choose either one. She seemed more deeply concerned with the basic fundamentals that can safeguard the social milieu for development to take place: that is peace and stability. Alece considered these two conditions to be the most important forms of reparation. It is reasonable for her to consider reparation in this way and her position is very understandable against the background of her personal history and of her region. Her whole life, from adolescence through adulthood and into menopause, has been lived in the context of war violence. Her past experiences cannot be negated or undone by any sort of reparation. Against the totality of war destruction, the response is a wish for peace and all its potential benefits: the absence of fear, freedom of movement, and freedom to work.

## **Conclusion**

The sample used for this chapter was composed of victims of gross human rights violations perpetrated by soldiers from both armies during the war. In spite of their extreme wartime suffering, there was no general agreement among war survivors over the role of retribution and reparations in post-war Gorongosa. The differences in opinion regarding reparation were less prominent than regarding retribution. People were more in accord about the need to repair the havoc of the war. However, their perceptions differed in that they suggested different ways of enacting reparation. This study also demonstrates that not all war survivors were able to formulate a clear position in relation to these

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<sup>229</sup> ± 40 years. Interview, Barue, 04.08.2004.

issues. The group, which I categorised as “indifferent”, will be analysed in detail in the next chapter.

One of the most suggestive results was the gender differences observed in attitudes to both punishment and reparation. Women had more favourable opinions than men towards the necessity for trials and reparation. These results are suggestive because knowing that the Gorongosas live in a patrilineal society, where women are generally subordinated to men and wives to their husbands, one might expect that women would be hesitant in expressing opinions that differed too widely from those of their husbands. This was not the case. The explanations for these differences must be found in the past experiences and in the present situation where patrilineality and gendered power relations play a crucial role.

As demonstrated in the previous chapters on the dynamic of war violence and on rape and forced marriage, there is strong evidence that men and women suffered from the war in different ways. Although both men and women were highly exposed to violence, as the war unfolded women and their bodies became the central target of the soldiers, particularly from Renamo. *Gandira* was appalling for women as they were exploited physically and sexually. Violence against women was even more pernicious to their lives because men (including their husbands) generally recognized that women suffered but they did not fully acknowledge that they were unwilling victims. This predicament has degraded the condition of women both during and after the war.

Many women voice these frustrations when they say in general that “after the war little changed” (Igreja, Kleijn & Richters, 2006). Besides having to face the stigma of not being trusted by men in society in general, women are also the main targets of the war-related spirit, *gamba*. Possession by *gamba* spirits causes a lot of suffering before the afflicted women can successfully mobilize healing resources in order to be treated by *gamba* healers. On other occasions it is not the accessibility of resources that poses a serious challenge for women. As will be demonstrated in the chapter on traditional justice, women have equal access to this resource. Accessibility is not a problem. The problem stems from some of socio-cultural norms that are founded upon patriarchal rules. These rules clearly do not treat men and women as equals; they were designed to protect the interests of men to the detriment of women.

I conclude that it is within this context of exposure to sequential suffering that the women's perceptions of the role of transitional justice in this post-war period are shaped. They believe that their victimhood can only be publicly exposed and acknowledged and their suffering really addressed when the former soldiers are punished for their wartime crimes and when the state develops initiatives to repair the damage. Since men experience some form of social mobility and their dignity is somehow being restored as they have the possibility to marry again with women who did not experience *gandira* and sexual violence, they tend to perceive retributive justice differently from women and they favour forgiveness as the best mechanism to come to terms with the violent past. It could be argued as well that perhaps men favour forgiveness because men have some sense of sympathy or connection with other men and for this reason they generally do not want them to be punished for crimes against women. It is an unambiguous issue for women – they don't commit these crimes, so to favour punishment doesn't hurt them in any way. But men have something to lose if they favour punishment. These are contentious issues that should not be precluded from the overall interpretation of the results presented in this chapter.



## **Chapter 11: Perceptions of the role of restorative justice in reconciliation**

### **Introduction: “*The war is over; let’s laugh together*”**

The previous chapter demonstrated that war survivors constitute a heterogeneous group and hold different ideas about retributive justice after the war. This chapter addresses war survivors’ perceptions of restorative justice in terms of forgiveness and acknowledgement. The sample of war survivors in this chapter is the same as in the previous one: N=392.

Regarding forgiveness, war survivors reflected upon the necessity for the former perpetrators to recognize their deeds of the past and offer apologies in order to be forgiven. The majority of war survivors appear not to favour retributive justice. Their main judgment was that the best way to proceed after the war was to do *ku lekerera* (to forgive) and *ku lekererana* (to forgive one another). War survivors presented various reasons to justify their position. Sometimes the same person had several different reasons to explain their choice of a peaceful attitude vis-à-vis the former perpetrators.

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section presents the quantitative results: the percentages and genders of the war survivors in relation to the choice of forgiveness, the necessity of acknowledgement and apologies, or indifference to these issues. The second section provides an account of the reasons why war survivors in this post-war society unilaterally forgave the former perpetrators. The third section addresses war survivors’ conflicting perceptions over the need for official acknowledgment and public apology. The fourth section deals with the attitude of indifference, noting the apparent contradiction between not knowing (at a discourse level) or not having an elaborated view on justice and forgiveness but knowing to do something

(at the level of practice). Taking seriously people’s indifference in their account of “not knowing” will enlighten our understanding of the meaning and impact of agricultural practices for post-war reconciliation. The last section wraps up the key ideas discussed in the restorative and retributive justice chapters, and advances ideas for the analysis of themes presented in the following chapters.

### 11.1. Restorative justice and gender

Table 3 presents the quantitative results of the war survivors’ judgment in relation to forgiveness or the demand for apologies. This table also presents the percentages of the group that expressed indifference in relation to these two types of restorative justice. The gender factor was controlled in relation to forgiveness, acknowledgement and the demand for apologies, and indifference.

<b>Forgiveness, apologies and gender</b>						
All Participants: N = 392						
	(+)		(-)		(?)	
<b>Restorative Justice:</b>	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
<i>Forgiveness</i>	155	47	103	32	35	11
Men	87	58	16	14	9	29
Women	62	41	96	86	22	71
<i>Apologies</i>	65	20	171	52	57	17
Men	36	55	68	40	8	14
Women	29	45	102	60	49	86

**Table 3.**

The results indicate that the majority of war survivors, 47% (N=155), reported that forgiveness was the best way to deal with the legacies of the violent past, while 32% (N=103) indicated that they were against forgiveness for what happened. When war survivors were asked whether the former perpetrators should come forward to acknowledge their appalling misdeeds and make apologies, the results were also surprising. Only 20% (N=65) of the participants considered this to be the correct attitude, while a large majority 52% (N=171) disagreed with it. As it was the case with retributive justice, a certain number of war survivors demonstrated indifference in relation to restorative justice: 11% to forgiveness and 17% to apologies.

By controlling these data with the gender variable the results demonstrate consistency with those presented in the previous chapter. As described in the chapter on retributive justice, the majority of men were against criminal justice. In this chapter, the

data show that the majority of men do indeed favour of forgiveness: 58% (N=87) of men were in favour of forgiveness, while 86% (N=96) of women were against it. Comparing the sample of men among themselves, the results show some consistency: 58% of men were in favour of forgiveness, against only 14% (N=16) who expressed a negative position toward forgiveness. Comparing the sample of women among themselves, the results also show some consistency: 41% (N=62) were in favour of forgiveness against a large majority of women who were negative about it (N=96, 86%).

In relation to acknowledgment and apologies, there were no major differences between the genders, i.e., only a small group of men (N=36) and women (N=29) were in favour. A large majority of both genders were generally negative about acknowledgment and apologies, i.e., men corresponded to N=68 and women N=102. In relation to indifference, the pattern is even: a certain number of war survivors N=57 (17%), the majority of whom are women N=49 (86%), stated that they did not have an opinion in relation to this matter.

The overall analysis of these quantitative data confirms two things already touched upon in the previous chapter: that transitional justice is not at all an alien issue for war survivors in Gorongosa and that notions of transitional justice are gendered. A larger proportion of women consider retribution as their favoured mechanism to come to terms with the legacies of the past, while men are more inclined towards forgiveness. Forgiveness by the majority of men and the few women that were apologetic generally exempted from accountability. A minority of people, particularly women, continuously reiterated their position of not being able to make judgements about the various types of transitional justice mechanisms.

In the following sections, accounts of the war survivors' perceptions and motives that justify their choices are outlined in detail.

## **11.2. People's views on forgiveness**

### **11.2.1. *Ha zwina ndawa* or the spirit of forgiveness**

I knew that the people in the centre of Mozambique lived in an environment rich in a diversity of spirits but I did not know that the spirit of forgiveness also existed. It was

Campira<sup>230</sup> who disclosed the existence of such a spirit. He said, “*ha zwina ndawa*”, meaning, “there is no problem”. I was interested in knowing what people meant when they said that “there is no problem”. He used his personal case to illustrate. He said that he had suffered a lot under Renamo; the soldiers had tied him up and beaten him a lot in their base located high in Gorongosa Mountains. The reason for the beating was that “they said I went to live inside the *aldeia*”. By the grace of God he managed to escape: “God helped me to escape on the fourth day”. When the war was over another problem emerged in Campira’s life: “When I think about this experience I get *ku dzudzumissa pa mussoro* (very confused in the head)”. When he gets confused in his head an invisible force comes to him and whispers in his ear and goes straight to his head: “*ha zwina ndawa akiri nkondo*” (there is no problem; it was war).

Campira explained that this is the voice of the spirit, “the spirit of forgiveness”. He said that this spirit had possessed many people in Gorongosa and transformed the minds of the war survivors so that they did not seek revenge. He also said that this spirit allowed the war survivors to forgive what had happened and to move on in their lives in order to attain other objectives, notably the one expressed by other survivors: “what we want is to live well”.

### **11.2.2. The soldiers did not know what they were doing**

Forgiveness by excusing the perpetrators was one of the reasons used to explain this attitude. Zauzau,<sup>231</sup> like all the other interlocutors, survived the entire war within the war zones of central Mozambique. During the anti-colonial war Zauzau was living inside the Portuguese *aldeamento* (also known as *aldeia de Caetano*) together with his family. Then there was an outbreak of cholera and many people died, including his father. During this period he saw many bodies of people who had died of cholera. At the end of the anti-colonial war he returned to his *madembe*. Immediately after independence, instability escalated in the region again and Zauzau did not escape. He recollected:

Matsangaissa [Renamo soldiers] burned my house. When they arrived at our houses they were saying, “*piça nhumbai, piça wega*” (burn this house, burn it yourself). Then I had to take fire and burn my own house. I say that it was Matsangaissa who burned my house because they are the ones who compelled us to burn our houses. We were compelled to leave that place and hide in the

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<sup>230</sup> Male, ± 55 years. Interview, Gorongosa, 02.11.2004.

<sup>231</sup> Male, ± 50 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 29.09.2003.

bush. We lived many years under Renamo control and we suffered a lot. We had to do *gandira*, and we had to give food to the Renamo soldiers all the time. Although we could cultivate in the bush, it was not easy because Frelimo soldiers used to come to our places from time to time and burn our fields and houses. I lost everything I had because of the war. The most terrible misery started during the period of very strong sun [drought]. We started dying like rats because of famine.

When I asked Zauzau about his thoughts on post-war justice he did not seem to have any doubts about the answer, neither did he seem to have harboured resentments vis-à-vis the wartime perpetrators. He seemed very *folgado* (relaxed) and stated:

How can the soldiers be punished if it was not their own will? They were being compelled to do these bad things: “Do this”. And they did it. Now if we say that we are going to punish them, they didn’t know anything, it was not their own will. When they received orders to do a certain thing they obeyed the orders. If they had refused to do what they had been ordered to do the chiefs could get annoyed. And if we say that we are going to punish these soldiers, that is not right because it was not their own will. We have to forgive them.

Zauzau’s answer caught me by surprise. My view was that forgiveness takes place when people want to forget what happened; they do not want to revisit the painful past or it is too complicated to initiate a process of addressing the past. It is quite another thing to forgive based on the notion that the former soldiers did not know anything; they were simply following the orders of their commanders, and in this way they were innocent. I could not believe that after having witnessed major atrocities, Zauzau could still believe that the soldiers were innocent. I reminded him of the barbaric event that had taken place in his village and that Julieta (8.3) had told me about, when a soldier murdered a pregnant woman, stabbed her belly, extracted the foetus and placed it in the drums loaded with *nipa* (local alcoholic drink). I asked him if this soldier did not know what he was doing and was simply following orders, and if this soldier was innocent. I thought that after being reminded of this horrific event he was going to think differently. But Zauzau kept in his initial answer. For him this soldier did not know what he was doing, and is therefore innocent. The only reasonable, although somewhat doubtful, explanation that I could find for such an answer was that Zauzau was a pastor in one of the most popular churches and his answer was inspired by his religious beliefs. I thought that he was probably extrapolating the final words of Christ before his death on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”.

As I spoke to many more people it became clear to me that the belief in Christian religion did not always shape war survivors' perceptions in the direction of forgiveness "because the foot soldier did not know what he was doing". For instance, Alberto,<sup>232</sup> a war survivor who was *laodicean* (indifferent in matters of religion), is a pertinent illustration of this type of explanation for forgiveness, which is not shaped by the Christian religion. Alberto's life was a cascade of blood. In early 1972 he was working in Beira city as a *mainato* (washing and ironing the clothes of his Portuguese employers). One year later he returned to Gorongosa to visit his family. The anti-colonial war became intense and he was unable to return to the city to continue his work. The Portuguese soldiers were abducting people to incarcerate them inside the *aldeamentos* and Alberto too was incarcerated. He never managed to return to the city to resume his work until the proclamation of independence in June 75.

When the civil war began, Alberto was violently crushed by both Frelimo and Renamo. Like most of the people during the war he had no fixed abode, he was jumping from one zone to another: one day in one zone, the next day in another. Since he was living under Renamo control, he did *gandira*: he was forced to carry heavy loads for very long distances without enough to eat and to drink. While doing *gandira* he was tortured twice. The first time was when he tried to refuse to do *gandira*; the second time was when he tried to save one of his pregnant wives from having to do *gandira*.

Alberto's brother and mother met an even worst fate. It is the usual story of people caught attempting to flee from one zone to another. A *majiba* who was passing by saw them. He rushed to the base to inform Renamo soldiers, who showed up immediately. They tortured both Alberto's brother and his mother so severely that they shed so much blood that they died. The cascade of suffering did not end here. Alberto managed to run away from Renamo to the government-controlled area in search of a kind of safe haven. Eavesdroppers were everywhere, and soon he was going to reap the consequences. A special unit of the government army, DOE (Departamento de Operações Especiais – Department of Special Operations) knocked on his door. The image of the horror embodied by DOE is portrayed like this: if someone fell into the hands of the DOE, could even a miracle save him or her? Falling in the hands of the DOE was like carrying the sign of death. The number of people whom DOE officials executed without

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<sup>232</sup> Male, ± 45 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 01.10.2003.

trial is not known. Because Alberto's friend managed to trap an animal to eat, Alberto was confusedly and falsely accused of receiving weapons from Renamo soldiers to hunt animals for them. He was put in an underground prison with no sight of daylight. To his surprise, he met another man in the same prison cell but this man did not survive. DOE asked him how many living family members he had. When the man answered "ten", DOE shot him with ten bullets. Alberto was severely tortured for eight days to make him confess: "swear what you did; swear, swear and we will kill you immediately to save you from more suffering". The unexpected appearance of a DOE chief from Beira city was the just-on-time miracle that saved Alberto's life.

The saga of Alberto did not terminate here. He was imprisoned and tortured a second time amid false accusations of treason. His body carries the legacy of this period: scars all over his back. Other people told me that Alberto had succumbed to *nipa* before I arrived in their village. When I met him he told me that he had abated his consumption of *nipa*. As usual I asked his views on justice. He did not have derogatory comments in relation to his perpetrators. Instead, he seconded the words of Zauzau.

*Haa*, there is no need to do anything because these events took place in wartime. It was not the will of the soldiers; it was war. I cannot suggest that they should be punished because it was not their will; if it was because of their own will that these bad things happened, then it would be possible to punish them. However, they were following orders, "do this, do that..." For this reason I think they should be forgiven.

I asked Alberto whether he thought that the DOE officials were right when they tortured him.

No, they were not right to beat me. I was the one who was right. A person, even a child, when you want to beat someone you have first to ask what mistake the person committed, "you did this". Then you can punish the person, "you must not repeat this wrongdoing again". Yet in my case I was just imprisoned and beaten and they did not prove what I had done wrong.

Even if Alberto recognized that his captors were not right when they tortured him, he still thought that they were innocent. When I asked whether those who gave orders to the soldiers deserved to be punished, Zauzau, Alberto and other war survivors with similar views rejected this possibility. I asked all of them why, if it was war and if the soldiers were following orders as they were saying, it was the case that not all soldiers committed crimes. They gave many explanations but all of them shared a similar view:

This is very bad. The soldiers were receiving orders from their commandants that when they arrived in the zones they should not beat people if they had done nothing wrong. It's the same

thing when a father has many children at home; some children listen to the father, and other children do not listen what the he says. Even though I think that it's better to forgive these soldiers.

### **11.2.3. It is impossible logistically/Unknown whereabouts of the soldiers**

Arguments anchored on the unknown whereabouts of the former soldiers were also used to justify the choice for forgiveness. For instance, Zinga-Zinga,<sup>233</sup> who is a chief, used this argument. His height of almost 1.90 could make him a really big chief but the problem is that Zinga-Zinga is not a chief in the traditional sense; he did not inherit power and authority from his elder kin. He is a *secretário*, one of the post-colonial chiefs who gained power via their loyalty to the central government in Maputo. Through the insignia that the government gave to people like him, and through their intimate contacts with the local administrators, these *secretários* tried to rule alongside the traditional chiefs.

Despite Zinga-Zinga's usual threats using the government's name when he resolves villagers' conflicts, I thought he was a very hard-working chief. Almost every day he used to climb the mountains on foot for an hour and a half to deliver his report to his superiors who were sitting, relaxed and joking together, in the main village of Gorongosa. War survivors used to tell me, "*senhor a guerra não é brincadeira*" (Sir, war is not a joke). If Zinga-Zinga's present life is a kind of political joke, his past was certainly no joke. When Zinga-Zinga looks back he cannot figure out how he was saved from certain death.

I almost died during the war. I was living in the bush, then the *komeredes* [Zimbabwean troops] arrived in my house, I was not present that day, they took my *mano* (elder brother) and his wife to Vila. Then a Renamo officer came to my house and accused me of being a *capricornio* (traitor). He took me to the base and when I arrived there I suffered a lot. They beat me three times and my body got completely swollen... I fainted several times and I lost my physical strength. They were just torturing me when I had done nothing wrong. They took all the things I had at home: my radio, my bicycle, the children's clothes, they took everything. The only thing they did not take was the trouser I was wearing...

While Zinga-Zinga was telling of his experiences he became distressed because of the very shameful and disgusting events that were graven into his life and those of his family.

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<sup>233</sup> Male, 40 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 29.09.2003.



When he stopped a little bit, I asked him whether his wife was present on the day that Renamo took him to their base. He answered,

Yes she was. On top of that, Renamo soldiers compelled my mother-in-law to take her clothes off in front of me so that I could see her. Can you think this? The son-in-law staring at the mother-in-law while she is naked? At that time, the soldiers were doing things that no one could understand.

Besides the physical torture, Renamo soldiers were really specialists in torturing people mentally by purposefully violating the socio-cultural taboos of Gorongosa people. What Zinga-Zinga was trying to highlight to me when he chose to tell of the episode with his mother-in-law was very serious. A mother-in-law is a respected person in this society. The son-in-law must relate to her with deference to the extent that he must always keep a distance and must never directly address her. The Renamo soldiers knew about this, but they did not hesitate to step far across that cultural threshold: son-in-law and mother-in-law naked and front of each other. After the Renamo soldiers tortured Zinga-Zinga, it took two weeks for him to start walking again, and at the first chance he ran away to the government-controlled area together with his wife and young children, where he was able to survive the war. During my conversation with him he kept saying that he did not know how he had survived. Later he said that it had been God who saved him. When I asked him about post-war justice he answered by saying the following:

Since this is over, it is really over. If these soldiers had to be brought to justice, how could they be found now? Who knows where they are now? No one knows where they are, the only thing we can do is forgive...

This type of reasoning concerning the unknown whereabouts of the perpetrators as the justification for forgiveness was echoed various times among many war survivors. It is true that many former perpetrators died and others returned to their places of origin. But it is also true that many other former perpetrators are still roaming around in Gorongosa, and this makes the argument of “unknown whereabouts” only partially true. My understanding is that pragmatism shaped some of war survivors’ perceptions. These views are not so much about the painful past but about the way forward after the war. For instance, Seda,<sup>234</sup> who in spite of the loss of his son and daughter who were killed during the war and the suicide of his wife after the war, also argued in favour of forgiveness because of the apparent unknown whereabouts of the former criminals. He stated,

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<sup>234</sup> Male, 45 years. Interv., Gorongosa 02.11.2004.

We will not be able to dig these things properly. Even if we have the idea of punishing these ex-soldiers it will be difficult to identify their location ... I always think that the war killed my son and my daughter; now do I have the right to ask to be paid because of these losses? It's not possible... We don't know where these soldiers are; the best thing is to forgive one another. Now the war is over, lets laugh together....

If the justification for forgiveness was not directly related to the whereabouts of the ex-soldiers then it was about what Girababa<sup>235</sup> had said metaphorically, “a soldier is not only one; a soldier is many soldiers”. What this informant wanted to convey is the classic dilemma of establishing individual and collective guilt in contexts of mass violence.

It is difficult to demand accountability from ex-soldiers and compel them to pay for their deeds... If we think of justice we will fail to attain it because it was not only one soldier who did bad things. It's better to forgive. It's easy to make someone pay if it's only one person. There were many soldiers who did bad things; if you accuse one, all of them will deny it, “It wasn't me... It wasn't me...” We just have to realize that we are the ones who lost. For my part I forgive and leave these things behind, and I go to do other things.

To these interlocutors, including Zinga-Zinga, I suggested the possibility of finding the former soldiers, as there are witnesses. There are still several former perpetrators who live nearby. Moreover, through the experiences of other post-war countries broadcast on the radio, the whereabouts or information about the numbers of ex-soldiers could be knowledge worth fighting for in order to initiate criminal trials. Again their answers were straightforward like “read my lips”:

*Zwa pera, zwa pera* (It's over, it's over) ... it's better to forgive since the war is over ... Now it's over, we do not think that they should be judged and punished ... It's over and it's over...

#### **11.1.4. Prevent another war**

The prevention of war was another argument used to support the option of unilateral forgiveness. Unlike the majority of war survivors, whom I interviewed and informally talked to in Gorongosa district, Rotagoza<sup>236</sup> lived together with his family in a very remote area of Barue district, west of Gorongosa district. He was living near the site of the massacre perpetrated by the soldiers of Ian Smith from the former Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in August of 1977. It became known as the “*Massacre de Nhazonia*”

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<sup>235</sup> Male, 45 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 29.10.2003.

<sup>236</sup> Male, ± 40 years old. Interv., Barue, 30.07.2004.

(Nhazonia Massacre). It was not easy to find Rotazoza since the administration officials were not sure whether or not there were people living near the massacre site. The only reference was the tobacco farmers located in an area that belongs to the white Zimbabweans,<sup>237</sup> and Rotazoza was one of their workers.

After the Nhazonia massacre in 1979, the corpses of the dead were buried in mass graves and the area became completely uninhabited. Even during the civil war people did not seek refuge in this area. Rotazoza claims that he was one of the first people to settle in the area after the civil war. Even now there are very few families there, less than five. Rotazoza did not witness the massacre, but he experienced the anti-colonial war. The real drama in his life, however, started in the civil war. As he was living in a Renamo-controlled area, as he told me he will never forget the physical torture of *gandira* and the extreme humiliation of witnessing his wives being systematically taken to the Renamo bases to pound maize and cook for the soldiers. When I asked Rotazoza about his views on post-war justice, he answered with a kind of metaphor that I was unable to grasp. So I asked him to repeat his views. This time it became clear.

*Ndondo indie ku bara nkondo, nkondo ati tchadiba muno* (suffering gives birth to war, we no longer want war here). It is better to forgive because if the soldiers are punished, then they will start another war when they feel pain. We don't want war any more; we are tired. We want to live in peace so that we can farm like we are doing now. If you punish the former soldiers for their past crimes, they will get loaded with nervous and then they will continue with their war again. We don't want that any more. It's better to forgive so that everything ends once and for all.

Another informant, Rafael,<sup>238</sup> had expressed the same fears and explicitly stated that it was better to forgive in order to go on with life.

We have to forgive these people. If there is an order to do something bad against these former soldiers then we are sowing the seeds of another war. It's better to do *ku lekerera*, because what was happening came to an end. We cannot go back and say that these soldiers deserve punishment... If we punish them the war will continue again and we no longer want war, *não vale a pena*...The suffering happened but now it's over, *basse* (that's it).

These narratives mirror the views of many other war survivors, for whom any initiative aimed at seeking the former perpetrators and exposing them to public opinion because of

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<sup>237</sup> These were white Zimbabwean farmers who were resettled in Mozambique as a result of the conflict that Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwean President, raised against them. They are commercial farmers employing around two hundred workers, black Zimbabwean and Mozambicans.

<sup>238</sup> Male, ± 55 years. Interv., Gorongosa 29.09.2003.

their past deeds is not an action of social repair but is rather perceived as a move backwards. They regard war-related justice as synonymous with creating more violence in society; it is the antithesis of peace and stability for them. After many years mired in a cycle of brutal violence, no one is prepared to let peace vanish. The pragmatic thing to do is “to forgive and try to forget”. This process is only possible because many war survivors strongly believe that there is a present to be lived and a future to invest in. This belief is inspired by the availability and accessibility of abundant resources.

#### **11.1.5. The war is over; justice is for present wrongdoings**

The achievement of peace in Mozambique clearly represented the end of the mass violence and indiscriminate killings of civilians and destruction of property. Yet peace also represented the persistence of conflicts among war survivors. In this way, for some war survivors the role of justice is not to address the unresolved abuses and crimes of the past, but to systematically and fairly address actual conflicts in everyday life. That is the message I got from Albino<sup>239</sup> and other war survivors.

We know that war is war. The things that the soldiers did in the war are over. Since the war is over, it's better to forgive... Now if a person does something bad against someone else, then this person has to be taken to the authorities to be judged... We have to resolve the problems that people create for one another now. If someone hurts another person then he has to be judged and condemned. That is what we are doing, and we resolve many conflicts. We even resolve some problems of former soldiers, but problems that they create now—not the things that happened in the war. Those things are over.

Fernando,<sup>240</sup> a war survivor whose friend witnessed Frelimo soldiers massacring eighteen men because they refused to live inside the communal village, expressed the same type of reasoning by saying that, “Things of the war and things of peace are different... Now we are waiting to see what bad things will occur outside the context of war. Now that we are at peace, if someone commits a crime, then we will try and condemn that person...”

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<sup>239</sup> Male, ± 55 years. Interv., Gorongosa 29.09.2003.

<sup>240</sup> Male, 40 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 10.11.2003.

### 11.1.6. “*Inbaticie zwenezwe*” or clearing the hearts

War survivors also forgive in order to clearing the hearts. Otherwise they fear that they can become reservoirs of hatred. According to the local perceptions the locus of hatred is the heart. When the heart is loaded with hatred it is difficult to live a normal life and the person becomes liable to act violently against others. That is how several war survivors articulated their reasons for forgiving their former perpetrators. Sebastito,<sup>241</sup> whose wife was raped by soldiers several times, presented his arguments along these lines.

He was exposed to both the colonial war and the civil war. His most painful and vivid recollections of suffering are related to the last war, in particular the experience of *gandira*. Because of *gandira*, Sebastito endured distress. He got sick, a terrible pain in the back and symptoms of dysentery, and he went to the healer.<sup>242</sup> In front of the healer his wife disclosed that the soldiers had raped her on the base. When she returned home she did not disclose her traumatic experience to her husband because she was afraid of the secondary traumatization of telling and thus reliving it. She cooked for him, and then he got sick. The healer provided medicines and Sebastito got better. I asked Sebastito about post-war justice for the perpetrators of abuses and crimes during the war. He answered by recollecting a conversation that he had with his wife about the same issue:

I said to my wife, “we cannot keep the bad things of the war inside our hearts. If we live with these thoughts and accusations inside our hearts, ‘you had sex with the soldiers’, it can happen that one day other spirits arrive, bad spirits, they make the person get very nervous [trigger the rape memories] and then I might start beating my wives. Or it can happen that one day I am drunk while I have these nerves [rape memories] and then I will become a bad man, I will start beating my wives. It is better to remove these things from inside the heart”. For this reason we thought that it was better to forgive the soldiers and to remain silent so that we do not remember these bad things, “*inbaticie zwenezwe*” (let’s put these things behind). I also told my wife, ‘when you leave these bad things behind, then just follow only one thing so that we can raise our child that we made together in Tsocera, including our children who have already grown up.

Another war survivor, Artur,<sup>243</sup> also insisted on the need to cleanse the heart from the bad experiences of the war by forgiving the former soldiers.

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<sup>241</sup> Male, ± 45 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 02.07.2004.

<sup>242</sup> There is a local belief that “illicit” sexual intercourse leads to social pollution. If purification rituals are not enacted, the polluted person can transmit diseases to closely relatives.

<sup>243</sup> Male, ± 35 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 10.07.2004.

We know that these soldiers did very bad things, but we cannot live with these bad things in our hearts... We always say to one another, “*hazwite ku higa mu moio tango akari nkondo*” (you cannot keep it inside your heart, because it was war). Since the war is over, it’s better to forgive. These war survivors fear that the accumulation of bad things inside their hearts in combination with present circumstances can brew to reach a state of uncontrolled emotions capable of unleashing violence into their families and community again. The awareness of such a possibility leads them to forgive the ex-soldiers by “cleansing” their hearts. For “cleansing the heart”, war survivors did not suggest any transcendental technique, but rather “Just forget about it”. Forgetting does not suggest a conscious capacity to undo the memories of their past experiences. To forget means “Not to place one’s interest to the past any more”. If no interest is placed on the past, this means that no action is taken vis-à-vis the extreme awful past experiences.

#### **11.1.7. The soldiers were suffering too**

Some war survivors indicated that they forgave the former perpetrators based on the understanding that it was not only the civilians who were suffering. The former soldiers suffered too. In this regard Magaziculo,<sup>244</sup> whose right hand had been disabled by a bullet in wartime, stated:

I cannot say that these ex-soldiers deserve to be punished because they did bad things against me. No. What I can say is that the soldiers were suffering too. I was also suffering, but now it is over, it’s over. Now we have to live smiling at one another. Now we are free; we have to live with understanding (*ku verana*). Do you see? I don’t know if the government wants to punish them. If they do, they won’t count on me to do it (...) It’s better to forgive them so that they can live like I am living. I am not thinking about anything else because that hatred is gone. That’s it.

One might be tempted to argue that this attitude resembles the so-called “Stockholm syndrome”, in which victims develop empathic feelings towards their perpetrators. However, this does not seem to be the case. Rather, the victims here appear to recognize that war inevitably brings suffering for everyone involved. For instance, the soldiers were once civilians; they were kidnapped from their homes and socialized in violence, and they reproduced violence in the communities. My interlocutors in this case recognized the breeding grounds for the eruption of the violence. It was not a case of specific empathy for particular soldiers.

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<sup>244</sup> Male, ± 50 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 28.10.2003.

Besides the perception that the former soldiers suffered too, there is an underlying understanding that the end of the war marked the end of everything, and in particular the hatred and the horror. One of the main features for a successful rebuilding of the social world is *ku verana* (understanding), as well as what Magaziculo said: “people should have only one heart”. I asked Magaziculo what that meant, and he said, “to do our work, to build our houses, to think about feeding our children, to think about our farming work, that’s it”.

The idea of having only one heart was demonstrated by Margarida<sup>245</sup> in a very convincing way: marriage and reproduction. Margarida’s case is interesting or intriguing in that Renamo soldiers killed her father in the war and then after the war she and her sister married former Renamo soldiers. I asked her how she felt about being married to a man who fought in the army that murdered her father. She smiled a little as she answered:

As my father was killed during the war, there is nothing that can be done. When my husband came to get engaged to me, I knew he had been a former Renamo soldier but I didn’t care. I just received his *mehete* [local ring]. My sister was the first one to marry a former Renamo soldier.

I asked Margarida about her thoughts on post-war justice, in particular in relation to the fact that her father was murdered even though he was a civilian. She affirmed,

... my father made a mistake. He wanted to run away from the bush to go to Vila, and for this reason he was caught, he was beaten and he died. Yet the soldiers were wrong too in killing him. But now the war is over, it’s better to forgive them.

Margarida’s position sounded ambivalent. She thought that her father had made a mistake trying to scurry away from one zone to another. Yet she also thought that Renamo soldiers committed a crime by murdering her father. By interpreting this unfortunate event in this way, she was apparently able to forgive the former perpetrators and even marry a former soldier of the army that killed her father. Unlike Jeremias (10.3.2), whose “revenge” was not to allow his daughters to marry former soldiers, Margarida rejected the possibility of this kind of vengeance. Margarida and her sister’s approach offers an unequivocal demonstration of how people can put the past behind, not in theoretical terms but in very practical ones. Like these two young women, many other women married former soldiers in the aftermath of the war.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Male, ± 30 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 22.11.2003.

<sup>246</sup> Marriage in the post-war period was in fact regarded as a mechanism for the reintegration of many former soldiers (Schafer, 1999).

### 11.1.8. I lost, they lost...

The various interpretations and explanations presented so far to account for the attitude of forgiveness towards the former perpetrators often had a collective dimension. Yet there were also war survivors who appeared to have very personal interpretations. These individual interpretations carry a mark of creativity; this was the case of Anita and Roberto.

Anita<sup>247</sup> was living in the bush (under Renamo control) with her husband when the government troops abducted them both to Vila. Her husband was starving and was somewhat sick (i.e., “he did not get ill to the extent of defecating on the mat”). When they arrived in Vila the health professionals rushed to give him medicines. He did not survive for even a couple more days but died suddenly; whether he died of hunger or of bad medicines is unclear. That was a loss, but not such a major loss according to Anita. Her devastating loss was her beloved son. She recollected,

I was in the bush and other people were living inside the *aldeia*. My son liked the idea of life inside the *aldeia* because the people there used to get humanitarian aid. So he left the bush to go to the *aldeia*. He ran away from us; he didn't even say goodbye, either to me or to his father. We looked for my son here in the bush but we couldn't find him. Then we heard from someone else that he had gone to the *aldeia*. Then we heard from other people that came and went from the *aldeia*; they told us that our son had been killed/ He was killed on a Saturday afternoon. He did not have a weapon, but Frelimo soldiers killed him and I don't know why.

I asked Anita why she had suffered more from the killing of her son than the death of her first and sole husband. She replied thus:

I suffered a lot because he was my elder son, although he was still a young man and he was not married yet. I was very sad because I was the one who gave birth to him. I suffered a lot to raise him and then Frelimo killed him. I never saw his body again... It's the same thing when a woman gives birth three or four sons, then she loses one of them; the woman always has to think that she lost one child. The woman always thinks, “Satan seized my child”. When the days pass by, then the person forgets because there is nothing that can be done. It's the same thing as when water spills; you can't get it back.

Anita, like many war survivors, was making an effort to deal with the tragedy of her son's killing. She had assumed, through the metaphor of the impossibility to recover spilt

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<sup>247</sup> Female, 40 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 24.10.2003.



water, that there was nothing to be done. What seemed to comfort her, however, was related to a belief that she expressed almost at the end of our conversation:

When the Frelimo soldiers found my son they could have used him to work for them; if they had shown mercy for him, he could have worked for them in the service of the war. Instead they killed him. That means that I lost—and they lost too.

Anita's interpretation of her situation helped her to accept it. Within this "loss-loss" mindset, which generates a "stalemate", Anita was able to forgive the perpetrators of her son's murder even if she never met them personally. The most important thing is that she was not the only one who lost. Although meaning is often a social construction created by human beings in their interactions with one another, Anita seems to have generated a particular meaning for her devastating experience through this inner reflection. It was the first time that I heard this type of analysis, and I never heard anyone else repeat it.

Roberto<sup>248</sup> applied different reasoning from Anita's, but his thinking too carried the imprint of creativity. As he was a Christian pastor, his creative way of dealing with his losses followed religious lines. Roberto met catastrophes several times in his life and survived all of them. Like most men of his age, he experienced *mutarato* (colonial forced labour) (Chapter 1; Sec. 1.2), the anti-colonial war, and the civil war. Of these three violent periods, none was worse than the civil war. His son was tortured, and only a miracle rescued him from death. His young virgin daughter did not have the same good fortune. She was raped to death. Despite these human-made tragedies, Roberto expressed his thoughts on post-war justice in the following terms,

Since the war is over, we have forgiven these former soldiers. I know the ex-soldier who killed my daughter; I know where he is and I often see him, but I am not going to do anything bad against him. If this soldier arrives in my house I will prepare *ntsim* (porridge) to give him. I am not worried about him; this sin belongs to him. I forgave him so that the sin stays with him and not with me.

Other religious-orientated war survivors had told me that the Bible forbids revenge, and revenge is a sin; but I had not heard before or after Roberto that it was better to forgive the former perpetrator so that he who committed the offence against the other keeps the sin. Accordingly any attempt to do justice against the former perpetrator would transfer his sins to the one retaliating for the past crimes. Within this frame of analysis Roberto

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<sup>248</sup> Male, ± 55 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 27.11.2003.

was even able to be relaxed with himself despite the fact that he knew the whereabouts of the rapist and murderer of his young daughter.

### **11.3. Acknowledgment and demand of apologies**

By “acknowledgment“, war survivors expressed their thoughts on whether or not they deserved to be compensated for the damage that was inflicted upon them, and whether the former perpetrators should come forward to offer apologies. Again war survivors expressed mixed reactions. The group that demanded punishment for the former perpetrators remained unsurprisingly consistent: with very few exceptions, most of them dismissed the possibility. The surprise came from the group that had chosen forgiveness as the solution. These war survivors were prepared to forgive the former perpetrators, yet they did not agree about the possibility of a trade-off where the former perpetrators could ask for and receive pardon. The apparent contradiction lies in the fact that the war survivors who stated that they forgive have by so doing ruled out any need of the former perpetrators to ask for forgiveness. They forgive without being asked to do so. Only a minority of war survivors supported the idea of the perpetrators asking for pardon in order to reach closure.

#### **11.3.1. It's no use begging for pardon**

War survivors who felt that it was useless for the perpetrators to seek pardon presented an array of reasons for their refusal to meet with the former perpetrators so that the latter could make an apology. The group that initially favoured punishment remained of the view that only punishment could create a way out. People like Gubudunbo (10.2.1.) remained fixed in their positions. Gubudunbo had already expressed his bitterness at the soldiers who cut off his right ear and forced him to eat it. He did not change his initial remarks, and adamantly refused the idea of the perpetrators asking him for forgiveness. He stated,

I could not accept, I would tell them, “The courage that you had for cutting off people’s ears means that you did not like the people”.

I asked him about his thoughts if the process of asking for pardon were to be simultaneously accompanied by, for instance, the construction of a house for his family. He did not delay with his answer and vehemently reiterated,

I could not accept. I would tell them, “If you had killed me on the day that you cut off my ear, who would you build a house for today? I don’t want to hear this; just go away”.

I posed the same question to his wife, Francisca,<sup>249</sup> who was attentively listening to our conversation, to check whether or not she was more serene in her answers and in her wishes to deal with the past. She did not deviate one iota from her husband’s view, not because of submission to him but simply because, although the day had not yet arrived, she too was going to die because of the Renamo soldiers’ warfare:

No, I don’t accept. I can’t accept because my leg was injured by these soldiers. Now I am lame... Like this, can I accept them? No. The Renamo soldiers me do *gandira*, and they did not give us food. I was near death because of famine in the bush. If not for God I would not be alive today. I got some strength because someone gave me some soft porridge to eat. I was eating porridge as if I was a baby; I was drinking water little by little. No way, I cannot accept the excuses of these former soldiers.

Most of the war survivors who thought that punishment was the best way of reckoning with the past were very consistent. Forgiveness is the antithesis of punishment; therefore, all of them stated that there is no room for anything but punishment, even if in principle that is not going to happen from the side of the official authorities.

The surprise came from the group that had insisted more than once on the need for forgiveness. I was expecting, following the mainstream literature on forgiveness, that in unison they would welcome the idea of seeing former perpetrators coming forward and showing repentance for their past deeds. Yet that was not the case, as the following examples illustrate. Albino (10.3.3) stated,

The best thing to do is that they don’t come here to ask for forgiveness. The people they killed will judge them. Many people died here, and many bad soldiers died here too. There was a soldier here called *mwamuna andi goni* (man who does not sleep). He finally slept (died). There was also a man called Alverino. He was a war criminal. He died. There is no way they should come to offer apologies because the people they killed are already judging them.

Magaziculo (11.1.7) insisted on an argument related to the fact that there are too many former soldiers and victims for this to be possible. He affirmed,

It would be very difficult because there are many ex-soldiers and the places with victims are numerous too. Since the war is over we think that the bad things have passed away too. We want to see new ideas.

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<sup>249</sup> Female, ± 45 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 01.11.2004.

His argument was supported by the idea that the war is over, and so everything must be left behind. Accordingly, what is necessary is not to look back but to bring new ideas into the communities.

Zacarias (10.3.1.), influenced by the sad condition of his war disability and the fact that he was unable to live a full life as a result, asserted his arguments in a very harsh way:

My eyes don't want to see these people coming to ask me for forgiveness because I am still suffering till today. For me the war still exists because I am suffering. I don't want to see these people coming to me to say sorry because if I see them I will remember that they are the ones who caused me to suffer.

I asked Zacarias why the suffering was still with him, as he was a religious warrior and he was even responsible for a local branch of his church, and some times these *petit chefs* of parishes have little privileges that ordinary men do not have; I also asked him how it was possible that a servant of God was not prepared to at least see his former perpetrators coming to ask for forgiveness as the Bible teaches. He replied,

Because I still cannot work. I can't even manage to cut the *estacas* (stakes) to build a house; I have to cry (beg) for someone to help me to carry these *estacas* until my house. This is huge suffering for me. All this impairment that I have that prevents me carrying *estacas* is because of the war. I say that the war is over because I no longer hear shoots, but for me the war still exists.

Apparently the canon of the religious teaching and practice (such as "Let them come to confess their sins in order to be forgiven") did not resonate easily among these parish *petit chefs*. Alberto,<sup>250</sup> a war survivor, who said he had been promoted to a leading position in the church because of his courage in waging wars against bad spirits, also dismissed the idea of the former soldiers showing up to ask for forgiveness. His reasoning was different from that presented by Zacarias. He asserted,

If the soldiers come here to talk about these things all the people will cry. The people will start saying, "It was you who killed my brother" and so on. The people will cry and they will fight again. This is not necessary and it is better to leave it as it is... Asking for forgiveness while the people are crying because of their beloved ones? No, we don't want that to happen. Since the Presidents have signed the peace agreement, in this way they have asked for forgiveness. It's up to the leaders to ask for forgiveness.

In relationships between individuals, people usually ask for forgiveness (*ku lekerera*) in order to recognize their error and to try to re-establish relations with the person they have

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<sup>250</sup> Male, 30 years old. Interv., Gorongosa 29.10.2004.

offended, but Alberto and Adelino believed the opposite, at least in these matters of war. They suggested that this initiative could end in generating violence in communities that were already peaceful, and where many people were trying to forget the past. Inês,<sup>251</sup> whose brother was killed by *matropa* (Frelimo soldiers), presented a very inflexible attitude by suggesting that there are no answers available that can redeem the atrocities committed by the soldiers during the war. She asserted,

If they come back to say sorry will our people that disappeared come back? If these ex-soldiers came back, we would ask them, “we see that you are asking for forgiveness, but I would like to know if our brothers that you killed and others who disappeared will come back again? Will they come back like you are coming back to us too? (...)” Since they will not have an answer to give us, I think they should not come to ask us anything.

For Inês, asking for forgiveness is more than a collection of words of repentance. It is a practical gesture that should signify that the damage is fully repaired. Words and discourse are not enough. This kind of irreducible position taken by Inês and others who held a similar view signalled the desire not to be disturbed again by something that has already caused a great deal of suffering in the past, and also the knowledge that what they had lost could not be replaced.

Even the war survivors who had given me the convincing impression that they were very strong advocates of forgiveness were not at all interested in seeing their former perpetrators asking for forgiveness. Zinga-Zinga (11.2.3) was one of them. Despite being tortured and despite the humiliation of being compelled to see his mother-in-law naked, he was a strong advocate for forgiveness. Yet, like many other war survivors who were decided and vociferous in relation to the uttermost need to forgive, he preferred a unilateral forgiveness of the former perpetrators. Perhaps unilateral forgiveness in this case was the best way of addressing the legacies of the past for various reasons: a) war survivors were still loaded with pain and rage, to the extent that a confrontation with the former perpetrators could trigger undesirable feelings and resentments; b) war survivors thought that a public offering of apologies and request for forgiveness by the former perpetrators could represent nothing more than just another form of humiliation. In various encounters war survivors repeated that “it is difficult to understand why the soldiers had so much hate against us. They were destroying us; they were killing us when

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<sup>251</sup> Female, 25 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 30.10.2004.

they needed us”); and c) by acting in this way, war survivors were feeling some form of agency by controlling and determining the parameters of the politics of forgiveness.

### **11.3.2. If they come to ask our pardon we will receive them**

In contrast to the previous group, who gave a range of arguments for their rejection of a process of seeking pardon, another group seemed positive in relation to such an initiative.

Emanuel<sup>252</sup> had told me since the beginning of our conversation that despite all the atrocities and suffering the former perpetrators should not face trial, and that the best way to reconcile was to forgive. When I asked him about the possibility of the former soldiers officially asking for pardon he was very consistent. He said that,

If the ex-soldiers came to ask for forgiveness it would be good, I am not saying that this asking of forgiveness is only for me; no, it should be for everyone. There are people who are living with difficulties; they are still suffering. For someone to know that he is forgiven it is important to talk face to face, and then recognize the misdeeds... All soldiers should do it; many people who suffered would be happy with this gesture.

Pedro,<sup>253</sup> who served in the Portuguese army and fought in the war in India between 1945 and 1949, suggested that it was urgent for the former soldiers to come and ask pardon for their past actions. He stated,

They have to come. If they don't come, things will go further; things will not end. If they don't come, people will start imitating what they did.

Fanita<sup>254</sup> (who was once married to Alberto (10.1.2) but divorced him because he accused her of having sexual intercourse with their son) suggested that the soldiers should come and ask for pardon because only in this way could they be forgiven. However, she thought that the process of seeking forgiveness should not be confined to words:

They can come so that we can forgive them, but they have to bring food, and clothes, so that we can accept their excuses and we can forgive them.

Castigo (10.2.2.), who had initially stated that he could not even imagine what kind of punishment his predators deserved after raping his mother in front of him, seemed prepared to forgive but under certain conditions. These conditions were the following:

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<sup>252</sup> Male, ± 30 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 04.11.2004.

<sup>253</sup> Male, 80 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 06.11.2004.

<sup>254</sup> Female, 35 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 30.10.2004.

(...) If they come here to confess that they are the ones who killed our brothers and violated the women; if they say they are sorry, then I will thank them and I will forgive them because it was not them; they were inside the war. If they come to ask for forgiveness we will forgive them.

Later this same encounter he reiterated the collective dimension of any initiative aimed at redressing the past.

*Waaaaa*, they can come to ask for forgiveness, but they must not come to say sorry only to me, no. They must come to say sorry to everyone.

Although each individual may have a different interpretation of the war suffering based on his or own situation in the war, what Castigo was saying was that suffering had been a collective experience. On this basis any formal initiative to repair the damage must take this collective dimension into account. Yet the most difficult thing to understand in this collectivised approach to wartime suffering is that the same approach was perceived and interpreted many times as a reason for inaction. In other words, the collective suffering does not inspire the emergence of a collective identity of protest. There is no unanimity in the protest that 1) the past must not be ignored; or 2) the dead did not die in vain; or 3) the past must not be repeated; or 4) politicians must not use memories as weapons for cheap political profits in the national parliament; or 5) acknowledgement of the past wrongdoings is not a sign of weakness but signals a deep desire to reach an official closure. So far this kind of unanimity has not emerged. On the contrary, the collective dimension of suffering is used as an argument for forgiving the former perpetrators, even though they have not asked for this forgiveness Sairosse,<sup>255</sup> a local pastor, gave the most explicit illustration of this:

I forgave *wa nhankondo* (the soldiers) because the suffering did not happen only to me, it happened to many people. Other people died: other people got disabled and the government knows what happened. For this reason we have forgiven them.

Sairosse also explained that if suffering had only happened to him then he would feel inclined to protest in order to get some form of reparation. As long as suffering is perceived as a collective experience, no apparent efforts will be made to claim something from those responsible for the violence.

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<sup>255</sup> Male, 45 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 30.102004

#### **11.4. “*Ife indife muno tida kara apo, hapana zwina dziwa ife*” or indifference**

The title of this section means: “I am a person who is living; I don’t know anything”. After repeatedly hearing this kind of answer, I started to wonder how it could be possible that some war survivors, particularly women, demonstrated indifference in relation to all kinds of transitional justice. It could not be that the various aspects of transitional justice were of no interest to them; if that was the case, then the majority of the participants would have assumed a similar position. This group completely differed from the first two in that they appeared not to have any opinion vis-à-vis punishment, forgiveness, seeking pardon, and reparation. Initially I thought that this apparent indifference reflected some kind of polite attitude of refusal to reflect and engage in dialogue about the past. Various war survivors kept repeating,

If they want to pay us, that’s fine; if they don’t pay us, that’s fine too. What we want is to live...  
The State is the one that knows about this issue. I don’t know anything... I don’t know, only the State knows about these matters... *Na tchimwana ku zwi dziua tango ndine muno wa ku tonguiwa*  
(I don’t know because I am a person who receives orders).

It was difficult in such circumstances to develop a dialogue. These answers were very short and straight. I could persist once or twice more in the hope of triggering some reflection in another direction, but to no avail. Sometimes it was best to leave these war survivors in the apparent comfort of their indifference, which was a perfectly legitimate attitude for them and correct procedure for me.

#### **11.5. “*I don’t know anything*” or the art of everyday life**

Other war survivors who initially did not seem predisposed to utter more than just the parrot answer “I don’t know... I don’t know anything... I just live...” expanded their thoughts and answers a little more. That was the case with Andulana<sup>256</sup> and Joalena<sup>257</sup> on one hand, and Salena, Lolinha and Dolinda on the other. They provided important clues to indicate that it was not merely a question of a comforting numbness or polite refusal to talk about the past; it was much more than that. The “not knowing” answers were also related to something that was very logical and deserved closer attention, i.e., the art of everyday life. They asserted,

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<sup>256</sup> Female, ± 40 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 30.10.2004.

<sup>257</sup> Female, ± 35 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 03.11.2004.



*Ine indiri ku nherezera ku gara kwene, basse* (I just think of living, just that). The State is the one who knows about these issues. I don't know anything... When a church member does something bad against another we kneel down together and we pray; we talk to this person; we have to forgive one another; we do it because we worship together. But these other things related to the war—I don't know. A person has to say what he knows. These other things I don't know; only the government knows what to do.

Andulana, Joalana, and other war survivors who referred to the government authorities were corroborating a generalized perception that in general transitional justice is part of political processes. It is not up to the war survivors, those who suffered most and who are confined to grassroots level, to decide what is to be done. As another informant stated, “*indine muno wa ku tonguiwa*” (I am person who receives orders). It could be said that this is part of history repeating itself: the common people do not initiate legal cases regarding abuses and crimes committed by the parties in conflict. It has been the political elites who, based on certain circumstances, have decided about the role of justice for reckoning (or not reckoning) with past abuses and violations. What the common people have historically done is to protest against impunity and to claim justice.

Salena<sup>258</sup> and the other women, on the other hand, did not refer to the political dimension of this type of transitional justice initiatives, but mentioned something else that also provided important clues to explain the apparent indifference of some war survivors. Salena affirmed the following:

I don't know anything; the only thing I know is how to live. We want to wake up every day without the noise of weapons so that we can live our lives. I don't know anything, *ku kala kwene zwango* (I just live my life).

The key aspect in Salena's answers is the capacity to live. I could term this the “art of living”, as both women claimed it to be the thing that they know best. This capacity to live or the art of living is not exercised in a vacuum. It consists principally in what Hannah Arendt, in another realm of analysis, called *vita activa*, i.e., the dignity that is generated through manual labour. Some of the war survivors explicitly defined what this dignity of labour in the local terms and told of the role it plays in giving meaning to the post-war recovery process. Dolinda<sup>259</sup> and Lolinha<sup>260</sup> stated that the best way of repairing

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<sup>258</sup> Female, ± 40 years. Interv., Barue, 31.07.2004.

<sup>259</sup> Female, ± 45 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 29.09.2003.

<sup>260</sup> Female, ± 30 years. Interv., Gorongosa, 29.09.2003.

the damage brought by the war was not by distributing money or goods. Instead, Dolinda said that:

We want peace so that we can take hold of the hoe so that we can go to the field and cultivate the land (*ku tora paza kiaenda kia lima, basse*).

And Lolinha metaphorically stated that:

*Ku lima basse; indica lima indie wene mubari wango pazari* (just to farm the land; when I farm, the hoe is my brother).

Both statements suggest that work, that is subsistence farming, is the essence of the art of living after the war. Lolinha even sounded poetic in her description of a life filled with work: her work instrument, the *paza* (hoe) becomes her brother every time she takes hold of it to cultivate the land. Her statement profoundly resonates with the socio-cultural practices of interdependence and exchange among enthusiastic members: someone becomes a brother because of the role played in supporting others and helping to solve problems in families and communities. Since most of her close relatives died during the war, the hoe became her sole brother, in this case the instrument that she relies upon to keep going in life. When some war survivors seemed to withdraw into a numbed state, they did it knowing that there was something more important that they relied on to recover from the wartime experiences: working the land.

I think that in this lies the second reason why some war survivors expressed negative attitudes towards the possibility of reparation or apologies or pardon: working the land in peace and freedom was already a form of reparation that could not be replaced by anything like punishment, apologies and pardon, or reparation. Other war survivors made a connection between the availability of land and the fact that *tchintchino ta gara ife tire pa nbuto* (now we are living in a place). This phrase is not so simple as it looks. When contrasted with the wartime experiences of systematic violent displacement, this statement carries with it a value judgment, namely that they are living in the right place, the place they can call home, that is the *madembe*. *Madembe* is the place of living and cultivation; it's the place of the ancestors and of worshiping; it's the place of safety and hope. In order to understand the conditions that cause people to experience their *madembes* as a home in a Hegelian sense (the overcoming of alienation and the reaching of reconciliation) requires a comprehensive analysis of the interplay of agency and structure, that is an analysis of people's social practices in a context of social hybridity

where victims and perpetrators share the same social world. This analysis must offer insights on what people do, how and when they do it, and what results they achieve.

## **Conclusion**

After the war the Mozambican official authorities promoted a culture of impunity, to the detriment of any possibility for the war survivors attaining state justice. The politicians in control of the state institutions indicated that the process of rebuilding in the post-war era would have to be done by without official intervention. War survivors could choose between silence over the past or disregard of the authorities' orders and vengeance against their former perpetrators. Events have shown that war survivors did not choose either way. Rather, they engaged in rebuilding their devastated social world by developing their own interpretations of the past and setting up priorities that would work for their individual and community self-preservation.

Summing up the two forms of justice presented in the previous and present chapters, one important fact is immediately evident: war survivors do not represent a homogenous group. They are divided into three distinct groups according to their perceptions and interpretations of post-war justice: One group, (portrayed in Chapter 10), advocated formal justice; another group, the majority (addressed in this chapter), advocated forgiveness; and the third group seemed to be indifferent to these debates. Along the lines of these divisions over post-war justice, they were heterogeneous in terms of gender as well. The majority of men favoured forgiveness whereas the majority of women favoured punishment.

Despite these different perceptions and interpretations among and within the groups about the necessity for post-war justice, all of them applied the same strategy in their daily interactions: peace and stability by means of sticking to the principle of self-preservation and investing in the available and accessible resources to rebuild their social world. This result demonstrates that contrary to the assumptions promoted by scholars in the field of transitional justice, the absence of legal initiatives to reckon with the terrible past did not drive war survivors to acts of revenge. The absence of revenge was a powerful indication of the generalized willingness to move on rather than to remain stuck, which could ferment anger and hatred leading to a possibly degenerating and

chaotic life. It is true that in this first decade after the war the painful memories of violence and abuse and claims for justice have not vanished away simply because of the authorities' unwillingness to officially address them. What seems most important, however, is that the struggle for justice (retribution, revenge or restoration) was not what the majority of war survivors engaged in as a way to come to terms with the violent past. The majority opted for unilateral forgiveness.

These results clearly demonstrate that war survivors were capable of shaping their own recovery process without organizing themselves to demand retributive justice or resorting to violence to reckon with the past. This remarkable post-war settlement raises intriguing questions. Why is it that after having suffered so many brutalizing and barbaric acts, the majority of war survivors chose to forgive the former perpetrators, even though they did not come back to ask for forgiveness? Why is it that even the group that strongly defended the need for post-war justice still chose not to take any action to obtain it? Why is it that even though there was major consensus regarding the need for reparation, people preferred not to engage in practices to pressure the official authorities to reconsider their decision not to give any kind of compensation for the war damages?

Following the explanations presented by the majority of participants, my answer is that there are at least three principal reasons to explain this coinciding of all war survivors' choices. First, despite their numerous traumatic experiences, despite the officially organised cultures of denial, still in the end, the majority of survivors were not devoid of hope and they had something to rely on, namely resources. These were spiritual and material resources that permitted them to engage in the paramount challenge of rescuing their social world from the ashes of destruction. Yet to recover from war there was also a need to keep the peace and stability.

Second, the majority chose to forsake any form of confrontational justice and engage in forgiveness because they believed that this is the only way that they can succeed in preserving peace and stability. For exactly the same reason, even those survivors who had strong opinions in favour of formal justice, revenge or reparation did not do anything about it; they chose to forsake their individual wishes, pragmatically keep silent and assume their social responsibilities. This choice was based on the reasoning that the gains that could be brought by silence outweighed the costs of any kind

of legal redress of the past. *Mutendere* (peace) within this perspective was conceived as an asset that could potentially generate benefits, i.e., well-being through safely returning to their *madembes* and working the land. Therefore, they preferred to invest in resources that did not represent any potential obstruction to the development of this asset. Justice for the past events or even the possibility of the former perpetrators returning to ask for pardon was within the category of obstruction to peace, and was therefore precluded.

Finally, the generalized silence and sidelining of justice (revenge or appeals for reparation) was reinforced by people's perception that their environmental resources and local institutions had not entirely collapsed and disintegrated with the civil war. The main community resources are the land, politico-legal traditional authorities and the traditional healers. The potential role of these resources to contribute to social repair could only be thought of and utilised in a context of peace. The contribution expected from these resources was not that they would deal with the brutalities and crimes of the past (obstructive factor) but that they would help to control and regulate individual and collective behaviours in a way that can guarantee peace and social stability. How these resources effectively contributed to engaging survivors in reconciliation, social stability, and attainment of justice in the first decade and a half of political transition is the central topic of the chapters that follow.

## Chapter 12: The agricultural cycle and the reconciliation process

### **Introduction: “*Indica lima indie wene mubari wango pazari*”<sup>261</sup>**

The previous chapter indicated that the perceptions and attitudes of war victims in central Mozambique are contrary to some mainstream assumptions in transitional justice studies. The survivors did not engage in vengeful acts (*ku hirindzira*) in the context of state’s refusal to make any official reckoning with the gross human rights violations and crimes perpetrated during the civil war. Neither the survivors gave indications that “forgiveness is the postponement of revenge for a later tempo”. Instead, they demonstrated in various ways that the most important factor instrumental in fostering peaceful relationships and reconciliation after the war is the availability of resources: land, local justice, and healing.

This chapter explores then how the process of regaining access to the ecological environment and consequent access to fertile land, which gives rise to specific social and economic practices, are crucial both to reconciliation and to the attainment of social justice in Gorongosa. In its exploration of the impact of the land resource and the concomitant social production of food on the reconciliation process, this chapter is divided into six sections. Section one sets the general tone of the chapter, i.e., ecological environmental factors shape the local socio-economic production systems and play a key role in how community members perceive and relate to one another. These relational aspects are extremely important for understanding the importance and the meaning of reconciliation in Gorongosa district. Section two gives a brief historical description of the agricultural practice in Gorongosa as well as an analysis, through a quantitative approach, of some characteristics of the participants in this study. Section three also follows a quantitative approach to report on availability of land and land ownership according to gender factors. Section four makes an analysis of land and its impact on peace and social

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<sup>261</sup> It means, “When I farm, the hoe is my brother”, Lolinha, 11.5.

stability. Section five, describes the annual calendar of the people in Gorongosa and in central Mozambique in general. The calendar shows how time is structured according to the forces of nature, the agricultural cycle and the relationship between humans and animals. The description of the different stages of the cycle and related activities paves the way for understanding how this resource is intimately connected to the post-war reconciliation process in Mozambique. Section six demonstrates that reconciliation is not being forged through talks, confessions, or testimonies about the past. Perpetrators are not confessing to the monstrous nature of their actions and victims are not testifying about the horror of their experiences. Reconciliation follows the path of activity. It is through labour in the fields, which sometimes takes individual forms and at other times incorporate collective dimensions, that victims and perpetrators have been creating their reconciliation process. It is far from being a perfect system, but it allows war victims and the perpetrators of violence to engage in collective actions for the fulfilment of their individual and family needs.

### **12.1. Ecological forces and the relationship to social structure and practices**

Evans-Pritchard (1947[1940]) demonstrated through his careful study of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of the Nuer people how features of the ecological environment directly condition Nuer life and influence their social structure. Evans-Pritchard described how the scarcity of food—which is the result of the environmental system, a low level of technological development, the absence of trade, and a pastoral life—produces direct interdependence between members of smaller local groups and indirect interdependence between members of larger units. Following a similar path, and specifically elaborating from the ethnographies conducted among the rural Mayan people around the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, Linda Green (1999) studied Mayan women widowed by war violence in rural Guatemala. Green found that the material conditions, under which these war widows live, particularly corn production, are central to their survival. Green provides descriptions of both the gendered nature of the rural Mayan economy and the Mayan agricultural cycle. However, Green does not engage in the analysis of how, for instance, the process of corn production gives rise to mechanisms of the production of new social relations in the aftermath of war violence among alienated people. Green states that “during the planting and harvesting phases of *milpa* production,

Mayan men often work together: fathers, sons, uncles, brothers” (p. 16). From this description it appears that certain stages of the agricultural cycle shape social relations among men belonging to the same kin group. Yet this still leaves unclear how the agricultural cycle shapes social relations among war survivors in general (victims and perpetrators) and in the broader spaces of these highlands. Rather, the main focus is on how the growing scarcity of land affects survival strategies.

These connections between the ecological environment and the production systems that give rise to the production of specific type of social relations are taken over in this study to explore the possibility of reconciliation in the aftermath of political violence.<sup>262</sup> I address questions such as: what role does accessing one’s own property and participation in agricultural activities play in the process of post-civil war reconciliation? What is the contribution of the availability and accessibility of land resources and the concomitant social production of food to the process of reconciliation? The current literature on reconciliation studies provides no answers to these questions. The main concerns in reconciliation studies tend to be restricted to processes of retributive or restorative justice as a way of coming to terms with past abuses and crimes. The specialized literature in general completely ignores the possibility for reconciliation to unfold at grass-roots level through the availability of material resources that promotes routine physical work on both an individual and a collective basis. There are no available published sources that have explored the relationship between agricultural land resources, the specificities inherent in the production cycles and the process of reconciliation in post-war countries.

Instead, a handful of studies have focused on the role that land scarcity can play in disrupting social relations and undermining social stability in society, For instance, various authors have attempted to demonstrate that in predominantly agricultural countries such as Rwanda and Burundi, severe problems of overpopulation combined with scarcity of land resources triggered and heightened violent conflicts between kin and community members in general. These land-related conflicts were considered to have contributed significantly to the corrosion of social cohesion and stability (André &

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<sup>262</sup> The relationship between participation in the activities of the agricultural cycle and its contribution to healing in the strict sense (i.e., how it improves the health situation of war survivors) is not addressed here. During fieldwork, data were generated that address this issue but the analysis of these results is not presented here. Chapter 15 below addresses the relationship between the agricultural cycle and healing in the broad sense.



Platteau, 1998; Uvin, 1996). Under these circumstances, Jared Diamond concludes that “population pressure was *one* of the important factors behind the Rwanda genocide...” (Diamond, 2005: 327). In another direction of analysis, these studies linking the scarcity of resources with the eruption of violent conflicts can help to establish the importance of the availability of land resources in post-conflict countries in fostering hope and promoting peace, social stability and processes of reconciliation.

Joseph Nevins (2003), who addressed the reconciliation process in post-conflict East Timor, has called attention to the relationship between transitional justice and social justice. Nevins raised critical questions about the implications of a justice-infused notion of reconciliation that gives primacy to individual acts or events to the detriment of broader issues of social justice. In East Timor, one dimension of social justice is redress of the abuses and crimes committed against coffee farmers by the former regime of Indonesia. The violence led to a drastic loss of income and impoverishment of the East Timorese farmers as well as to the disruption of the territory’s coffee sector. A comprehensive reconciliation policy should include the process of disclosing the Indonesian individuals and companies responsible for this disruption, the rebuilding of the farming sector and restitution of the farmers’ tremendous losses.

This chapter fills the current gap in the scholarship by addressing the relationship between land availability and accessibility and the process of rebuilding the social world in the aftermath of the civil war in Mozambique. It explores how the dignity of war victims, the establishment of peaceful relations and the building up of a sense of collective identity and destiny can be forged through agricultural work in the post-civil war period.

## **12.2. The nature of agricultural practice and characteristics of participants**

Historians generally consider the Portuguese to be most probably responsible for the introduction and spread of maize agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa. What remains a matter of dispute and is difficult to establish is the precise dates and circumstances in which that introduction took place. There are historical accounts indicating the production of *milho grosso* (maize) in Mozambique around the year 1750 as well as descriptions of maize as the staple of the country (Miracle, 1965).

In Mozambique, as in many sub-Saharan African countries, maize is considered the single most important food staple (Byerlee & Heisey, 1996). In Gorongosa, people historically relied for their sustenance on hunting as much as on agricultural practice. This scenario gradually changed as a result of the Portuguese persuasion to intensify food crops and the establishment of strict rules for the hunting of animals. The practice of hunting lost its key position in the food supply in favour of agriculture when in the 1940s the Portuguese started the construction of the Gorongosa National Park. Vast areas of former hunting land were protected, and hunting was regulated and strictly controlled. Since then, and as result of the favourable weather conditions, the production of maize crops became central in the local economy. The increment in agricultural activities also reinforced the idea of private property that had historically been regulated by the concept of *madembe* (homestead). For instance, whereas in the case of hunting there was no need to demarcate one's own place since the animals did not belong to anyone in particular, agricultural activities required land demarcation and fostered a stronger sense of land as property. Land became the most important source of material wealth.

<b>Family and professional characteristics</b>							
	<b>All Participants</b>		<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>		
	<b>N = 392</b>		<b>N = 194 (49.5%)</b>		<b>N = 198 (50.5%)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	
<b>Marital Status:</b>							
Married	320	81.6	182	56.9	138	43.1	
Widowed	49	12.5	3	6.1	46	93.9	
Divorced	13	3.3	7	53.8	6	46.2	
Single	9	2.3	1	11.1	8	88.9	
<b>Type of Family:</b>							
Polygamous	126	32.1	60	47.6	66	52.4	
Monogamous	211	53.8	124	58.8	87	41.2	
Other	55	14	10	18.2	45	81.8	
<b>Occupation:</b>							
Farmers	240	61.2	92	38.3	148	61.7	
(a)	87	22.2	39	44.8	48	55.2	
(b)	27	6.9	27	100	00	00	
(c)	21	5.4	21	100	00	00	
(d)	12	3.1	10	83.3	2	16.7	
Other	5	1.3	5	100	00	00	

Table 4. (a) Traditional & religious healers; (b) Local government officials; (c) Traditional Chiefs; (d) Community court officials.

Table 4 shows the availability of land for growing crops according to gender, marital status, type of family and occupation. The total number of people assessed was 392 adult

men and women.<sup>263</sup> The gender distribution was balanced: men corresponded to 49,5% (N= 194) of the sample and women 50,5% (N=198). The marital status of the participants indicates that the majority of the people 81,6% (N=320) were married, followed by widowed 12,5% (N=49), divorced and single.

Most of the married people, 53.8% (N=211), belonged to monogamous families while only 32,1% (N= 126) belonged to polygamous ones. The main occupation of the people is farming, corresponding to 61.2% (N=240). The second most represented occupation is that of traditional and religious healers. The healers also have their own fields and very often they do farming work in addition to their healing activities.

### 12.3. Land ownership and gender

Table 5 shows land ownership according to gender. The data indicate that the large majority of people, 98% (N=384), have access to and control of a piece of land. The data also show that globally there is a balanced distribution between the genders: men 48.2% (N=189) and women 49.7 (N=195). A similar type of distribution is observed vis-à-vis the amount of land that each person possesses. The majority of people have at least one type of field in the form of *machamba* (74.7%: N=293) and *baixa* (69.1%: N=271).

Controlling land ownership with variables such as civil status and type of family demonstrates that these variables do not influence whether or not the person is able to get land. Land ownership is clearly not contingent upon a person's status. The only slight difference relates to the ownership of more than one field and nether fields, that is fields on the banks of the rivers. Men seem to possess more fields than women, but a general overview suggests that these differences are not particularly prominent.

Land ownership and gender						
	All Participants		Men		Women	
	N = 392		N = 194 (49.5%)		N = 198 (50.5%)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Land Ownership:</b>						
<i>Machambas</i> (Fields)	384	98	189	48.2	195	49.7
No field	12	3.1	8	2.0	4	1.0
1 field	293	74.7	132	33.7	161	41.4
2 fields	82	20.9	49	12.5	33	8.4
3 fields	4	1.0	4	1.0	00	00
4 fields	1	0.3	1	100	00	00

<sup>263</sup> The participants were asked to take part in this study and in each location almost every single member of the household was interviewed to determine the various land-related variables.

<b>Baixas (Nether fields)</b>	349	89.0	181	46.2	168	42.9
No <i>baixa</i>	61	30.9	16	8.2	45	22.7
1 <i>baixa</i>	271	69.1	129	66.5	142	71.7
2 <i>baixas</i>	41	10.5	32	16.5	9	4.5
3 <i>baixas</i>	15	3.8	13	6.7	2	1.0
4 <i>baixas</i>	3	0.8	3	1.5	00	00

**Table 5.**

The most important evidence that these data provide is that both men and women have access to land for the practice of agriculture. It could be argued that these data conceal the circumstances under which villagers obtain the land and maintain it under their control; these circumstances could be marred with conflicts. Checking whether or not the local courts receive and deal with land-related disputes can help determine the validity of this assumption. Data obtained from various traditional and community courts indicate that in a four-year period hardly any land-related conflicts were reported in the courts.<sup>264</sup> This categorically shows that land resources are not a source of conflict. On the contrary, these land resources allow people to become engaged in a daily routine of activity and to create prosperity.

#### **12.4. Land and its impact on peace and social stability**

The key issue at this level of analysis consists in determining the relationship between the availability of land and the promotion of peace, social stability and reconciliation in post-conflict countries. For instance, comparing the context of the protracted Mozambican civil war with the East Timorese case mentioned above, the processes are different. In Mozambique the farmers did not lose control of their land resources as a result of expropriations as such. The main problem lay in the fact that the possibilities to explore the available land resources were seriously undermined by the high levels of insecurity. In Gorongosa, people living under Renamo control continued practising agriculture, but under very harsh security conditions; as a result, people had to dispute among themselves and make alliances with Renamo soldiers to get the most securely located plots of land to cultivate and produce food.

Yet the food was never enough since, through the violent process of *gandira*, people were forced to share the little food they had with the Renamo soldiers. These violent practices gave rise to various intra and inter family conflicts. People living under government control relied on humanitarian assistance most of the time, but nobody could

<sup>264</sup> See Chapter 13.

foretell when the next lorry or plane would arrive. Taking the risk of cultivating the very small plots of land allocated by the governmental authorities in the vicinity of the communal villages very often ended in tragedy. People died because they stepped on government or Renamo landmines; or they died because of ambushes by Renamo soldiers or disputes sparked by among civilians. The overall conclusion is that in both domains of control (government and Renamo) the violence of the war contributed to extreme forms of food insecurity, hunger and often death.

In the aftermath of the peace agreement a completely different scenario emerged. People were summoned to abandon their hiding places and the communal villages to return to their places of origin. Others simply went by themselves. The significance of this act for the reconciliation process lay in the very basic fact that the war victims had a place to go, namely their *madembe*.

This post-war movement, that is the physical reunification of formerly separated villagers and the re-occupation of the land to live on and to cultivate, was not free of conflicts. However, these conflicts were not triggered by the lack of land per se or by disputes over well located plots of land, since the scenario of insecure location no longer represented a serious threat. The reason for conflict was the uncontrolled occupation of free plots of land. The traditional chiefs (discussed in a later chapter) played a key role in the correct allocation of the plots of land to their historically known owners and distributing the vast areas of free land to the displaced war victims who decided to stay living in Gorongosa.

This apparently rapid post-war settlement, which was only seriously endangered by the presence of landmines in some areas, facilitated the starting process of rebuilding the social world from the ashes of destruction. The availability of land, which suggested to the war victims a potential for re-establishing their depleted material wealth, was crucial in giving them hope. Hope meant the possibility to work in freedom, to produce food, to create their own self-sustainability and ultimately to regain control over their own environment and create prosperity.<sup>265</sup> The possibility for a person to regain control

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<sup>265</sup> For instance, as a result of cotton cultivation and commercialisation, Ilidio (8.4.1) was the person who most profited from cotton in his village in 2003. Everyone in his village used to positively comment about the amount of money that he had made. As a result of three years of cotton production and trading, Ilidio told me that had managed to send his two sons and one daughter to study in Chimoio city (Manica province). Another case involved two male kin who managed to save money to buy a car to use it as a taxi

over his or her own environment and property, even if it is destroyed and in ashes, is critical in fostering all sorts of social and political processes with some considerable degree of success in post-conflict agrarian settings. Within this context, I contend here that the availability of land resources plays a significant role in giving hope to war victims and fostering peace, social stability and, ultimately, reconciliation. It is important to stress that it is not only land per se that leads to the development of these social and political processes. Rather, it is the perception of what people can do with the land, and under what circumstances they can do it, that turned land into a key resource in post-conflict Gorongosa.

People perceived that working on the land could contribute to reducing the extreme levels of poverty that the majority of them were experiencing immediately after the war and to creating conditions for self-sustainability. Besides the absence of war, the necessary circumstances for a favourable investment in the land are positive social relations. Although working on the land is primarily individual or family work, there are activities that require collective coordination outside individual or family boundaries. People are forced to establish interactions with others in order to undertake these collective activities. The availability of land and the related food production processes significantly shape the way people think about the wrong that was done to them in the past and influence their individual choices and collective actions regarding what is worth fighting for in this post-conflict period: that is, to personally struggle to right the wrongs of the past via retribution or revenge, or to fight for improving their actual social and material situation. It is through these analyses of war survivors' reasoning processes, which are influenced by the specificities of the total context where they live, that I approach the processes of post-civil war reconciliation.

### **12.5. Nature, time and the characteristics of the agricultural cycle**

An ecological approach to reconciliation cannot be dissociated from the total context where people live and are called upon to reconcile. One key factor in the ecological environment of people is the articulation of time. The way time is experienced and used among many of the socio-cultural groups in the centre of Mozambique is articulated by three factors. The first factor is the forces of nature, namely the changes in the weather

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in their village. They became the first persons to buy a car in their village. These are just some examples among many others.

conditions that occur during a year (hot and cold; rain and dry). The second factor is connected to farming activities, determined by the cultivation and growing process of the two main types of crops (namely *milho*: zea mays or maize; and *mapira*: millet). The third factor is the movement of animals and the noises they make; these too mark a specific point in the time conception of the Gorongosas. Of these three factors, agricultural activities and the types of crops could be considered the most important.

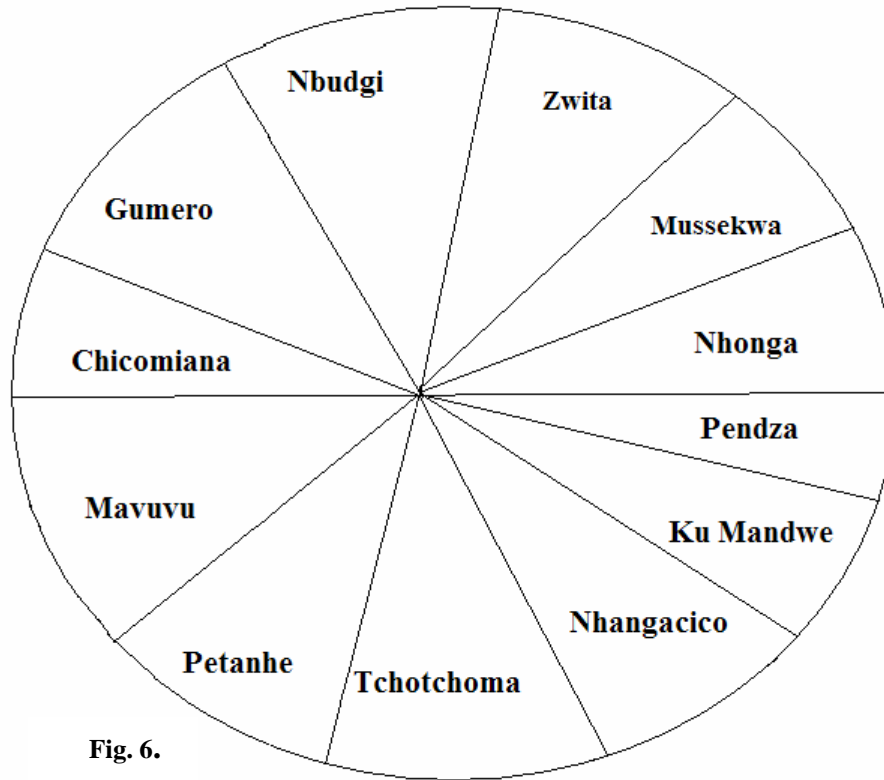
The agricultural cycle represents a set of different stages in each of which there are different types of activities to be performed. Each activity requires specific forms of individual and social organization.<sup>266</sup> The agricultural cycle is the clock of village life. It is the common way with which the peasants give meaning to their sense of time and control. The various periods comprising the cycle serve as reference points for locating in time the occurrence of significant events on an annual basis. Important events such as a serious sickness, accidents or deaths are located in time according to the period of the cycle.

The cycle shapes the way people think. That is, the production of food is both an individual and social activity. The social production of food implies the need for coordination of activities between the people involved. Concomitantly the agricultural cycle shapes people's reasoning in that it continuously compels the villagers to think about the present (*tchintchino*) and the future (*ku sogora*). In the present time people work so that in the future, i.e. at the end of the agricultural cycle, they can have a good harvest and plenty of food.

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<sup>266</sup> Another important element in the definition of the agricultural cycle is that for each of the various stages there are different levels of physical and psychological engagement. This aspect is more relevant to explore in the context of the relationship between participation in agricultural activities and health status. I address this aspect in a separate study.

**Calendar of Mozambique central: Nature and the Agricultural Cycle**



**Fig. 6.**

Figure 6 shows the agricultural calendar and the various periods that people live by and actively work throughout a year (*tchaka*). According to the inner logic of this calendar the New Year does not begin in January, as in the Gregorian calendar. The beginning of the year coincides with the beginning of the agricultural cycle. In this regard, rather than starting to count in January, the logic is that the year starts in *Petanhe*, which could correspond to August in the Gregorian calendar. Minor variations in the timeframe of this calendar can be found according to the levels of altitude of the fields.

*Petanhe* is the time when God sends His warnings through thunderstorms to tell the people “I am coming” (in rain).<sup>267</sup> At this sign, people start doing *ku fuma* (clearing up the fields already in use) or doing *ku sendula* (clearing the forest to open new fields). In both activities there are serious risks to consider. The most dangerous is the use of fire in a process called *ku fumba*, which consists in gathering the agricultural waste after *ku fuma* and burning it, and there is also the process of burning parts of the forest in order to open up new farms. These activities cannot be initiated individually since there is always

<sup>267</sup> This period coincides with the beginning of summer. The temperature varies, at 25-30 degrees Celsius.



a possibility that they could end in tragedy. As a result of unpredictable winds, the fire can turn wild and cannot be controlled, to the extent that it could burn people's property. For this reason, coordination is required. It is the traditional leader who gives orders or officially opens the New Year. Then every community member starts working in the fields and everybody becomes attentive to the direction of the wind and the intensity and spread of the fire. It is also in this first period of the year that they do *ku zwala* or *ku palira* (to sow the seeds).

*Mavuvo* is a tree that gives a huge shadow that darkens the bush environment. The tree loses its leaves, and then new leaves grow again, making a shadow everywhere. The time of year when the tree is in leaf, as well as the tree itself, is called *Mavuvo*. *Mavuvo* would correspond to September. Older interlocutors in Gorongosa say that a long time ago when God was able to control the weather, the people would start doing *ku parika* (to sow) precisely on the 25 of September. This is the first sowing (*gundzo la kutoma*).

*Chicomiana* means that this is the last chance that people have to sow; everybody must sow because the land is already wet as a result of the first rains, People sow both *milho* and *mapira*. This takes place around October.

*Gumero* (or *gumegro* or *gumeguro*) is a very risky period because there is a lot of *ndzala* (famine). If a person survives this month it means that he or she will not die during that cultivation year. *Gumegro* means the last of phase of famine. For everybody who was about to die because of hunger, the famine is over. This corresponds to November.

*Nbudgi* (or *Nbuzi*) means that the *maguere* (*milho*) is completely white (*nbuuuuu*) on top. When people look at the fields they see lots of white as the *milho* already has petals. Some people also call this period *dzua rapiça* (the sun burns). Those who had some familiarity with the white settlers also call this month *kissimisse*, which means Christmas; it is December. During this period the rainfall becomes regular and the farmers have to work hard doing *ku sakula*, i.e., to clear the fast-growing grass in the middle of the *machambas*. The grass is harmful to the healthy germination of the maize seeds. The collective dimension of work coordination involved in this phase consists in controlling the domestic animals such as goats and pigs so that these cannot destroy other people's fields. However, this level of coordination does not seem to function properly. Every year there are a few conflicts caused by the disorders of domestic animals, and

very often these conflicts end in the local courts. My impression of these cases is that they emerge as a result not of a lack of strong community leadership, but rather because of a lack of coordination and animosities over legitimacy among the various community leadership structures.

*Zwita* means that people are divided; each person is blocked in his own place because of the typical intense rains that fall during this period. The consequence is that all the rivers get flooded and people cannot move from one place to another because of the force of the water. Yet in this period the people still continue to do *ku sakula*. It corresponds to January.

*Mussekwa* comes from the word *ku seka* (to laugh). In the context of the calendar *Mussekwa* means that the people who were close to death because of famine can now experience some relief since the *milho* has grown (*makone*)<sup>268</sup> to the extent that they can use it for feeding themselves. The people who nearly died were supposedly lazy and unable to control the rapid grow of the grass inside their fields because they were sleeping. For this reason the hardworking people start joking<sup>269</sup> and laughing at these they consider lazy. This corresponds to February.

*Nhonga* means the time when the *mapira* (*mahere*) stops growing any higher and last of the leaves grow before the ear of corn (*espiga de mapira*) appears. It can also be regarded as the last period of the “pregnancy” of the *mapira* to be delivered. This period also coincides with the first harvesting of *milho*; as it is said, “*ari kuibva maguere*” (the maize is ready). This first harvesting is called *ku konka maguere ia kutoma*; it corresponds to March.

*Pendza* means that the *mapira* is opening and dust and small flowers fall down from the *mapira* branches. For some really hardworking people this period is also used for the second sowing of *milho* (which is called *murope*) as they fresh *milho*. Those who do not do the second sowing will appreciate other people’s fresh *milho*. This corresponds to April.

*Ku Mandwe* (or *Ku Mando*) is *ntsimba* (porridge) made out of *mapira* that was not yet ripe and not ready to be harvested. This would correspond to May. *Nhangacico*,

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<sup>268</sup> *Makone* is a *milho* that is not yet ripe. It still has a white resin but people take it away (*ku bora*) from the fields to eat it because they have no other food and they want to escape dying of hunger.

<sup>269</sup> They can joke saying, “such and such people are lazy; their fields were won by the grass; they no longer managed to clear their *machamba* because of famine.”

which is the time of cold weather, follows this period. There is a lot of cold (*mepo*) around this time and people must make fires inside their huts to warm up. In this period the farmers also do *ku tema mapira*, which is the harvesting of *mapira*. It is important that everyone completes the harvesting because this is officially the period when community members are allowed to release their animals from the corrals, so if any animal is found eating in someone's fields no major conflict would erupt. This corresponds to June.

*Tchotchoma* is a word created as a result of mimicking the sounds of animals when they get in touch with dry grass and leaves; the sound goes like this: *tcho*, *tcho*, *tcho* or *tchua*, *tchua*, *tchua*. For instance, when someone walks in the bush when a lizard or a rat gets scared and starts moving rapidly in the middle of the dry grass and leaves, it produces a sound like *tchua*, *tchua* or *tcho*, *tcho*. This event is called *Tchotchoma*, which corresponds to the month of July and it is also the end of the year.

Throughout these stages of the agricultural cycle, the principal phase that requires a serious collective coordination is in the outset. The consequences for non-cooperation or neglect can be devastating. Prior to the years of wars that afflicted the region, the agricultural cycle was so important that some of its stages used to be celebrated with collective ceremonies to worship the *muzimu wapa tchissa* (territorial spirits under the auspices of the traditional chiefs. The community celebrated two ceremonies. One was performed before the outset of the new agricultural cycle. This was a ceremony to ask the spirits for a good production year. A tree (*mitsassa*) that just before this period bears very red flowers would give the indication that the ceremonies were approaching.<sup>270</sup> When the leaves started to change colour it was time for the ceremonies to take place. People would start making *harua* (drinks) for the ceremonies in the houses of the *Regulos* and *n'fumos*. The other ceremony was performed at the end of the agricultural cycle. The people again used to make *harua* and the traditional chiefs offered it to the spirits in order to thank them for the success of the agricultural cycle as well as to ask the spirits to protect the harvest, otherwise animals such as pigs and monkeys could destroy it.

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<sup>270</sup> It was forbidden to perform the ceremony while the flowers were red (*shishaua*) because the red indicates blood (*miropa*); this would be an indication that the place is potentially vulnerable to accidents and as a result blood could be spilled. The spirits in whose honour the ceremonies are held do not come out at such times.

People cannot control these animals because these animals are under the control of the spirits. The spirits could send them to punish people for failing to perform the ceremonies.

In this context and from a historical perspective, the agricultural cycle served not only as the clock of village life but also as a source of collective identification, fostering the sense of belonging to place and culture. However, even if these community rituals are no longer systematically practised, on a general level, some stages of the cycle still foster collective participation for the sake of the individual and family agricultural productive process.

### **12.6. The agricultural cycle and the post-war reconciliation process**

In the aftermath of the civil war and political impunity, question of reconciliation at grassroots level became a serious life matter: what does it mean to have perpetrators and victims living side by side? What does it take for victims and perpetrators to share the social world without resorting to vengeful violence? Neither the former perpetrators nor their victims dared to insulate themselves and become indifferent to these dilemmas. Formerly alienated people were called upon to establish relationships free of nervous or tense talk about the past and war-related conflicts and violence.

Despite the initial reactions in which some war victims did not wish to see their perpetrators nearby (see previous chapter), the great majority of victims and former perpetrators did not demonstrate any intention of reckoning with the past abuses and crimes. Willy-nilly they found themselves to be dependent on one another as a result of the specificities of the local economy, which revolves around agriculture. The agricultural cycle and reconciliation are closely related in Gorongosa because of the social nature of food production. The process of reconciliation is enacted by behaviours and actions that derive from the agricultural cycle and significantly contribute to reducing the social distance between alienated people. These actions or behaviours form part of the engagement in common goals that is required for and instrumental in the satisfaction of individual or family needs. It could be argued that the agricultural cycle does not include discursive practices about the horrors of the past and demands for moral redress. Nevertheless, it contributes to reducing the distance between war survivors; they have to cooperate to attain the goal of satisfying their basic needs. The agricultural cycle and its

intrinsic particularities therefore add a completely different perspective to the common scholarly debates on transitional justice and reconciliation.

A careful observation of the social life organization in these post-war communities at the outset and the ending of the agricultural cycle reveal important differences between the two time periods. At the beginning, people are in constant movement from their houses to their fields and vice versa, and always carrying their tools. In general, the day starts very early in the morning, and it is intercalated by periods of rest, taken in the fields. The activities terminate at the end of the day.

The majority of people have their own fields and do the work individually. People who have some additional financial resources can hire someone to work in their fields. With couples, husband and wife might help each another in each other's fields. Children do not have their own fields, and it is part of their socialization process, starting at a very early age, to work in their parent's fields.

In the aftermath of the civil war betwixt and between extreme suffering and the need for post-war justice, there was also the imperative to grow food to guarantee people's self-sustainability and reduce the level of poverty that the majority of people had inherited from the war. This meant that post-war circumstances led the main contenders at the local level to seriously reflect about their individual and collective choices, their paths of action and the consequences. The path followed indicates that the main contenders, principally the war victims, perceived that there was more to gain in investing in the exploration of their material resources than in igniting a cycle of revenge for the abuses and injustices that they had gone through. They understood that the production processes, i.e., the particularities of some of the stages of the agricultural cycle, clearly show how dependent they are on one another. They require social processes such as interaction, dialogue and coordination with others. These processes reduce the social distance between people and foster some sense of collective identity and destiny.

The process of reconciliation in this context continuously unfolds through activity, i.e., togetherness in work. The masterminds of the bloody political violence and the foot soldiers who perpetrated the abuses and crimes at grassroots level did not show any sign of compassion for their victims. They did not sit down with their victims as happened in South Africa (TRC) or Rwanda (*gacaca* courts) to make verbal confessions regarding the horror of their actions, to demonstrate repentance and to offer an apology.

At the community level, there was silence over the past and there was action; and action was performed through physical activity in the fields. The specificities of these activities contribute to reducing the distance between people. Another important element in this type of reconciliation through togetherness in labour is that it does not necessarily replace the need for post-war justice. What the availability of land and the corresponding agricultural cycle does is to 1) give hope to the war victims that though the past must not be ignored, there is a present and future to live; 2) allow war victims to gain control of their lives and destinies, 3) enable war victims to move ahead by relying on their own resources and energies; and 4) seasonally direct war victims' thoughts to focus on the future as the agricultural cycle is always a preparation process in the present to yield good crops in the future.

These four agricultural cycle-related outcomes prevent war survivors, in the absence of any formal justice, from seeking revenge by their own hands and from falling into the traps of daily thought-fixations such as “My life will never get better unless my problem is resolved”. The agricultural cycle instils another type of thought that is inherently more constructive: “Even if my problem is not resolved, I wake up every day, I take my hoe and I go to my field to cultivate”.

Many war victims repeated this latter statement time and again. The absence of justice creates the feeling and perception that the past is not finished. The presence in the community of the former perpetrators or community members who were implicated in the abuses and crimes, the geographic locations where monstrous acts took place during the war, or even the extreme physical scars<sup>271</sup> that war victims harbour on their bodies are permanent and powerful reminders of this interminable past. However, war victims cannot afford to sit down and wait for state justice to be enacted so that they can, as a consequence, initiate the rebuilding process. Post-war justice, production activities and the overall process of rebuilding the shattered social world are very serious life matters, but they do not necessarily require a synchronic occurrence. Justice is a powerful means of repairing or giving back people's dignity and promoting trust and solidarity ties in the community, but so is work for self-sustaining.

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<sup>271</sup> For instance, the case of Tobias (15.1).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated how central the availability of land resources is in the process of rebuilding the disordered social world of the war victims in the centre of Mozambique. Despite their miserable situation in the aftermath of the civil war coupled with the official culture of denial, war survivors were not caught up in the traps of extreme despair. Instead, they looked to and created the future with hope, inspired by the availability of material resources.

The availability of this important survival resource fosters hope and reconciliation among war victims and contributes to establishing their priorities in terms of their needs, behaviours and actions in the post-war period. It is important to bear in mind that the agricultural cycle does not undo the presence of sentiments of post-war revenge and the need for state justice. However, the need to respond to basic survival issues and the satisfaction that is extracted from agricultural activities enables victims to succeed in their struggle to gain control over their lives and destiny and to move on, relying primarily on their own resources and energies.

The majority of war survivors clearly demonstrated that they focused on rebuilding their property and lives by participating in agricultural activities. These activities function through a cycle composed of various phases, and for each of these phases, periods or stages there is a need for a certain amount of individual and collective participation and organization. The necessity for a collective engagement has fostered interaction and communication between the villagers. They have had to work together to reach their individual or family goals. It is necessary to stress again that the goal is clear and unarguable: the production of food for self-sustainability. However, it is the intrinsic procedures that the fulfilment of these goals entails that made me seriously reflect upon the relationships between the availability of land resources, the agricultural cycle and the reconciliation process in the post-civil war period. The specificities and activities of agricultural production give rise to an important dimension of reconciliation: togetherness in work for the fulfilment of individual needs. This case is a remarkable example, where war survivors and those who perpetrated violence against them can forge their own reconciliation processes at a local level and in a peaceful manner as long as they have equal access to, and control over, resources. For an agrarian community this resource is land.

## Chapter 13: Traditional justice and reconciliation strategies

### **Introduction: “Let’s do things as the wild fruits that ripen in the floor”<sup>272</sup>**

The previous chapter analysed the impact of the agricultural cycle on post-war reconciliation and argued that the availability of the land resource, which is used primarily for the satisfaction of basic food needs, contributes to rebuilding the social world by way of giving hope and fostering collective perspectives and togetherness in work. However, this process of engaging in togetherness through labouring the fields is by no means free of interpersonal, family and social tensions and conflicts. These conflicts must be peacefully and quickly resolved to maintain the social order.

The general goal of this chapter is to explain what form the contribution of traditional justice to transitional justice takes. Specifically, it analyses the role played by the availability of the traditional justice system as a reservoir of social capital<sup>273</sup> in breaking with the cycle of abuses and injustices in the aftermath of the civil war, by peacefully dealing with numerous tensions and conflicts and fostering reconciliation between alienated people.

In order to pursue these proposed objectives, this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section addresses the potential contribution of the traditional justice system to transitional justice. This section also provides a brief historical account of the traditional authority structures that form part of the existing justice systems in Mozambique and the metamorphosis that this has faced in the last thirty years as a result of colonial and post-colonial influences and the mass disruption of the civil war. The second section describes the actual organization of the traditional political system in Gorongosa and the ways in which this system interacts with the state institutions. The third section addresses the organization of the traditional justice system and its *modus operandi*. It provides a retrospective description of the main kinds of cases that the traditional judges addressed soon after the end of the war, in the period between 1992 and 1997. The last section presents the nature and type of actual conflicts, analysing the emergence of these cases from the perspective of the radical changes brought about by the civil war. This section also discusses the ways in which these conflicts are addressed from a gender perspective. The chapter concludes by suggesting that on a general level

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<sup>272</sup> Popular proverb meaning ‘to do things in a coordinated way.’

<sup>273</sup> It is also known as the customary justice system or community justice system.



the traditional justice system contributes to peace and social stability by breaking with the cycles of injustices that were typical to the wartime period. Yet a critical approach indicates that the uneven gendered treatment of certain cases represents the most serious limitation of this local resource in the process of rebuilding the local social world.

### **13.1. The role of traditional justice in transitional justice**

The Mozambique transition process was characterized by legal impunity for those involved in the upheavals of the past. In view of this political settlement, forged upon unjust foundations, we must not fall prey to the fallacy that there is no justice at all, at least at the community level. There is indeed transitional justice, but it serves purposes other than retribution. These purposes can fit well in a broader definition of transitional justice, i.e., the traditional justice system plays a role in preventing the continuation of cycles of injustice. This kind of preventive factor can in turn contribute to containing the eruption of violence and to keeping peace and social stability in a post-war society. Questions that can emerge in contexts of political impunity are: how do the war survivors manage to amend broken relationships and establish interactions without triggering unsettled wartime disputes? And since relationships are not immune to conflict, in the case of the eruption of conflicts, how do people manage to address them without resorting to violence? Essentially, how do they manage to prevent a continuing cycle of injustices in a context of political impunity?

Trying to answer these questions leads to a more complex way of understanding and defining transitional justice. The foundations for such answers have to be created through empirical documentation of war conflicts resolved by traditional judges as well as through the realization that the legacies of the past can be manifested in present litigations that may appear, at first sight, to have no roots in the past. In reality everyday practices that result in very serious conflicts are connected to the events that took place during the civil war. A careful analysis combining socio-cultural material and war violence dynamics in addressing everyday conflicts in the transitional period discloses conflict factors whose aetiology is related to past violations and abuses. In legally addressing these present conflicts, which indirectly form part of the legacy of the violent past, traditional justice contributes to justice in transition by way of breaking the cycles of violence and fostering peace and social stability at a community level.

It is within this perspective that the transitional justice case in Mozambique is approached. The goal is to analyse the extent to which the traditional structures of power and authority, represented in this particular case by the traditional justice system, which operates mainly in community-based settings, provide legal responses that do not specifically put wartime violations on trial but contribute to breaking with the cycles of injustice as they existed in the wartime period.

### **13.2. Conflict resolution in the civil war and reconciliation in the aftermath**

Despite the fact that the traditional authorities were officially banned during the war, they continued to operate in the Renamo-controlled areas, performing activities that were in tune with the war effort in the war-zones. In the interviews I conducted with various traditional judges regarding whether or not they continued to resolve conflicts during the civil war, different answers were forthcoming. Some traditional judges indicated that they did indeed do so, but not on the same socio-culturally recognized terms as before, and they resolved only minor conflicts as major cases were often transferred to the Renamo military bases, where the commanders in charge would resolve them according to their own perceptions and standards of justice. Other judges told me that they did not work at all during the civil war.

These different answers may reflect different experiences of war, since the intensity and geographic coverage of the war was unevenly distributed in Gorongosa. In some areas it was possible to have time of a minimal degree of normality (though intercalated by periods of severe instability), while in others the levels of instability were high and almost constant.

With the peace agreement and in the months immediately following it, traditional chiefs and judges assumed greater importance. The whole process of population resettlement and relief operations required a major coordination effort, in which the local chiefs were indispensable. Also of key importance was the immediate peaceful resolution of conflicts among people who had been bitterly divided by the circumstances of war. The chiefs' overall message to their fellow war victims was to insist upon reconciliation and rule out *ku hirindzira* (revenge). The chiefs advised the people to do *ku lekerera* (to forgive) and *ku lekererana* (to forgive one another) as the best strategy to end the cycles of violence brought about by the civil war.

One of the most serious problems was related to the women whom Renamo soldiers had abducted and would force into marriage. Some of these women and their former husbands wanted to be reunited, but the Renamo soldiers who had married them refused. The traditional judges helped to resolve these cases peacefully. In the majority of cases, the judges ruled that it was right for the woman to be reunited with her husband since there had never been an official divorce; it had been the circumstances of the war and the abduction that had separated them. Other serious problems dealt with by the judges were related to inappropriate land occupation and allocation.

The decline in the role of these traditional judges was set in motion when a governmental enacted law no. 4/92 was applied in the former-war zones. Until 2001 this law had been dormant. It had only served to provide legal legitimacy for the judges working in the so-called *tribunais populares* (people's courts), mainly in the urban and semi-urban centres (Sachs and Honwana-Welch, 1990). Boosted by the wave of the approval of another government-enacted law, No. 15/2000, from 2001 onwards the provincial government, following the article 12 of law 4/92, initiated its enforcement in the former war zones, at a district level. This was the beginning of the loss of control of the justice administration by the traditional judges in favour of the local government-related judges who started working in the so-called community courts or the *secretarios* who also resolve conflicts.

### **13.3. The traditional justice versus community courts in the post-war period**

As seen in Chapter 9 (sec. 9.3), traditional justice is an integral part of the traditional political system in Gorongosa. The system can be characterized as holistic because it encompasses different levels (visible and invisible forces) of intervention and different sources of legal inspiration in the resolution of conflicts. As a result of national political transformations, exacerbated by the war violence, the administration of justice in Gorongosa has undergone various changes.

In 1992, amid the war, the Mozambican parliament under Frelimo rule promulgated law no. 4/92 which created the *tribunais comunitarios* (community courts) and defined their areas of competence. The justification for the promulgation of this law was principally based on the argument of social justice and equality, and respect for

social and cultural values and traditions.<sup>274</sup> The law defined in its Article 2 the rationale of its operation by stating that “The community courts will try to promote reconciliation between the parties” and “If the parties cannot reconcile and this possibility has been ruled out the community court will judge in accordance with equity and good sense and with justice”.

The areas of competence of the community courts were no different from what the traditional justice system had already been doing for centuries and also under the colonial regime. In fact, as in the case of the colonial Portuguese legislation, law 4/92 reduced the scope of the traditional justice system’s competence.<sup>275</sup> Law 4/92 established the following competences in its article 3: “... to deliberate on small conflicts of a civil nature and about emergent questions of family relations that result from unions constituted according to uses and customs, trying whenever possible to reconcile the parties... deal with non-serious offences that does not entail sanctions involving the loss of freedom... to perform all the acts entrusted to them by the judicial courts”.<sup>276</sup>

Contrary to the old system, where an individual would become a traditional judge usually (though not exclusively) through lineage descent, the new law stipulated in its Article 9 that, “Any national citizen in full exercise of his or her political and civic rights and not less than 25 years of age can become a member of the community courts”; and “the members of the community courts will be elected by the local representative organs.” It is not defined precisely what these local representative organs are. What in fact happened was that the government authorities, many of them officially attached to the Frelimo party, had the final word on who would or would not become a community judge.

Although this law has the merit of trying to give legitimacy and recognition to the legal agents operating at the community level, as well as giving villagers the possibility of another source where they can attain justice, the law was also classified as illegal since according to the former Justice Minister, José Abudo, these tribunals “are not mentioned

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<sup>274</sup> *Boletim da República*. Suplemento. Lei no. 4/92 de 8 de Maio. Maputo: Assembleia da República.

<sup>275</sup> This was the case because before colonial penetration, the traditional judges used to mediate conflicts involving intentional or accidental murder. The legal settling of this kind of cases—officially named ‘criminal cases’—was withdrawn from the traditional judges’ competence.

<sup>276</sup> A set of penalties that the courts can impose were also defined: public reproach; perform community work for a period not exceeding thirty days; a rather symbolic fine for the damage caused by the offence and so on...

in the List of tribunals foreseen in the [1990] Constitution<sup>277</sup> [and] these tribunals conduct trials without adhering to the principle of strict legality. They judge according to equity, good sense and with justice (art. no. 2 of Law 4/92)...” (1995: 124). Besides this critical remark, the law 4/92 was riddled with various omissions, and this contributed to creating more confusion more than it facilitated the development of the community justice system.

The law omitted to outline the type of connection that the community courts have to establish with the traditional courts described above. The only referral system is divided between the community court and the official or judicial courts; and in this schema the community courts are in fact subordinated to the judicial courts. It is not established how these courts should relate to the traditional courts; and it is not stated that the *secretarios*, officially recognized as community authorities, are also to solve conflicts. The law does not indicate how the presumption of innocence is to be enacted and how the truth is to be obtained. It only states that court deliberations cannot be held without the presence of at least two members besides the president. It is not specified what role important resources such as the *mapaza* healers, the traditional barometers of truth and lies, or healers in general can play in disclosing the truth of a certain case according to this law.

In fact, instead of helping or facilitating in the resolution of conflicts at the local level, law 4/92 is an obstructive and unproductive law. Its omissions gave rise to confusion among the judges in the communities over who is entitled to be a judge and who is not. The local government officials insisted, as the law stipulated, that the judges for the community courts had to be elected but they did not know for sure what should be the mandates to give to the traditional courts. However, amid this disorder, the traditional chiefs were not passively contemplating the loss of their arbitration powers. Using their own tactics, the *nhakwa* ordered one or two of his former judges to become candidates for a position as a judge in the “new” community courts. These candidates were chosen together with other community members who in general were former government troops or active Frelimo party members. In other cases, the traditional courts continued operating simultaneously with the community courts and also the courts operated by the *secretarios*. This sudden conglomeration of various courts created very serious clashes in

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<sup>277</sup> The status of this illegality was changed as a result of mentioning the *tribunais comunitários* in the list of courts in the new Mozambican Constitution approved by the national parliament in December 2004. In Parag. 2 of Art. 223 it is stated, “(...) Arbitration and community courts do exist”.

the administration of justice. As I will inquire in the case of Joaquim (13.5.2), when a certain court errs in a judgment of a case, where should the defendants and the aggrieved parties go to appeal?

Despite these internal conflicts, fomented by internal power struggles as well as caused by macro-level power forces (initially by the Portuguese, followed by the Frelimo party, and currently by both Frelimo and Renamo parties), ordinary community members still trust in their local courts. The reality, in fact, is that these communities cannot survive without leaders.<sup>278</sup> The need for leaders and of competent judges in this post-war period is even more vital since the war has depleted the levels of trust that used to be available on the micro-level setting. Above, I described how conflicts between family members used to be addressed first within the boundaries of the household. Only when the elders responsible for conciliation between the parties failed to achieve this would the estranged parties take recourse to the social institutions available at the meso-level. Nowadays, the micro-level setting as a resource for the resolution of conflicts has almost ceased to exist. In this regard, the community courts are playing a crucial role in promoting justice and, to a large extent, peace and social stability.

#### **13.4. Community courts, issues of trust and conflict resolution**

The community courts were established in different villages in Gorongosa. In order to keep the trust of the people, the court officials made no radical changes either in their modus operandi or in the laws that are used to judge offences. The proceedings are still made up of a combination of restorative justice and procedural justice. Such changes as have been made result from the assimilation by the community courts of some of the proceedings common to the judicial courts. First, conflicts are no longer resolved in spaces like the *matchessa* or beneath the mango trees. Most of the community courts function in small houses, which are called *tribunal* in Portuguese. Second, the judges no longer apply the various rituals that used to accompany the proceedings in the traditional courts. Usually, the judges just order the injured party and the defendant to stand up and put their arms behind their backs every time they are asked to say something. Third and most importantly, the judges do not follow the principle of the presumption of innocence by hand-clapping during the court proceedings.

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<sup>278</sup> As demonstrated in the chapter discussing the agricultural cycle (Chapter 12), there are various activities that require coordination by leaders.

In fact, according to my observations, most of the community courts base their proceedings upon the presumption of guilt. In other words, when the victim reports his or her case, the judges concentrate their efforts during the trial towards demonstrating that the defendant is indeed guilty of the indictment brought forward by the complainant. On many occasions it is clear almost from the very beginning of the case that the complainant is going to win the case.<sup>279</sup> One spectacular example of the presumption of guilt was registered in one of the community courts where the alleged victim accused his wife of having extra-marital sexual intercourse with a young man from the neighbourhood. Following the presumption of guilt, the judges ordered both defendants to kneel down (symbolising their guilt) even while the court was still in the process of building up the evidence that intercourse had actually taken place between them.<sup>280</sup>

In spite of these errors,<sup>281</sup> what seems crucial in the functioning of these courts is that on a general level the judges are not alienated from their own socio-cultural milieu. Hence, they have not changed the functioning of the law. They still judge cases according to local customs. Even though in many community courts the person presiding over the

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<sup>279</sup> Although in this case the act of winning means different things according to gender.

<sup>280</sup> I called the attention of the judges to the fact that their procedures were not in accordance to the principle of equity. They were building up evidence for a case where they had apparently already reached a verdict of guilty for the defendants. The judges changed their procedures and ordered the defendants to sit down on the benches just as the alleged injured party was sitting. This was not the best solution, but it was the least bad one. I went further to advise the judges that in their discursive procedures to build evidence they should not omit to ask the alleged aggrieved party why he had systematically authorized his wife to accept a bicycle ride from the defendant rather than ferrying her himself. I suggested to the judges that they might reason according their own patriarchal and traditional laws to investigate whether the plaintiff had not created the conditions to catch his wife in the act, since in this society it is unusual for a husband to authorize his wife to often be in close contact with another sexually active man. When these questions were raised, the course of the trial completely reversed. The wife of the so-called injured party confessed that her husband had reached a secret agreement with her and the young man for him to have sex with her in order to impregnate her, because the alleged aggrieved party was infertile. If the wife had become pregnant the child would belong to her infertile husband. The problem with this secret arrangement erupted because the people live in a society where it is very difficult to have a private life. Several times the neighbours saw this married woman accepting a bicycle ride from a sexually active young man. Hence they started gossiping that she was cheating on her husband, that she was a prostitute, and that the young man was having free sex with a married woman. As a result of these comments, instead of asking his wife and the young man to be more discreet in their arrangement, the husband felt humiliated and rushed to the court to report the case that he had in fact helped to create.

<sup>281</sup> For instance, in another community court, the judges insisted upon having the defendant admit his wrongdoing but the defendant persisted in doing *upoca*. This standoff lasted for more than six hours. It was on a very hot December day; the court was located in a very tiny hut covered with a metal sheet; everybody was sweating and no air was circulating; but the judges kept insisting in order to reach a resolution. According to the customary laws, the judges should have referred the case to the *mapaza* healers, so that they could finally disclose the culpability or innocence of the defendant. The reason why the community judges did not refer the case to the healer was that the judges had misread government law no. 4/92 and they thought that in order to legally demand *matako wakulo* ('buttocks of the old men', meaning court fee) they had to reach a verdict and utter a sentence at any cost.

court initially reads the articles of the *Boletim da República*, which describes law 4/92, some of them have tried (in vain) to translate the very complicated concepts into the local language. The laws and the reasoning processes that they apply are, however, clearly inspired by local traditions; and people are overwhelmingly using these courts to resolve their numerous disputes.

In the course of this research I witnessed the resolution of various cases in the former traditional courts as well as in the recent created community courts. My direct observations ran intermittently from 1997 until 2004, and then from January 2001 until December 2005. My assistants systematically registered the cases presented in one community court located in the village 1. From other areas I consulted the files which some of the community judges kept on the cases they solved. For the main analysis of the results I use the data from village 1. The data collected from the books where some judges register their cases is used just for descriptive analysis. The key variables in the presentation of the quantitative results are: 1) the number of cases per month and year; 2) the types of cases; 3) the nature of the relationship between complainant and defendant, and; 4) the type of resolution of the case according to gender.

### 13.5. Number, types and prevalence of conflicts, 2001-2005

Table 6 shows the number of cases registered from 2001 to 2005 in Location 1. As the table indicates, in 2001 and 2002 the data were not gathered systematically. This was the period of confusion that characterized the transition from traditional courts to community courts.

**Number of conflicts in location 1: 2001-2006**

Location 1		01	02	03		04		05		06
1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Jan	Jul	01	03	07	06	09	10	18	15	16
Feb	Aug	-	02	03	05	11	11	12	14	14
Mar	Sept	-	00	04	10	09	10	12	13	12
Apr	Oct	-	09	03	07	06	18	12	15	18
May	Nov	08	00	03	05	05	09	13	14	10
Jun	Dec	08	09	05	10	07	22	12	17	09
<b>Semesters Totals</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Year Totals</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>68</b>		<b>127</b>		<b>167</b>		

Table 6.



The stability of the functioning of the justice system was re-established at the end of 2002 when the community courts in various villages of Gorongosa started operating. From then on, that is from January 2003 until the present, the data were systematically collected.

Table 6 indicates that the number of conflicts presented to the community court in location 1 has been growing drastically since 2003, by almost more than hundred percent each semester. The first semester of 2003 registered 25 conflicts, and in the second semester of the same year the number of conflicts almost doubled to 43. The total for the year was 68 cases. A similar pattern was observed in the following year. The first semester of 2004 registered 47 cases, and in the second semester 80 conflicts were presented. The total for the year was 127. The same was observed again in 2005; the first six months registered 79 cases and in the second semester this increased to 88 cases. The total for the year was 167 cases. An even pattern was observed in the first six months of 2006 with a total number of 79 conflicts presented in the court. In order to grasp the meaning of these numbers it is necessary to know the types and prevalence of conflicts that affects the war survivors in the centre of Mozambique.

Table 7 is a summary of the original table (appendix 9), which contains at least fifty different types of conflicts. The data are organized into three major groups of conflicts according to the total annual number of cases between 2003 and the first six months of 2006. The first group is composed of cases with a prevalence of more than 30, the second between 20 and 30, and the third between 10 and 20 cases.

**Types and Prevalence of Conflicts 2003-2006**

N	Type	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Set	Oct	Nov	Dec	Tot
1	Divorce	7	7	7	8	6	9	7		4	3	5	8	71
	Debt	8	3	8	6	1	1	2	1	4	2	6	2	44
	Domestic Violence	5	3	1	3	2	2	4	3	7	3	4	4	41
	Aggression	3	3		3		4		4	3	4	5	8	37
2	<i>Ku fewa</i>	2	2	1	2	1	3	3	1	1	1	2	3	22
	Adultery	4	4		2			3	2	1	1	2	3	22
3	Theft	1	3	4		1		2	1	3	2	2	1	20
	Jealousy	3	2	1	1	1				3	1	1	4	17
	Defamation	7			2	2	1	1	1	2	1			17
	Deflowering	1		4	2		1	1	4	1				14
	Property Problems	2	2	1	1	1	1		2	1	1		2	14

**Table 7.**

The most prevalent type of litigation, with 71 cases, concerns divorces. Until December 2005 the prevalence of cases of divorce was followed by cases of domestic violence (35 cases). However, this scenario changed in the first six months of 2006 where litigations

over debts (which before 2005 had occupied the fourth place) became the second most significant conflicts with 44 cases.<sup>282</sup> This increase reflects the growing trend of mercantilist social relations over the years. Mercantilism has been replacing the traditional social relations based on reciprocity.

Conflicts over debt are followed by cases of domestic violence (41 cases) and physical aggression among community members in general (37 cases). In the second group of cases, there are conflicts related to *ku fewa* (22 cases), which is the financial and material restitution that the men receive as a result of a divorce, as well as cases of confirmed or merely suspected adultery (22 cases). On the third group, there are conflicts over such things as theft (20 cases), jealousy (17 cases), defamation (17 cases), deflowering of girls without following the prescribed socio-cultural norms (14 cases) and problems between property owners (13 cases).

A closer look at these cases allows relationships to be established between them. For instance, divorce is linked to domestic violence, accusations of adultery, and jealousy. These cases all very much pertain to the domestic arena. Physical aggression is related to witchcraft accusations, theft, problems between property owners and public defamation. These cases are divided between conflictual family and community relations. Conflicts over debt involve debts between family members as well as people in the community in general.

### **13.5.1. The nature of the relationship between court opponents**

An analysis of the type of relationship between defendants and complainants further helps to show the social identity of the main agents involved in the creation of these conflicts.

Table 8 is also a summary of a longer list describing types of relationships (appendix 10) that the victims have with the defendants. The table demonstrates that the main actors in the conflicts in this society are family members. In first place are problems in relationships between men and women, specifically husbands and wives which, as seen above, culminate in the break-up of the marriage alliance. The extended family is also very active in the production of conflicts. The second type of conflictual relationship is that between neighbours.

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<sup>282</sup> Until 2005 there had been only 28 cases involving debts. The current figure of 44 represents an increase of more than 50%.

### Type of relationship between defendants and victims 2003-2005

Type of Relationship	03	04	05	Totals
Husband / Wife	15	30	48	93
Neighbours	8	14	33	55
Father/Mother/Son-in-law	17	19	13	49
Uncle/Aunt/Cousin	1	13	30	44
Brothers-in-laws	6	7	7	20
Ex-husband & Ex- wife		3	12	15
Cousins	2	4	8	14
Fathers/Mothers-in-law (compadres/comadres)	1	7	5	13

Table 8.

These data raise some intriguing questions. First, why is it that the prevalence of directly war-related disputes is minimal in the courts? Second, what is the relationship between the high prevalence of the more broad war legacies cases in the courts and the effects of the prolonged civil war? Third, why is it that the relationship between men and women is the main source of conflict? What follows in the next sections is an attempt to answer these questions.

#### 13.5.2. War conflicts and transitional justice

The overwhelming majority of conflicts that arrive in the courts are part of the wartime legacy. During the period under analysis four serious conflicts (Annex 1) whose origin was in wartime were brought to the court (location 1) in order to seek a resolution. Although the judges did not go very deep in their exploration of these cases, with the exception of the case of Bernardo versus Saquina (see below), they nevertheless dissented from the officially imposed silence over past crimes and they managed to put an end, with varying degrees of success, to the intrigues that sooner or later could have escalated into open violent conflicts. This rupture with official policies demonstrates the closer relationship between the work of traditional judges and reconciliation and elicits their engagement in everyday forms of community formation.

The first case opposed Joaquim, a former Renamo soldier and now disabled, to José, a civilian war survivor. José had been verbally provoking and insulting Joaquim by suggesting that Joaquim should leave the region and move on to an area where there are other Renamo demobilized soldiers like him. Joaquim continuously refused and argued that after the war they had been informed that everybody was free to live where they liked. One day the problem reached its climax and José physically attacked Joaquim by

beating him on his disabled leg. Initially, Joaquim took the case to the house of the *secretario*, but he was not satisfied with the *secretario*'s decision, namely that in order to avoid conflicts in the future it would be better for Joaquim to look for another place to live. But this was not a constructive way of resolving the conflict. The *secretario* transferred the long-term conflicts<sup>283</sup> that exist between Frelimo and Renamo on a more national level onto local level to deal with this case. He was unable to resolve this conflict properly because he was judging as a Frelimo member and not as a community judge.

Perceiving this bias on the part of the *secretario* and his colleagues, Joaquim took his case to another community court. The judges did not explore the real reasons for José's behaviour; they were not interested in finding out whether this case was the corollary of animosities that might have started and unfolded during the war. The judges just decided that José was wrong to have used physical aggression against his neighbour, and it was based on the physical aggression that they formulated their decision. They asked Joaquim what he wanted as compensation for the damage. The court ordered José to pay a fine to Joaquim and demanded an apology.

The second case involves two former Renamo collaborators and a civilian war survivor. All were living in a formerly Renamo-controlled war-zone. Tobias worked for Renamo's recognition forces (military espionage), Sabão worked as a *majiba*, and Sozinho was just a civilian. During wartime, Tobias and Sabão were captured in 1986 and taken to the prison in the government headquarters. While in prison, Tobias was severely tortured to the extent that he still has very visible scars on his back and arms. As time passed, Sabão told Tobias that Sozinho had been the person who had denounced Tobias's identity to the government troops, for which Tobias had paid with extreme torture and almost his life. When the war was over, Tobias remained silent and tried to forget his traumatic experience. The practical engagement in forgetting and social repair was demonstrated through the fact that Tobias and Sozinho continued to live as neighbours, but even more through the marriage of Tobias' daughter with Sozinho's

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<sup>283</sup> In this conflict, as addressed in the previous chapter Frelimo cadres regard themselves as 'good gentiles', and Renamo adamantly refuses to accept a history that they perceive as having been imposed upon them. This history portrays Renamo as former bandits and puppets initially of the former Rhodesian secret police services and later of the former Apartheid regime in South Africa.

nephew. Since Gorongosa people live in a patrilineal society with patrilocal rules of residence, Tobias' daughter went to live with her husband in the house of Sozinho.

One day there was a major conflict between Tobias' daughter and her husband (Sozinho's nephew). Sozinho got involved in the conflict by insulting Tobias' daughter and apparently mentioned the unsettled wartime conflict between him and Tobias. Tobias' daughter got very upset. She rushed home and in one breath disclosed to her father not the origin of the problem (the conjugal conflict), but what Sozinho had said about the wartime conflict. This information unleashed an overwhelming emotional reaction in Tobias. He could hardly think clear any more. Tobias went straight to Sozinho's house to demand clarification of what he had allegedly said to his daughter. Sozinho refused to comply. Tobias demanded a girl as a form of repairing the damage he had suffered during the war. Sozinho replied saying that Tobias must be crazy, since he did not denounce anyone during the war. Then, this conflict reached a climactic phase. Tobias spat out the "red serpent" that had for many years been squeezed in his throat: he put a curse on Sozinho, locally known as *ku pikirira* or *ku temerera*: "When I die you will pay me a girl" or "When I die you will see what will happen to you!" This is a very dangerous oath. It is dangerous because Gorongosa people believe that the moment of its enunciation automatically unleashes the invisible process that culminates with its material realization. According to traditional laws, this type of verbal threat is illegal. In reaction to this threat, instead of engaging in a fight, Sozinho engaged with the courts of law. He rushed to the court, located three hours from his house, to report the case.

During the deliberations Sabão confessed that he had lied to Tobias about Sozinho having denounced him when they were in prison.<sup>284</sup> The judges decided that this conflict should end without any sentence. But Sozinho objected, arguing that he had been falsely accused and defamed; and as a result he wanted to be paid. The judges insisted and ruled that nobody would be paid because this conflict was related to the war. They explained that the political authorities had decided that conflicts related to war came to an end when the peace agreement was signed in Rome. The judges also insisted that Tobias and Sabão should swear in public not to resurrect these types of conflicts that were supposedly buried on 4 October 1992. Sozinho only demanded an apology from Tobias and Sabão

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<sup>284</sup> When I collected Tobias' testimony in July 2006, Tobias believed that Sabão had been bribed to lie in court. Tobias still believes that Sozinho denounced him and Sozinho insists that he did not denounce anybody during the war. It was not possible to speak to Sabão because he was already dead.

and the case was dismissed. The demand for apologies was fulfilled and the neighbours continued to live side by side.

The third case involved Isabel against Duarte. During the war, they were living in Renamo-controlled areas. They were both young and they got married. When Isabel was nine months pregnant, *gandira* (Chapter 8) disrupted their lives. Duarte was suspicious that during *gandira* his wife Isabel had had sex with Renamo soldiers. He got extremely annoyed and started accusing his wife of being *uputa* (prostitute), but she denied it. His wartime neighbours whispered to him that his wife had indeed entertaining various Renamo soldiers with sex; they even told him that his wife did not choose the soldiers, but just went to have sex in the bush with any Renamo soldier she met. Duarte got even more outraged and once he dared to stop his wife from doing *gandira*. Renamo soldiers accused Duarte of being jealous and wanted to kill him. Duarte had to escape to another area to save his life. Isabel was left alone and pregnant, but she managed to find another husband who helped her to raise her little daughter.

The war ended. Isabel's daughter managed to survive and grew up. When she reached the age of 12, Isabel accepted a young man's proposal to marry her daughter. That is when Duarte reappeared on the scene. He claimed that he wanted his daughter back, the daughter that he had abandoned when she was still in her mother's womb in the war. Isabel was outraged. Therefore, she took the case to the court. In order to avoid interfering with the political authorities about their decision to silence the past, the judges in their reasoning were not interested in exploring the causes that led to the emergence of that conflict. They were just interested in the description of the events; hence they did not accept the arguments that Duarte presented for abandoning his pregnant wife in the war. They did not want to know who the alleged soldiers were, who had had sex with his wife, and who had also threatened to kill him; they had no such concerns, since in cases like this one there is no evidence to build.

However, there was one thing that the judges did well. They did not dismiss the case; they at least tried to reach a peaceful and timely settlement. The judges ruled that Duarte did not have full rights over his daughter and in order to get them he would have to fulfil all his cultural obligations, which means abiding by norms of respect. If this decision is right according to the local customs it was repellent for Isabel. The norms of respect in question state that Duarte had to get some money and pass it on to Isabel. This

does not mean that from that time onwards Duarte was going to share his parental responsibilities with Isabel. On the contrary, he gave her some centavos and then took their daughter away from her, once and forever. Once Duarte had taken their daughter to his home he started bombarding the girl with misinformation, saying that her mother was a prostitute during the war. As a result the daughter decided never to visit her mother again. Thus Isabel lost during the war and lost after the war as well. I told the judges that the way in which they had approached this conflict was strange for me. The laws that they used—and their own reasoning and practice in this case—had served to protect the abusers and not the victims, and when a court uses its power to side with the strong in detriment to the weak, the court becomes an instrument of oppression. The judges were not happy to hear that, but they recognized that there had been a failure. They heard Isabel again and send out a summons to bring back Duarte to the court. However, through follow-ups I learned that Isabel did not insist upon getting final resolution for her case and Duarte never agreed to return to court.

The fourth case was the most complicated. In brief, it involved many people, some of whom are already dead and others of whom died precisely during the course of the documentation of this case.<sup>285</sup> The people most directly involved in the case are Bernardo and Saquina. Bernardo's father was a very well-known *madzoca* healer during colonial times, and accordingly he was a rich man. When Bernardo started growing up, his father decided to set up an engagement for Saquina's daughter (Merita, who died in the civil war), who was still young at the time, to marry Bernardo. Everything was going well; Bernardo's father was pouring money into Saquina's family because of Merita, who was still a *mambira*. Independence came in June 1975 and one year later the civil war began. With the civil war came famine, death and population displacement.

On one day during extreme famine conditions, Merita and her father went to try to steal some food from the only farm that still had any amid that terrible drought. This farm belonged to a *n'fumo*, Quereva (now deceased). Quereva was a chief, and a very clever old man; he looked at the footprints on his land and initially he thought that they were

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<sup>285</sup> One of the interlocutors who are now deceased was Quereva. He died at the age of around 70 or 75 years. His role in this story is very grim. He was a *n'fumo* during the war in the Renamo-controlled area and he tortured Merita and her father during that time. This violent act somehow decisively contributed to unleashing this conflict. In the meantime, when I interviewed him in July 2006, it was an extremely informative interview because he was one of the very few people in Gorongosa who knew the Gorongosa calendar very well.

perhaps the footprints of monkeys, but under closer scrutiny he divined that it was Merita and her father. He rushed to their house and found a basket full of *maçarocas* there. According to Saquina (the only person involved in the case who is still alive), Merita and her father could hardly walk. The “crime of the sun” was unbearable. Quereva did not care. He tied Merita and her father up, took them to his house and severely tortured them. He decided that as an end to the conflict, he would make Merita marry his son. But there was a problem: Merita was the *mambira* or fiancée of Bernardo. Bernardo and his famous father had been forced to migrate because of the war, but Merita’s parents had the responsibility to care for her until their return so the marriage could take place. Since Merita’s father was dying because of the famine, the family accepted Quereva’s order so that he could be saved. Therefore, Merita married Quereva’s son.

Then Bernardo showed up with his father. “Where is my wife? I have come to pick up my wife; where is she?” Merita’s mother (Saquina), pointed in answer towards the neighbouring house (Merita’s father had died in the meantime). Bernardo would not accept this, and he demanded reparation for the damage to his honour. However, he asked for a lot of money. Who had money amid the war? To save her face, Saquina promised to find the money. Time passed. One day Bernardo’s father whispered to his son, “You have to collect my debt. If you don’t, then you and they will die”. Some hours later on the same day, Bernardo’s father became ill and died.

The war ended in 1992. Merita was dead. Fourteen years later, in June of 2006, Bernardo returned to Gorongosa and went to see Saquina. “I want my wife or I want my money. If you don’t give me one or the other, my father promised that his spirit would finish all of you off one by one”. *Ku pikirira* again, but this time Saquina believed that she had some degree of responsibility in the case in the name of her late husband and her late daughter. She did not rush to court, but after a while she went to put her case.

What exactly Saquina did want from the court? She did not come to court to dismiss Bernardo’s cause, as she had lived during the time of Bernardo’s father and had seen what this healer was capable of. She only wanted the court to convince Bernardo to do two things: first, to reduce the amount of money that he was asking for the reparation, and second to wait a little longer until she could mobilize the money to pay him back.

The judges heard the case. They immediately sensed two things: this was a war related case, but a very complicated one. Neither the laws of the nation state nor the laws



of tradition could automatically be applied. It was a case involving at once war, famine, torture, murder, debt, false promises, spirits, and dead and living healers, since Bernardo had inherited his father's healing spirits. In fact it was a worst-case scenario: a case involving spirits of dead healers and on top of that the spirit of a healer known for his magical powers. This was far from being an ordinary case.

First the judges tried this strategy: "This *micero* (conflict) happened during the war. It was war; now there is reconciliation". Bernardo got very annoyed and launched a vituperative attack on everyone present in the court. "Reconciliation? What reconciliation? What are you talking about? You sons of nobody, what do you know about reconciliation? Do you know what my father said before he died? Who are you to challenge the orders of the spirits? Don't fool around with me!" This was a very aggressive reaction. To counterbalance it, the judges tried another strategy: deploying the code word "government", as sometimes the word "government" can scare or appease many people (plaintiff and defendants). But Bernardo was no ordinary person. He said that the government and its laws were meaningless to him. The most important thing was his father's spirits: "My father died unhappy. Saquina owes him money. Just give it back so that I can take it to him".

The judges surrendered, realizing that they needed to address this case seriously, and began the hearings. As stated above, there were many people involved; some of them were already dead, and others were living in another district and there was a need to summon them. It became clear that the court was not prepared to properly address this case and the judges had to omit many of their basic procedures. Bernardo insisted that reconciliation and forgiveness could only take place once he had got the money in his hands. In the end, the judges asked Bernardo if he would reduce the amount of money he was demanding. This attitude on the part of the judges was in total opposition to their previous ruling, in which they had dismissed the case arguing that, "It was war, and now it's the time for forgiveness". The involvement of spirits in the case revealed the ineffectuality of state laws and orders and relegated the traditional laws commonly used in the courts to a marginal position. The spirits imposed their own master laws: "a crime or a wrong never prescribes"; "a crime or a wrong must be reckoned with". Initially Bernardo adamantly refused to reduce the amount of money; he would only agree to wait until the cotton crop was sold. Two months later, when the time for selling the cotton was

approaching, the court summoned Bernardo and Saquina, who both showed up at court. The judges tried again to convince Bernardo to reduce the amount of money because Saquina did not have anybody to help her pay it. This time Bernardo agreed and Saquina continued to search for the money required to pay him.

These four cases, as well as the two other cases described in Chapter 9 (Sec. 9.3.4), demonstrate that war conflicts were not buried and did not fade away simply because the policies of silence instigated by the Frelimo and Renamo parties. Statistically these wartime conflicts are not comparable to the frequency of conflicts involving the legacies of war presented in Table 6. Yet there are some explanatory factors that may justify this lower prevalence. First, it is probable that these kinds of conflicts do not reach the courts because people are aware that the judges will not address them properly. Second, the courts have indeed followed the orders given by the politicians that war-related conflicts must not be addressed because these conflicts were supposedly buried during the AGP. Nevertheless the judges are able to dissent from the politicians' orders and use their discretionary powers to do something about these cases. Perhaps they fear to establish precedents, which could get them into trouble since in the case of a mass eruption in the numbers of plaintiffs presenting such complaints, there would be no local structures to convey all of them properly.

Nevertheless, the strategy adopted by the judges resulted in a kind of legal hybrid consisting of a mixture of "different and often contradictory legal orders or cultures, giving rise to new forms of legal meaning and actions" (Santos, 2006: 46). Hybridism in these four plus two cases played a pivotal role by paving the way for reconciliation between the contenders and for mutual understanding in their neighbourhoods. Only time will tell whether or not the contenders in these conflicts have in fact re-established relationships after the intervention of the court. What is extremely important and must be spelled out is that the actions of the judges were reasonable because they managed to build a consensus about the binding nature of the decision and the justice of it. In this context, the judges created the formal conditions for peaceful redress of the conflict. Furthermore, when it was not possible any more to side with the government orders (that is to silence and denial), the judges used their discretionary powers to give voice to the contenders and to find a reasonable solution for their dispute.

### **13.5.3. The higher prevalence of conflict and the reservoirs of social capital**

With the exception of the above four cases, at first sight the nature of the conflicts that are emerging in the post-war period does not seem to bear any relationship to the events that took place during the war. A direct relationship would demonstrate, for instance, the emergence of vengeance conflicts related to events in wartime. This is not the case, however, since the majority of conflicts are apparently generated by everyday relationships (table 6).

Despite the everyday dimension of these cases, my intention in analysing them is to demonstrate that the local courts, operating in a context of legal and political impunity, still make a contribution to transitional justice. Their contribution to transition is meaningful because these conflicts are somewhat related to the tragic events of the war; thus the decisions of the court help considerably in fostering peace and social stability. Yet one must ask: why are these post-war societies experiencing a high prevalence of social conflicts? and why are the majority of these disputes not resolved by the contenders and their relatives, but instead end up in the community courts?

A socio-cultural and historical analysis of the community life and organization in conjunction (principally but not exclusively) with the overwhelming events that took place during the war reveals another dimension underlying these conflicts. There is a close relationship between the conflicts resolved in the courts and people's wartime experiences. In order to demonstrate these linkages I initially explored the possible reasons for the higher prevalence of conflicts that are expressed through the growing number of cases taken to the courts. In the next section I will explore the content and nature of these conflicts.

As described in chapter 9, the traditional courts were historically the last resort for people seeking to resolve their family or social affairs. In the first place, people would resolve their conflicts within the confines of the family; only if a solution could not be found would they look for an outside arbiter. Nowadays, people are looking for an external arbiter as their first resort.

Of particular curiosity is that when the different parties in a conflict are asked about their preference for the courts as their first resort, most often they do not have a clear-cut answer. For example, the late chief Charles, who died from a chronic illness, had a case involving a couple to resolve in the traditional court located in his house.

When everybody was installed in their places, chief Charles gave indications that he was ready to start. It was a divorce case where the husband was accusing his wife of misbehaviour. The initial question that chief Charles asked was, “When you realized that your wife was not behaving properly, did you summon her relatives so that you could *gara pance* (sit down) to address this issue among yourselves?” The husband answered in the negative. Chief Charles then asked, “Why not? Why are you coming here first if you have not sat down at home yourselves to find a solution to this problem?” The husband did not have an answer. However, chief Charles did not send them back to try to resolve the problem at home first. He proceeded, together with his judges, to address the conflict.

Another apparently trivial case involved a traditional healer versus his client. The healer had successfully treated the wife of his client, who was failing to become pregnant. Some months after his intervention she became pregnant and her husband paid the first instalment of the treatment price. The conflict emerged because he was delaying in paying the second and final instalment. The healer decided not to go to the home of his client, who was also his neighbour, but instead to report the case in the community court which was located two and a half hours away from his house. In addition to the distance being great, the debt also consisted of a very small amount of money even by local standards—and the judges were already overloaded with cases of this type. I was astonished that this healer had walked such a long distance in the burning sun to report a case involving a very small amount of money. “But why did you not simply go to your client’s house to remind him of his debt?” I asked. He did not have an answer. In addition the distance, the little amount of money involved, and the fact that he had abandoned his patients at home, if the judges were to decide on his favour the healer would have to share his money with the court because both defendants and complainant have to pay what used to be called *matako wa ukulo* (buttocks of the old man) and is now called justice tax. Everybody was laughing at the healer because apparently he had behaved in a stupid way. Had he reminded his client of the debt, the case could probably have been solved among themselves in their distant village.

These two examples, to which I could add plenty more, are an unequivocal indication that war survivors have very little social capital in the form of trust and observance of taboos. Since they do not trust each other, they are not prepared to enter into dialogue and listen to one another in order to address their conflicts, no matter how

superficial the conflict may appear to be. But the positive aspect to consider here is that war survivors do not take the law into their own hands. They most often look for the reservoirs of trust embodied by the local courts in order to find arbitration for their conflicts.

The depletion of the levels of social capital is a legacy of the civil strife. To wit: this war ravaged families and neighbourhood relations, as well as the infrastructures. The dynamic of the war at local level cemented hatred relations between families and neighbours, and left them bitterly antagonized and fighting one another. As I described in the case of Marta (7.3.3), her two brothers were murdered because her neighbours secretly went to report to Renamo soldiers that the two were doing business with the enemy, their alleged proof being the presence of salt to temper their food. Renamo soldiers took the utmost advantage of these situations not only by killing the accused people in front of everyone, but also by disclosing to the victims and their relatives the names of their denouncers.

The government troops in their turn did not lag behind. Every time they managed to abduct people from the Renamo-controlled areas, some of these people would be labelled as *recuperados* (recovered); they would be placed in a specific area of the village and were not readily allowed to get in touch with other relatives who were already living in the government-controlled area. The soldiers feared pollution, not in any traditional sense but in terms of security matters. The *recuperados* were always vulnerable to accusations of bringing the enemy with them. Because of the dangers involved in having contact with a *recuperado*, family members had to avoid one another; and to facilitate the forced alienation they lived in a state of tension with one another, which could be enacted through accusations of witchcraft, theft, defamation, lack of respect, disloyalty, and adultery.

The legacies of these mutual accusations in families and neighbourhoods that led to numerous deaths still prevail and are manifested in a general lack of trust and willingness to listen to one another and to cooperate for the mutual solution of quandaries and conflicts. This is the main reason to explain the war survivor's first choice of court arbitration rather than *ku gara pance* in their own homesteads to address their litigations. One would think that addressing their conflicts at home would be cost effective, as it is free of charge. Yet money is not the main problem here, even when it involves an

accumulation of debts and other concurring sacrifices: walking long distances and spending money to pay all sorts of court expenses instead of accumulating the meagre financial resources. The heart of the matter is that distrust and lack of observance of taboos prevents people from seeking solutions by themselves in their homesteads.

#### **13.5.4. Suspicious behaviour, *gandira* and the conspiracy of silence**

The main source of the conflicts which are presented in the courts is the extremely poor quality of family relations, particularly relations between men and women. Usually men have suspicious behaviour toward women, which leads to frequent cases of male accusations of female sexual misconduct, domestic violence, and divorce.

For instance, in the case dealt with by chief Charles noted above, the husband had demanded a divorce because he had heard rumours that his wife was having sex with a neighbour. The husband felt so dishonoured that he could no longer stand it. Chief Charles even asked him, “But did you send for these people who gave you this information to confront them in front of your wife and determine the veracity of these allegations?” He did not have an answer. Chief Charles applied another cultural mode of reasoning by suggesting that the husband should think twice when talking about divorce because the wife had suffered during the war and had even been hit by a bullet while she was his responsibility. Put another way, the husband should share the burden of the war legacies inscribed on her body. Yet the husband’s mind was too distracted or he was pretending to be so annoyed that he could not answer. Only one thing was fixed in his mind, “*andidi mukadzi inei tango ari uputa*” (I don’t want this woman any more because she is a prostitute).

These extreme levels of mistrust between men and women are not problems confined to the generation that survived the war. It affects all age groups and involves all sorts of family and neighbourhood relationships: young sons-in-law accuse and insult their fathers-in-law of molesting their daughters; husbands accuse their brothers, male cousins and male neighbours of sexually preying upon their wives under the banana trees; even old men are showing up in the courts to make ridiculous accusations against their *sucatas* (scraps, but meaning already very old wives) of being involved in incestuous relationships with their adult sons. But how is this possible?

Sharing the concerns expressed by the Japanese scholar Magoroh Maruyama (1992) on other types of problems affecting the human condition, I would paraphrase his question: “Can a culture be partly dysfunctional, pathological for itself, or pathogenic for its members?” (p. 302). That is, how can a society regress to such levels that even old men, so long attributed the status of respect as reservoirs of knowledge, dare to accuse their own older wives of sexual misconduct?

In order to understand this situation, the same type of argument anchored in a socio-cultural and individual disruption is applicable here. Socio-culturally and historically, war survivors say that a marriage used to last until “walking with three legs” or “going blind”. This is to metaphorically convey that the marriage used to be a stable institution to the extent that the couples used to enact—long before the Catholic Church showed up—that solemn phrase “till death us do part”. This is not to affirm, however, that the past was pristine. There used to be conflicts, and couples used to divorce; but it was not with such a high frequency or for the most banal of reasons as it is in the present day. Before proceeding further, this banality issue deserves explanation.

When men beat their wives and consequently the women ask for divorce, this is of course not a banal reason. This is abuse and violence against women; it is condemned not only locally but also nationally and internationally. However, when men live in a permanent state of alert to check “who is my wife talking to?” and when men are frequently possessed by feelings of *ntchange* (jealousy) and systematically utter real or virtual accusations of extra-marital sexual intercourse, these are banal reasons. Because a husband saw his wife talking for the second time with a neighbouring man, he immediately thinks that she is trading sex with him and she is *uputa*, and he wants a divorce. Or if a husband hears rumours that his wife is delaying in preparing the food because she is playing erotic games in the darkness of the river and under the banana trees with a village boy and immediately accuses her of being *uputa* and demands a divorce, these are, from my perspective, trivial reasons.

At the heart of these strained relations is the extremely suspicious behaviour of men vis-à-vis women. The explanation of this phenomenon cannot be confined to ideas about men’s incapacity to swallow and digest women’s emancipation. The following section will address the roots of this suspicion and mistrust.

### **13.5.5. The community courts and the restoration of social order**

The long-term consequences of the civil war and the historical changes brought about by colonialism, post-colonial state policies and the civil war are crystallized in a very conspicuous form, namely the extreme suspicious behaviour that has taken hold of many people. The judges in the community courts spend the majority of their time trying to determine the veracity of accusations most often based upon rumours. It is not women who are suspicious of men but the opposite case. Men account for the majority of manifestations of jealousy and accusations of adultery, while women report cases shaped by the negative consequences of this suspicious male behaviour, that is domestic violence and defamation. In turn these conflicts contribute to a high rate of divorce.

An analysis of the court responses to these post-war conflicts has to be conducted on two levels. One is a general description of how the courts, as one of the few reservoirs of trust in the community, manage to contribute somewhat to transitional justice and in a decisive manner to peace and the restoration of order and social stability. The other is a critical analysis aimed at disclosing how the courts and their laws contribute to perpetuating and reinforcing men's suspicious behaviour toward women. By functioning in this way, the courts completely fail to be institutions for the promotion of equality between the sexes and for the promotion of social change in the post-civil war period.

First, with the exception of the four cases involving wartime abuses and violations described above, the deliberations and resolutions of the court contribute to transitional justice not in the strict sense but in a more enlarged dimension. The courts contribute to transitional justice by resolving conflicts stemming from the wartime legacy. As demonstrated, both the aetiology of family and social conflicts and the mass presentation of these cases in the courts are symptoms of the violent changes brought about by the recently terminated civil war and other historical events related to colonial and post-colonial policies.

Second, the courts play a key role in that the cases are swiftly resolved, thus avoiding the perception of a repetition of injustices in the community. The courts do not accumulate legal processes. The maximum time for the resolution of a case is one to three weeks. Yet even when cases take this length of time it is not because of the slowness, fatigue or overburden of the judges, but simply because the defendants and complainants fail to cooperate appropriately. The courts promote a culture of peace by giving the same



opportunity to everyone involved, regardless of gender, ethnicity or political affiliation, to participate in the search for a peaceful solution. From this perspective the community courts undoubtedly contribute on a general level to peace and social stability in the post-civil war period, as their timely interventions prevent people from injuring one another as a way of attaining justice. War survivors as well as the new generation are very much aware that in the wake of a conflict they have a place where they can go to get help.

### **13.6. Human rights, the politics of gender and the prevention of conflicts**

There are no traditional taboos in Gorongosa communities to bar women's access to the community courts. Both men and women have access to justice. The most important thing in various types of conflicts is that the judges try to reach a fair resolution. This general dimension of their work contributes to the restoration of order and respect for human rights regardless of gender.

However, a critical perspective towards certain cultural practices reveals the negative aspect of the work of these courts. This is evident in relation to the gendered nature of the laws applied and the resolutions attained in cases of divorce, and to the total absence of a preventive dimension. The questions that demand a serious and critical reflection are the following: what does it mean for a man or a woman to win a case? And why is it that certain cases keep springing to the courts when they could simply be prevented?

The gendered nature of the laws applied in the resolution of divorce cases corresponds to a differential outcome for men and women. This is a violation of the national law in general, which has defended gender equality since the early days of the defunct post-colonial revolution, and specifically of law (no. 4/92), which some judges actually read every time they open their court. There are two possibilities for their disregard of the law: perhaps they do not understand what is written there,<sup>286</sup> or maybe they think (but do not say), that the law violates their customs, and because they have sympathy for the customs, they violate the law; *é um beco sem saida* ("it's a blind alley").

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<sup>286</sup> This seems less probable because paragraph one of the referred law (4/92) states that, "The edification of a society of social justice, the defence and preservation of equality of rights to all citizens, the reinforcement of social stability and the valorisation of tradition and other social and cultural values constitute major objectives in the Mozambican Republic."

When a man reports that his wife is involved in an extra-marital sexual affair with his young brother (which is a crime according to custom), and he manages to generate evidence, even if it is weak, to prove his allegation, the court may decide that he is right and he will win the case. As a result, the man will be entitled to financial reparation for the damage. His wife and her lover/brother-in-law will have to find the money to pay him compensation for their infringement of custom. Up to this point there are no major problems since according to any court the loser has to pay and the winner has to be compensated.

Yet in a similar case where a woman reports that her husband is excessively aggressive, that is, she is continuously exposed to domestic violence and as a result she wants a divorce, justice means quite a different thing. The husband may argue that he beats her because she does not respect him, and that eavesdropping has confirmed that she is involved in sexual dalliance with another man in the neighbourhood. The judges may decide not to give much credence to the husband's arguments and might support the woman's complaints instead, which is a positive step towards the attainment of fairness. At the end of the proceedings, the judges may conclude that the woman is free to divorce her husband because he is indeed a violent man. However, in such a case, in order for the woman to get her divorce, she must give back the *ku fewa*, i.e., material and financial restitution to cover all the goods and services that the husband provided for her during the duration of the marriage.<sup>287</sup> The woman is not entitled to demand the restitution for her *mambira* contributions: her working investment and her obedience are not converted either materially nor financially. It is here that the judges *borram com a tinta toda* ("blot with the whole ink"). The judges' endorsement of this custom is a clear breach of the country's constitution and of the recent approved family law.<sup>288</sup>

Why is it that when a man wins a divorce case he has to be paid, by the woman and a woman has to pay instead of being paid even if she wins? Moreover, when a

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<sup>287</sup> I gathered various lists of young men demanding their *ku fewa*, and many of them are quite ridiculous. In one list a young man was asking, besides other goods, for the leg of a gazelle that he had offered to the father of his former wife; another list demanded one kilo of salt; another demanded one litre of oil and a chicken leg; another asked for two pieces of meat; another for a piece of soap; another for two kilos of maize, and so on...

<sup>288</sup> Law no. 10/2004 approves the family law and revokes Book IV of the Civil Code. In its Article 3, regarding Family Rights, it is stated in paragraph 2 that "The dispositions of the present Law must be interpreted and applied taking into account the superior interests of the family, that lie in the principles of special protection for the children, and the equality of rights and duties of its members and of the pact between them." I SÉRIE-No. 34, Boletim da República de Moçambique, Suplemento, August 25 2004.

husband has intercourse with another woman, this is not regarded as extra-marital affair; and if his wife complains she runs the risk of sounding ridiculous and being accused of *ntchange*; but a woman's unfaithfulness is called adultery and causes to a family earthquake with foreseeable consequences: de-humanization of the woman, domestic violence, and divorce. I posed these questions and points of reflection to judges time and again, and they answered simply that it was tradition: "This is our tradition"; "If the woman does not pay the man she will fail to have a happy life with another man because her former husband will go home loaded with hatred in his heart." I also asked the judges whether it was part of tradition that husbands were extremely suspicious of their wives to the extent that just by finding her talking twice to another man in a corner of the village and under a tree is a motive for a hail of accusations of extra-marital sexual activity, or to call her *uputa*. Sometimes the judges would shrug off the question or would refer not to tradition but to alcohol abuse. But if extreme male suspicious behaviour is being fuelled by alcohol abuse, why do judges order women to pay for their divorce? Why do judges do not dismiss these cases by demonstrating to the men that their allegations are problematic, not to say false, because they are forged as a result of excessive consumption of alcohol? Why do judges not reprimand the men for excessive drinking and forbid the community to sell alcohol to such men? The answer comes back to the tradition discourse. Veena Das has observed in her study in Punjab (India) that "Tradition is what diminishes women and permits a subtle everyday violence to be perpetrated upon them" (2007: 45). In this case of post-civil war Gorongosa, according to what men and women told me about their traditions in the past, in which kinship networks provided mechanisms for restraining the unbridled abuse of women and violence in the household in general (Chapter 9), I am rather inclined to single out the malicious effects of tradition: but not of traditions as such, but traditions that are facing deep crisis.

In this context, and following Maruyama, one can conclude as he reflected, "It is safe to assume that each culture (...) has some dysfunctional, misfunctional, or toxifunctional aspects..." (1992: 303).<sup>289</sup> The local justice system, in a strict micro-level analysis, instead of changing these dysfunctional, misfunctional, and toxifunctional aspects, normalizes them by perpetuating deficient and self-destructive relationships among the war survivors in these communities.

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<sup>289</sup> Respectively, "dysfunctional is lack of functioning. Misfunction is to function in a wrong way. (...) toxifunction is a harmful function" (p. 303).

Although this logic is only applicable to cases of divorce, it contributes to reinforcing men's perception of female unreliability as real, and to denying women equal rights. This produces a marked effect on a woman's life, since in order for her to get free of an abusive husband she has to look for another man who can buy her liberty. If her father has sufficient financial means she can rely on him, which makes the situation less complicated. From this perspective, women's increasing demand for divorce cannot at all be regarded as part of either an emancipator movement or a social context of liberty that previously did not exist. It cannot be treated as a power struggle either. Male power and female subordination is not at stake. Men are still regarded as the heads of the households and are responsible for decision making inside and outside the household. This is not to say that women are totally devoid of power. Some women do have power, as in the case of religious leaders, but this power is not given to them to challenge male authority; rather, it is to reinforce and perpetuate the male-dominant role via patriarchal tradition (Cruz e Silva, 2001). The current conflictive situation only makes women's lives even more complicated and increases their dependency on men and consequently their vulnerability.

The other critical dimension of the courts is related to the absence of any preventive approach, though in this case the critique has to do less with socio-cultural practices than with politics. Every year there are conflicts between property owners. Most often these conflicts are generated because goats or pigs invade other people's fields and eat and consequently destroy the crops. Apparently a solution to this problem could be very simple, since there is no scarcity of land in these communities and the villagers could find more isolated places so that the animals could feed without destroying anybody's property. This does not happen, however. Such cases are in themselves not remarkable, as statistically they are not comparable to the higher frequency of other conflicts presented in table 6. The interesting aspect about the occurrence of these cases is that it calls attention to the strained relations between the different communitarian institutions.

As stated above, when the Frelimo-led government approved law no. 15/2000 (13.2), they did not do so in good faith. It was part of a political strategy to guarantee the availability of local representatives besides the Frelimo cadres. In this regard, not only the former traditional chiefs officially took power again but the *secretarios* as well.

Frelimo cadres are not naïve; they know very well that “two roosters cannot rule at once in the same poultry-yard” because they will clash. The detrimental effect of these local disputes is that the communities are reluctant to organize themselves because the leadership institutions do not understand one another.

Law no. 15/2000 states that one of the duties of the community authorities is to establish “liaisons with the community courts, where they exist, in the resolution of small conflicts of a civil nature, taking into account local habits and customs, within the limits of the law”.<sup>290</sup> The law in general and this article in particular is problematic, however, as they were preceded by another problematic law, namely law no. 4/92 that created the community courts. Law no. 4/92 is controversial because for centuries the traditional chiefs resolved disputes according to the local customs of their people, and now this function was removed from their hands. How can one expect then that they are going to cooperate with the community courts? And, if we consider the law for its own sake: what does the establishment of a “liaison” mean in this case?

If the law was appropriate and if it was clear vis-à-vis the modalities of vertical and horizontal liaison and cooperation among the various state and community institutions, one might suppose that the judges in concert with other leadership institutions would try to find preventive solutions for some of the conflicts that keep emerging every year. This is not the case because so far there is an authority crisis, and the various leadership institutions are working separately. In my conversations with the judges it became evident that they themselves cannot successfully engage in prevention strategies because if they did they would have to interfere with the realm of authority and power of other community structures, particularly of the traditional chiefs. This situation represents sand rather than oil in the wheels of local development and progress.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to demonstrate that members of the community have legal resources to help in the peaceful resolution of their conflicts. The civil war gravely depleted the social capital that existed prior to the war years. People in general have now very little trust in each other; the micro-level space of the family has become the centre stage for very serious disputes which are fuelled particularly by the lack of trust and poor

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<sup>290</sup> Section II, Duties of the community authorities, Article 5 (general duties), line b.

levels of solidarity between its members. Consequently, people are clearly not capable of resolving the conflicts by themselves. Despite this intriguing predicament, the community courts embody the remnants of the communal reservoirs of social capital in the form of trust and willingness to cooperate to solve the conflicts of the people in general. This key position of the communal courts has created the conditions for a peaceful resolution of family and community conflicts, and for a gradual process of reconciliation between war survivors.

To grasp the specific role played by the community courts as a contribution to post-war reconciliation requires a broader rather than narrower conceptualisation of transitional justice. A systematic and careful analysis of post-war conflicts and the way in which they are addressed locally demonstrates that the traditional justice system provides responses, albeit in a limited manner, to the unsettled abuses and violations of the wartime period. More generally, the traditional justice system deals with numerous wartime legacies and by resolving present day conflicts, the traditional justice system contributes for reconciliation and prevention of further escalation of violence. In this way, the local justice system actively contributes to transitional justice by breaking with the cycles of injustice and impunity and foster to peace, reconciliation and social stability in Gorongosa.

However, the general analysis conceals the negative side of this legal resource. A microanalysis in terms not of accessibility but of dynamics of resolution of cases involving conflictive relations between men and women demonstrates a very problematic feature of the courts' resolutions: the extreme gender bias. This situation is predicated upon the wartime legacy, politics and culture.

One of the most compelling war legacies is inscribed in the extremely suspicious behaviour of men towards women; this is a legacy particularly of *gandira*, which radically transformed relations between men and women, changing their relations from complementary to confrontational one. Notwithstanding the coping strategies that were initiated during the war to deal with pain, the sense of humiliation and defeat, men still perceive women as the embodiment of their ineluctable and undefeated wartime enemies. As the politicians representing the macro-level forces refused to engage in a national debate in order to avoid having to examine and articulate the archaeology of the recent evil, their failure only contributes to creating and maintaining the situation and to

justifying as right everything that unfolded during the war. As a result, there is a persistent and malevolent conspiracy of silence, which does not deny that women suffered but refuses to acknowledge that they were victims.

In this context, in cases of strained relationships, when men challenge women in the courts or vice versa, the culture that provides men with material and financial comfort is the same culture that morally undermines women even more. This predicament contributes to the perpetuation, through legal means, of men's perceptions that their wives are conspiring to have sexual intercourse with any man they happen to find around the corner—including their own fathers, brothers or cousins. The laws and justice in their current form are incapable of restoring the dignity of women. This situation is detrimental to women's lives. It is inimical for their well-being, it prevents them from accumulating financial and material resources, and it generates very serious health predicaments.

## Chapter 14: *Gamba* spirit possession: Affliction, healing and reconciliation

**Introduction:** “*That which has horns cannot be wrapped up in a bag*”<sup>291</sup>

This chapter deals with war-related health problems and healing strategies. The goal is to elucidate and to analyse the contribution of spirits and traditional healers in restoring the social world of the victims in the aftermath of the Mozambican’s civil war. The social world of the Gorongosas consists of a web of actors engaged in dynamic relations and processes. Dead people are among these actors. The dead establish relations with the living and between the living through their spirits. In their polysemic existence the spirits play a key role in the way in which suffering is experienced, interpreted and dealt with. This chapter deals particularly with *gamba* spirits (plural: *magamba*). Their origins are generally attributed to the horror of the civil war. They return to the world of the living to claim for justice. *Magamba* are male spirits of soldiers who died during the war and whose bodies were not properly buried. Allegedly the civilian people living in the war-zones took parts of their corpses for purposes known only to themselves. *Gamba* is also the name of the healer that deals with afflictions by *gamba* spirits.

The main focus in this chapter is the people afflicted by the *magamba* spirits and their struggle to find ways to get rid of these spirits.<sup>292</sup> The chapter describes how spirits strike their victims as a way of vindicating their own cause, the availability of social capital (bonding ties, trust, cooperation, and solidarity) in the family that is required to help the patient, and how the *gamba* healers develop their interventions. Based on longitudinal observations of patients diagnosed with *gamba* spirit possession who received treatment from different *gamba* healers, the data are presented in quantitative and qualitative ways. Quantitative data provide important insights into the background and contextual characteristics of the patients. In order to clearly apprehend the complexity of the health problems related to *magamba* spirits, the quantitative data are complemented with four case studies. Through these cases, the specificities of the health problems<sup>293</sup> involved and of the participation of the patients’ family are analysed. Most importantly the case studies permit a description of the narrative of the *gamba* spirits,

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<sup>291</sup> A proverb meaning “there is nothing that can be done secretly without being unveiled”.

<sup>292</sup> For a thorough description of *magamba* healers see Igreja (2003b); Igreja & Dias-Lambranca (2005).

<sup>293</sup> For an account of further health and social problems as a result of *gamba* spirits see Igreja, Kleijn & Richters (2006).



which, in parallel with family participation, is one of the key elements in the diagnosis and consequently in the healing interventions.

The effectiveness of healing interventions constitutes a crucial element for the understanding of healing systems from a medical anthropological perspective. However, the theoretical debates are far away from offering a unified approach or even methodology on how to study healing effectiveness. A general idea in these debates is simply the suggestion of the necessity to adopt an emic perspective, i.e., to explore and comprehend how efficacy is understood within traditional medical systems themselves (Waldram, 2000). This strategy is pursued in this chapter also. In this regard, the effectiveness of the *gamba* healers in restoring people's health is also a focal point of the chapter. I am particularly interested in finding out whether the interventions developed by *gamba* healers exert positive results from the perspectives of the people involved, and in exploring the meaning of these results and the circumstances in which they are generated.

The emic perspective is studied by employing the sketch model of "therapeutic process" (Csordas & Kleinman, 1996) described on Chapter 4. This study also follows three different stages: 1) to assess the patient's condition before treatment; 2) to participate in the treatment procedures focusing on the *gamba* spirit's narrative, the *gamba* healer's interventions, and the patient's kin reactions; and 3) to make various follow-ups to determine the extent to which the patient successfully recovers from the ill health condition.

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section presents some individual and family quantitative characteristics of a sample of two types of cases: possession trance and *ku tekemuka* (body shaking) cases. The second section describes four cases of patients suffering from trance possession, and the voices of their spirits are presented as well. Section three develops the effectiveness model by presenting the views of the principal people involved in each case of trance possession. Section four presents my critical observations of the work of the *gamba* healers, and the last section presents the main conclusions of the chapter.

#### **14.1. *Gamba* spirits: Possession trance and *ku tekemuka* cases**

Using a longitudinal approach, i.e., over a period of six years I participated personally in healing sessions in the houses of magamba and other types of healers and interviewed

healers, their patients and their patients' relatives.<sup>294</sup> Table 9 shows some of the basic characteristics of the patients and their spirits. The total number of patients was 40 and they were spread over the different villages of the Gorongosa district. They were patients of different healers, but many of them were treated by members of Ametramo (Mozambican Association of Traditional Practitioners). The gender difference was significant: 80% were women (N = 32) and only 20% were men (N = 8). Their ages ranged between 12 and 30 years. 45% were married (N = 18) while 38% (N = 15) were divorced and 17% were still single (N = 7). These epidemiological results are generally consistent with published materials on spirit possession in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>295</sup>

**Some characteristics of patients and their spirits**

	All Participants		Trance Possession		Ku Tekemuka	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Gender:</b>						
Women	32	80	16	72	14	80
Men	8	20	6	28	4	20
<b>Marital Status:</b>						
Married:	18	45	10	25	8	20
Polygamous	11	61	7	39	4	22
Monogamous	7	39	4	22	3	17
Divorced	15	38	5	13	10	25
Single	7	18	3	8	4	10
<b>Divorces in lifetime:</b>						
One	3	9	3	9	-	-
Two	3	9	3	9	-	-
Three	4	12	2	6	2	6
Four	23	70	4	12	19	58
<b>Traumatic Experiences:</b>						
War-zone (years)	15	100	15	100	15	100
Parent's death due to war	28	70	14	35	14	35
Parent's death due to war-illness	10	25	4	10	6	15

**Table 9**

The cases were divided into two kinds: patients who reach the possession trance state, which means that the spirit talks through the patient's body, and patients who failed to thrive, which means that patient only did *ku tekemuka*<sup>296</sup> (meaning that their body shook as a result of spirit penetration) and the spirit did not talk. Following this division, table 1 indicates that from the total number of participants (N=40), 55% (N = 22) were able to reach the possession trance state to build a narrative. The remaining 45% (N = 18) only reached the stage of *ku tekemuka*. Gender differences were again remarkably evident: of

<sup>294</sup> My assistants complemented these data by interviewing and recording 60% of the total cases in the houses of various others healers.

<sup>295</sup> See, for instance, Behrend & Luig, 1999; Boddy, 1989; Crapanzano & Garrison 1977; Fry, 1976; Giles 1987; Janzen, 1992; Lambek 1981; Lewis 1969; Sharp 1993; Spring 1978; Walker 1972.

<sup>296</sup> This differs from *ku guedemera*, meaning shivering as a result of cold, strong headaches, or fear.

the 22 possession trance cases, only six participants were men, and 14 of the *ku tekemuka* cases were women.

Comparing the two groups (trance possession and *ku tekemuka*), no significant differences were found in terms of variables such as degree of war exposure, family characteristics, and history of divorces. In relation to traumatic experiences, all participants (N=40) were born and grew up inside the war zones. They went through numerous traumatic experiences individually and collectively, both as direct victims and as eyewitnesses. Stories of tragedy and of traumatic losses were very common among all interlocutors in both groups (possession trance and *ku tekemuka*). In addition to the fact that all participants were born in a war zone, another striking result is that 60% (N = 24) of participants were beleaguered by never having met one of their parents owing to war-related death. Such patients had been unborn or still a baby at the time of the death of one of the parents, and they were nursed and grew up with other relatives or with neighbours. 20% of the participants lost both parents due to war or illness-related deaths.

The family structure was divided between polygamous and monogamous marriages. Of the 18 married participants, 60% (N =11) belonged to polygynous households and 40% (N = 7) to a monogynous type of family. From the total number of married and divorced individuals (N = 33), 70% (N = 23) had a history of four divorces. Of these, 58% (N=19) belonged to the *ku tekemuka* group. The cause for such high numbers of marriages and divorces was attributed principally to the presence of spirits, deteriorating family relations, alcohol abuse on the part of men and domestic violence against women.

In both groups of patients (possession trance and *ku tekemuka*), the afflictions by spirits were accompanied by a set of psychological and physical symptoms: stomach and rib pain, strange pains in the whole body, headaches, poor appetite, sleeping disorders, nightmares of persecution and sexual violence (particularly among women), irregular menstrual cycles, difficulties getting pregnant or nursing their babies, outbursts of anger, and general body weakness. The female patients considered the most distressing problems to be those related to reproductive health, i.e., difficulties getting pregnant or nursing babies. Of the total number of female patients observed, 20% suffered from *ku himira* (failure to become pregnant); 30% experienced *ku gweda* (miscarriages); 40% experienced *ku ntsay wana* or *zwi ntchia* (the problem of “throwaway babies” or infant

mortality; some participants had lost more than three children in infancy); and 10% had irregular menstrual cycles.

Comparing the two groups, the *ku tekemuka* group had more health and social complaints than the possession trance group. The high levels of complaints in the first group were related to the increased difficulties they face in finding a solution to their health problems. In one case of *ku tekemuka*, a young patient died in the course of treatment. He had no close relatives left to support him.<sup>297</sup> The only people around were his sisters, but they could not deal with the spirits because they were young. The fact that their spirits are mute poses tremendous complications in getting a positive resolution for the afflictions. In cases of mute spirits the *gamba* healers can still apply an old technique called *ku nunka*<sup>298</sup> (to sniff), but few people nowadays regard this as an appropriate intervention.

To illustrate the afflictions provoked by *gamba* spirit possession I will give detailed descriptions of four cases concerning patients from the trance possession group (N=22) presented in table 1. These cases were selected randomly from only this group because from the emic perspective the voice and narrative of the spirit is of extreme importance to understanding the aetiology of the health problem. The descriptions cover the ways in which people suffered from spirit possession, the trickier process of mobilizing social capital among family members, the *gamba* spirit's voice, the *gamba* healer's response, and the recovery process assessed through various follow-ups.

#### **14.2. *Gamba* spirits: Possession trance cases**

The case studies concern four young people, three women and one man: Maria, Almeida, Isabel, and Joana. Before proceeding, it is pertinent to clarify some points. There are at least two important aspects to consider in presenting the process of dealing with *gamba* spirits. First, as well as the patient, everyone closely related to the patient has a history of overwhelming war traumatic experiences. Because I am particularly interested in the

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<sup>297</sup> Renamo had murdered his father when he was around four years old. His mother died after the war. His father's relatives had been divided since the war and refused to cooperate. As they were living very far away it was extremely difficult to compel them to help by using the local Mozambican Association of Healers (Ametramo) or the police.

<sup>298</sup> This technique is also called *ku fema*. The healer sniffs the body of the patient in order to transfer the mute spirit from patient's body to that of the healer. The healer does *ku tuta* (to carry the spirit) in order to give voice to the afflicting spirit so that he can air his claims.

traumatic experiences of the patients I pay less attention here to the traumatic experiences of their close relatives.<sup>299</sup>

Second, from the emic perspective the healing of *gamba* spirit possession requires an engaged listening to and respect for the narrative of the *gamba* spirits. Without this narrative of the spirit it becomes very complicated to reach a comprehensive diagnosis of the health problem and the healing techniques to apply.<sup>300</sup> During the various treatments of *gamba* spirits, the *gamba* healers always emphasized the importance of disclosing the identity of the spirits, and encouraged the spirits to talk freely and the participants to carefully ponder on what they had to say. For instance, a common introductory remark can be exemplified by what one *gamba* healer said to the spirit, “*ife ati ku tongueri tai*” (we are not here to give you orders), “*upese zwaco zwida putiwa iwe*” (you have to tell everything that led to your killing).

The process of dealing with *gamba* spirits clearly indicates the necessity to do justice to the world of the spirits by focusing on their voices and narratives. A phenomenological presentation of the spirits should be a meaningful feature in the anthropological descriptions. What do the spirits say? What do they do? What do they want? Who are their hosts? How do they relate to their hosts and to society at large? The absence of these phenomenological features of the spirits and their hosts impairs our deeper understanding of the world of the spirits and limits our possibilities to establish meaningful comparisons across cultures.

One crucial example of the lack of a phenomenological presentation that seriously impairs a fruitful cross-cultural comparison is related to experiences of exorcism (*ku zungulira* in Chi-Gorongose). While in some cases the spirit is discharged in the classic way (“go away!”),<sup>301</sup> that is with the agency of the living over the spirit, in the cases of *gamba* spirits described here, although there is a discharge of the spirit, the agency remains with the spirit (“I will only go away if you follow my orders; otherwise I can kill every one of my host’s relatives and the generations to come”).

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<sup>299</sup> During the fieldwork I tried as much as possible to rebuild the narratives of everyone closely related to the patient, and these data are available. For the sake of simplification and clarification I provide only general information about the relatives of the patient here. An example of how confusing the narration of the various people involved could become will be evident in the case of Almeida below.

<sup>300</sup> This is very well exemplified in the case of patients whose spirits only do *ku tekemuka*.

<sup>301</sup> In the Christian religion they say, “Go away, you devil”.

Following this line of reasoning, that is the need for a truly respectful attitude toward the agency of the spirit, during the fieldwork I recorded all of the *gamba* spirits' narratives and on various occasions interviewed the spirits. Here I follow a similar path in presenting some of the qualitative results. For each patient I will give some background information and then place particular focus upon the voices of spirits. My focus on the spirits is also part of my project, and in the closing chapter of this thesis I will explore the extent to which *gamba* spirits and the processes that they set in motion embody a dimension of reconciliation. By proceeding in this way, I wish to avoid any impression of an endless capacity to judge the truth, and I give the reader the possibility to draw his or her own conclusions after listening to the spirits in their own contexts.

### **14.3. Case One: Maria**

Maria is a young woman of 25 years living in a very remote village in the middle of the Gorongosa Mountains, located around 45 km from the main village (Vila Paiva de Andrade). Frelimo soldiers killed her father in the war while her mother was still pregnant with her. Her father was polygamous and she has half-brothers and sisters, but Maria was her mother's only child. Some months after the death of her father, when Maria was still a baby and still in wartime, there was a family reunion in which the late father, through a medium healer, announced that his widow (Maria's mother) should leave his household and remarry elsewhere—but that she could not take Maria with her. Maria's mother was forced to abandon her daughter amidst the civil war. She married another man and went with him to Barue (a neighbouring district). As a result of this premature separation from her mother, Maria grew up in adverse circumstances moving between her half-brother's and maternal grandparents' houses.

Maria survived the war and when she reached marriage age she was married to a former Renamo soldier. A year later she started suffering from spirit-possession episodes. She became pregnant three times and miscarried each time. As she described her health predicament, "I feel tired, my heart beats fast, and I am in pain. Usually, after a possession episode I faint and only recover my consciousness after two to four hours." When I asked about bad dreams, she answered, "Dreaming bad dreams is like my

*machamba* (field).<sup>302</sup> Every day I have terrible dreams; I dream of a man who comes to stab me with a huge knife; sometimes this man has sexual intercourse with me. I try to fight but I can't; it's difficult to sleep properly".

Her husband took her back to her half-brother's house. She asked her half-brothers for help, but they systematically refused her desperate requests. In the end, she travelled to Barue to look for her mother. She found her mother after many years of separation but it was still not possible to do *ku socera* (the diagnostic process consisting of playing drums and singing songs to call the spirit to come out). One particularity of this diagnostic process (*ku socera*) is that it cannot be conducted without the presence of the paternal relatives of the sick person, because when the spirit manifests itself to the public the relatives have to respond to the spirit's demands.

Maria's paternal relatives were refusing to cooperate to help Maria to deal with the harmful *gamba* spirit. They were saying that Maria herself was responsible for whatever bad things she might have done during the war, and for this reason they were not willing to take part in any *ku socera* session. Maria and her mother had no other alternative than to go to the police station to report their case. Since most police officers share the same or a similar beliefs prevailing in this social world, they do not hesitate to give official notification to force the relatives of a sick person to participate in a healing session. Maria and her mother obtained the official notice, and finally the paternal relatives agreed to cooperate in the process of *ku socera*.

#### **14.3.1. Voice of the spirit**

Maria took her case to Ametramo (Mozambican Association of Healers) accompanied by her mother and the paternal relatives. The healers did *ku socera*, and Maria started making uncontrolled and violent body movements. From the apparently peaceful, depressed and gloomy Maria, someone else emerged. Maria was gone: she was wheezing, her voice and language changed, her eyes kept rolling and focusing up, and the healers were treating Maria as a *seculo* (grandfather). The spirit manifested itself to everyone. The spirit in Maria's body was very aggressive towards Maria's family members; he wanted to beat them, he wanted to carry heavy objects, he was insensitive to

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<sup>302</sup> This is a metaphor to express that the person experiences a certain phenomenon regularly like the work that is done on the *machamba* (field), which is also a regular activity.

pain. He seemed to have great difficulties in breathing and he was screaming loudly. Everyone was afraid and the stronger men tried to hold him down.

The healers kept beseeching, "*Seculo, seculo*, don't get annoyed; we are here to listen to your *micero* (problem) and solve (*ku tonga* – a judicial word for “to resolve”) it. Please, *seculo*, sit down, sit down and tell us who you are and your requests will be satisfied tonight". When they finally managed to appease (*ku gazikissa*) the spirit, he uttered the following words: "Do you know me? Do you know me?" The family members had to answer as to whether or not they knew the spirit. The spirit, speaking in Shi-Shona, disclosed his name and origin while the healer translated the words of the spirit to Maria's relatives. It was the spirit of a former Renamo soldier. The action went on and the spirit speaking through Maria's body said the following:

"My name is FM. I was a Renamo soldier. I was married to Julieta..." (Julieta is Maria's half sister, and she was present during the session). The spirit continued narrating with the same wrath and recklessness:

"I fathered one child with Julieta, but the child died.... Julieta killed me in the war, and then she cut off my *mussuto* (penis) and *nguenje* (testicles), *ada ndirdja* (she ate me). She took all my possessions.... I came back because I want my things.... If you don't give me back everything that belongs to me I will continue to kill people in your family. Are you listening to me? Do you hear me? I want my things, back otherwise you will never live in peace. Are you listening to me?"

This dialogue unfolded with intense moments and full of interruptions and menace. The speech of the possessed in Gorongosa is not opaque as in the case observed by Englund (1998) among Mozambican refugees of the Ngoni ethnic group in Malawi. It is coherent, and the spirit has the crucial task of building a consistent narrative. The healer plays the role of *sankulo* (godfather or witness) to mediate the proceedings and deliberations. The healer only translates in cases where it is not clear, when the spirit uses several different languages at once.

Julieta was confronted with this disclosure and at first she adamantly refused to acknowledge it. She said that this was not the “clone” of any of her previous husbands: "I was married to a Renamo soldier and you all know that I used to live on a Renamo military base, but my deceased husband is not this one who is appearing now. This is not my husband". For several hours there were heated deliberations, arguments and counter-arguments, shouting and protests among the family members because of Julieta's refusal. The *gamba* healers were also trying to mediate the discussions and at the same time



exerting pressure over Julieta to accept the truth of what the spirit said. This pressure from the healers and the participants' was based on the apparently irrefutable evidence that the spirit had presented: Julieta's throat was sometimes swollen because of his penis. The spirit said, "You ate my penis and testicles, and sometimes my testicles move from your stomach and take refuge in your throat. That's why your throat is sometimes very swollen; it is because you ate my penis". Accordingly Julieta was failing to digest and once in a while the penis and testicles of the spirit surfaced in her throat. No one in the audience dared to contradict this evidence because Julieta did in fact suffer from a sore and very swollen throat from time to time.

Based on this compelling evidence and because of the mounting pressure, Julieta had to change her position. She ended up agreeing with the accusation. She said that she knew the case and that she was prepared to repair the damage. During follow-up sessions, she told me in private that she was not responsible for the case and that she had only complied for the sake of the family and Maria in particular. Yet Julieta revealed important facts about her life. She had been married more than four times, mostly with Renamo military personnel and she "had thrown away many babies (*ku tsay wana or zwi ntchia*)". She used to live on Renamo bases, she suffered a lot, and it appears that she used sex to survive.

When the disclosure was finished, the healers asked how the reparation should be done. The spirit said:

I want back my *mussuto*, my *nguenje*, my *nfute* (weapon), my uniform, my bag, my *ntchorora* (bayonet). Do you hear me? I want *nbanje* (cannabis sativa), a red cloth and *folia* (tobacco leaves). Do you hear me? Take these things to a tree in the bush. Do you hear me? If you do this, I will leave you in peace. Do you hear me? I want all my things tonight. Do you hear me?

The relatives and the healer insisted on finding out if the spirit really would leave the family in peace if these objects were given back to him. The spirit confirmed that after the ceremony of returning his property had been performed, justice would have been attained for him and he would go back to his *dzindza* (family origin). Yet suddenly something very strange happened. Everyone became totally confused because Maria started crying out in pain, sobbing, and calling for her mother's help:

Mother, mother, someone is stabbing me... Mother, I am being stabbed ... Mother, they want to kill me...Mother, I am dying...Mother, they want to kill me...Someone is stabbing me...

I looked at the healer and his face was wrinkled in bewilderment. In five years of observing different healing sessions, this was the first time I had seen a healer totally dismayed. I went closer to Maria to see where exactly she was feeling the pain, and she had her hands on her right ribs. No one was bothered by the fact that the supposed person who was hurting or trying to kill Maria was invisible. It was clear to everyone that someone had launched a spirit to hurt Maria. The healer was afraid that Maria would die in his yard and this could put his reputation in peril.<sup>303</sup>

Maria's mother was there but she did not know what to do either. She was just saying to Maria, "I told you, these people [her half-brothers and sisters] want to kill you. I knew that because of your disclosure these people would want to kill you". Yet it is not clear whether Maria was able to understand her mother's words. Maria just kept wailing. The session seemed to be about to end in a tragedy when another healer went into a trance; he sniffed (*ku fema*) Maria's body and did *ku tuta* (to carry the spirit) in his own body. The healer took away the spirit that was trying to kill Maria. When the assembled people asked the spirit to disclose his identity, he just answered: "Do you want to see me naked? Do you want to see me naked?" and refused to disclose his identity. The healer carried the spirit and he went to the back of the house to do *ku hossira* (to sneeze) "*hotsi, hotsi*". This meant that the harmful spirit was gone.

Some minutes later Maria recovered. As is usual in such cases Maria had complete post facto amnesia. She told me that she was very tired and was feeling a lot of pain in her body. Afterwards Maria's relatives and the healers started preparing everything that the *gamba* spirit had requested in order to perform the closure ceremony. The following day, they managed to get it all collected and they went to the bush in the late afternoon to make *mpamba* (to worship the spirit and deliver his goods). The *gamba* healer ordered all kin members to spit in the spirit's possessions and then they left them in the bush near to a river.

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<sup>303</sup> In 1978 this healer had been sent to the re-education camp in Sa-Kudzo because a patient had died during a treatment session in his yard.

#### 14.4. Case Two: Almeida

Almeida<sup>304</sup> is a young man of 24 years. He lives with his father and stepmother in a small village in one of the Gorongosa Mountains located around 20 km from Vila Paiva de Andrade. During the war Almeida lost his mother, a newborn sister, and his grandmother (Carla), all of whom died on the same day. My baseline interview with Almeida's father (Armindo) revealed that, "A spirit killed them on the same day. That is the same spirit that is still roaming around"<sup>305</sup>.

As it will be demonstrated through the voice of the spirit, a very important person in the closed niche of Almeida is his deceased maternal grandmother (Carla). The only people who knew her very well are Almeida's father and maternal uncle (Francisco). How is it possible that in this patrilineal society the maternal grandmother would be so prominent in the Almeida's life? In general the answer is simple, but in this case it is very complicated. According to the family tradition of Almeida's mother, they do not accept *ku lola*<sup>306</sup> for the children. Therefore Armindo did not pay *ku lola*; therefore in this case, although Armindo raised his children, he does not have full rights over them. According to this tradition Almeida is a *makuio*<sup>307</sup> child, which means that he is under the responsibility of his maternal grandparents.

Under these circumstances, it could be presumed that Francisco would be the most appropriate person to assume the role of *ku himirira* in all conflicts related to Almeida, especially in conflicts involving spirits. However, he had already refused to assume responsibility during the war and he was refusing again now because, according to Francisco, "We don't have the same father. Almeida's mother has her own *dzindza*

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<sup>304</sup> The birth history of Almeida followed this path, as narrated by his father: "His mother was pregnant, then she did *ku gweda* (had a miscarriage); then she gave birth to twins and they were alive. They died later on because it was not yet the right time for their birth. Then she gave birth to a girl; this one is still alive. Then she gave birth to a boy and this child died. Then she gave birth to this boy here, Almeida. Then she gave birth to another baby, the one who died on the same day as her".

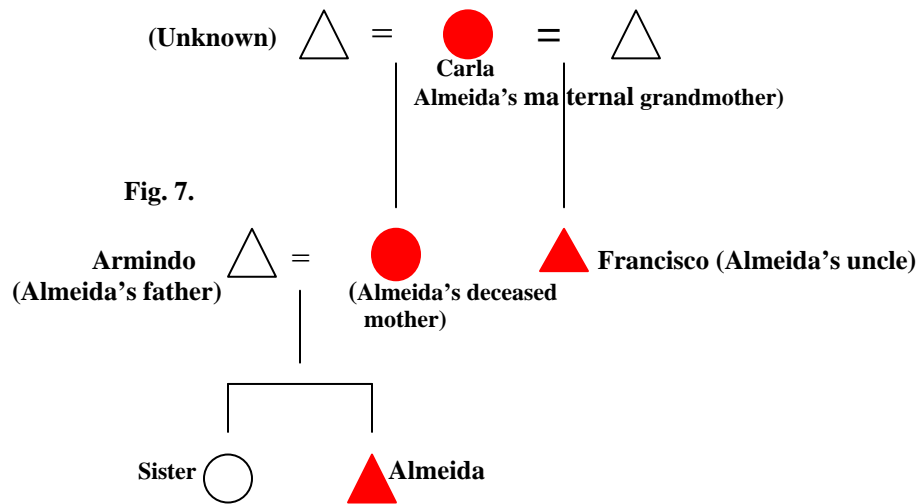
<sup>305</sup> Almeida's father, who had done a lot of *gandira* during the war, also disclosed that his elder sister was murdered in the war when she was doing *gandira*. "There was a fight between Frelimo and Renamo. My sister tried to escape but she stepped on a landmine", he said. His wife, Almeida's mother, had also done *gandira* in the war and she had been raped: "my wife was raped by the soldiers. She was taken to do *gandira* and when they arrived there she was threatened, 'if you refuse I am going to kill you; if you don't agree I am going to kill you'. It was a Renamo soldier who was threatening my wife and then he raped her". These narratives of war, trauma and suffering are interminable. What we can consider an individual story is always intersected by other peoples' stories, experiences, and destinies.

<sup>306</sup> *Ku lola* is the money paid by the husband to his wife's parents in order to get full rights over his children. If *ku lola* is not paid the children remain the responsibility of their maternal grandparents.

<sup>307</sup> About *makuio*, people also say "*ku tongua ku hire*", which means that they receive orders from both maternal and paternal grandparents.

(family origin). It's her *dzindza* that has the duty to resolve problems related to Almeida". The dynamic of Almeida's family and his sources of support are represented in figure 7.

### Kinship relations in Almeida's family and his source of support



Recollecting the life of his parents-in-law, Armindo said that he never met his father-in-law because when he had married Almeida's mother in the colonial period, her mother (Carla) was already a widow and she remarried several times. When I asked if his late mother-in-law had been married to a soldier, the answer was "no". Francisco also confirmed the unstable nature of the marital life of his deceased mother. An indication of this marital instability was the fact that Almeida's mother was his half sister, "We belong to the same belly but the father was different".

Armindo related that when his wife, their newborn baby and his mother-in-law died in the civil war, he had informed Almeida's uncle (Francisco) about the occurrence. Initially Francisco did not want to participate in the burial because of the very unstable security conditions as well because of what he had already said (that Almeida's mother did not belong to his *dzindza*).<sup>308</sup> Yet bowing to pressures that he received at the time, Francisco went to attend the funeral and performed the *ntsanganiko* ceremony. Because of the non-payment of the *ku lola*, Armindo went to Francisco's house after the funeral to deliver the children, including Almeida. Francisco refused them, arguing time and again that it was the *dzindza* of his deceased half sister that should assume responsibility for the

<sup>308</sup> The most important kin participating in the burial would have been Almeida's paternal grandparents.

children. As Armindo explicitly noted, however, “The problem is that their late mother does not have relatives to take responsibility for these children”.<sup>309</sup>

Since the day when Francisco refused to assume the responsibility of Almeida and his sister amid the war, Armindo, his daughter and son (Almeida) never saw him again. The war ended but they never communicated; they remained separated, each in his own apparently comfortable corner, for almost fifteen years. It was the spirit lodged in Almeida’s body that brought these people together again.

At the time of the three tragic deaths, Almeida was around five years old, though no one knows for sure. However, Almeida does not remember his mother, grandmother and newborn baby sister. He grew up with his father, stepmother, and younger sister. His father said that he tried to protect Almeida as much as possible during the war.

After the war, Almeida went to school. He was a bright student but he decided to stop studying and went to Chimoio<sup>310</sup> to work to earn some money. He spent one year there and then returned home. At that point, Almeida started getting sick and he had different symptoms, as he narrated: “I feel weak; sometimes I have headaches; my heart beats fast. Sometimes I suffer from bad dreams at night: I dream of knives, I dream about fire burning, and many other things. I feel pain in my ribs, and then I start getting possessed by a spirit”. Yet Almeida located the starting point of his suffering far back in the past, “I started manifesting the spirit this year; but ever since the death of my mother, my sister and I have always been suffering”. When I asked Almeida what kind of suffering he and his sister had been going through after their mother’s death, he did not know, “When my mother died I was still very young, I don’t remember what was happening”.

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<sup>309</sup> When I heard Armindo talking about his children in this way I wondered how he could say “these children” as if he was referring to his own children. It is interesting to note that because of some local traditions, when there are intense conflicts, when parents talk about their children the outside listener will get the striking impression that they are not talking about their own offspring, and a compelling impression that in this society to have children is regarded as an extreme burden. When I confronted parents with this impression they immediately denied this by saying, “How can I refuse my blood?” or “How can I refuse something that came out of my womb?” However, there is a proverb in this society, which says that, “The banana tree dies because it bears a bunch of bananas,” i.e., children cause suffering to the parents. Probably when there is suffering caused by children the parents talk about them as if they were talking about any other children from the village.

<sup>310</sup> An urban centre located around 150km from Gorongosa district. Historically the young Gorongosa men used Chimoio as a labour migrant city. This trend continues now but with less intensity because of the socio-economic crisis that the country has been going through since the beginning of the civil war.

The spirit lodged in Almeida body was extremely violent. Every time the spirit showed up, he wanted to beat every one of Almeida's relatives, particularly Armindo (Almeida's father). The spirit treated Armindo as *nhariposse* (i.e. the male lover of a married woman), in this case, the lover of Armindo's deceased wife (Almeida's mother). Almeida's father started to suffer and once was a victim of the spirit's violence: "The spirit came out and he bit me on the arm and suffocated me... It was the people in the vicinity that helped me. When the spirit comes out he does not want to see me".

Under these dysfunctional circumstances, and because Almeida had made it explicitly clear to his father that he wanted to be free of the afflicting spirit, Armindo decided to seek the help of a *gamba* healer. The few living relatives they had were summoned to join for a *ku socera* session to help Almeida. This spirit, unlike the others, did not require any performance but would just suddenly show up. It was the spirit of a *komerede* (Zimbabwean soldier). He came out and accused Almeida's maternal aunt of having killed him. Yet the referred maternal aunt was no longer alive, so she could not assume the responsibility for that spirit herself. The only direct relative who could do *ku himirira* (assume the responsibility of the case) was the maternal uncle (brother of the deceased aunt), Francisco. As had happened during the war, Francisco once again refused to take part in the healing process for Almeida, using the old argument that only the *dzindza* of Almeida's mother could deal with this case.

The local representatives of Ametramo sent for Francisco to present himself in the house of the healer, and after some insistence he went there. Initially, the spirit asked for Z\$ 250 (Zimbabwean dollars) or, if they did not have that much money, a young girl to dwell in. The *gamba* healers who were consulted first in this case committed very serious mistakes. During the hearings, Almeida's uncle Francisco continued to refuse to assume any responsibility. He said to the *gamba* healers that during the war he was separated from his late half sister, and that he had never heard that his half sister had established a relationship with this *komerede*. He refused *de pés juntos* ("with two feet together", or adamantly) to admit what the spirit was saying. The *gamba* healers were foolish; otherwise they could have silenced Francisco by counter-arguing that he was wrong because Almeida was a *makuio* child. But they did not pursue this legitimate cultural argument. The *gamba* healers just used their intuition and identified themselves with the demands of the *gamba* spirit. They tried to compel the uncle to accept the spirit's

narrative. As the arguments unfolded, Francisco got annoyed and decided to leave the *gamba* healer's house as a way of expressing his disagreement with the whole procedure. The spirit of the *komerede* ran after Francisco, took hold of him and violently struck him. When the healers realized what was really happening it was too late; the spirit was beating Francisco without stopping.

Francisco was gravely injured. He was taken home and everyone thought that he was going to die. For two days he could not walk, no words came out of his mouth, and he was just lying down on the mat. Then Francisco's boss gave him a ride on his motorcycle to the hospital in Vila Paiva; otherwise, Francisco could have died.

At the hospital he was diagnosed with a fractured rib. Because of the clear signs of violent physical aggression, the health workers transferred him to the police station to report the case. When the police tried to find out what had happened, Almeida's father told them: "Francisco was beaten by a spirit". The police immediately transferred the case to the central headquarters of Ametramo. Everyone involved, except the group of healers who had wrongly dealt with the case in the beginning, was summoned to come to Ametramo. Immediately the spirit again came out without being called and told his story to the healers at Ametramo. The healers immediately requested Francisco to bring one of his daughters, because he did not have Z\$ 250 to satisfy the spirit. Against his will, Francisco ordered one of his relatives to bring a young daughter who was about to get married. When they went to look for the girl in the village I arrived at Ametramo and from then on I followed the case until its end.

#### **14.4.1. Voice of the spirit**

The head of Ametramo informed me about the case that they had received and he also told me that they were waiting for a girl to arrive. The girl was intended to be the new host of the *komerede* spirit. I looked at Almeida and his father Armindo. The case looked very gloomy and Armindo in particular was very desperate. He was loudly saying that he could no longer handle the case and wanted to commit suicide. Yet I told him that suicide was not going to resolve the problem.

I told the leader of Ametramo that I wanted to talk to the spirit. I told him that transferring the spirit from the boy to the girl was not going to solve the problem; they were just going to transfer it to another person. My intention was to find out if there was

a possibility to change the spirit's request for a girl back to the Zimbabwean dollars and the goat that he had previously asked for. By proceeding in this way I was assuming the role of *ku himirira*. The Ametramo chief healer accepted my request and he informed Almeida of my intentions. Some minutes later Almeida started shaking while singing and whistling; the spirit had his own song in Shi-Shona language.<sup>311</sup> His father immediately ran away because he was afraid of the spirit that was coming out. I remained in front of Almeida together with the chief healer of Ametramo. Almeida continued shaking and dragging himself along on the sand floor. Some minutes later, the spirit came out and the action started. The chief healer of Ametramo uttered the introductory words and introduced me to the spirit:

Healer: *Seculo*, you cannot come here full of nervous thinking that there is war here. Here there is no war. I am here; things are going right; there is nothing that we failed; we are trusting you... We have not changed our previous deal. The guests (VI & assistants) have arrived here; these guests are doing their work but they are not against you. Since you have come, if you want to talk with these guests, you can do it. If you don't want to talk to them, that's fine too. I am the one who invited you so that we can make an arrangement. We have not changed anything yet (...) You are a dead person and you hear everything that is being said; no one is lying to you; you cannot offend your people. Live well; you have to say what you want; come well. (...) You can say what you want... We have not changed anything that we agreed yesterday. There must be understanding in everything, you and I, from now on let's understand each another. That's the solution we want here. We don't want to argue here. We are still waiting for the people we recommended yesterday to bring your *mandara*; they have not arrived yet. We have just received guests now. This house is huge and there are many people who come here; you can't get confused because of seeing these guests... The case that we talked yesterday is the same as that of today... I told you before that this problem would end we will resolve it today. We are looking for a solution for your case; we will not change anything; we are men and we understand one another (clap of hands).

Spirit: I see that these authorities who are about to resolve me are too many for me.

Healer: No, they are not many. I am the one who gives orders here. They are just doing things as if they were asking questions; they are trying to know how things happened so that they can also transmit it to other people from other countries...

The spirit responded positively to the request of the healer and started talking to me.

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<sup>311</sup> The song succinctly said “*Baba* today, I don't want, my girl (*mandara*), father today, I don't want, answer me, father today, father and mother, father today, I want my girl, father today, father and mother answer me; father today, father and mother, my girl, today she came (...) father and mother, father today, father and mother, answer me, my girl; father today, father and mother, my *mandara*, today she came, oho, oho, oi, oi, oi, father today, my *mandara*, father today answer me; father and mother, you are courageous in your heart, father today, my *mandara*, father and mother, father today, father today answer me, father and mother you are courageous in your heart, father today, my *mandara*, father today answer me, ai, ai, ai...”



Spirit: These people are coming from where?

Healer: He is asking you come from.

VI: I come from Maputo.

Spirit: I don't speak Portuguese, but I speak English.

VI: What's your name?

Spirit: My name is Gaissamoro Joshua... my father is the President of Zimbabwe, Joshua Nkomo; he is my father; he is dead.

VI: Where do you come from?

Spirit: I come from Zimbabwe.

VI: Where exactly in Zimbabwe?

Spirit: I come from Harare.

VI: How did you come here?

From then on and through my questions the spirit started narrating his trajectory in very basic English:

Spirit: I came here because I was a soldier. I died here in Mozambique. The people from Mozambique ate me. I came here because the people of Mozambique ate me, I want my wife. But I tell you, if you have a goat and dollars from Zimbabwe then I will go back to my house in Zimbabwe... I fought many years here in Mozambique. The people ate me. I died in Pungue, near the bridge of Pungue... The family of this *txiquiro* killed me in Pungue, then she took my bag, my shoes, she cut off my penis, she said that my penis was very soft and she ate it, this is my problem... [to solve this problem] I wanted money and a goat but the family who killed me said that they did not have money; they said that they did not have this money because here in Mozambique there are no Zimbabwean dollars, do you see? Then I said that if the family does not have money, then they should give me a wife. But today, if you have money, if you have Zimbabwean dollars give me that so that I can go to my house, in Zimbabwe. Because I am here in Mozambique I am tired, I don't live in Mozambique; my family is there in Zimbabwe, in Harare, do you see? Give me a male goat with a long beard; give me 15 Zim dollars, no, give me 25 Zim dollars. Tie the money around the neck of the goat and then put me on the road; the goat will go to Zimbabwe... In 24 hours my goat will arrive in Zimbabwe...

As the conversation unfolded, the spirit changed the initial sum of 250 Zimbabwean dollars to only 15 and then to 25. In relation to this change the spirit explained without being asked:

I had asked for a lot of money so that they can't do this again, so that tomorrow they will know that to eat people is very bad. This is not a good thing. For this reason I asked for this amount of money. I knew that this money is very difficult to get; here in Mozambique you can only get it in Harare... Today I reduced it a little bit; I asked for 25 dollars. It's better that you give me 25 dollars, then take this money and tie it around the goat's neck. When you tie the money on, Francisco my *nhariposse* has to talk well, "you came here long time ago, we are the ones who did

bad things against you; for this reason now, go back from here and go to your house". You have to talk well.

Healer: Very well.

Spirit: You cannot utter these words while you are nervous. If you talk with me full of nerves I will come back again. Do you understand?

Healer: Yes, I hear you.

Spirit: When I go, you know that Magorongosianos are bad; if someone kills my goat and unties my money then I will live with that person, do you understand? If I run away, if someone takes me, then I will live with this person. I don't want to come back; when I go back home I will not come back again. I will only come back to the person who takes me. That's why I am happy; if no one interrupts me, I will arrive at home. Are you listening?

Healer: Yes, I hear you.

Some hours later, the expected girl arrived. But we had already reached the agreement with the spirit that he would no longer get a wife but his Zimbabwean money and goat. On the following morning, to end the ceremony, we used Mozambican money instead of Zimbabwean dollars. We went to the road<sup>312</sup> where the spirit had asked to be discharged, along with a male goat. Before the transference of the spirit from the young man to the goat, Francisco performed a form of worship in which he acknowledged the wrongdoing of his family. He also acknowledged the suffering of the Zimbabwean soldier when he was still alive. In his turn, the spirit accepted the apology and the goods that had been prepared for him. The spirit took hold of the healer's bayonet<sup>313</sup> and he started massaging Armindo and Francisco with it. Everyone got extremely worried. Was this spirit going to drive everybody crazy by finally stabbing his *nhariposse*? The healer and the others were very attentive, staring at what the spirit was doing. But the spirit just massaged the injuries of his victim, and nothing evil was repeated.

Then the closure ceremony entered into the last stage, i.e., the transference of the spirit to a different host. Usually this transference is done just by sneezing (*hotsi, hotsi*). Yet to everyone's astonishment, this spirit went further than sneezing. He took hold of the male goat with strength and managed to open its mouth. Then the spirit introduced the goat's mouth into the mouth of the *txiquiro*, as if they were exchanging a kiss. The leader of Ametramo had spent 25 years on the front line of healing and fighting witches, but he had never seen anything like this in his life. That *gamba* spirit surprised him and the rest

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<sup>312</sup> A road that the young Gorongosa men historically used to escape from *mutarato* (forced labour).

<sup>313</sup> A collective symbol of the *gamba* healers; the bayonets were transformed from murdering instruments into healing instruments.

of the audience with that very special kiss. Some seconds later Almeida recovered his own personality and the goat disappeared in the bush carrying the *gamba* spirit heading to Zimbabwe. Post facto amnesia followed as usual.

#### **14.5. Case Three: Isabel**

Isabel is an 18-year-old woman. She is a *mambira*, i.e., a girl living with her in-laws in preparation for marriage. She divides her time between her mother's house and the home of her future parents-in-law. She never met her father because he was murdered in wartime. Her father and mother had been running from one place to another in order to find a safe place to live. They ran away from a Renamo-controlled area to a communal village (a government-controlled area). After some time they felt it was not safe inside the *aldeia* either, and they decided to flee back to their *madembe*, which was under Renamo control. Discontented neighbours and some distant relatives rushed to inform the Renamo soldiers that, "the *capricornio* (traitor) arrived yesterday". An accusation of a *capricornio* was usually paid at a high price. Renamo got hold of Isabel's father and murdered him.

When Isabel's father was killed, Catarina (Isabel's mother) looked for her late husband's close relatives so that they could raise Isabel together. They were displaced in different places: Isabel's paternal grandfather had fled to Malawi; one paternal uncle of Isabel's was in Chimoio; and another uncle was in Zimbabwe. The one who was in Gorongosa refused to shelter Isabel and her mother and insisted it was Catarina's responsibility to raise Isabel. In the meantime Catarina got married, and fortunately her new husband did not have any objection to raising Isabel. In this context her mother and stepfather raised Isabel. The relatives of Isabel's murdered father (whom culturally she calls fathers as well) completely neglected them. After the war, the rest of Isabel's paternal relatives returned home. However, the paternal grandfather (Simone) and his sons never organized a family reunion to count their dead and those still living, to worship the dead, and to re-establish the family bonding that had been destroyed by the war. Like many other families of war survivors, in the aftermath of the civil war they simply wished to forget the horror. They unilaterally forgave and they sought refuge in the quarantines of silence. They went on with life as if nothing had happened.

Catarina (Isabel's mother) took the initiative again to look for Isabel's paternal relatives in order to give Isabel to them, since culturally they are the relatives who can do *ku himirira* to Isabel. They did not do *ku gara pance* (sit down and discuss) with Catarina to hear from her how Renamo soldiers had killed her husband and how she had managed to protect and raise Isabel. Time and again they persistently refused to care for Isabel or to support her mother in the upbringing task.

Isabel survived the war, grew up and was reaching the time to get married. One day, inexplicably, a spirit started possessing her. Catarina, her mother, explained that, "My daughter is suffering. She is manifesting a spirit. When we went to inform her family (her father's relatives) they refused; they questioned how it was possible that Isabel was manifesting a spirit when their daughters were not manifesting spirits. They say the spirit comes from my *dzindza*". One thing should be clarified here: Isabel was not a *makuio*. In this case her paternal relatives were wrong in refusing to cooperate and accusing Isabel's mother of being responsible for the spirit lodged in Isabel's body. Within this context Isabel's mother decided to report her case to Ametramo so that they could compel Isabel's relatives to cooperate in the healing process.

As part of the spirit possession, Isabel said that she was suffering from many things: "weakness, feeling dizzy, and I fall down, I have headaches, stomach pains, and weakness in my legs. Sometimes I have bad dreams; a man comes to hurt me". Ametramo's leadership wrote a kind of subpoena to Isabel's paternal relatives so that they would present themselves, but they refused. The last step was to report the case to the police. With the police notification the relatives decided to show-up in Ametramo.

#### **14.5.1. The voice of the spirit**

When Isabel's paternal relatives came to Ametramo the assembly was not complete. Only the brothers of Isabel's murdered father were present; the paternal grandfather did not come. Nevertheless the Ametramo healers, together with the patient's relatives and the healer's neighbours, did *ku socera* and the spirit manifested itself to the gathering through Isabel's body. The spirit did not talk much because he wanted the presence of the *txiquiro*'s paternal grandfather. The session was terminated without any progress.

The paternal grandfather had not come because he was sick and could not handle the walking distance from his house to Ametramo, which takes at least three hours. The

Ametramo leaders decided to get a bicycle to pick him up from his house. After two days of waiting, the grandfather (Simone) arrived.

The healers did *ku socera* again. Initially the spirit did not come out; only after four hours of *ku socera* did he emerge through the usual *txiquiro* (Isabel). The action started and the spirit identified himself:

I am Bande. I died of an illness and I was buried. Then you Simone, you went to where I was buried and cut off my things.

Although for the healers the phrase “my things” was clear, one of the healers asked the spirit to clarify what he meant, “Your things, what do you mean, *seculo*?” The spirit continued.

You, Simone, cut off my *mussuto* and *matchende*. I want back what belongs to me. Simone recognized the identity of the spirit but he refused to accept the accusation and said, “Where I am going to get these things? I did not take anything that belonged to him in the place where he was buried”. The healers who were mediating the dialogue asked the spirit where Simone had hidden the sexual organs. The spirit answered that,

He hid them at home. I want my penis and testicles back; if you don’t have then I want a girl. If you don’t give me back my things I am going to kill people in your family and you will not live in peace.

Simone continued to refuse and the healers advised him: “The spirit wants his testicles back. If you don’t have it, then give him a girl so that this problem can end. Choose what you can manage to pay here. If you can pay back the testicles, then you have to pick them up tomorrow. If you want to pay with a girl, then you have to pay today. That’s it”. Simone did not change his mind, “I can’t choose because I don’t know these two things. How can I pay testicles or a woman? If my elder brothers were here maybe they could respond to this case”.

After almost an hour of deliberation the healer said to Isabel’s grandfather, “You have to have an adult heart”. The grandfather agreed to pay a girl to the spirit. Yet the problem was that he did not have a girl to give, as his daughters were already grown up. The healer suggested that one of his grown-up daughters, who were present at the ceremony, could be offered to the spirit. However, the spirit refused to transfer from Isabel’s body to the one of the grown up woman. He said,

How many husbands will we be of the same woman? She has already another husband. I don’t want this woman... She has already another man who is dead. Then we will be two dead men in

the same body. I want a woman who is married to a living husband. I don't want woman who is already married to a dead husband.

As result of this rejection the healer suggested to Simone that he ask one of his sons to give one of his young daughters to the spirit. The three of them adamantly refused. One of the sons loudly said, "The one who committed this mistake is the one who will pay; I cannot pay something I don't know about. What was he [father] doing with those things that he took?" The other son said more or less the same thing: "Why did he create this situation? Since it was him who created this situation he has to handle it. We are having children because we want them. We can't give our daughters to the spirits".

All of Isabel's relatives refused to comply with the spirit's demands. The last strategy that the healers could try was to convince the spirit to accept a goat. Another round of deliberation unfolded. Before revealing if he would accept a goat or not, the spirit asked, "Who will clean the goat's house?" The healer said that the spirit was free to choose a girl to clean his future house, but Isabel's paternal uncles had not brought their daughters to Ametramo, so the spirit could not choose. In order to overcome this impasse, the healer decided: "The white people say that the one who creates the excrement has to deal with the smell. This old man (Simone) is the one who will clean the goat's house. Later on at home, if he wants to find a girl to do it, that's up to him".

The standoff did not end as a result of the healer's decision, because Simone refused to clean up for the goat. Then the healer told everybody present that, "This case is going further because the goat does not have a house to live in. Since Simone is still alive, it's getting difficult to resolve this problem. If Simone was no longer alive, his sons could give a girl to the spirit because of the suffering". The healer was saying, in other words, that Simone was being an obstacle to the solution of this quandary, and those who had ears to listen heard the message: to heal Isabel there was a need for Simone to die. The participants started staring at one another. It got very dark and the *gamba* healer who was leading the case stopped the session, as her spirit does not work at night. The participants dispersed without the performance of the closure ceremony. Around midnight there were terrible screams, and people said that someone was doing *mawewe* (Igreja & Dias-Lambranca, 2006).

#### 14.6. Case Four: Joana

Joana is a 26-year-old woman. She was married twice but both marriages ended in divorce. Both of her parents are still alive, and they have the responsibility to search for solutions for her problem. During the war Joana was with her father, mother and brothers.

The nuclear family survived the war together. The only separation in the family was between Joana's father and his elder brother (Alberto), who is a traditional chief (*n'fumo*). When the war intensified Joana's father, mother and brothers ran away from a Renamo-controlled area to a government-controlled area. The elder brother of Joana's father decided to stay in their *madembe* under Renamo control as he was a traditional chief and knew the Renamo soldiers well.

One day, almost at the end of the war, a Renamo soldier (a well-known hunter) was bitten by a snake. He was transferred to Alberto's house to receive treatment. Because of the gravity of the wound the soldier did not survive; he died, and his fellow Renamo soldiers buried him. The war ended, and war survivors returned to their *madembe* to re-establish their lives. Joana's father met his elder brother again after a long separation and they both engaged in the rebuilding their lives. Joana grew up, reached the age to get married and was delivered to her fiancé. The first marriage lasted two years before ending in divorce. She got married again; the relationship lasted a year and a half and then she was divorced again. In both cases, the husbands claimed that Joana had a spirit and that they had divorced for this reason. Joana suffered from terrible nightmares. There is a legion of men that come in her dreams to force her to have sexual intercourse with them, and she is unable to resist because they are powerful.

Her parents got very worried and started to consult different healers. In one of these sessions the spirit came out through Joana's body. The spirit disclosed that he was a Renamo soldier; a snake had killed him and he had been buried. However, after the burial Alberto went to pick up parts of his body. The spirit came back to Alberto's house for revenge. Instead of giving back the spirit's body parts, Alberto had transferred the spirit to the house of his young brother to possess the body of Joana. For this reason the spirit of the dead Renamo soldier was lodged in Joana's body.

The spirit's disclosure generated family turmoil between Joana's father and his elder brother, Alberto. Joana's father tried to resolve the problem but Alberto refused, saying the accusation was false. Then Joana's father went to report their case to the

traditional court. The judges ordered the entire family to go to a healer to treat the case, which they did. After *ku socera* the spirit came out again and made the same revelations. Alberto admitted his wrongdoing and agreed to offer a girl to the spirit. The transference was done and Joana was free. Six months passed without any problem and a man came to marry her, but after some time she was divorced again and her former husband accused her of hosting a spirit. She returned to her parent's house.

It was in this context that Joana's father decided to take his case to a female *gamba* healer living in the Gorongosa main village. The healer told Joana's father to send for Alberto. He did, but Alberto refused, arguing (rightly) that he had already offered a girl to the spirit. Joana's father explained to the *gamba* healer that there was no use insisting because relations between the two had seriously worsened and he doubted that Alberto would show up. So the healer decided not to wait for Alberto and she did *ku socera* in order to hear the story directly from the voice of the spirit.

#### **14.6.1. The voice of the spirit**

It was around eight o'clock in the evening and I was already preparing to sleep when I heard the sound of the drums. The sound was coming from the direction of the house of a *gamba* healer I knew. I got ready, took a torch and climbed the hill to reach the house. When I arrived they were already busy singing songs of war for the spirit to come out. Every time I participated in a healing session in the house of this healer her song to trigger the spirit was about the same themes: dance, war and Zimbabwe.<sup>314</sup> Half an hour later the spirit came out—but not through the body of Joana. The spirit came out through the body of Joana's paternal grandmother, and the action started. The spirit was screaming and wailing:

Mama *ine* (me), mama *ine* (me), I was bitten, I was bitten on my leg, mama *inei*, mama *inei*, I was bitten on my leg, I was bitten on my leg, mama *inei*, mama *inei*, mama *inei*, I was bitten, mama *inei*, I was bitten, mama, mama, mama, mama, my leg, my leg...hum, hum...

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<sup>314</sup> You said that they danced the war, they danced the war, but they danced with what? Zimbabwe, danced with what... I danced this war... in Zimbabwe I danced with who? We danced the war. In Zimbabwe I danced with what? We danced the war. In Zimbabwe I danced with what? In Zimbabwe I danced this war, Zimbabwe I danced with what? This war I danced Zimbabwe I danced with what? You saw war. Zimbabwe, I danced with what? Zimbabwe, I danced with what? This war I danced.



The *gamba* healer said, “We saw that you were bitten, but tell us the news. Tell us everything that you want to say, we are here to listen to you”. The spirit continued saying the same thing:

I was bitten in the leg, my leg, I was bitten by a snake, I was bitten by a snake when I was running to the house of m’fumo Alberto, Albertoooooo, Albertoooo... I was killed, I was killed, my leg...

The healer asked the spirit, “Who told you to come back to bother this family? Who brought you here?”

I was sleeping at home when he [Alberto] arrived. He [Alberto] sent me back. He told me that my home is here. I was told to come here because here there are family members.

Joana’s father said to the spirit, “But you don’t have a place here. You are not right to come here. Can you really do this while the person who made the wrongdoing is still alive? He has many children, boys and girls, and he even offered you a girl, so why are you coming back here? You have to go back there to live with them”. Joana asked the spirit, “What can we do so that you will return to our uncle’s house? We cannot agree to pay while the accused person is still alive. We are waiting for his death. We can pay if he dies, not while he is still alive”. In response the spirit said:

I am not alone in your family. We agree to go back to Alberto’s house but first give us back our things and we will go there. We need our money, weapons and uniform.

The *gamba* healer asked the spirit about the identity and number of the other spirits and he answered:

They are *makomeredes*, they need their wives, weapons and cars... They are 25 *makomeredes*; they were killed in an ambush and then Alberto’s wife went to eat their bodies. When they started to suffer with these spirits they also sent them to come to your family.

Almost everybody got surprised and shouted, “25 soldiers! How is this possible? How will this problem end?” Joana did not seem very surprised, because when she has nightmares it is a large group of men that come to rape her. The healer asked the spirit then, “How will this problem end?” and the spirit answered:

If you want to end this problem, you have to get 25 women, 25 soldiers, 25 weapons and cars and place these soldiers and their wives inside their cars and take them to the bush. They will go away by themselves.

Joana’s father told the spirit that they would give these things to the spirits but “When you arrive there you have to beat everyone: Him *bo*<sup>315</sup> on the floor, his wife *bo* on the floor...” The healer interrupted to tell the spirit not to beat Alberto’s wife, “No, not his

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<sup>315</sup> It is a gentle way of saying, ‘hit and kill.’

wife...” Joana’s father corrected himself and said, “No, only Alberto. There is no place for you here. You should do *bo* in the floor and then you will live in his daughter’s body because he already gave you a wife a long time ago. If you kill Alberto it means that you have won and no one will dare to order you to leave from your wife’s body”.

On the following the day, very early in the morning, the healer spent at least three hours preparing everything that the spirit had asked for. Right before they went to the bush nearby to perform the ceremony, the father of Joana reiterated what he had said to the main spirit and his companions on the previous night: “Now we are going to say good-bye; now you are going, and when you arrive there you have to kill Alberto. Tomorrow and the day after we want to hear silence; you have to kill him so that you can live well with his daughter”.

They went to the bush and river to perform the last ceremony to the spirit of the Renamo soldier and the legion of Zimbabwean soldiers. The soldiers and their wives, the military cars and all their wartime belongings consisted of *nbumbandongo* (toys made of clay) and they were expected to go to Alberto’s house. The *gamba* healer was leading the ceremony and talking to the spirits:

All your colleagues, let’s go with your cars, your wives; all your weapons are here inside the car; all your military uniform is inside the car. All of you stand up and let’s go to the place where you were eaten. Let’s go to the place where you were eaten. Each of you has his own bag, it’s better that you take them. Stand up, all of you, and let’s go to the place where you were eaten. All of your colleagues should stand up to go. Every person has his own bag; you should carry that yourself. Here it is your flesh, each person has his own flesh that had been eaten, each of you take your own meat. Each of you know the place that was eaten on his body; I am putting it here and you can choose. If you were eaten in the gut... I am also informing you father that you said that they ate your gut, so wake up and let’s go, your gut is here, stand up and let’s go. All your things are here, your instruments are here and your flesh is here. You also complained about your pots, the pots that you used to cook with. Stand up and let’s go; your rice is here. Look, the maize was eaten; it’s a little bit now. There is no more maize. Stand up and let’s go. You have to fly to go back to your place of origin. Stand up and fly, all your flesh is here. Each of you has his own flesh. According to the parts of your body that was eaten, you know yourselves. Each of you take your luggage and your wife and let’s go. Your blood is here, all your blood is here.

When they arrived at the place of the ceremony the *nbumbandongos* were placed on the ground and the *gamba* healer prepared herself to worship the spirits. The healer clapped her hands and everyone did the same; and then everyone had to utter the healer’s words:

Excuse me, you spirits; excuse me, you spirits,

Go away from our bodies; go away from our bodies,  
Go away; go away,  
To the place where you were eaten; to the place where you were eaten,  
There in Alberto's house... Go to his daughter Maria... Go there today ... They will give you  
back your wives there... The women are there... Look, your weapons are here... Your wives are  
here... Your bags are here... Your clothes are here... Everything is here... Your blood is here...  
We brought everything... Then today you have to go there... You know where to go... They are  
the ones who know all of you... We want to hear that their daughters are manifesting these spirits  
there... We want to hear that you have arrived there... All your bags... Look, your cars are here...  
We finished arranging your things in the cars... All the instruments and bags you asked for are  
here... We came to deliver these goods here in the water... Because the water is something that  
cleans everything... You know what the water does... The person who steps in excrement... the  
person who steps in bad things... when a person comes from a burial in the cemetery... then the  
person goes to the river to take a bath... The water is the one that cleans the body... It cleans all  
the dirt... For this reason we came to leave you here in the river... You have to go back to the  
place where you were eaten... Everything that was done against you... If you want to arrive there  
all together, it's up to you... If you want to arrive there separately, it's up to you... You have your  
colleagues who walk around with you... Take all of them and go together with all your  
colleagues... Leave our bodies... We have finished removing everything... Maybe you left your  
colleagues in our house... Go there and pick them up so that you can go all together... Go there to  
inform them that you have received all your goods... It's better that you run away and go there...  
It's better that you, big man, run away to the place you know... We are leaving you here...

Suddenly the healer ordered everybody to stop and not to repeat her words. She started talking to the spirits just herself:

There is still one *komerede* who is complaining that he did not receive anything. You are not different from the other group that was eaten; go there, because your way is the same. Maybe there are still others who stayed in the middle of the way, when you meet them in the middle of the way take them with your cars, give them a lift with your cars. You have to say to them, "Let's go; we were eaten there; we came from there". We have paid all the debts. We no longer have a debt. You should no accept when they tell you to come back here. There must be a border. The limit is this street; you are in Zimbabwe and we are in Mozambique.

When the healer finished she ordered everybody to spit on the soldiers. They did so and then they clapped their hands to mark the end of the worshipping of the spirits. The healer made a sign on the ground, and everyone had to jump on that sign at the same time saying, "*Inda gwanda mugano* - I have cut the limit". Then everyone went back to the healer's house and thenceforth the recovery process started.

#### 14.7. Effectiveness of the interventions

Despite the recognition by some Mozambican mental health experts of the pervasive consequences of war and their tremendous struggle to place the health needs of trauma victims on the national health agenda,<sup>316</sup> the State systematically failed to give a response to this human right. The exception was the creation of programs by non-governmental groups to respond to the mental health needs of the former child soldiers in some limited regions of Southern Mozambique (Igreja, 2004a). The vast majority of rural Mozambicans who were directly affected by the extreme violence of the civil war did not get any specific health-related response from the official authorities.

In Gorongosa there was never a state mental health program aimed at dealing with the effects of war violence, and “the few health workers never tried in their diagnosis to elicit whether or not the symptoms patients presented could be confounded by their overwhelming war experiences”.<sup>317</sup> The communities themselves generated the responses to deal with the legacies of the horror. This assertion is not new.<sup>318</sup> What is relevant to emphasise in a summarized form is the following: from a comparative point of view the type of health-related responses developed in the aftermath of war violence in other socio-cultural contexts can help reinforce the effectiveness of the emergence of the *gamba* spirits and healers in central Mozambique.

For instance, retrospective studies of the Second World War and Holocaust victims suggest that it took at least two decades before the horrors that victims had experienced could be publicly presented and acknowledged (Kirmayer, 1996). Inge Bramsen notes with astonishment that in the Netherlands, “a lot of official attention for war victims (...) came 35 years or more after the end of the war” (1995: 8). She also indicates that the physical and psychological problems that the survivors of the Great War were facing most of the time went unrecognised until the 1950s, when the concentration camp syndrome<sup>319</sup> became a recognized concept (Bramsen, 1995: 9).<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Custódia Mandlhate. 1996. Programa nacional de saúde mental. Ministério da Saúde. Direcção Nacional de Saúde. Secção de Saúde Mental. Maputo. [National mental health program].

<sup>317</sup> Interview with João Tezai, Gorongosa, July 20 1997.

<sup>318</sup> In the introduction of this chapter I mentioned an article describing the emergence of the *gamba* spirits and healers in the postwar period; it is also noteworthy mention the PhD thesis by Robert Marlin (2001) who found consistent results in the Northern Province of Tete.

<sup>319</sup> Concentration camp syndrome consisted of a collection of symptoms such as: shock, heightened arousal during which the individual is warned that his existence is threatened, as well as reactions of extreme nervousness, anxiety, insomnia and restlessness (Bramsen, 1995: 9).

This politics of denial and locking of the public spaces, for strategic reasons or simply due to ignorance, so that the war victims could not present their psychological wounds to be worked through in Western countries (Bramsen, 1995; Kirmayer, 1996) did not take place at the community level in the centre of Mozambique.

Within this context of traumatic war experiences and failure to respond specifically and quickly, it is reasonable to argue that the emergence of the *gamba* spirits and healers was a timely effective socio-cultural production to response to the specific health needs of the victims of extreme political violence in Mozambique. Five years after the end of the protracted civil war, precisely in April of 1997, the *gamba* phenomenon was already in the brewing process in Gorongosa. *Gamba* spirits were still not yet a phenomenon widely spoken about, but some healers were already roaming around and the war victims knew that these healers had spirits whose origin could be traced back to the recently terminated civil war. Seven years after the end of the war, around 1999, *gamba* spirits became a “*quiri, quiri, quiri*” phenomenon: spread all over Gorongosa, with every person susceptible to becoming possessed by this spirit. The emergence of *gamba* spirits bears witness to the brutality that was experienced at local level and offers possibilities for those who continue to suffer to seek solutions for their extreme health and social problems.

It is one thing to recognize that there are indeed health-related resources to deal with the war effects, but it is quite another thing to determine whether or not they really help and how. In order to establish this, there was a need to determine the emic view of effectiveness. From the cases presented below it became clear that the emic perspective on effectiveness consists in the patient becoming free of the spirit and being able to function without the constraint imposed by its presence.

A culturally sensitive model for studying the effectiveness of the *gamba* healers’ interventions has to consider the following: since in this socio-cultural world the aetiology of ill health, particularly spirit possession, is most often attributed to the *dzindza* (family origin), the first phase of analysing the effectiveness of the intervention is

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<sup>320</sup> Nevertheless a significant development in Western psychiatry to address patients with war trauma only came into being in 1980 when the American Psychiatric Association identified Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and integrated and cemented it firmly in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III) (APA, 1980). Almost four decades separated the ending of the Second World War and the creation of the PTSD diagnostic entity. In fact, it could be argued that it was not the horror lived by the civilian populations during World War II that specifically gave rise to the PTSD category but the developments that unfolded in North America as a result of the American-Vietnam war in the mid 1960s.

to determine the kinds of response enacted in the micro-level space by the sick person's kin members. Specifically, there is a need to determine the circumstances in which cooperation is granted in order to help the sick cognate. The second phase in the analysis focuses on the responses available in the meso-level that complement or compensate for the interactions unfolding in the micro-level space. It is crucial to understand who helps or provides services and under what circumstances. Within this phase there is also a need to observe the kind of participation that is required from the cognates of the sick person and to determine the extent to which their reactions play a role in the outcome of the healer's intervention. The third and last phase consists of follow-ups to determine the extent to which patients successfully recover as a result of the *gamba* healers' intervention.

#### **14.7.1. Strained family relations and the intricacies of healing**

In this patrilineal society, "family" means the cognates of the paternal line. The only exception is in cases of *makuio*, i.e., when the jural majors of a child are the maternal grandparents. The only *makuio* in this study is Almeida. The availability of social capital in terms of bonding, trust, and willingness to participate and cooperate, which is decisive for the healing of ill health between kin members, is extremely poor. In the majority of the cases of both possession trance and *ku tekemuka* cases (70%: N= 28) the agreement of the patients' relatives to participate and cooperate was preceded by an official notification from the Mozambican Association of Healers, the Community Courts or the police. In two cases the patients' relatives ended up in prison because of lack of compliance with the police ruling; and in six cases the relatives initially cooperated but withdrew their support in the middle of the treatment.

In relation to the four cases presented as examples here, the responses of the cognate relatives clearly demonstrated to various degrees the depletion of social capital in the micro-level social space of the patients. In Maria's case, her half-brothers and sisters completely refused to help her. Her mother was far away in another district, but even if she had been closer she could not have provided the specific help required for the diagnosis and healing, because culturally she is not a family member. Nevertheless, Maria's desperation was so compelling that it led her to look for her mother in order to find an ally. The role of the mother was to help Maria in her struggle to force her paternal

relatives to cooperate. The experiences Maria went through to get help demonstrate that the reservoir of social capital between her and her paternal relatives was totally depleted. It was the police who succeeded in compelling Maria's paternal relatives to cooperate. One must pose the question: does this kind of compulsory participation and cooperation play a role in the final outcome of the treatment? The answer to this question will be provided gradually as the analysis unfolds.

The case of Isabel does not differ much from that of Maria, though one might say that it was probably less stressful for Isabel because unlike Maria, who was prematurely separated from her mother, Isabel grew up together with her mother. From the early days of the trance possession episodes Isabel's mother was there to support her. However, the paternal relatives of Isabel completely neglected her. After many years of separation because of the war, on their return to their *madembes*, Isabel paternal grandfather and his adult sons could have organized a meeting to talk with Isabel's mother and to accept their granddaughter. But they did nothing of the sort; even when Isabel's mother insisted that they should have such a reception they would not. When Isabel fell ill and got possessed and her life turned upside down, her paternal relatives pretended that they did not see or hear anything. Isabel and her mother understood that cooperation could only be extracted from Isabel's paternal relatives by compulsion. They went to Ametramo and got notification for Isabel's relatives to present themselves, but as we saw, the relatives still refused to cooperate. Then Ametramo leaders together with Isabel and her mother went to the police and they got another subpoena. Some people in Gorongosa are very afraid of the police because of their arbitrary methods of punishing alleged offenders. Since Isabel's relatives did not want to fall into the hands of the police, when they saw the notification they appeared in Ametramo to take care of the problem.

Joana's case was slightly different. Both her parents were alive, and most importantly her father was very concerned with his daughter's ill health. In this case, the basic reservoir of social capital that could allow engagement in the search for a solution was totally guaranteed. In fact, Joana's father did *ku mufambira ntsango* (that is shopping around for a cure, or consulting several specialists for the same condition). However, one very serious problem emerged: the various healers consulted agreed in their diagnosis that Joana was suffering because of a *gamba* spirit that had been launched by Joana's *bambu unkulo* (elder father or elder paternal uncle). Initially the *bambu unkulo* refused to

cooperate. The traditional judges compelled him to cooperate, and he did; he accepted the responsibility for the *gamba* spirit and offered his young daughter to the spirit. Yet some months later, the same *gamba* spirit returned to afflict Joana and this time the *bambu unkulo* indicated that he would not participate in any healing session since he had already offered his daughter to the spirit. Joana's father could not resign from finding a solution for his daughter. They went to the healer and they paid for the dangerous and usually not-talked-about intervention: *Ku tussirana, ku tussirana* (a reciprocal launching of bad spirits between cognate relatives). This is the antithesis of a treatment that ends with *ku verana* (understanding). It was both the phenomenon of *ku tussirana, ku tussirana* with its violent nature and the successful closure ceremonies that made me reflect upon the possible reconciliatory dimension of *gamba* spirit possession that I will address in the last chapter.

The case of Almeida is very interesting because of the particularities and complexities of the socio-cultural traditions behind his status. The interpretation of illness aetiology and healing strategies cannot take place without knowledge of the culture in general and family history in particular. Although Almeida's father is still alive and very much willing to help his son, the problem is that Almeida is a *makuio* child. This means that the reservoirs of social capital required lie not with his father but with his mother's cognates. Initially Almeida's maternal uncle (Francisco) refused to grant cooperation. It was the local delegation of Ametramo that compelled him to participate in the diagnosis and healing session. Because the *gamba* spirit was very violent and because the healers who first dealt with this case were negligent, Francisco's refusal to accept the *gamba* spirit's narrative almost cost him his life. In the end the case was transferred to Ametramo headquarters.

The family responses in these four cases did not differ much. The primary therapeutic management group, which in principle should form a chain of family support, is not functioning as it did in the past. Instead there is lack of trust, and most of the time there are fierce battles between family members to try to gain cooperation in the healing of a cognate. This cooperation is only obtained through recourse to institutions outside the boundaries of the family: Ametramo, the community courts and ultimately the police. However, the dilemma of cooperation is not observed in the meso-level space of the villages. The secondary therapeutic management group, composed of the neighbours of



the traditional healers, do their best to support any person in need of *ku socera*. As soon as the healer plays the drum to announce the presence of a patient in need of *ku socera*, the neighbours usually turn up without any financial reward<sup>321</sup> to sing, clap their hands and scream in order to call the afflicting spirit.

#### **14.7.2. The participation of *gamba* healers and the community in healing**

One key characteristic of affliction by *gamba* is that the spirit has come back to take revenge for an injustice that happened in the past. The past of *gamba* spirits is the civil war. This means that the *gamba* spirit is seeking vengeance for events that took place during the protracted civil war.<sup>322</sup> The spirit takes his revenge upon the family members who allegedly committed the injustice acts at stake. Vengeance is enacted by causing ill health to someone in the family of the culprit. It can also happen that the spirit rotates among several of the culprit's family members.

Another important feature of the *gamba* is that these spirits primarily prefer to voice the abuses and injustices that they went through by using the patient's body. This is in contrast with spirits dealt with by the *madzoca* healers, who monopolized the activity of possession by transferring, through *ku fema* (sniffing), the afflicting spirit from the body of the patient to the body of the medium-healer. *Gamba* spirits detest mediums; they prefer to speak for themselves through the body of the patient. This rejection of mediums is also consistent with people's expectations and fear that the voice of the *gamba* spirit can be iatrogenically produced by the medium-healer.

Within this context the role of the *gamba* healer is to guarantee that: 1) the patient gets into a possession trance state; 2) the spirit talks; 3) the dialogue between the spirit and relatives of the patient is mediated; and 4) the closure ceremony ordered by the spirit is performed. In order to achieve the first goal a *gamba* healer usually gets him/herself in a possession trance. In this trance state, the *gamba* healer re-enacts a scenario of war violence. The objective is to help the spirit identify himself with the environment that gave rise to the abuses and suffering that he went through and, ultimately, to his death.

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<sup>321</sup> The exception in this secondary group is the drum players. If they are asked to play the drums there is a need for a financial payment.

<sup>322</sup> Based on long-term observations it is possible to observe that in a decade after the war *gamba* spirits have become more comprehensive, i.e., the past is not necessarily confined to the events that took place during the civil war, but can also encompass violent events that happened during the anti-colonial war or even illicit activities related to sorcery.

Often when the patient goes into a possession trance the healer will return to his or her normal state to mediate the dialogue.

Although the *gamba* healer is a key figure in the diagnosis process, it is important to consider the collective dimension of the healing work that is manifested through the help given by the neighbours. As noted, they sing, clap their hands and scream for the *gamba* spirit to come out.

Another important part of the *gamba* healer's work is the mediation of the dispute between the spirit and the relatives of the possessed patient. This role is particularly important for three reasons. First, sometimes the spirit will speak by using a combination of various languages and the healer has to interpret what is being said to the relatives of the possessed patient. The need for translation was clearly visible in the case of Maria and Almeida.<sup>323</sup> Second, the *gamba* healer is considered as an authority for resolving conflicts, for instance as *watongui* (authorities, or judges). During the healing session, people perceive the *gamba* healer as embodied with a form of official power. Third, a *gamba* spirit considers the *gamba* healer as an ally in his struggle for acknowledgement and justice. In this regard, the *gamba* healer must corroborate the authority of the *gamba* spirit's narrative.

An important part in this complementary approach is that the *gamba* healer uses his or her authority to validate the spirit's narrative and to convince the relatives of the patient that the *gamba* spirit's disclosure is true. However, the truth disclosed in these cases is not a factual truth about an individual past misdeed; neither it is perceived as an apocryphal story. It is a multidimensional and collective truth. The war generated multidimensional and extreme experiences, and *gamba* spirits expose some of these many dimensions: there were soldiers as well as civilians; soldiers perpetrated extreme abuses and crimes; civilians had to commit abuses as well, though less frequently than the soldiers and for different reasons (i.e. for survival). A crucial aspect of *gamba* spirits is that they only expose the truth concerning civilians. The *gamba* healers do not raise any questions about the amoral and criminal behaviour of the former soldiers. The soldiers who return as spirits and as victims only give the political dimension and context of the family's problematic past: what happened to the families and their large collectives was

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<sup>323</sup> Their spirits used a lot of Ndaou and Shi-Shona language respectively and her parents were not very familiar with the words. In the cases of Isabel and Joana the spirits used many words of mainly the Shi-Gorongose language.

in the context of the political violence. It is a collective past saturated with shameful intrigues, amoral rejections, abuses and humiliation, and ultimately blood and murder.

The strategy of the *gamba* to expose the violent past consists in a re-enactment of that past. The spirit presents himself as the dead victim of a particular individual. However, the individual does not represent a unit in itself; the individual is a member of a collective or family group. The spirit of the dead soldier represents the political dimension of the violence that escalated in the region; and the indicted individual reflects the vicissitudes the family went through. Although the accusation of past misdeeds befalls only one individual in the end, it is the whole family collective that is expected to acknowledge the wrongdoing and engage in satisfying the demands of the *gamba* spirit. It is not the accused person alone but the family group that looks for the goods that the *gamba* spirits asks for, and it is through this cognate collective endeavour that the *gamba* spirit affliction subsides and the spirit is ultimately discharged. Only when the *gamba* spirit is gone does the patient enter the process of recovery.

Through the characteristics described above it is possible to determine whether the *gamba* healers succeeded or failed in their interventions to induce the possession trance state on the patients. With the exception of the unusual case of Almeida, whose spirit did not require any intervention from the healers, it can be concluded in the other three cases that the *gamba* healers were successful, i.e., their patients reached the possession trance state. The *gamba* healers were successful also because there was an exchange between the *gamba* spirits and the relatives of the patients.

Through the various disputed dialogues the *gamba* healers managed to persuade the relatives of the patient to accept the *gamba* spirit's demands. The exception was in the case of Isabel and Joana. The *gamba* healers failed to convince Isabel's relatives to respond positively to the spirit's request. Initially the spirit had demanded a girl, but the healers managed to change the demand and convinced the spirit to agree to dwell in a goat. However, the position of the goat in this case was different from the case of Almeida. In the latter case, the spirit entered the body of the goat and the goat was left in the bush to travel to Zimbabwe. In the case of Isabel, however, the spirit wanted to live in the house of one of Isabel's paternal relatives and wanted a person to take care of it.

Although this is a very familiar practice in Gorongosa,<sup>324</sup> none of Isabel's relatives—in particular her paternal grandfather—would accept this responsibility. Isabel and her relatives went home and they were supposed to return to Ametramo some days later with a consensus about the way forward, but they never did.

In the case of Joana it is difficult to assess the response of the healer since the accused party did not participate in the diagnosis and healing session. The *gamba* healer responded positively in that she managed to convince the *gamba* spirit to return to his owner's house, that is the house of Joana's *bambu unkulo* (elder paternal uncle). The healer fulfilled the demands of her patients and launched the *gamba* spirit to his origin.

There are two interesting aspects about Isabel's and Joana's cases. They demonstrate that when there is lack of understanding between family members, the healing session may not reach its end, or it can become very violent. When a family member plays an obstructive role, as was the case with Isabel's paternal grandfather and Joana's elder paternal uncle, everyone directly connected to the patient (including the healers) starts to think that the problem could be simplified if the people being obstructive were not alive. This wish was very explicit in the case of Joana. Her father explicitly demanded that the *gamba* spirit to do *bo* (to hit and kill) when he arrived in his real host.

#### **14.7.3. Patients' responses: The recovery process**

The response of the patients was assessed through various follow-ups: after one week; after one month and six months; and between one and two years.

A comprehensive approach to the effectiveness in dealing with affliction by *gamba* spirit requires a separation between the possession trance and *ku tekemuka* cases. Between the two groups, the possession trance group had a higher degree of success than the *ku tekemuka* cases. At all established follow-ups, 63% (N= 14) of the possession trance cases were experiencing a successful recovery process, i.e., they were no longer suffering from possession by *gamba* spirits. The physical and psychological symptoms had significantly reduced and they were able to pursue normal lives again. In three cases (N=3), their track was lost because the people had moved to live in a new location. The

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<sup>324</sup> The most impressive case I came across was a man who possessed more than 50 goats that belonged to his ancestral spirits. None of these goats could be sold or killed to feed people unless there was a specific ceremony and the spirits themselves gave the authorization to slaughter them.

remaining five cases (N = 5) had not experienced any clear change in their health and social status. The main reason for the failure to improve was that midway through the treatment relatives refused to cooperate further. In these cases, the *gamba* spirit was not discharged. Although at the two-year follow up at least three of these patients were not possessed constantly, they recognized that the *gamba* spirit still dwelled in their bodies, they continued to experience physical and psychological problems, and they indicated the desire to join a Christian religious group.

Among the four cases described, Maria stopped suffering from spirit possession; she became pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy. At the two-year follow-up Maria's son was healthy. But there were two things the intervention did not seem to restore. First, the relationship with her half-brothers and sister Julieta: although her relatives stated that they had no problems with Maria any more, it was she who had not made any effort to visit them regularly. Second, her quasi-nomadic life: although she had a stable relationship with her husband, she was constantly moving from one relative's house to the other, as used to happen during wartime.<sup>325</sup> The side effect of the intervention was that her half-sister, Julieta, got married and her husband built a house for her in her mother's yard.

In the case of Almeida, at the one week and six month follow-ups he was free of the *gamba* spirit. Occasionally he was affected by nightmares, but they were less threatening than before. Almeida continued to live with his father and he never again threatened or beat anybody in the family. Almeida's father did not speak again about committing suicide. The quality of the relationship between Almeida and his uncle Francisco could be considered reasonable. The difficulty in getting a clear account of the real quality of this relationship was based on the fact that they were both living in very distant places. However, Francisco promised that he would never again refuse to cooperate if Almeida became seriously ill.

The cases of Isabel and Joana did not register any significant changes. Isabel's paternal grandfather's refusal to assume the responsibility of the spirit's goat represented a major setback. At the one-year follow-up she was still facing trouble with the spirits. Although her husband had not sent her away, her position in the marriage was very

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<sup>325</sup> This was the most difficult and complicated case for completing the follow-ups. As stated below, Maria was living in one of the very remote mountain areas of Gorongosa and because of her quasi-nomadic life no one really knew for sure in which relative's house she was staying.

precarious. The husband said that he only kept her with him because Isabel's paternal uncles had promised to initiate a new process to heal Isabel.

Joana's situation looked very similar to that of Isabel, though in this case there were contradictory assessments between Joana's father and Joana's paternal grandmother. I did not talk to Joana personally in any of the follow-ups, but relied on what her father and grandmother said. The father said that Joana was recovered and that she was already married, whereas Joana's grandmother said the contrary; she told me that her granddaughter had not yet found a stable *ku misha* (in-laws' house). The only thing that the two agreed on was the relationship between Joana's father and his elder brother who had refused to cooperate in the resolution of Joana's case. Their relationship was completely broken and there were only unspoken death wishes between the two.

In the *ku tekemuka* group only 28% (N=5) stated that the *gamba* spirit no longer afflicted them. The remaining 67% (N=10) were still doing *ku tekemuka* and three had joined a Christian religious group. The application of the *ku fema* diagnostic technique as a way of giving voice to the *gamba* spirit, which in turn discloses the illness aetiology and dictates the course of treatment, proved to be by and large ineffective. The main reason for this failure could be attributed to the poor quality of the *gamba* healer's intervention (since in these cases most of the patients' relatives complied with the treatment until its ending), or to the lack of a differential diagnosis. The responsibility for this latter aspect cannot be attributed only to the *gamba* healers but to the society as a whole, which tends to be quick to consider any type of affliction to be related to strikes by *gamba* spirits. Nevertheless, the lack of success of *gamba* healers in cases of *ku tekemuka* is not the end of the story. Sufferers have the possibility of joining the various Christian religious groups available in Gorongosa to seek health solutions.<sup>326</sup>

#### **14.8. A critical stand on the *gamba* healers' interventions**

The analysis of the case studies demonstrated that *gamba* healers are the only resources in this society that specifically deal with war-related issues. Their remarkable work, performed through re-enactments of wartime events, forcibly triggers war memories in the participants. It is a powerful indication that the wartime experiences are far from

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<sup>326</sup> I do not address this topic in this thesis although it constituted an important part of the field research.

being forgotten and that there is a need to relieve them in order to get rid of them.<sup>327</sup> Despite the *gamba* healers' important contribution to the Mozambican post-war public health system there are some aspects essential to their work that merit critical reflection.

I) During the hearings and confrontations between the *gamba* spirit and patient's relatives, the *gamba* healers only give a specific focus to the interests of the *gamba* spirits; they endeavour as much as possible to make sure that the patients' relatives fulfil the demands of the spirit. This is certainly part of the inner logic of the *gamba* phenomenon, i.e., the patient cannot improve his or her health condition unless the *gamba* spirit is satisfied in the first place. However, the *gamba* healers could expand the *thambo* (healing space) to explore further the socio-political dimension shared between the spirits and patients' relatives. This occasion could also be used to promote a more explicit family debate<sup>328</sup> about the shameful events that took place during the war and how they disrupted the family bonding and solidarity ties that existed prior to the war years.

This is not something alien for the *gamba* healers, neither it is a limitation derived from the lack of a specific language. It is not alien for them because they specialize precisely in re-enacting some war events and the actual conflicts among family members as a legacy of the civil war; and it is not a limitation stemming from the absence of a specific language because they have an array of interesting and powerful expressions that could help break the ice to conduct the hearings in an explicit manner. Maybe the limitation derives from a lack of local socio-political structures that could support their healing activity if they were to explicitly explore each other's roles and responsibilities during the civil war. Otherwise they could use the metaphor that the spirits sometimes utilize to ask the audience repeatedly and in a provocative manner: "Do you want to see me naked? Do you want to see me naked?" *Gamba* healers could incorporate in their healing expertise the understanding that unless the patient's relatives "get naked" by getting rid of the "dirty clothes" that they were forced to wear, that is actions that they had to perform to survive, a systematic and consciously orchestrated social healing

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<sup>327</sup> Viewed in this way, it resembles a kind of exposure therapy although it was inspired and developed with a completely different logic to that of the exposure therapy described in Western psychotherapeutic textbooks.

<sup>328</sup> For instance, I do not write, "open debate" because indeed during the *gamba* proceedings the discussions are very open and fierce. The real problem from my perspective it is that these discussions rely very much on an implicit discourse.

cannot really take place. They contribute to healing in the strict sense, but pay little attention to the family relationships.

II) Health, illness and healing have always been family group phenomena. When the *gamba* strikes, the patient's family group is required to help in the diagnosis and therapeutic process. Despite the vicissitudes involved in getting their cooperation, when the relatives finally meet together after many years of estranged relations, the *gamba* healers could use the momentum to go back to the basics of the healing practice to complement their legitimate preoccupation with the *gamba* spirits with an emphasis on preaching the importance of family bonding in the healing of *gamba*. Yet they do not do this. This is very evident in the *ku tekemuka* cases, which are precisely the weakest point of the *gamba* healers' skills. When the patient fails to reach a possession trance state the *gamba* healers correctly blame the relatives of the patients by saying that they are doing *ku gurucuta* (to murmur). The most serious accusation is that the patients' relatives are doing *ku sunga phundo* (to tie a knot so that the spirit cannot come out).<sup>329</sup>

From my perspective these accusations are correct, and they indicate that the *gamba* healers are very conscious that healthy family relationships are a sine qua non for a successful intervention case. But they fail to be pro-active and innovative at this level. In order to break the knots or to subside the murmurs that are believed to pave the way for the *gamba* spirits to show up, the *gamba* healers continue to sing, to play the drums, and to re-enact the war events for days sometimes without success. The *gamba* healers could use their authority to send a strong message to the patients' relatives about the necessity of re-creating family ties not only for healing but to prevent the escalation of health problems in the future. By consciously acting in this way *gamba* healers could be clearly contributing to restoring not only the health of individuals but relationships as well.

III) Traditional healers in general do not concern themselves with following up the results of their interventions.<sup>330</sup> However, because of the delicate material (mutual

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<sup>329</sup> Another version of the dangerous "knots" is called *ku sunguirira*. In this case the relative is accused of using dirty tricks to escape being caught and transferring the blame another relative who is innocent.

<sup>330</sup> In the past, it was common for the patients to return to their healers to let them know of the medium-term results of their interventions. The patients would go to the healers' house to disclose whether *muana ha gona ou nkabe* ("the child slept or not", meaning the child recovered or not); or it might happen the other way around and the healer would go to the patients' house to get the same feedback. Nowadays hardly anybody, either patient or healer, does this.



accusations over wartime events), which the *gamba* healers deal with, it could be reasonable to expect that the healing process would include follow-ups after the solemn discharge of the spirit. The importance of following up the cases lies in the fact that mutual accusations can later degenerate into an escalation of conflicts. The only assurance that violence is not expected to occur as a result of the mutual accusations lies in the fact that the belief in spirits is backed by a total behavioural discontinuity between the living and the dead, the person and the spirit. Consequently, the host is not accountable for anything that happens during the possession state. It was through this belief and practice that Almeida escaped a criminal charge as a result of the spirit's homicide attempt.

More than ever *gamba* healers should do follow-ups to control both the health and social impacts of their interventions. I did not come across any case of later violence that erupted as a result of the mutual accusations during healing sessions. However, what I noticed is that what happens after the *gamba* healers' interventions is random and solely dependent on how convinced the relatives of the patient are vis-à-vis the necessity to re-establish relations with one another. In cases where the relationships were re-established, the people concerned did not clearly make the link and acknowledge that the *gamba* spirits and the healers had created the social space that repaired their formerly estranged relations. The link was only explicitly made in relation to the restoration of the health condition of the patient.

## **Conclusion**

In the aftermath of the civil war violence, the health situation of some of the war victims deteriorated. This was particularly the case among young women who were afflicted by *gamba* spirits. Two types of manifestation of *gamba* possession are common: possession trance, in which the spirit manifests itself to the public through the body of the patient and develops a narrative of violent past events, and *ku tekemuka*, in which the spirit shakes the patient's body but does not voice its claims.

Possession by *gamba* spirits generates a multiplicity of health problems. However, the most distressing problems are related to complexities in the intimate forum of relations between husbands and wives and in female reproductive health. The aetiology of these problems, particularly in cases of chronic diseases or cases of spirit

possession, is always sought in the roots of the patient's kin history (*dzindza*). Because Gorongosa people live in a patrilineal society the search for the aetiology of the illness is carried out in the *dzindza* of paternal relatives, who have to mobilize themselves to help in the healing of the illness. The exception is with *makuio* children, in which case the illness aetiology and resource mobilization is carried out among the maternal kin members.

Historically the mobilization of family support for a sick relative was never a major problem; on the contrary, the disclosure of the disease aetiology reinforced the sense of identity and common belonging and destiny among kin members. This, however, has dramatically changed. The intimacy of the civil war violence seriously undermined the family bonding, mutual trust and solidarity ties that for generations had offered protection and support for family members. In the aftermath of the war, the victims unilaterally forgave one another and tried to move on in silence. The apparent silence was disrupted by the sudden emergence of the war-related spirits: *gamba*. The afflictions caused by *gamba* spirits serve to denounce and voice what seems to lie beneath the surface: serious divisions and disputes among family members. Besides the suffering caused by the spirit, the possessed person has to struggle hard to mobilize the support required for healing. In most cases, the patient is unable to find the requisite support, and the solution is to seek support among the social and law and order forces available at the meso-level space of the villages: the Association of Healers, the community courts and ultimately the police.

*Gamba* healers specialize in dealing with *gamba* spirit possession cases. When *gamba* spirits manifest themselves to the public they bear witness to the violent events that unfolded during the civil war. The main themes in the spirits' narratives refer to military instruments like weapons, uniforms, boots, and bags, drugs and alcohol, male sexual organs (penis and testicles), suffering and death. In order to restore the health of the patient there is a need to discharge the *gamba* spirit from the patient's body. The spirit only agrees to abandon the patient's body if the patient's relatives acknowledge wrongdoing during the civil war and agree to repair the damage. The reparation is done by providing goods for the *gamba* spirit, delivered in a solemn ceremony conducted by the *gamba* healer.

One of the most important parts of the *gamba* healer's intervention is the capacity to induce possession trance states in their patients. When the patient is in a possession trance state and when the *gamba* healers manage to persuade the patient's kin to fully comply with the demands of the *gamba* spirits, then the *gamba* healers' intervention becomes very effective in restoring the patient's health. In this study their success was observed in 63% of the cases over a time period of two years.

When the *gamba* spirits are mute, however, that is when the patients only do *ku tekemuka*, a serious challenge arises for the *gamba* healer. Through the *ku fema* diagnosis technique the *gamba* healer manages to give voice to the *gamba* spirit. Yet in this post-war period people are very sceptical about hearing the voice of the *gamba* spirit through the healer-medium. They are more prepared to pay heed when the spirit addresses them through the body of the patient. In almost all of the cases of *ku tekemuka* the family, after the usual pressure, cooperated until the end. However, at the end of the various follow-ups, almost 67% of the patients had not improved their health situation. Viewed from the general availability of resources in these former war-zone communities, this high percentage of unsuccessful cases does not constitute a desperate outcome. Patients who have failed to recover can still join the various Christian religious groups who are also engaged in tackling ill health experiences.

What constitutes my main critique of the *gamba* healers is their focus on the truth of the *gamba* spirits to the detriment of the extreme experiences that the patients and their kin groups went through during the civil war. The logical consequence of this inattention is that the family's uprooted relations are not worked through in a carefully planned and systematic way. Nevertheless, by comparing cases where the kin group cooperates (even if under pressure) from the cases where the relatives adamantly refuse to participate, I received the impression that *gamba* spirits carry with them a powerful message of post-war restoration of family bonding and reconciliation. This aspect is addressed further in the concluding chapter.

## ***PART IV Intersections of Justice, Reconciliation and Healing***

### **Chapter 15: Cultures of engagement for reconciliation and healing**

#### **Introduction**

This research examines the socio-cultural processes of reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of the protracted civil war in Mozambique. Reconciliation and healing are approached from an ecological perspective, i.e., as dynamic processes involving war survivors trying to repair their social world in multiple spheres of social interaction. Framing this study along the lines of the ecological model leads us to consider war survivors as agents, operating on specific levels of the social world, who have the capacity to make choices and implement them in a way that responds to their needs and priorities according to the resources available.

The principal resources studied were, on the one hand, the agricultural cycle and the traditional justice system and their contributions to reconciliation, and on the other hand, traditional medicine and its contribution to healing of war-related illnesses. It was demonstrated that these resources play a crucial role in helping war survivors repair their scattered social world by relying primarily on themselves. The goal of this chapter is twofold: first, to identify intersections among justice, reconciliation and healing processes by demonstrating the extent to which the resources under analysis combine together to promote justice, reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of the civil war; and second, to draw theoretical and practical implications from the main results. In order to attain these goals, this chapter is divided into ten sections. Section one describes some paths of the war destruction that contributed for gender-related social and individual suffering. Section two demonstrates how the peace agreement a political act, was founded upon *cultures of denial* that with the passage of time have become transformed into *cultures of dishonesty*. Section three analyses the circumstances that may have contributed to the durability of resources in post-civil war Gorongosa. These resources significantly contributed to the emergence of *cultures of engagement*. This is addressed in section four. Section five demonstrates the complementarities or intersections between the various resources that are crucial for the emergence and sustaining of *cultures of engagement*. Sections six and seven analyse the socio-cultural and gender factors involved in justice,

reconciliation, and healing. Section eight discusses themes related to the possible effects of impunity upon revenge and also upon forgiveness and reconciliation. Sections nine, ten and eleven place specific focus upon *magamba* spirits and their multiple dimensions, namely collective memories, healing, reconciliation, time, power and social metamorphosis.

### **15.1. Paths of destruction and gender-related social and individual suffering**

The key question that animated this research is related to the challenge of repairing the in the aftermath of the extreme war violence in Gorongosa. The intricacy of the challenge resides in the ways in which the civil war was fought and terminated, and in the multiple legacies that need to be addressed. The chapters on war violence showed how the civil war, which was initiated as part of a conflict between antagonistic macro-level forces, descended into the people's social world and was brutally fought in the back yards of people's homes. The civil war broke down the military distinction between battlefield and home front. As a result it targeted individuals and the living spaces of families, entire villages, ways of life and social institutions. In the homesteads or in communities in general, women's bodies became the micro-sites of intense, violent battles for sexual intercourse. The soldiers not only disrupted the lives of women but also violated people's sense of family through sexual violence against married women, by depriving numerous fiancés of virgin fiancées, and by humiliating many parents who witnessed their daughters' loss of virginity through violence.

Besides these experiences of family and gender-related social suffering, the war generated other individual experiences as well. People living in the war's hot zones accumulated experiences of horror in its crudest form. This kind of experience, which pervaded every single aspect of people's lives during almost two decades, was well characterized by Antonio, a man blinded in the war, who said that, "war used to be our culture..." It was also summed up by war survivors who said that during the war they were always dully thinking "we are already dead..." that is, they were living with the permanent feeling of being dead. What, then, does it take to change a culture of war to one of peace? Or what does it take to change from a consciousness of death to one of life, which is worth living, which offers hope and capacities to repair the shattered social world?

There are no easy answers for these questions since the legacies of peoples' overwhelming experiences cannot be erased and automatically replaced by a new mindset. This continues to be exemplified by the permanent evocation of the legacies of the World War II that devastated Europe for just six years (1939-45), the end of the cycle of silence and impunity through the public accusations by Asian women (Korean and Chinese) who were victims of sexual slavery ("comfort women") at the hands of Japanese soldiers during World War II (Hirofumi, 2001), or by the recent upsurge in exhumations of disintegrated bodies that were hidden in mass graves in the Spanish civil war (1936-39) almost seventy years ago (Ferrándiz, 2006). In these three cases—to which many more could certainly be added—the explanations for the public persistence of war memories require caution, since perhaps, "(...) the delayed onset of public debates about the meaning of negative pasts has more to do with political interests and opportunities than the persistence of trauma or with any 'leakage' in the collective unconscious" (Kansteiner, 2002: 187). However, Veena Das (2007) suggests that due to unresolved traumas, "stories of discord and betrayals do not disappear, for they remain suspended and can break into the present without notice" (p. 80).

In Gorongosa, a decade after the civil war, Tobias (13.5.2.) demonstrated the unending nature of the horror when he pointed to the terrible scars in his body. Instead of narrating what had happened, Tobias pointed to these scars with his finger, but not just as physical scars per se or as one element in his stories of discord and betrayal. The reason for this performative rather than discursive act on the injured body may be related to something that Elaine Scarry (1985) has referred to: "Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it" (p. 4). "[T]he moment language bodies forth the reality of pain," she continues, "it makes all further statements and interpretations seem ludicrous and inappropriate" (1983: 60). Tobias showed the scars in his body as if he was contemplating the betrayal at the moment of its articulation, and all further explanations would indeed seem ludicrous. His own body gave him a powerful (even perhaps a unique) tool for enunciating the horror, what horror means, and what horror does, in a way that words, speeches or tropes completely fail to do. His body does not only represent the horror but continuously presents it. He said, "This [pointing to the scars] is Sozinho". Sozinho was the person who falsely denounced Tobias to the Frelimo troops; and this denunciation almost cost Tobias his life. Yet the crude reality in all this—the

cultural dimension that the man blinded in the war referred to—is that Sozinho (13.5.2.) and the people like him were not *walendo* (visitors, or aliens). Violence was often the result of betrayal. For instance, the soldiers who cut off the ear of Gubudunbo (10.2.1) and compelled him “eat it, eat it” did not go to his house by accident; they had been directed by ill-meaning acquaintances. The soldiers were also directed to the homes of young women to prey upon. Cognate neighbours would ask the soldiers, “But why is it that you don’t like the virgin girls in that house too? and that house? and that house? Don’t these girls have holes like the women of this house? Or do they have pistols in their vaginas? Even if they have pistols in the vaginas, aren’t their bullets sweet?” As a result of such types of interrogations and collaborations, some community and kin members thwarted others from protecting their daughters from rape as the soldiers chose their prey.

#### **15.2. 4 October 1992: From war to peace, from crimes to impunity**

In the aftermath of the war the challenge of starting anew was paramount. The peace settlement was built upon *cultures of denial*. In these cultures of denial, Cohen states, the political authorities manage events in a striking manner, that is, “knowledge without acknowledgement; suffering without compensation; violation without accountability; horrors that are not exorcised; history without continuity...” (Cohen, 2001: 247).

The Mozambican peace accord and post accord politics persistently promoted impunity for the perpetrators of indiscriminate killings of civilians, and no official acknowledgement of the suffering of the victims was expressed. The war suffering of the people in Gorongosa, as in many parts of Mozambique, did not find any recognition in the narratives of the nation-state. Indeed when Gorongosa reached the mainstream political sites of the nation-state through the voice of the late commander-in-chief, it was to promote military propaganda in 1985: “We took over Gorongosa and five hours was enough (...) the snake’s back is broken”.<sup>331</sup> The civilian victims did not seem important in the face of the alleged broken back of the snake. This inattention to the plight of the victims did not change with the end of the civil war on 4 October 1992. On the contrary, the Mozambican official authorities replaced the *cultures of denial* that had up until then characterized their political activism with a *culture of dishonesty*, a new political

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<sup>331</sup> Samora Machel in “Notícias”, 07.09.85, Maputo. P.1.

dispensation under which the politicians use the painful war memories as weapons for minimal political returns. The past is put under siege, both to control the central spaces of the national polis and to banish political adversaries to the peripheries of the political community.

Tracing the path of political impunity, another intriguing predicament surfaces. It took a decade for the date of the peace agreement to be regarded as a national public holiday because of Frelimo's persistent refusal to admit the public significance of this date for many war survivors and for the country as a whole. This fact raises interesting reflexive questions about the extent to which one can really talk about a "post"-war and "post"-Marxism and Leninism in the Mozambican political transition. On one level, it is clear that there was peace and there was a change of the political system. However, the political agents behind these changes remained precisely the same. This development raises the question of what challenges this type of half-reaching political transition brings to the process of constructing a state based on the rule of law and respect for and legal enforcement of human rights.

Second, nowhere and at no time of the peace accord was it envisioned that special villages should be created to accommodate only those that had been implicated in murderous acts and the criminals themselves. The dead, the survivors of extreme abuses and the victimizers were all resettled together, on the same sites where their horrendous experiences had taken place. It was not possible for the survivors and perpetrators of abuses and crimes to return to their *madembe* and create insular spaces to resume the task of living. They were required to meet in everyday life on the same village paths and walk over the ashes of the visible and invisible destruction.

The scholarly literature is loaded with assertions of how these conditions are the perfect breeding grounds for the social reproduction of hatred, fear and bitterness and the eruption of violent, vengeful acts. Yet many pundits in transitional justice tend to forget, or simply fail to articulate in their analysis, the cultural variability and creativity in people's responses to extreme violence. In fact, long ago, Radcliffe-Brown (1939: 149) had correctly stated that "in our fears or anxieties as well as in our hopes we are conditioned (...) by the community in which we live. And it is largely by the sharing of hopes and fears (...) that human beings are linked together in temporary or permanent associations". It is this conditioning, in the specific case of Gorongosa people, the



accumulation of extreme experiences, that leads people to become very aware that violence, as a mechanism of non-state justice, can produce more violence, and as a consequence it can behave them to shun violence as a way to address their predicament that is loaded with injustices. In this respect Rotazozza (11.1.4) was very explicit when he said, “*Ndondo indie ku bara nkondo, nkondo ati tchadiba muno* (suffering gives birth to war; we no longer want war here)”. Popular wisdom corroborates Rotazozza’s assertions when it states that “*não existe raiva que dure dez anos nem cão que a ature*”: “there is no case of rabies that lasts ten years, and no dog that can bear it”.<sup>332</sup> The dismissing of bitterness is necessary “in order to make it possible for life to go on” (Arendt, 1958: 240).

War survivors in Gorongosa likewise did not keep and nurse an everlasting hatred, fear and bitterness among themselves. If they had legitimately insisted upon allowing hatred and bitterness to brew, this could have been a disaster as relationships in this society are extremely important. The need to spur non-antagonistic relations, which permits society on the various levels to function, shaped the war survivors’ agency in positioning themselves vis-à-vis the legacies of their extreme past. Hence, they did not resign from assuming their individual and social responsibilities. A sense of individual responsibility occupied their thoughts when they considered ideas on how best to avenge the past abuses and crimes that they had gone through.<sup>333</sup> But a sense of social responsibility led them to reflect upon the consequences of igniting a cycle of revenge.<sup>334</sup> In both scenarios, the willingness for self-preservation, the availability of resources and generalized accessibility to these resources led war survivors to carefully consider the type of actions they should unleash: that is, on some occasions to shun the past by pursuing local forms of silence, and on other occasions to engage with the past when it erupts in the form of nightmares and *gamba* spirit possession, and moreover, to invest in the resources available to transform the extremely precarious conditions that had resulted from the war.

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<sup>332</sup> Catholics provide the most recent and best-known example of this human refusal to harbour hatred endlessly. Germany, which was the reservoir of the human evil of the birth and reproduction of the Nazi terror system and initiation of a world war, is the same Germany that sixty years later provides the most important religious figure for Catholics, the Pope.

<sup>333</sup> This individual responsibility was inspired by the feeling and belief that only by avenging the dead victims could one then rest in peace and life could move on.

<sup>334</sup> This social responsibility was inspired by the desire to prevent the occurrence of similar events in the future, i.e., “Tomorrow they [perpetrators] will know that if we punish we will be punished as well.”

### 15.3. The durability of resources in the post-war period

One intriguing aspect surrounding the endogenous capacity for social repair concerns the durability of resources. How did the social institutions endure during the protracted civil war? In the case of traditional medicine (Chapter 14, and addressed in further sections below), the explanation for its durability lies in its capability to transform itself in order to provide specific healing responses to the war survivors in great affliction. However, a similar explanation cannot be directly deployed vis-à-vis the traditional justice system. In this section I specifically use this resource as the focus of analysis to understand the durability of certain social institutions.

In order to advance an explanation, one important aspect must be seriously considered. This has to do with the use of the trope of ‘destruction’ as applied to describe social and cultural phenomena. It is generally acknowledged that war destroys houses, people’s fields, roads, bridges and various other types of physical infrastructure. Problems arise, however, when using the trope of destruction to describe under what circumstances does war destroy social institutions? For instance, using the case of the law and courts, it is clear that the violence of war can destroy the court buildings, can kill the judges and can leave the law books in ashes. However, war cannot destroy the legal reasoning processes that are used to resolve conflicts as such. When “destruction” is used in the literature to refer to social institutions or social practices it is used metaphorically. The metaphorical aspect of destruction should lead us to rethink how we consider the survival of certain institutions and social practices in the aftermath of war violence.

For instance, war violence cannot destroy people’s knowledge or practices of how to legally treat an adulterous married woman and her lover. The potential of war violence to radicalise or to transform even aspects of people’s identity can be recognized by war survivors themselves, but not the destruction of the identity per se. For instance, Ernesto (7.6), at the end of an afternoon drinking *nipa* with his friends, started walking and singing around the village, saying in *Chi-Gorongose*, “*Gorongosa people, Gorongosa people, don’t feel strange about me; even if I do not have a tail like a monkey, I am also a Magorongosiano like you*”.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> In this account, war brought so many changes to society that (so the story goes) many Magorongosianos who survived the war acquired tails like monkeys in their buttocks—but not the singer of the song. Since war survivors recognized the underlying content and profound resonance of the message in the song, everyone started laughing. It was a good joke-song to end the afternoon.

Social practices that are embodied and inscribed in concrete social institutions can be disrupted and certain elements of the practice can be radically changed, but institutions cannot be destroyed as a railway, bridge or hut can be. Following this train of thought, the concept of *habitus* developed by Pierre Bourdieu appears useful in providing some explanations for the durability of the traditional justice system notwithstanding the extreme war conditions the Gorongosa people endured. Bourdieu defined *habitus* in various ways, but for my specific purpose I focus on his approach to *habitus* from two perspectives: 1) human temporality, the way humans move through time; and 2) social practice.

The temporal perspective regards the *habitus* as “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks...” (1977: 82). *Habitus* in this perspective retains two features: durability and change.

From the perspective of social practice the *habitus* is regarded as a “strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations” (Bourdieu, 1977: 72). The principle of *habitus* as an iterated process of adaptive responses in a world under permanent mutation conflates *habitus* with a form of collective institution or collective resource which agents can make use of to adapt to changing situations.

Transferring these two perspectives (temporality and social practices of *habitus*) to analyse the impact of war, it can be suggested that the impact of war can be filtrated or buffered by the *habitus*. This means that the process of filtrating the impact of war can give rise to a double process: one that leads to the durability of the *habitus*, and the other leading to the metamorphosis of the *habitus*. However, what is missing in Bourdieu’s approach is the conditions under which the *habitus*, approached as a set of social practices or social practices embodied in social institutions, succeeds in mobilizing individuals (men and women), and families to engage in common and durable activities. In the specific context of Gorongosa, these common activities are related to the rebuilding of communities by way of repairing broken relationships and healing the wounds of war.

Thus I turn to Geoffrey Hodgson (2003: 163), whose analysis of institutions and individuals in economic theory is pertinent to complement Bourdieu's approach. Hodgson suggests that "in part, the durability of institutions stems from the fact that they can usefully create stable expectations of the behaviour of others. Generally, institutions enable ordered thought, expectation and action, by imposing form and consistency on human activities". That is, social institutions prevail amid the changing world because they are cable of fostering stable expectations among their users.

These two analytic frameworks, Bourdieu's analysis of *habitus* which shapes the scaffolding of institutions and Hodgson's assertion that institutions endure as a result of generating stable expectations, provides some explanations regarding the persistence of traditional justice institutions in post-war Mozambique. What still needs further explanation is how the general population of war survivors perceived these institutions as being able to generate stable and non-contradictory expectations.

It appears that the perceived utility of the traditional justice system relies on the fact that a certain number of shared cultural beliefs and practices that inform the functioning of the system are embedded in the *habitus*. In addition, through repeated practical experiences of using the courts, war survivors received a powerful signal that the agents running the court system were indeed interested in repairing society after the war by breaking the cycles of impunity and injustice. The perceived utility of the traditional justice system was greatly enforced by the actions of some individual judges who clearly understood and embodied what were the critical challenges of the post-war repair. Instead of mimicking the *politics of dishonesty* enacted by politicians sitting in the centres of the political power, the local chiefs set themselves the task of recreating their society based on understanding and based on the provision of stable expectations among the war survivors in general. Various ethnographic facts presented in this thesis were cues for this analysis. For instance, when the traditional chiefs were trying to address the complex legacies of the civil war within their own institutions of power and conflict resolution, Taimo (9.3.4), who had served as a chief during the war and still wanted to be the chief in the peacetime era, used his wartime suffering as an argument to justify his right to continue in the leadership of the palaver of his village. The other chiefs who were sitting in a circle under mango trees and attentively listening were outraged at Taimo's argument. All of them perceived that too much invoking of the past to justify present

desires would undermine the social fabric that they were collectively trying to repair. It was this kind of practical positioning, shaped by profound knowledge of past and present circumstances, which was assumed by many traditional leaders that contributed to spreading an image of workability of their institutions to develop *cultures of engagement* to respond to the needs of social repair in post-civil war in Gorongosa.

#### **15.4. *Cultures of engagement* in the processes of social repair**

This study has demonstrated that at the individual and family level, the resources necessary for various types of post-war repair were severely affected. In the past, individuals experiencing affliction were likely to find solutions for their problems through recourse to their cognates' pool of resources. The civil war drastically eroded important features of social capital that had historically regulated individual and communal life. In the aftermath of the civil war, the family space became the centre stage for various types of disagreements, bitterness and fierce conflicts. However, to stop at this assertion would be to corroborate the "fallacy of composition", since what happens at the individual and family level does not represent the whole story. In the aftermath of the civil war, effective resources were mostly available *outside* the family sphere, i.e., as part of the various institutions of the community.

The capacity of alienated people to recognize and to transform the limitations<sup>336</sup> that they have at the individual and family level by actively accessing resources located in other spheres of their social world and proactively establishing relationships in the process of utilizing these resources is referred to in this thesis as *cultures of engagement*. In general terms, *cultures of engagement* refers to the interplay between agency and structure that is crucial in keeping peace and social stability and generating prosperity at local level. Specifically, it consists in the willingness of war survivors (agency) to actively access and utilize available endogenous resources (structure) to repair their devastated social world by way of reconciling alienated people and healing the extreme wounds of war. Borrowing analytical insights from Homi Bhabha (1997: 38) on the Third Space of enunciation, I corroborate his views in that "it is the 'inter' – (...) the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture". That is to say that if

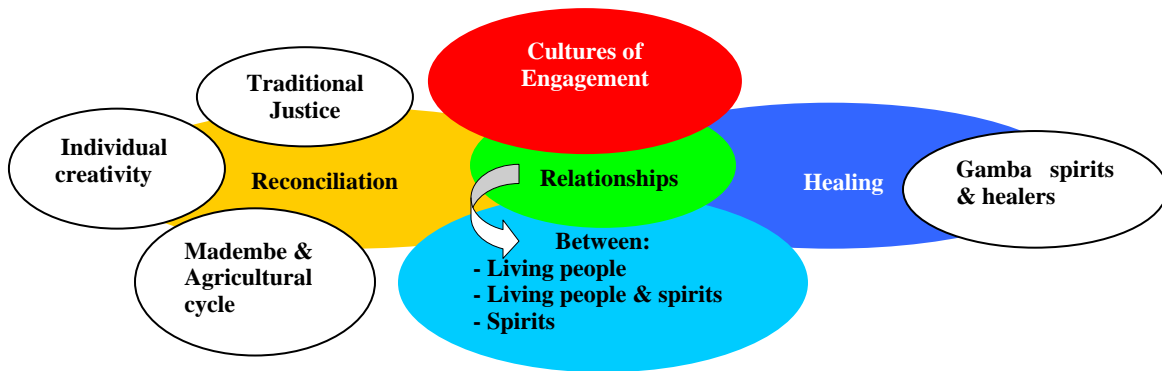
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<sup>336</sup> These limitations include: a lack of trust between family members and neighbours to the extent that they are unable to resolve their own conflicts by themselves; the refusal of some family members to cooperate when kin are ill; and suspicious attitudes and behaviour of men toward women.

one looks at the interstices between agency and structure, the *cultures of engagement* emerge as real creative drives that boost the processes of repairing the social world. For example, Anita (11.1.8) provides an interesting instance of someone located in the in-between spaces of agency and structure. This location allows the enunciation of rare mechanisms of dealing with the legacies of the horror. She thought and said that she had managed to move on because her case was a stalemate situation: she had lost her son as the state lost one man. The feeling of being in a no-win situation, coupled with her access to community resources, allowed her to come to terms with a trauma that cannot be compensated for, as the state cannot give her another son and neither can it symbolize the figure of a son for her. Many war survivors expressed how the act of getting hold of their hoes and going to their fields filled them with positive feelings of a new beginning that kept springing up and that they were in a position to take control of their own destiny again.

Figure 8 shows that *cultures of engagement* are catalysed by the availability of resources. These resources are used to address two key social processes, namely reconciliation and healing.

Fig. 8.



Reconciliation processes in this ecological model are fostered through individual agency, the agricultural cycle and traditional justice. On the other side, healing processes are enacted through the intervention of *magamba* spirits and *gamba* healers. The salient aspect of figure 8 is that *cultures of engagement* connect reconciliation and healing through a kind of *social hexis*,<sup>337</sup> i.e., a disposition and pattern of postures that leads war survivors to actively engage in relationships in order to explore an array of resources.

<sup>337</sup> Bourdieu (1977: 87) refers to ‘body hexis’, which constitutes “a pattern of postures that is both individual and systematic”; it is “linked to the whole system of techniques involving the body and tools, and charged with a host of social meanings and values...”

Moreover, because of the ecological features of the social world of the Gorongosa people, relationships are multidimensional and very complex. They involve relationships between living people, between living people and the spirits of the dead, and among the spirits of the dead themselves (see below 15.10).

Hegel's approach to reconciliation—precluding his choice for philosophy as a means for reconciliation—is the most relevant to the Gorongosa post-war context. He suggested that reconciliation consists in the process of overcoming alienation. The result of overcoming alienation is that people must experience their social world as a home. The question is: what does it take for the war survivors in Gorongosa to overcome estrangement and to experience their social world as a home? Figure 8 provides an answer by showing that people experience their social world as a home because of the *cultures of engagement*, i.e., the availability and equal accessibility of resources coupled with the fact that the utilization of these resources ignites the emergence of various processes.

For example, people may regain access to their places of living, particularly the *madembe* (the place of the spirits of the ancestors and of the farms) or to a new place of resettlement, and can regain access to the fields to practice agriculture. These two processes are somewhat similar to the one described in Linda Green's study of Mayan war widows. Green demonstrated the importance of accessing the *milpa* [fields] among the Mayan inhabitants, as it is believed that the ancestors reside there. Although Green does not place her results within an analysis intersecting reconciliation and healing, from the way in which her interlocutors described the connections between “access to land and ancestral spirits,” it might be concluded that these “post-war”<sup>338</sup> connections do indeed play a role in both reconciliation and healing.

Reconciliation and healing in Gorongosa were effectively pursued and attained through daily engagement in unilateral forgiveness with a restraint upon reckoning with the violent past. In other literature on forgiveness, self-forgiveness or unilateral forgiveness is generally described as an act that “releases victims from anger and resentment and terminates the compulsion to get even, thereby healing and liberating them from past injustices” (Amstutz, 2005: 57). Since the post-war Gorongosa context

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<sup>338</sup> I use the word ‘post-war’ with caution since Green writes that “A war continues in Guatemala today, even though it is a war called peace. The 1996 Peace Accords failed to address the fundamental problems in Guatemalan society, those of land and impunity” (1999: 172).

involves families and entire communities, one has to pose the question of what happens in terms of social relations between victims who unilaterally forgive and the perpetrators of violence. Considering unilateral forgiveness as it is addressed in Amstutz's formulation cited above could lead us to think that since forgiveness in this case is not dependent on any action by the perpetrators, the plausible outcome in terms of social relations between victims and their perpetrators would be resumed solely as co-existence or to the so-called negative peace.<sup>339</sup> Yet as a result of unilateral forgiveness, Gorongosa war victims went further than negative peace or co-existence and actively engaged in social relations with the former perpetrators, both as living people and as spirits (*magamba*).

Unilateral forgiveness in post-war Gorongosa was devoid of words or speech. It was enacted through social practices. For instance, the activities developed during the agricultural cycle contributed to re-creating a sense of commonality or togetherness; the work of the community institutions of conflict resolution contributed to breaking the cycles of impunity and to fostering mutual and stable expectations among war survivors (victims and former perpetrators).

The process of healing war-related ill-health reached its apotheosis through the socio-cultural production of *gamba*, a new polysemic spirit, that bears witness to the extreme war-related suffering experienced both individually and collectively in the whole region of central Mozambique (Igreja 2003b; Marlin 2001). This phenomenon was accompanied by the emergence of *gamba* healers, who specialize in dealing with the ill effects of *gamba* spirit possession. Two important aspects are linked to this resource. First, using this resource breaks the silence over the past and compels alienated people to come together and deal with their own war-related problems;<sup>340</sup> and second, the procedures involved in dealing with *gamba* spirits indicate a local version of restorative justice. The soldiers (former perpetrators) appear as violent spirits that return to the world of the living to seek redress for past violent events; the victim is the patient who is still suffering as a result of war-related abuses; and the patient's kin share the burden of

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<sup>339</sup> Negative peace is regarded as the absence of direct physical violence (Galtung, 1996) and co-existence is often regarded as the accommodation between members of different communities or separate countries to the extent that they live with a sense of mutual tolerance and respect (Kriesberg, 2001), without collectively trying to destroy one another (Weiner, 1998).

<sup>340</sup> In case of failure of the interventions of traditional medicine, war survivors and people in general can still rely on the interventions developed by Christian religious groups (Luedke, 2005; Pfeiffer, 2002).



responsibility over the abuses and crimes that occurred during the civil war. The intervention of *gamba* spirits by mobilizing these three agents (former soldier, patient and cognates) creates reconciliation and healing in Gorongosa.

### **15.5. Cultures of engagement and the concatenation of resources**

The deep meaning of the endogenous resources in the process of individual and social repair is continuously grasped "...in the time-space settings which agents make use of in order to organize their day-to-day social activities..." (Giddens, 1986: 538). That is to say that social repair is primarily about social actions through the use of resources. Social actions in Gorongosa bespeak the extreme importance of relationships and the complementarity of resources. It is not one or another resource that contributes to social repair in the aftermath of the civil war. It is the combination of all of them, and this combination generates a *social hexis*, i.e., people's disposition for productive togetherness.

The relationships that are required in the various processes of using these resources give rise to a set of social practices that foster processes of production, reproduction and transformation of valuable mechanisms for dealing with the legacies of the civil war. For instance, it was shown that land for the practice of agricultural activities is available and accessible to everyone. Agricultural activities allow people to satisfy their basic needs for nourishment and allow them to become self-sustaining. In becoming involved in the agricultural cycle, and because of its particularities, people need to establish contact with other villagers even though these are former perpetrators or former active collaborators. The need to establish interactions creates a sense of togetherness. Survival is guaranteed not only by the availability of land but by the mode of using it as well. Agricultural work and the surplus that is traded play a role in the capacity of the community members to generate prosperity.<sup>341</sup> For instance, as a consequence of working the land, the financial resources that people gain from selling their various agricultural surpluses help them to pay for their access to services such as the court system<sup>342</sup> and traditional healers.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> In the literature on peace building it is considered that "rebuilding the war-torn economy can significantly reduce the incentives of former protagonists to resume armed conflict" (Mason & Quinn, 2006: 27).

<sup>342</sup> In this thesis I have only highlighted the connection between the money that people gain by selling their agricultural surplus and the access to other community resources (court system) in the case of Bernardo

Hegel is right in affirming that reconciliation does not mean the end of conflicts. In Gorongosa the process of developing togetherness in work and other post-civil war forms of connectedness and sociability is not free from conflict. One legacy of the civil war is that family and community relations are permeated with intrigues and very serious conflicts. It could be inimical for reconciliation and social stability if these intrigues and conflicts perpetuated the cycles of abuses, violence and impunity that flourished during the civil war. However, this is not the case; most of these conflicts and intrigues are reported in the available community courts and the judges, using primarily mechanisms of adjudication (traditional justice), manage to resolve them. The types of laws used in the arbitration of conflicts are an important source of these courts' effectiveness. This effectiveness is strengthened by people's understanding of the *modus operandi* of the courts and its laws, and through their procedural, rapidity, pedagogic (counselling), and collective dimensions.

One important consequence of using the mechanisms of adjudication is their conformity with the concept of truth or evidence that the members of this society hold. When the judges are unable to determine guilt in a case they transfer the case to the traditional healers, the *mapaza* healers. When the *paza* healer has determined who is innocent and who is guilty, he refers the case back to the court of origin. Only then can the judges close the case and pursue the consequences.

The *complementarity* between the customary justice and traditional healing systems is also evinced in reverse. This was demonstrated in the chapter on traditional healing. As a result of war, the social capital in the form of trust, social reciprocity, and mutual support that used to permeate relations among family members was depleted. When a cognate gets sick seldom the participation and support that is required is granted on voluntary basis. There is a need for the community courts or the police to force family members to take part in the diagnosis and healing of the sick cognate.

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versus Saquina (13.5.2). However, the importance of financial resources acquired through agricultural work is presented in many cases. Agricultural-related financial means are also crucial for acquiring goods that are not produced locally. I also gave the example of Ilidio (12.4) who through cotton production and commercialisation managed to pay for the schooling of his two sons and one daughter in the city. However, I could give many more examples to illustrate how prosperity is created as a result of agricultural production.

<sup>343</sup> It could be argued that access to money also has very adverse and detrimental effects, i.e., people (particularly men) spend large amounts of money not investing in themselves and their families, but buying and drinking alcohol.

The three resources under analysis (land for agricultural practice,<sup>344</sup> the traditional justice system and the healing system) bear direct connections to one another, and in the case of the traditional justice and healing the connection is even enacted through a system of mutual referral. One interesting aspect about these resources is that they are not complementary because the leaders (in their role as managers or regulators of access and use) sit down somewhere in the shade of a tree in the village to trace strategies to better coordinate and maximize their usage. Rather, there is complementarity as a result of the way in which this social world is structured and organized (or even disorganized). The plurality of socio-cultural institutions and their usage has been for many years a central feature of this society and key source of resilience.

### **15.6. Socio-cultural and gender factors in justice and reconciliation**

The current debates I presented in the first three theoretical chapters of this thesis have at least two things in common. First, in some occasions reconciliation and healing are conceived interchangeably, without any systematic analysis to define these concepts and to demonstrate to what extent both achieve similar or different goals. On other occasions reconciliation and healing are conceived simply as separate processes. Second, post-conflict reconciliation studies have generally paid little attention to the role of environmental, socio-cultural and gender factors in the process of coming to terms with a past marked by generalized gross human rights violations and crimes.

Reconciliation in the aftermath of mass-scale violence is mostly debated in the circles of transitional justice, mainly by lawyers and human rights pundits. In these legal circles, transitional justice through reconciliation is addressed using very narrow approaches, which consider the available laws and their enforcement as the main goal to attain. Very seldom do these legal discussions elicit the perceptions of the people who have been affected by gross human rights violations, abuses, and crimes. Gender differences, if they exist, are not described and there is no consideration as to what role socio-cultural institutions such as the traditional justice systems can play in delivering justice and breaking the cycles of abuse and injustice in the aftermath of political violence.

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<sup>344</sup> For instance, mastering the agricultural cycle time (12.5) is an important asset for improving the quality of relations and understanding between patients and health workers in Gorongosa (see Igreja 2004a).

Only recently have anthropologists started nudging to find a place and a voice in that circle. The current anthropological research on transitional justice is largely limited to the analysis of the impact of state policies at grassroots level in Rwanda (Molenaar, 2005; Richters *et al.*, 2005; Sarkin, 2000) and South Africa (Wilson, 2003). There is little comprehensive knowledge available about the socio-cultural production and local alternatives for dealing with the legacies of political violence through traditional justice and healing mechanisms. However, two recent exceptions are found in the work of Richard Wilson (2000) and Tim Allen (2006),<sup>345</sup> and these are worth comparing with the case of Gorongosa. Following the structure of my thesis which first addresses perceptions of transitional justice and second the role of traditional justice, I analyse the study by Tim Allen first, focusing on perceptions, followed by the work by Wilson on traditional justice mechanisms.

Allen investigated Acholi people's perceptions vis-à-vis the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecuting alleged war criminals that fought on the side of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in war-torn northern Uganda. The Acholi people's perceptions of the relevance of the ICC differed according to whether they were expressed in public or in private.<sup>346</sup> In public, the dominant discourse emphasises that the Acholi people favour reconciliation and forgiveness through the use of traditional mechanisms, notably the *mato oput* (bitter root or juice) ceremony.<sup>347</sup> In private, people indicated a preference for retributive justice. However, Allen does not explain why there are differences between public and private views on the ICC, and neither does he clarify how gender<sup>348</sup> factors intersect in these public and private dimensions.<sup>349</sup> One might think that if the perception of threat is real and if a generalized sense of fear and insecurity

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<sup>345</sup> Though my intention in this chapter was to analyse the intersections of reconciliation and healing, neither author engages in such types of analysis. Wilson focuses solely on justice; Allen focuses on justice as well, but makes some reference to healing in a general way.

<sup>346</sup> Judith Zur (1997) studied Mayan Indian war widows and came across a similar discursive pattern in that certain topics are considered "private truth, articulated only between groups of trusted confidantes" (p. 65).

<sup>347</sup> Elders mediate this ceremony and the wrongdoer must admit responsibility, ask for forgiveness and agree to pay compensation. Both parties drink the blood of a sacrificed sheep mixed with *mato oput*, and the ceremony ends with *gomo tong* (bending spears) to represent reconciliation (Allen, 2006: 132-3).

<sup>348</sup> Gender factors are crucial for clarifying people's perception in this setting, as Allen refers to appalling crimes involving sexual violence such as rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy.

<sup>349</sup> Allen quotes extracts from his interviews with men and women, but does not explain how the similarities and differences in views are connected to gender. For instance, a woman said: "No, I will not forgive them. They picked my son." Can we infer from this answer that since she is a mother the trauma of losing a son is experienced differently from that of the father, and for this reason she was not prepared to forgive but that perhaps the father would have a different view? Allen does not clarify these gender differences.

prevails among the Acholi, and as a result the Acholi people develop *la langue de bois*, then to affirm that there is a private and a public discourse explains very little. If it is an explanation, then it is an explanation to indicate that in contexts of fear people tend to develop protective strategies: in the micro-level spaces—as Allen says, “I took him aside” (p.142)—they tend to say, “punish them”; and in the meso-level spaces they say something else: “forgive them”. Which of the views is true and which is determinant for explaining the importance of the ICC?<sup>350</sup> We cannot affirm categorically, other than to say that it is complex. Yet it lacks clarification<sup>351</sup> to enlighten us as to how and why the ecological setting shapes people’s views and what role gender plays in these settings and perceptions. Do women have equal access to public spaces as men? Do women speak freely in private spaces and men in public? How does the public domain articulate social responsibility and the private one individual responsibility and interests? Elsewhere in Eastern Uganda Susan Whyte (1997: 197) captures the dynamics of private and public, silence and voice when she asserts that, “afterwards life goes on with civility on the surface and hatred in the heart”.

Despite these contentious analytic and methodological issues, Allen presents voices of Acholi people to demonstrate that they are not indifferent vis-à-vis various aspects of transitional justice. As repeated many times in this thesis, the voices of those who were victims are lacking in the mainstream and legal literature on transitional justice (Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002). There is no doubt that the social world inhabited by the Acholi people is different from that of Gorongosa district. For instance, war survivors in Gorongosa were not consumed by fears of retaliation. However, the perceptions on transitional justice voiced by the Acholi people are somewhat consistent with the reactions of Gorongosa’s war survivors in that a large number of them showed a willingness to talk about justice after the war. The Gorongosa study provides a further contribution to transitional justice in that war survivors were systematically asked to explain the reasons for their position and the results demonstrate that war survivors do not represent a homogeneous group. They differ according to gender and to their past and

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<sup>350</sup> Another aspect that is worth examining, which in fact Allen repeats with some insistence, is that several participants in the study did not know beforehand what the ICC was, or the nature of its work. If people do not know the ICC, it is contentious to draw conclusions showing their perceptions over its potential role.

<sup>351</sup> Allen (2006) quotes statistical data that corroborate the results of his private encounters: “of the 2,585 adults interviewed (...), 66% wanted punishment for the LRA and only 22% favoured forgiveness or reconciliation” (p.147). What is missing here is that Allen does not clarify whether the authors of this survey (the ICTJHRC, University of California) obtained these data through private or public encounters.

present situations. For instance, unlike the majority of men, women war survivors indicated that the post-war settlement should have included mechanisms to try and punish the wartime perpetrators. This is an indication that war survivors are divergent in their reasoning over priorities and actions and that there is no single prescription that can satisfy everyone involved. They all agree about the importance of keeping peace and social stability, but they hold conflicting positions on how to accomplish this goal. In this regard, the voices of the war survivors in Gorongosa turned out to be very complex, not because of fear, but because of the array of issues that war survivors indicated were involved when enacting justice in communities where socio-culturally and historically relationships play a crucial role in survival. Moreover, perceptions of transitional justice were very much shaped by the availability and accessibility of resources to be explored.

The other relevant study in the field of transitional justice worth comparing addresses the role of the township courts in South Africa. Richard Wilson (2000) analyses legal actions unfolding in *kgotla* (plural *lekgotla*, township courts) and concludes that there are disjunctures between official notions and practices of human rights embodying religious values of redemption and forgiveness (TRC) and the concepts of justice enacted in *lekgotla*, which emphasise punishment and retribution. Accordingly, “at the level of local justice practices, this results in a rejection of the TRC’s project in favour of more punitive and vengeful responses to “resolving” past conflicts and violations under apartheid” (Wilson, 2001: 156). What Wilson leaves unclear, however, is how these courts fill the void created by the TRC, which glorified redemption and forgiveness among the victims of Apartheid. It is not evident in which ways *lekgotla* deal with the crimes of Apartheid or the extent in which violence is part of an organized collective “omerta” to dissent from the political proponents of the TRC. He describes violence in the townships, which occur mainly among rival groups of black people. Yet there is no clear articulation as to how the system of apartheid and its agents are punished in these courts. Moreover, Wilson does not provide people’s perceptions declaring that if the TRC had adopted measures of retributive justice, the violence between the rival groups in the townships would not have taken place. By addressing these pending issues, illuminating anthropological knowledge could be generated, since *lekgotla* could emerge as an alternative socio-cultural process of dealing with the legacies of Apartheid.

By contrast with Wilson's study and findings, I argue that the results obtained in Gorongosa contribute to the field of transitional justice by demonstrating that a longitudinal study of traditional mechanisms of adjudication in periods of transition reveals an underestimation of their role in providing war survivors with access to non-violent mechanisms of conflict resolution. It is demonstrated that justice in relation to wartime abuses and crimes was granted only on limited basis. Yet it could be argued that if the judges were vested with formal powers to deal with the abuses and crimes perpetrated during the civil war—as is the case with *gacaca* in Rwanda—the traditional judges in Gorongosa would fulfil the duty of adjudicating these cases. Nevertheless, the limited manoeuvres of the judges in the courts bespeak the potential of this type of justice in addressing wartime conflict. The role of the traditional courts was also evinced when dealing with numerous cases related to the wartime legacy. The peaceful resolution of this legacy breaks the cycles of impunity and injustice and contributes to peace and reconciliation in Gorongosa.

These results indicate in various ways that there is no one single blueprint or universal form of enacting reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of mass and protracted civil war violence. The various types of transitional justice mechanisms, particularly retributive and restorative justice (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2003; Kritz, 1995; de Brito *et al.*, 2002), are important, yet they are not the only strategies available for both reckoning with the past abuses and crimes and creating the social grounds for the reconciliation process to unfold. Justice and healing are human processes filtrated by idiosyncratic, socio-cultural, gender, religious and political factors and historical circumstances.

### **15.7. Socio-cultural and gender factors in healing and reconciliation**

Exposure to war violence can leave serious health consequences. Psychiatrists have for a long time dominated the debates and studies on the impact of violence on mental health, though most incisively at the beginning of the 1980s. Recently practitioners of other disciplines, particularly medical anthropologists, have since entered the scene. Yet the difference between the positions of anthropologists vis-à-vis transitional justice studies and healing is that in the latter case for a long time “anthropological studies have documented the social construction of disease categories, the social course of illness

experiences, the social organization of health services and practices ...” (Kleinman & Becker, 1998). With the upsurge of war-related health problems, medical anthropologists have tried to elicit the links between exposure to war, the resulting suffering and the various ways that people use to convey suffering (Argenti-Pillen, 2003; Green, 1999; Honwana, 1997; Marilin, 2001; Mueggler, 2001; Zarowsky, 2001; Zur, 1998). To various degrees these authors agree that the way people experience traumatic war experiences and the way that they respond to these are shaped by idiosyncratic, socio-cultural, political, economic and historical factors.

The results of the analysis of the experiences of Gorongosa war survivors decisively contribute to the theoretical debates on war-related healing and the mechanisms for engaging in everyday social practices in various aspects. It has been demonstrated here that justice and reconciliation, and healing and reconciliation should not be regarded as separated domains. This result is consistent with how Das and Kleinman (2001) conceptualise the idea of “remaking a world” in the aftermath of mass violence. They suggest that legal procedures are not enough to account for the continuity of everyday social experience. There is a need for community healing as well, which means repair but “also means transformation—transformation to a different moral state” (Das & Kleinman, 2001: 23).

In this study, the ecological perspective is demonstrated to be an effective way to grasp the possibilities for continuity in everyday social experience in multiple domains. The ecological approach crucially elicits how the restoration of broken social relations and the healing of war wounds is enacted by making use of precisely the same resources. This multidimensional restoration of relations and healing does not lead to a kind of *status quo ante*, but actually to a different moral state. Working the land fosters social relations between people; the traditional judges and healers use legal and healing techniques and material and invisible dimensions to provide responses to problems that cannot be divided into compartments because of their intrinsic relatedness.

The ecological aspects involved in post-war healing in Gorongosa contrast with western psychiatric conceptualisations concerning the effects of war trauma and the appropriate responses to this trauma. Although some individual symptoms that war survivors present in Mozambique resemble those of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Igreja *at al.*, 2004; Igreja *et al.*, 2006) or of the so-called Dissociative Disorders



(Steinberg, 1995; van Duijl *et al.*, 2005), it is correct to affirm that “all these phenomena are not simply natural events. They mean something locally and hence must be understood first of all as cultural forms (...)” (Antze, 1992: 321-2).

Such cultural forms in many parts of Africa may be expressed through the use of rituals to achieve resolution of various conflicts, as Amadiume and An-Na'im (2001) have argued.<sup>352</sup> In Mozambique, non-state monitored cleansing rituals were documented in the post-civil war period in various regions (Lundin, 1998).<sup>353</sup> However, the descriptions of these rituals were not accompanied by theoretical elaborations on post-war reconciliation or on ritual theory.<sup>354</sup> Furthermore, war survivors in Gorongosa have shown that resolution is not reducible to the simple enactment of rituals. It involves many more processes to rebuild the whole shattered social fabric of society. These processes are being shaped by the availability and accessibility of a plethora of environmental (fertile land) and socio-cultural resources. From this standpoint, and that of ecology of resources, utility and usage, the case of the war survivors in Gorongosa stretches to the limit contemporary understandings of the human capacity to repair their shattered social world in the aftermath of brutal civil wars.

No doubt focusing upon these positive post-civil war developments can conceal the serious problems that prevail in these post-war communities. Gender inequalities undermine the positions of women and men. The quandary has evolved around certain traditional rules that were radically changed as a result of the civil war. On the one hand, these laws do not offer protection to women, and on the other they contribute to perpetuating men's sense of insecurity in their families and in society. When the traditional courts reinforce these male perceptions in how they use the laws, this can

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<sup>352</sup> Irani and Funk (1998) make similar claims in relation to Arab-Islamic cultures. They state that, “Rituals such as *sulh* (settlement), and *musalaha* (reconciliation) exemplify key Arab-Islamic cultural values, and should be looked at (...) for insight into how to approach conflict resolution in the Middle East” (1998: 55). They also note that the performance of these rituals varies from Israel-Palestine to Lebanon and Jordan, and that besides *sulh* and *musalaha*, there are other rituals such as “*musafaha* (hand-shaking), and *mumalaha* (‘partaking of salt and bread,’ i.e., breaking bread together)” (p. 66).

<sup>353</sup> Reynolds (1990) describes cleansing rituals among Zimbabwean soldiers after the independence war.

<sup>354</sup> That is, no attention was paid to the real reasons for the soldiers performing such rituals: to announce their arrival home from war? to prevent the bad things that they saw and did during the war from haunting them? to ask for forgiveness? to reconcile? Do all the soldiers perform such rituals? When I did research in various locations in Manica Province (1997), the ex-soldiers did not agree about the function of these rituals. For some ex-soldiers, the rituals were for soldiers who had committed crimes against civilians during the war. For this reason they themselves did not perform any ritual as they had not killed any innocent person. For other ex-soldiers these rituals have existed for a long time and for anybody who has fought in a war.

potentially leave men and women, husbands and wives, unable to build up stable family relations. I do not pretend to say that as a result of these strained relations women and men are experiencing suffering with the same intensity. This is far from true. Men have more possibilities for social mobility because of the ease with which they can find new partners or cheat village girls under the banana trees. The social practice still prevails: the pumpkin does not roll in the direction of the pig; it is the pig that looks for the pumpkin. In this context of disrupted family values and relations, the one who has to wait to be courted is in a fragile position. The question that one is forced to pose then is: if this situation involves society as a whole, why is it that a change to address these gender issues is taking so long? I find in this case one area where the state and its institutions as well as non-governmental organizations operating in the field of social justice and human rights could go to village level to construct compromises between the local laws and the national laws. The practices resulting from these compromises could perhaps improve the quality of gender relations in Gorongosa.

### **15.8. From impunity to revenge, forgiveness and reconciliation**

It has been argued that “the instinct for revenge is as elementary as thirst or sexual desire” (Schivelbusch, 2003: 23) and it has been suggested also that political impunity can trigger the strong desire for irrational vengeance (Crocker, 1998: 496) or retributive violence (Borneman, 1997: 110). It is possible that the desire for revenge may operate differently in contexts of interpersonal relations and nationwide civil wars, in contexts of scarcity and availability of resources. Furthermore, although there is a continuing emphasis in the literature to spell out the risk of revenge in contexts of impunity, hardly other types of hypothesis are raised such as that “The decision not to attribute guilt in a legally organized way can reduce the desire to attribute guilt at all, that is increase the collective desire for forgiveness” (Gunther, 2001: 3).

The case of Gorongosa war survivors not only illustrates the necessity to make distinctions of contexts such as interpersonal, nationwide civil wars, availability or scarcity of resources but as well to seriously consider that “an amnesty [can] indeed pacify a society” (Gunther, 2001: 3), and that the durability of the peace is tied to the availability and accessibility of a plethora of resources. Some Gorongosa war survivors expressed war-related feelings of revenge. Yet there is no consensus that *ku hirindzira*

(vengeance) is the best way of ending the cycle of violence.<sup>355</sup> Rather, it is part of the socio-cultural system of belief that the spirits of dead victims or God or the evil tongue<sup>356</sup> can enact justice by punishing the perpetrators of various crimes against innocent civilians. Such beliefs and practices to attain justice, which did not emerge as a result of the failure of the secular justice system as observed, for instance as Sasanka Perera (2001) argues vis-à-vis the proliferation of avenging ghosts in the wake of the terror in Sri Lanka, appear to greatly restrain war survivors in Gorongosa from using direct physical and verbal violence against alleged perpetrators.

For instance, through an analysis of the realm of political governance in the current neoliberal order in Mozambique, Harry West (2005: 8), demonstrates the ways in which *uwavi* (sorcery) discourse in Mueda district (North of Mozambique) is used as a mechanism through which Muedans “perceive profound contradictions in the emerging neoliberal order” and also “through *uwavi* discourse, Muedans (re)made their world, although not at their whim”. In Gorongosa, the belief on invisible forces provides war survivors with a tool for remaking their world. They are capable of pursuing other lifetime objectives- instead of seeking revenge for past abuses and crimes- and employing peaceful means in the rebuilding of their social world. Within this context one is obliged to raise a number of questions. If such forms of justice, having the spirits of the dead as the principal agents, exist and are prevalent in various post-war societies, why is it that they are almost entirely absent from the theoretical debates on transitional justice? Is it because this is not considered to be justice at all or because the debates are totally dominated by western concepts, even if these notions are ambiguous, obscure and lack firm consensus among their advocates? How does this absence reflect the incapacity of current notions and perspectives to grasp the local dynamics in places where justice has a supernatural dimension, with all that this implies?

John Dugard (1999) provided partial answers to these questions in his discussion of the role of amnesties. He suggested that the problem stemmed from the fact that the western activists engaged in these issues are on the whole strangers to repression and

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<sup>355</sup> Acts of revenge exist in society but are not related to the events of the war. They are related to breaches in interpersonal relations in the present.

<sup>356</sup> Unlike the evil eye, the evil tongue consists in persistently saying bad things about someone so that his or her *tsumbe* (the probability that a healer can reach the correct diagnosis) is secretly locked in the *mpanbano* (crossroads) of the village. When patient’s *tsumbe* is locked the patient is in real trouble since the healer can do little to change his or her predicament.

therefore failed to pay sufficient attention to the circumstances of the society that chooses amnesty above retributive justice. Very often these circumstances are shaped by the peculiar conditions of civil wars. Another reason for this omission may be related to the fact that in western scholarship there are no examples of socio-cultural and religious processes of reconciliation to deal with the legacies of total wars. In the aftermath of the World War II, limited discussions evolved around retributive justice, which took shape through the realization of the Nuremberg Trials and the draft of an economic plan (the Marshall Plan) to engage in the socio-economic reconstruction of Europe. Following the Nuremberg Trials there was an interregnum of silence for at least twenty years; neither sociology nor anthropology, history nor psychiatry experts engaged in the production of knowledge to elicit non-state strategies to deal with the legacies of the war. For these reasons I think the field of transitional justice, which is dominated by western scholarship, has the tendency to develop unidimensional approaches (centred on criminal justice) when debating the best ways to address the legacies of political violence in transitional justice.

It is a highly contested proposition that the absence of political and legal approaches tends to make people less prone to reconciliation (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2003) or that cross-culturally the enduring labours of war survivors to rebuild their social world can be regarded as “false reconciliation” (Méndez, 1997) or “partial forgiveness” (Amstutz, 2005). Even if one gives the benefit of the doubt and embarks on the belief that there is something called “false reconciliation” or “partial forgiveness”, the proponents of such classifications fail to present cases of “true reconciliation” or “complete forgiveness”. Perhaps it could be more productive to think that each situation carries its internal strengths and inconsistencies, or that each situation must be respected if it fulfils the aspirations of its people.

Other authors have been more prudent in their analysis of the intricacies involved in transitional justice processes and the limitations of accepting generalizations. For instance, Alexandra Barahona de Brito *et al.* (2002: 303) analysed eighteen cases of democratisation and concluded that, “The key obstacle to theorizing about this topic is the enormous influence of the particular historical evolution of each country and various factors emerging therefrom, on policies of truth and justice in transition.”

Reconciliation and forgiveness are not simply identifiable through normative categorizations such as true or false, complete or partial. In this sense I think that Galtung (2000) is right when he asserts that reconciliation has profound human roots; however, he is less correct when he affirms that nobody knows how to successfully achieve it. As Giddens indicates, “Intentions and reasons which agents have for what they do are sometimes capable of being expressed in what they can say about the conditions of their action (...) But this by no means exhausts what they know about why they act as they do” (1986: 536). Stitching this assertion to the debates on transitional justice and reconciliation, I think that even when war survivors cannot give discursive accounts of their reconciliatory acts we cannot hastily assume that they do not know how to successively achieve reconciliation. Some war survivors in Gorongosa have demonstrated that they are quite aware of some of the strategies that they have employed in order to engage in reconciliation after the civil war and why they succeeded in containing the eruption of another cycle of war-related violence. But their justifications do not exhaust what they know about the conditions of their successful reconciliation. This is well demonstrated by the group that appeared indifferent (11.3) vis-à-vis the debates on transitional justice. They stated that they did not know what to say about what to make of the legacies of the past; but they could talk about their daily practices, and they disclosed in a stealthy way the key importance of paying attention to everyday life activities and practices in the process of reconciliation, particularly agricultural activities.

Viewed from a general perspective, Hegel seems to have offered a useful model of reconciliation. Hegel’s ideas on the necessity for alienated people to experience their social world as a home (reconciliation) gives plenty of room for exploring reconciliation processes in contemporary societies (Hardimon, 1994), particularly the study of reconciliation in societies whose political settlements were founded in *cultures of denial*. In this study such an approach demonstrates that the process of overcoming the various legacies of the horrendous past could not be understood by just fixating on most of the prescriptions described in the discipline of transitional justice. Giving war survivors access to formal justice or to the truth to reckon with past abuses and crime may not be sufficient to make them experience their social world as a home. In this regard, transitional justice has so far been founded on a very strict definition that considers the past in a restricted manner as well. The processes of addressing the legacies of the past

should not be restricted to the prosecution of alleged perpetrators, or to the creation of socio-political spaces for the victims to publicly unveil the horrors of their past experiences and receive financial compensation for the damages.

Transitional justice needs other concepts and methods of study to capture the breadth of issues involved in transitional processes. Naomi Roht-Arriaza (2006) has recently suggested a useful way of conceptualising transitional justice by considering broad and narrow definitions. It is suggested that in its broadest sense, transitional justice “involves anything that a society devises to deal with a legacy of conflict and/or widespread human rights violations, from changes in criminal codes to those in high school textbooks, from creation of memorials, museums and days of mourning, to police and court reform, to tackling the distributional inequities that underlie conflict” (Roht-Arriaza, 2006: 2).<sup>357</sup> It is this breadth that can clarify contemporary understandings of how the traditional judges in Gorongosa have been playing an underestimated role in the field of transitional justice. The contribution of traditional judges has been enacted mostly by blocking possibilities for the repetition of cycles of injustice and impunity, and by resolving the bulk of the conflicts that form part of the legacy of the civil war. To a lesser extent the judges use their discretionary powers to handle some unsettled war conflicts.

Perhaps the most interesting collective process for addressing the legacies of the war in Gorongosa concerns the emergence of the war-related *gamba* spirits. This is both a powerful example of the relatedness of the various dimensions of post-war needs (justice and healing that leads to reconciliation) and the inner capacity of the society to react in the face of adversity.

### **15.9. *Gamba* spirits: Collective memory, healing and reconciliation**

It was previously stated that *gamba* is a polysemic phenomenon. It is the name of a spirit, an affliction, the healer specializing in dealing with afflictions caused by the *gamba* spirit possession, and the mode of enacting the therapeutic process. The *gamba* spirits address problems of war-related ill-health (Igreja, 2003b; Igreja et al., 2006; Marlin, 2001), and

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<sup>357</sup> Roht-Arriaza is sceptical about the broadening of the definition of transitional justice because accordingly it “may make the effort so broad as to become meaningless” (2006: 2). On the contrary, I think that such broadness enriches the study of formal and informal strategies or events that may take place as part of the transition phase of a post-war country.

they foster social relations among alienated people. They also contest the post-war political discourses promoting silence and oblivion and reaffirm the socio-cultural tradition of evoking the past to address the complex problems of the present. It is this latter aspect of *gamba* spirits that can analytically be located in the interface between collective memory, justice, healing and reconciliation.

Paul Connerton (1989), writing on processes of collective remembering, suggests that the process of collective memory formation can be best captured by analysing certain “acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible” (1989: 39). These “acts of transfer” could consist of an array of social practices, such as the socialization process of the younger generation, the formal and informal educational process, and healing (procedures involving practices of ancestor worship or what Ancestral Schutzenberger (1999) calls the “ancestor syndrome”). Yet Connerton singles out and analyses only two social practices in which the acts of transfer can occur: commemorative performances and bodily practices. Commemorative performances to preserve the past are enacted through words and images depicting representations of past events. Bodily practices can preserve memories without recourse to words and images, i.e., the past is amassed in the body. In this regard, Connerton asserts that, “Our bodies, which in commemorations stylistically re-enact an image of the past, keep the past also in an entirely effective form in their continuing ability to perform certain skilled actions” (p. 72). In contexts of protracted political violence, collective memories may not be forums to commemorate the past, but can be transformed into “programs for revenge and hatred...” (Cohen, 2001: 245).

In post-war Gorongosa the process of the formation of collective memories and their usage takes place largely during the healing of *gamba* spirit possession. In this sense, using spirit possession as a means for analysing the processes of collective memory formation resonates with some of the anthropological literature on healing and embodiment.

In anthropological literature, healing processes can be considered as a privileged moment for analysing the relationship between subjectivity and the socio-cultural order (Comaroff, 1985), and approaching healing from the perspective of social relations is useful as it creates a space to explore reconciliation possibilities. But what do certain

healing practices disclose about the relations between the individual and the collective and the articulation of the past, present and future in a society?

The literature on embodiment provides a material dimension to the healing process by attributing a central importance to the body in the analysis of subjectivity and culture (Csordas, 1990), and some literature on spirit possession attributes a key role to embodiment and considers that “the sentient body is culturally consumed by a world filled with forces, smells, textures, sights, sounds, and tastes, all of which trigger cultural memories (Stoller, 1994: 636; 1995). The bodily and social afflictions caused by *magamba* spirits is related to the “embodiment of debt and moral fault, which is extended beyond the individual and his or her kin and concerns wider society” (Honwana, 2003: 72)

The process of healing *gamba* spirits discloses how alteration instead of fixation, and connectivity instead of disjunction (victims and perpetrators; life and death) in both subjectivity and the cultural order are among the most powerful mechanisms available to expose the extreme disharmonies prevalent in Gorongosa society and to attain healing, reconciliation and social order. The alterations in subjectivity are only possible by evoking extraordinary events of the past. In this case both the cause of extreme disorders in the society and the remedies for dealing with them are buried in the past. Unlike the *madzoca* healers, who relied on ancestor spirits and reiterate the importance of respecting the socio-cultural norms and traditions, *gamba* spirits evoke a different type of past: war violence. These spirits serve as a permanent actualisation of the recent history of brutal violence and overwhelming problems that the Gorongosa people went through.

The process of actualisation is enacted through a specific means. The host’s body provides the vehicle whereby the past can actualise itself. It is this process of digging up the past (which is distinctive from commemorations described by Connerton) that makes possible the elaboration and reaffirmation of collective memories. The healing of *gamba* spirits (Chapter 14) unifies all the features involved in the process of creating collective memories as Connerton describes them: words, sounds, images and bodily practices. The evocation of the past through bodily practices stems from restricting the body to extreme, heightened powerful movements, changes in the breathing rhythms, and ingestion and inhalation of alcohol and local cannabis<sup>358</sup> until the spirit of the dead surfaces. The spirit

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<sup>358</sup> In this case only by the healers.



brings powerful traces of the past: civil war violence, male power, and gender inequalities. This aspect deserves attention since it allows a transcending of the limitations of current theories about the body and embodiment and also enables the exploration of the signs of willingness for social change in this society.

*Gamba* spirits are male, and they penetrate female bodies and selves. A male spirit penetrates a female body or, as the local people say in proverbial talk, “the food of woman is the man”. This very fact suggests that when placing the body as a central tool of analysis it is necessary to consider the prevalent morality of the body in society. It is not simply a question of a body for the sake of a body. There is a morality involved; what I mean here is that there is a selection of a body based on socio-cultural norms of morality, power, authority, and social change. The current theories about the body and embodiment pay little consideration to this aspect, i.e., the moral dimension of the body in the process of being subject and object of culture.

In other anthropological literature on spirit possession the gender dimension of the body has been extensively debated, but under the rubric of social relations of affinity between women and spirits. In this affinity only the aspect of power and authority was considered in any depth. In brief: the most debated meta-theory concerns the proximity between women and spirits as mystical strategies to compensate for the status of powerlessness that characterizes women’s position in society (Lewis, 1971). This meta-approach has been one of the most contested in this field since it failed to conform to the multiplicity of cross-cultural variations in manifestations of spirit possession (Boddy, 1994). A fruitful analysis of the spirits in Gorongosa requires the observation of some basic principles: a) the socio-cultural, political and historical context of the society and the place of spirits; b) the types of relationship between spirits and hosts; c) the gender of the spirit and host and their voices; and d) the dynamic aspect of the spirits which gives rise to a new perspective of time. Matching these principles suggests elements to explore the local morality of the body and the signs of a shift of social relations in this society. In order to do so there is a need to highlight again the *gamba* spirits’ polysemic features and to locate the *gamba* spirits within a temporal perspective.

### **15.10. Old times and new times: The coevalness of *gamba* spirits**

On his essay on Time, Norbert Elias suggests that time is “a frame of reference used by people of a particular group, and finally by humankind, to set up milestones recognized by the group within a continuous sequence of changes, or to compare one phase in such sequence with phases of another, and in a variety of other ways” (1992: 73). These social and narrative timeframes vary cross-culturally. In some societies the main frame of reference of time is the clock, and in other societies it is social activities (Urry, 1996). In yet other societies there are multiple conceptions and experiences of time that run simultaneously. Joseph Adjaye suggests that “the apprehension of temporal categories in Africa must therefore be understood in the context of specific historical and social formations” and that “time in Africa is, at core, cognitive and social” (2002: 200). What seems to unify how people in different cultures experience time is that “(...) their past and their future can only ever be constituted in the present” (Adam, 1990: 142).

In general people experience time through the continuities and discontinuities registered in their personal lives as well as in their natural and social environment. In Chapter 12 it was demonstrated how the Gorongosa people articulate their social time through the agricultural cycle. The outset of the cycle combines annual changes in nature and animal life, which gives rise to specific farming activities. In turn, these farming activities indicate the appropriate time to end the cycle.

However, besides agricultural time there is spiritual time as well. It has been demonstrated that the ancestors’ spirits framed this time over many generations. These spirits are called *madzoca* (Igreja, 2003b). Historically the *madzoca* spirits represented the powers of the elders and embodied the socio-cultural and moral values and deep medical and prophetic knowledge of the Gorongosa people. As a result of the civil war, a new time was introduced in Gorongosa through the emergence of the *gamba* spirits. The local perception that *gamba* is a new spirit, which introduces a different way of dealing with ill-health, corroborates the view that time in this society (as in many African societies) is “practical, rational and cognitive” (Adjaye, 2002: 216). The *gamba* spirits as a phenomenon are represented by youth (the male as a spirit and the female as the host body). These metamorphoses indicate that the *gamba* spirits have substituted the time of gerontocracy with a time of rejuvenation or the time of youth agency.

One of the most significant aspects of this new time is its hybrid feature. This new time intermingles past and future in the same breath; it is at once a time of chaos and disorder and a time of reordering and setting up of directions; in addition, it is a time of continuity as well as a time of change. The present, then, is the time when the past and future can be lived, experienced, related to, interpreted, sought out, captured, recaptured, or preserved (Adam, 1990: 142). The past time that the *gamba* spirits embody refers to what Marie-Odile Godard (2003) calls *le fond d'horror* or the collective images of the horrendous past; the present time that the *gamba* spirit evokes expresses a time of reconstitution; and the future time refers to a time for consolidation.

The past conflates into the present and the present becomes a time of reconstitution because *gamba* spirits need justice to repair their virtual bodies. Without the reconstitution of their disfigured bodies there cannot be justice. Justice here takes the form of a transformation from the status of an alien and violent spirit into that of local healing divinity. Without this transformation enacted through justice, *gamba* spirits would be unable to establish relationships with other local spirits. If that were the case, rather than being an engine of social repair and social transformation, *gamba* spirits would be relegated to a marginal position and role in Gorongosa society. The practical and pervasive consequences for the war survivors generated from the inability of *gamba* spirits to establish relationships with other local spirits would be a general victory for the *cultures of denial* at local level. Elsewhere, I have given a practical example of the consequence of the lack of relationships between *gamba* spirits and other local spirits, particularly *madzoca* spirits (Igreja 2003b).

But what I want to spell out in this chapter is the successful establishment of active relationships between *gamba* spirits and other spirits, using an iconic example. One of the best-known healers in Gorongosa uses *madzoca* spirits. Around the year 1999, when *gamba* spirits were prevalent all over Gorongosa, this *madzoca* healer invited one *magamba* healer to work together with him in order to help war survivors in their extreme affliction. Two years later, in 2001, the *madzoca* healer had himself become a *magamba* healer. He did not tell me this, but I saw him treating patients with *magamba* instruments. How is this possible, I asked him, since these two spirits embodied two different types of time, two different types of traditions, two different types of history?

He replied by saying the following: “My *madzoca* spirits have already communicated with the *magamba* spirits and all the conflicts were resolved”.

*Magamba* spirits also intermingle a future time with the present. The enunciation of the future signals the desire for a shift in this society. The desire for a change in society is inscribed in the process of struggling for justice. This process has ceased to be conducted through a medium figure (as in the past, through the *madzoca* healer) and is now being conducted directly by anybody in society. In order to unleash the process for attaining justice, *gamba* spirits need to actively demonstrate one of their multiple features, which is power.

### **15.11. *Gamba* spirits, power and social change**

The power vested in *magamba* spirits is consistent with the idea that power has a “double valence of subordinating and producing” (Butler, 1997: 2). In its repressive form, the power of *magamba* clearly carries the force of prohibition and the resulting changes are not expected to be ephemeral; it is set in motion to generate long-term practical consequences. Alongside the idea of power as a mechanism rooted in prohibitions, *magamba* spirits are also characterized by a productive dimension. Michel Foucault affirms that power “traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Rabinow, 1984: 61). *Magamba* spirits have the power to break away from cults of denial that proliferate in post-war Gorongosa and in Mozambique more generally. Denial and silence is counteracted with narratives that carry specific forms of discursive knowledge about extreme abuses and crimes perpetrated during the civil war.

From a socio-cultural and gender perspective in Gorongosa, the female gender cannot embody the values attached to power as a producing force. In principle, these are human abilities exclusively incorporated by the male gender. Women are expected to embody the effects of the male power in society: exploitation and suffering. Submission and suffering allows women to accumulate experience, to become wise and to help society as a whole to redress the society’s actions. The accumulated experience and its importance for society is recognized in colloquial talk when people say, “a house without a woman is a sign of suffering,” or “a man cooking for himself is living amidst suffering”.

In order to exert influence in society, women need to have a great deal of realism. Edgar Morin and Anne-Brigitte Kern (1993), in another line of reasoning, have suggested that in politics “realism” can have two meanings. The first recommends that one cannot fight against reality without first adapting to it; and the second recommends that there is a need to take reality into account in order to transform it. That is what women do. They adapt to reality by embodying one of its principal features: suffering. That is, “power that at first appears as external (...) pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject’s self identity” (Butler, 1997: 3). The formation of women through subjection allows some of them to embody forms of power as presented by war-related male spirits. Possession by *magamba* spirits in symbiotic relations generates forms of gender equality that allows women to struggle over social change and equality more broadly. In this regard, the goals that *magamba* spirits set out to accomplish in partnership with their female hosts are consistent with how the *bori* (possession cult) phenomenon in Niger is analysed, i.e., “*bori* speaks to a host of issues that transcend the confines of individual afflictions or personal crises to address the problems of entire communities” (Masquelier, 2001: 9).

Spirit possession by *magamba* spirits in this analytic framework allows men (as a spirit) and women to redress the prevalent social disorders in the society. This is clearly visible during the *gamba* spirit healing sessions. The healing of a *gamba* spirit requires the presence of the cognates of the body-sufferer. They have to recreate the unity among family members that was eroded as a result of the civil war. Yet the attempts to recreate a harmonious social life also demands the re-enactment of the conditions that gave rise to the extreme social disorders. In these attempts, women appear to play a prominent role. They seem to decisively contribute in this struggle since they are the ones who accumulated the traces of suffering in their own lives.

The power/submission and destruction/construction dichotomy embodied by the *gamba* spirits requires further analysis in order to understand the dimension of expressing a need for change in post-war Gorongosa. People possessed by *gamba* spirits (the great majority are women) re-experience the suffering of the past as if it is happening now. The re-enactment is somewhat sinister and dangerous, and some forms of *gamba* possession can become criminal as demonstrated in the case of Almeida (14.4).

The *gamba* spirits' procedures are selective since they do not include discussions regarding the moral and criminal responsibility of soldiers, commanders and politicians for the violence of the last sixteen years. This responsibility is attributed to society, particularly to the individuals and their families that populated the war zones during the war. *Gamba* suggests that soldiers and civilians both have their share of responsibility for the events that took place during the war. The responsibility of the civilians is not so much to do with the origins of war suffering but is related to the way in which destruction and suffering were enacted throughout the years of violence. This capacity for sharing and assuming responsibility for some of the events that took place during the war helps the new generations to build the foundations for the constructive side of *gamba*. It is this side of *magamba* that expresses the need for a shift in Gorongosa. The seeds of change lie in socio-cultural conceptions and values related to subjectivity, responsibility, and truth. Such type of analysis in which spiritual agents articulate a whim for social change in society was also made by Joop de Jong (1987) on his study of the *jangué jangué* movement in post-colonial Guinea Bissau.

In Gorongosa, the willingness for change can be grasped through the fact that there was a removal of the monopoly of truth from the hands of the elite (that is *madzoca* healing families) that was accompanied by a liberation of the processes of truth acquisition in society. Such a move by the war survivors and the new generation are strongly signalling the desire to play an active role in the momentum for change brought about after the civil war. People, in their ordinary positions, want to participate in the elaboration of collective memories as well as to develop new forms of facing the truth and assuming responsibility. Truth can no longer be what the few in society constructed in the name of or for the majority of the people. The practice of monopolizing the truth and acting accordingly has brought a lot of misery and disgrace so far. The truth and the search for a better destiny have to be based not only on collective values but on individual choices as well. Unlike in the past, when *madzoca* healers had the monopoly of control of these processes and the individual just waited for his destiny to be uttered through the speech of the ancestral spirit, *gamba* spirits changed this logic by giving voice to the ordinary people who suffered as a result of warfare.

## Chapter 16: Final Conclusions

*When the monkeys and the bees went home, none of them were pleased with the decision of the judges to adjourn the trial, which many considered to be the trial of the decade. The general feeling of the community as well was total dissatisfaction. The dispute between the monkeys and the bees had created myriad problems in the community, most particularly a rupture of the trust and social solidarity that had prevailed until then and had allowed their society to flourish. Many community members could not understand why the judges had not referred the case to the mapaza healers, as the monkeys were persisting in their fixed position by doing upoca (refusing persistently) and the judges had failed to reach a settlement.*

*The judges had in fact seriously reflected on the possibility of transferring the case to the mapaza healers, since this was the normal procedure in such cases. What dissuaded them from proceeding in this way was the following: in their laborious search to unveil very fragile truths, the mapaza healers use ancestral spirits, and among these spirits are the spirits of monkeys. The healers sought knowledge from the monkey spirits by saying “a lie is only good until the day that the truth arrives. So, monkeys, don’t be circumspect with the truth! Swear the truth, monkeys! Monkeys, tell us the truth: who is guilty and who is being defamed in this case? Please, monkeys, our ancestors, swear the truth; monkeys, don’t jump about so much. Please, monkeys, swear the truth; please, monkeys, smash the lies and praise the truth...” The judges felt that there was a pressing danger in referring this dispute to the mapaza healers because there seemed to be relations of kinship between the spirits evoked by the mapaza healers and the defendants. These relations, the judges thought, would undermine the capacity of the mapaza healers to be nhampena (impartial). For this reason the judges decided not to transfer the case, and they thought that by adjourning the trial and letting time pass, a solution would be found. One flower suggested to the judges that they could consider giving the benefit of doubt to the mapaza healers and see whether they would be firm in their position as nhampena. However, the judges simply ignored the appeal of the flower.*

*The community members were very unhappy because they were afraid of unknown immediate or delayed reactions from both of the main protagonist groups in the unfinished trial. For six weeks there was a frightening silence in the community. The bees and their sympathizers started moving around more slowly, in a state of alert to detect any suspicious behaviour from the monkeys and their allies. The monkeys and their friends did the same.*

*After ten weeks of active and mutual espionage, the thing most feared by all was unleashed. It was around Tchotchoma (which in the Gregorian calendar would correspond to the month of July) that a huge fire spread rapidly all through the community. Huts, fields and gardens were on fire; members of the community were running in different directions around the village, screaming for help; but nobody could help, because everybody was in need of help themselves. The worst thing was that nobody could say where the fire was coming from, how it had started, and who had actually ignited it. Was it the bees and their allies, to avenge the stolen honey? Or was it the desperate monkeys, to avenge their damaged dignity and reputation?*

*As no one could answer even one of these questions, everyone was in a most precarious predicament, for no alliances could be made to fight the fire. The village ended in ashes and in complete disgrace. This was the end of the monkeys, the bees and their associates.*

People who survived the war insist on telling this type of exemplary tale to the younger generation so that they will know and never doubt what Rotazoza (10.1.4) was quoted above as saying: *ndondo indie ku bara nkondo* (suffering gives birth to war). Therefore, instead of inclining towards the strategy of the judges in the case of the monkeys, namely *to wait and see*, *ku barangaza* (prevention) is the best strategy for addressing the problems of people who have been grievously wronged. The prevention of further wrongs is the best medicine for addressing the legacies of the civil war.

The knowledge that people in Gorongosa possess about the sad reality of war is related to extreme suffering, overwhelming destruction, and horrendous deaths. Gorongosa people did not learn about war by hearing about it, reading about it in books or watching it on colour or black-and-white television. They themselves have experienced in their own bodies and over their entire lives prolonged cycles of war violence. The most overwhelming experiences erupted with the civil war in 1976, which gave rise to a culture of extreme mass violence. Individuals, families and communities were exposed to the most brutal forms of human-to-human horror for 16 years. Both government and Renamo troops continuously trespassed the *jus in bello* (conventions regarding the conduct of battle), and perpetrated the cowardly practice of “shooting everything that moves”.

When the war ended on 4 October 1992, another type of culture emerged: the *culture of denial*, with the goal of erasing traces of the past. No official authority dared,



even in a hypocritical manner, to come forward and say, “Let us not forget the time that is past”.<sup>359</sup> The authorities were allegedly implicated in the grisly murders of innocent people. No one knows with any certainty how many were killed in these most unjustified acts of war. Only those who have experienced the direct effects of the war violence and were trespassed against numerous times and in varied ways can bear witness to these appalling realities. In this study, war survivors voiced their experiences in four inter-related domains: 1) discursive and bodily disclosures of the lived horrors; 2) narratives of the prevailing legacies at individual, family and community levels; 3) descriptions of their perceptions of various types of transitional justice; and 4) the performance of their own invented *cultures of engagement*, that is, the various strategies applied for self-preservation, to overcome their post-war predicaments and to be able to experience their social world as a home once more.

The key hypothesis that guided the study was that Gorongosa people inhabit a social world permeated by connections of interdependencies and mutual influences that may give rise to processes of production and reproduction of resources and strategies that allow war survivors to engage in reconciliation and healing. Therefore, to understand the strategies applied to deal with the legacies of violence, there is a need to locate these strategies not separately (for example as one domain of reconciliation and a separate one of healing, or one domain of the past and a separate one of the present, with society being separated again) but in simultaneous interaction. This dissertation has presented, with ethnographic and sociological analysis and details, the importance of three particular resources for the post-war attainment of reconciliation and healing: the agricultural cycle, and traditional justice and medicine. It was demonstrated that as a result of the intrinsic challenges of post-war repair and the contingencies attached to the usage of these three resources, individual creativity emerged as another resource. Individual creativity permeates the entire process of post-war repair and it can be grasped in the interstices between agency (willingness to do) and structure (material and metaphysical means).

In the face of the post-war cultures of denial, survivors of the war did not plot ways to seek redress for their grievances. In a context of political impunity, the search for vengeance to reckon with a terrible past is the cornerstone formula of previous studies in transitional justice. The experiences of the Gorongosa people demonstrate that this

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<sup>359</sup> This was a post-colonial slogan used to acknowledge the suffering caused by the Portuguese colonialists.

formula does not stand up to cross-cultural examination. When transitional justice pundits increase the scope of their hypothesis to include the idea that reckoning with the abuses and crimes of the past is a key process in establishing a law-abiding society and creating a culture of accountability and respect for human rights, this broadened hypothesis still remains problematic in cross-cultural analysis. It is problematic because the cause-effect reasoning leads to the presumption of failure in the process of nation-building if a reckoning does not take place: that is, that if a state does not reckon with its violent past, there can be no rule of law, no culture of accountability created and no respect for human rights. The case of post-dictatorship Spain (1936-39)<sup>360</sup> is an example widely used to challenge this principle of the presumption of failure, which is nonetheless very prevalent in transitional justice studies.

The recent case of Gorongosa demonstrates that these goals (establishing a law-abiding society and creating a culture of accountability and respect for human rights) are not unattainable, even when the nation-state fails to respond adequately. Gorongosa war survivors have demonstrated the capacity of attaining these goals not so much in relation to building a state based on the rule of law, but in terms of preventing the continuation of cycles of injustice and impunity that prevailed during the civil war and healing the ill-health legacies of the civil war. This capacity is consistent with what Douglas Fry (2006) calls the “the human potential for peace” that is, “an anthropological perspective demonstrates that humans are capable of devising and employing a great diversity of conflict prevention and management techniques” (Fry, 2006: 260). This perspective leads us to think that there are multiple ways of thinking about truth, justice, peace and reconciliation in post-conflict countries.

In order to move beyond the current limited epistemologies in transitional justice that insistently point fingers and gesture to the past—when there is a present to live or a peace to waste, and there is a concrete future to build—there is a need to seriously think of mechanisms that can effectively help to produce and reproduce conditions for the maintenance of social order and stability in transitional societies. This dissertation has demonstrated not only that this goal is attainable but also, more importantly, that this objective cannot be fulfilled by applying only one single strategy. It is through the lens of

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<sup>360</sup> It can also be argued that this example may not be the most appropriate one, since during the transition in the aftermath of the Spanish dictatorship the international geopolitics of the world did not at all favour global discussions on transitional justice issues in nation-state territories.

an ecological mindset that we can start to seriously consider the paramount importance of socio-economic production systems and the accompanying socio-cultural, political and legal practices in the processes of rebuilding the social world.

It is beyond dispute that exposure to war leaves tragic consequences and that these must not be ignored. The controversy arises in relation to the locus of the tragedy. Contemporary knowledge produced in Western countries considers the individual as the focal point of suffering (posttraumatic stress disorders, dissociative disorders) and consequently the remedy (psychotherapy) also targets the individual. In non-Western societies, as in the case of Gorongosa, the locus of suffering is situated not only in the individual but also in the various networks of ecological connections (and disconnections) to which the individual belongs. Possession by *gamba* spirits is a clear indication of the multiplicity of loci of suffering as a result of exposure to the war. The idea of multiplicities of manifestation of suffering was partially captured through the anthropological concept of *social suffering*. The limitations of the concept of *social suffering*, however, stem from a failure to consider the dimension of the realm of the spirits and their role in shaping how suffering from war is expressed, dealt with and transformed into healing mechanisms. Of key importance is the fact that these healing mechanisms presented by *gamba* spirits embody the seeds of a shift in a transitional society. That is, social suffering is a concept that helps illicit the webs of suffering, but it fails to grasp the transformational dimensions embodied in processes of collective suffering.

This shift is characterized by the introduction of a new kind of time and an ardent desire to reach a balance between individual and collective responsibility. Through the case studies of young people suffering from *gamba* spirit possession and the withdrawal of the monopoly of possession from the elites (*madzocas*) into the hands of common sufferers, and by carefully following the therapeutic process of these patients and seriously listening to what the spirits tell and what they conceal, it was possible to observe and to demonstrate the signs of the shift in these communities. The essence of the transformation lies in the need for a balanced compromise among the spirits, the individual and the collective; and between the past and the future. It is in this willingness to change, which has germinated and erupted from the crossroads of the communities,

that the Gorongosa people give a convincing example of the human capacity to transcend the frontiers of an apparently impossible challenge.

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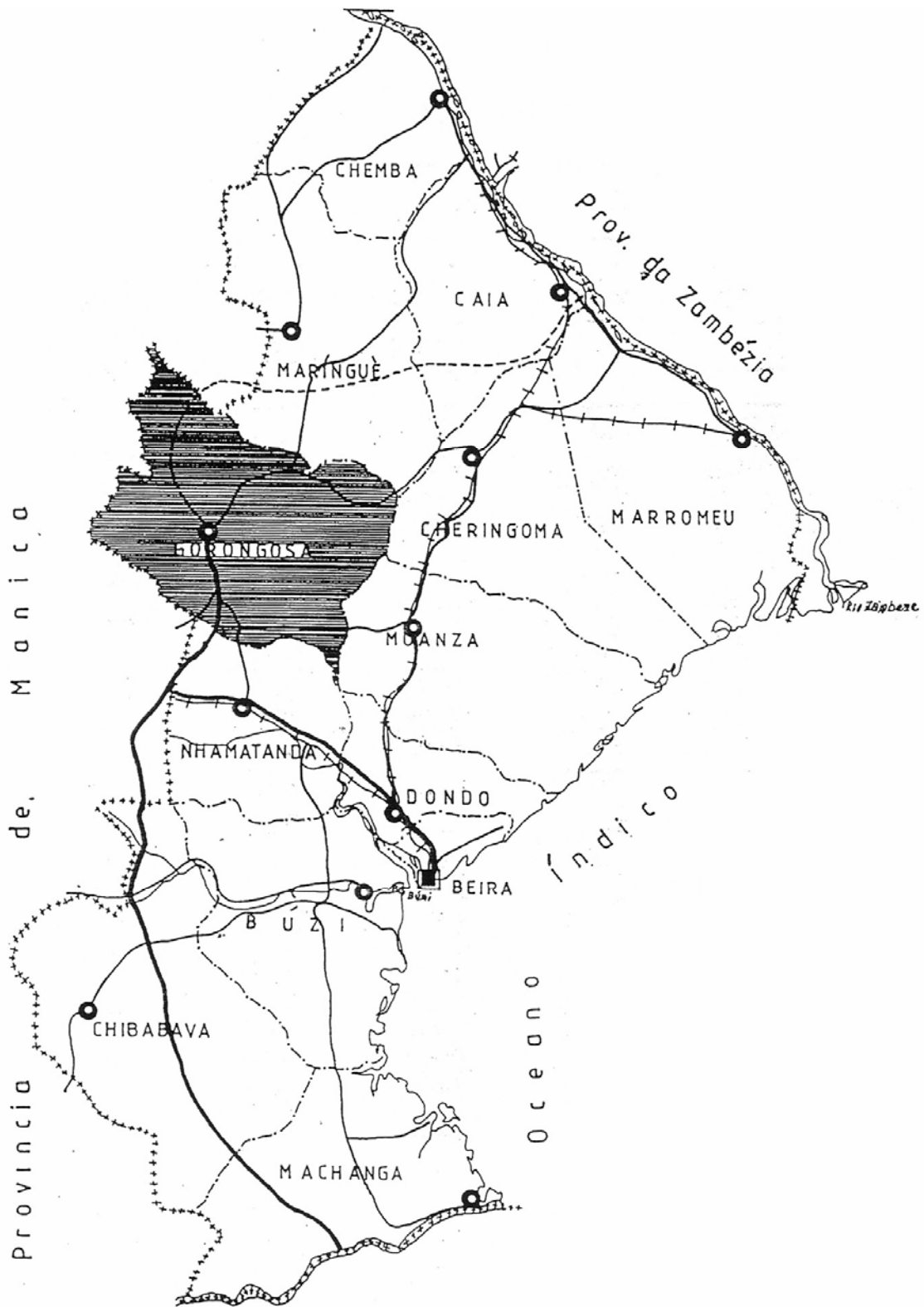
# List of Appendixes

## Appendix 1 Map of Mozambique

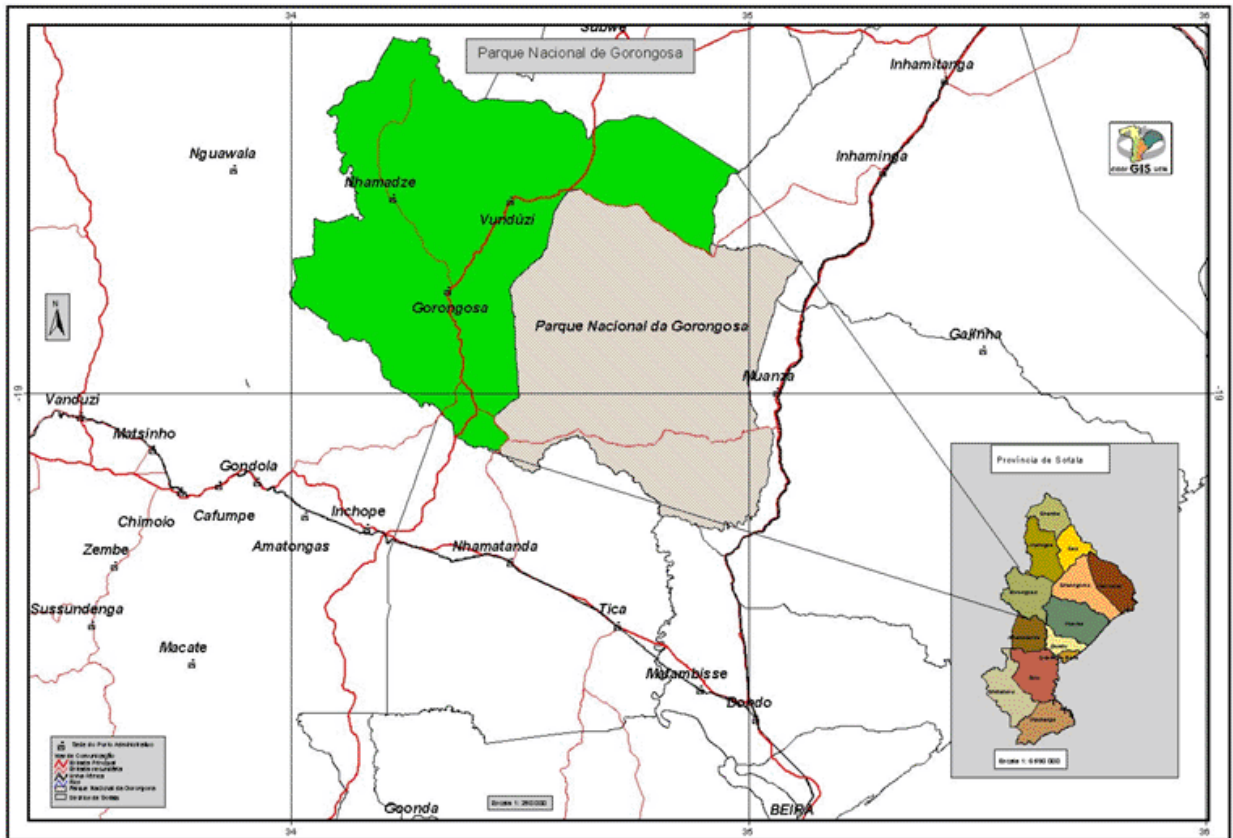




Appendix 2: Map of Sofala Province



### Appendix 3: Map of Gorongosa



Source: <http://www.up.ac.za/academic/centre-environmental-studies/Asard/mapsUCM.htm>

## **Appendix 4**

### **Individual interviews with interlocutors in general about experiences before, during and after the war**

1. How was life before the civil war? (Individual, family and communal experiences)
2. How was life during the civil war? (Individual, family and communal experiences)
3. How is life after the war? (Individual, family and communal experiences)
4. Do you see any changes as a result of the war?
5. Are there things that did not change even with the influence of the war?
6. How is the situation of *nipa* consumption here in your village?
7. What about community and domestic violence?
8. What are the most common problems that you see here in your area after the war?
9. Why do these problems emerge?
10. Who creates these problems?
11. How do you resolve these problems?
12. Are these problems well or badly resolved?

### **Working experiences**

1. What do you do for living?
2. Do you have a field? Who works in your field?
3. Are there any benefits for working in the fields? Why?
4. Are there differences between the various stages in the agricultural work? If yes, which differences?
5. Do the different phases of the agricultural cycle have specific names? If yes, what are these names and why are they called in this way?
6. Do you do any organizational activities before starting the agricultural work?

### **Group interviews and discussions**

1. How was life before the war? (*Goeiro* and *mambira* stage; boys & girls socialization; gender relations in general; domestic and community violence; trust and reciprocity relations)
2. Did life change after the war? If yes, what were the changes?
3. What are the things that remain the same after the war?
4. What use to be the socio-economic condition before the war (roads accessibility, cleaned water, schools and health centers, commercialization of agricultural surplus)?
5. Are still there war-related problems that were not resolved? If yes, how are these problems being resolved?
6. What are the most frequent problems that appear within the families and in the communities?
9. How is the situation of *nipa* consumption?
10. Are these cases of domestic and community violence?
11. What are the most important priorities that should be done within the families and communities?
12. How are the relations with your kin and with your neighbors? Do you trust one another? Do you support one another?

## **Appendix 5**

### **Perceptions on Transitional Justice and Remembering and Forgetting**

No.	Questions	Yes	No	?
1.	Do you think that the soldiers and their associates who used to abuse and kill people should be punished for their actions? Why? How?			
2.	Do you think that the soldiers and their associates who used to abuse and kill people should be forgiven for their actions? Why?			
3.	Do you think that the soldiers and their associates who used to abuse and kill people should demand apologies to the people? Why? How?			
4.	Do you think that you should be paid for the suffering that you went through? Why? How?			
5.	Are there things that you do that reminds you about the war experiences? If yes, what?			
6.	Are there things that you do that helps you to forget the war experiences? If yes, what? If no, why?			

## **Appendix 6**

### **Interviews with traditional judges**

1. When did you start working as a judge?
2. Can a woman work as a judge?
3. Are there other people in your family that were judges in the past?

### **Wartime experiences**

1. Where were you during the civil war?

2. Did you suffer with the war? If yes, how?
3. What were you doing during the war?
4. Did you work as a judge during the war?
5. What kinds of problems did you use to resolve during the war?
6. How did you use to do to escape from the deadly raids?

### **Post-war experiences**

1. Are there things that changed in your community as a result of the war?
2. How did life change as a result of the war?
3. What are the things that did not change even with the war?
4. What were the most frequent problems that you used to resolve soon after the end of the war?
5. Who used to suffer more as a result of these problems (men or women, children or adults)?
6. What are the most frequent problems that you receive now?
7. Who suffers most with these problems (men or women, children or adults)?
8. What is the situation of *nipa* consumption?

### **Operational aspects**

1. Why is it that these courts exist?
2. Why is it that people bring their cases to your court?
3. Why is it that people do not present their cases in the official court?
4. How did you use to resolve problems before the war?
5. How are you resolving problems now after the war?
6. Are there differences between the resolution mechanisms before and after the war?
7. When do you consider that a problem is resolved?
8. When do you consider that a problem is not yet resolved?
9. How do you know that a certain person is the culprit or not?
10. How do you know that a certain problem is very well resolved?
11. How do you know that a certain problem is badly resolved?
12. What does a person have to pay when he or she lost a case?
13. What do you do to enforce the convicted person to pay?
14. What do you do when a person does not want to pay?
15. What is the relationship between judges, and between judges and the court clients?
16. In which circumstances do you transfer a case to the healers?
17. Why do you send a case to the healers?
18. Who chooses the healer to be consulted?
19. Which cases do you transfer to the police?
20. Which cases do you transfer to the official courts?

### **Interviews with defendants and plaintiff**

1. When and how did this problem start?
2. Who are the parts involved?
3. What is the problem? What is under dispute?
4. Why did this problem start?
5. How does this problem disturb your life?
6. Was there violence involved before you came to the court?
7. Do you consume alcohol?
8. Do you consume tobacco?

### **Expectations before resolution**

1. How will this problem end?
2. Can the judges manage to resolve this case?
3. Why did you come here to resolve this case?
4. Before you came here to the court did you go elsewhere to resolve this case?
5. Who is right?
6. Who must win this case?

### **Effectiveness after resolution**

1. Are you happy with the court procedures?
2. Did the judges resolve this problem properly? If yes or no, why?
3. When do the people consider that a problem was well or badly resolved?
4. Who were the judges that resolved this case?
5. One week later: does the problem still exist?
5. Four weeks later: does the problem still exist?

## **Appendix 7**

### **Interviews with Patients: Before treatment**

1. What is your health problem?

2. When did your health problem start?
3. Are there other people in your family that had similar health problem?
4. What are you feeling in your body?
5. Why do you have this disease in your body?
6. From where does this disease comes?
7. How is your life affected as a result of this disease? Do you have pain? Do you manage to work and to visit other relatives under these conditions?
8. How does this disease affect your family?
9. Were there acts of violence as a result of this disease?
10. Do you drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, sniff or suck tobacco leaves?
11. Where did you seek for treatment before coming to the house of this healer?
12. Why did you come here? What is your expectation here?

### **Historical aspects of the life of the patient before treatment**

1. Where were you born?
2. Who raised you in your family?
3. Did you suffer when you were young?
4. Did you suffer with the war? If yes, how did you suffer?
5. Did you suffer with hunger? If yes, how did you suffer?
6. Do you have relatives that died because of the war? If yes, who and how?
7. Do you sometimes remember about the experiences that you went through during the war?
8. What do you do to forget your wartime experiences?

### **Interview with spirits during diagnosis and treatment**

1. Who are you?
2. What's your name and where do you come from?
3. Why did you possess this person?
4. What happened to you?
5. What do you want in the body of this person?
6. What should be done so that you can abandon this body?
7. If the relatives of this person give everything that you want will you leave from this body?

### **Interview with the patient and relatives soon after the diagnosis and treatment**

1. What are you feeling now that the spirit is gone?
2. Do you (relatives) agree with what the spirit said?
3. Are you going to do what the spirit demanded? Why?

### **Post-intervention assessment: Follow-ups**

1. One week later: The first time that I met you it was in the house of a healer, what was the problem that took you there? How do you feel now? Are there any changes in your condition? Are you able to work? Can you visit your relatives and friends? If there are positive changes, do you think that these changes are related to the treatment that you received?
2. Three weeks later: The same questions as during one-week follow-up
3. Two months later: The same assessment questions.
4. Three months later.
5. Six months later.
6. One year later.

## **Appendix 8**

Questionnaire No.	Interview Date & Demographic Data	
<b>1</b>	Date of interview	
<b>2</b>	Place of interview	
<b>3</b>	Starting time	
<b>4</b>	Ending time	
<b>5</b>	Name	
<b>6</b>	Date of birth	
<b>7</b>	Place of birth	Province / District / Locality
<b>8</b>	Age	
<b>9</b>	Gender	Male / Female
<b>10</b>	Civil status	Single / Married / Widow / Divorced
<b>11</b>	Number of marriages	

12	Number of divorces	
13	Profession	
14	Residence	
15	Number of people living in the house	
16	Type of family	Poliginious / Monoginious
17	Profession of family living together	
18	Number of living children	
19	Number of dead children	
20	Do the children study / Which grade?	Yes / No

### Socio-Economic condition

21	Number of houses in the yard	
22	Type of houses in the yard	
23	Do you have fields?	Yes / No
24	How many fields do you have?	
25	Do you have nether fields?	Yes / No
26	How many nether fields do you have?	
27	Who works in your fields?	
28	What do you produce in your field?	Milho / Mapira / Mandioca / Batata reno / Batata doce / Tomate Cebola / Couve
29	How was the production this year (2003)?	Good / Bad / More or less
30	How was the production last year (2002)?	Good / Bad / More or less
31	Are you going to sell part of your production this year?	Yes / No
32	Do you sell something to get money?	Yes / No
33	How many granaries do you have?	
34	Do you have animals?	Yes / No
35	Who is the owner of these animals?	
36	What kind of animal are these?	
37	Do you have a bicycle?	Yes / No
38	Do you have a radio?	Yes / No
39	Do you have watch	Yes / No
40	Do you sell <i>nipa</i> in your house?	Yes / No

### Cultural and Religious Practices

1	Do you do <i>madzawde</i> ?	Yes / No
2	Do you do <i>ntsanganiko</i> ?	Yes / No
3	Do you do <i>ntsandzo</i> ?	Yes / No
4	Do you do <i>makutchafia</i> ?	Yes / No
5	Do you go to church?	Yes / No
6	If yes, what is the name of the church?	
7	What is the name of the pastor of your church?	
8	Do you go to the healer?	Yes / No
9	Do you go to the hospital?	Yes / No
10	If, yes which hospital do you usually go?	

**Family Relations**

1	Do you have living relatives?	Yes / No
2	Who are these relatives for you?	Father / Mother / Brothers / Sisters / Father's brothers / Father's sisters / Mother's brothers / Mother's sisters....
3	Do you have good relations with these relatives?	Yes / No
4	Do these relatives support you?	Yes / No
5	What kind of support these relatives give you?	
6	Where do these relatives live?	
7	Do you visit these relatives?	Yes / No
8	Who is the person responsible for your family?	
9	Which person you usually ask for help when you have a problem?	
10	Which person you usually ask for help when you are ill?	

**Appendix 9**

**Types and Prevalence of Conflicts 2003-2006**

N	Type of conflicts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Tot
1	Spirits	1	1	1		1	1	2	2				1	10
2	Defamation of witchcraft	2	1		4	2	1							10
3	Expenses		1	1		1		2					1	6
4	Custody of children		1		1						2		2	6
5	Insult		1	2			1	1	1					6
6	Lobolo		1	1				1	1			1		5
7	Poisoning			1	1				1				1	4
8	Invasion of property					1			1	1			1	4
9	War-related conflict					1	1	1			1			4
10	Death threat: <i>Ku temerera</i>					2	1						1	4
11	Disturbances										2	1		3
12	Infertility	1			1		1							3
13	Rape					1	1		1					3
14	False promises					1								1
15	Delay in marriage				1									1
16	<i>Chithumua</i>					1								1
17	Broken agreement											1		1
18	Refusal to visit healer												1	1
19	Corruption of lobolo money								1					1
20	Division of lobolo money						1							1
21	Debt over a girl's pregnancy												1	1
22	Insults the spirit				1									1
23	<i>Mabatirwa</i>										1			1
24	No fulfilment of agreement				1									1
25	Paternity refusal				1									1
26	Refusal compensate for infertility								1					1
27	Broken taboo: To see a corpse			1										1
28	Menstruation taboo												1	1

## Appendix 10

### Type of relationship between defendants and victims 2003-2005

N	Type of relationship defendant & Aggrieved	03	04	05
1	<i>Mukazibas</i>	1		1
2	Rivalry lovers			2
3	Community / individual			
4	Father & Daughter		2	
5	Father & Sons	1		
6	Mother & Son			
7	Brother of deceased son-in-law former mother-in-law	1		
8	Parents-in-laws of husband and wife			
9	Lovers	2	4	
10	Brothers	1	5	2
11	Employer & Employee	2	1	1
12	Church Brothers		1	1
13	Colleagues of the same Association		1	
14	Patient & Religious healer	1		
15	Citizen against the community			
16	Traditional healer & Patient	1	2	
17	Business Partners			2

## Appendix 11

### Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Aldeamentos	Portuguese created communal villages
AMETRAMO	Mozambican Association of Traditional Practitioners
Bambu	Father
Bambu unkulo	Elder father or elder paternal uncle
Blocos	Renamo's paramilitary forces
Cabo terras	A kind of community police
Capricornio	Traitor
Casari	Girl's loss of virginity
Cipaios	African police working for the Portuguese colonial administration
Curandeiro	Traditional healer
Cutu	Ear
DOE	Departamento de Operações Especiais – Department of Special Operations
Dzindza	Family origin
Dzua	Sun
Erererere	To bleed
Estacas	Wooden stakes and grass
Folgado	Relaxed
Folia	Tobacco leaves
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambican Liberation Front)
Gamba /magamba	War related male spirit
Gandira	Forced labour created by Renamo
Goeiro	Hut of a young and unmarried boy
Harua	Local drink
Hu hure	Prostitute
Inbaticie zwenezwe	To ignore these things [war experiences] or to put behind these things
Komeredes	Zimbabwean soldiers



Ku bara	To give birth
Ku barangaza	Prevention
Ku dzudzumissa pa mussoro	To be very confused in the head
Kufa	To die
Ku fambira ntsango condition	To shop around for a cure, or consulting several specialists for the same
Ku fewa	A combination of work done by a fiancé in the house of his to-be parents-in-law as well as different gifts given to them
Ku gara pance or ku gazicana pance	To sit down to resolve a conflict
Ku gazikissa	To appease a spirit
Ku gona	To sleep
Ku gwandira micero	Final resolution of a conflict
Ku gwanda mugano	To cut the limit
Ku gweda	Miscarriages
Ku gurucuta	To murmur
Ku himira	Failure to become pregnant
Ku himirira	To assume responsibility for a problem during a traditional healing session
Ku hirinzira	To give back, meaning, “avenge”
Ku hossira	To sneeze
Ku nhepa	To tell lies
Ku nherezera	To think
Kuita tchakubata namandzango	To get hold of the truth with one’s hands
Ku kala kwene	To live one’s own life
Ku kula kale	A girl who lost her virginity long time ago
Ku laia	To kill
Ku lambana	Divorce
Ku lekerera	To forgive
Ku lekererana	To forgive one another
Ku lima	To cultivate
Ku lola	The money that the son-in-law pays in order to get full control of the paternity of his children
Ku nhenga	To have sexual intercourse
Ku ntsay wana or zwi ntchia	Problem of “throwaway babies” or infant mortality
Ku nunka or ku fema	To sniff
Ku patizana/batizana	Reconciliation ceremony between a couple
Ku penga	To get crazy
Ku pera	To end
Ku pikirira or ku temerera	A curse
Ku pinda nhumba	To enter in the hut, but meaning to lose the virginity or to get married
Ku socera	Diagnostic process consisting of playing drums and singing songs to call a spirit to come out
Ku sogora	Future
Ku sunga phundo	To tie a knot so that the spirit cannot come out
Ku tchidza	To check sexual status of a girl to verify whether she is a virgin or has been already deflowered
Ku tekemuka	To shake the body as a result of the presence of a spirit possession, but the spirit does not talk
Ku toera mabota	To go after the boots

Ku tonga	Judicial word for “to resolve”
Ku tussira mutombo	To throw away medicine, a ritual to restore full family the relations between a recent married girl and her parents
Ku tussirana, ku tussirana	A reciprocal launching of bad spirits between cognate relatives
Ku tuta	To carry the spirit
Ku verana	Understanding, or a harmonious relationship
Ku zungulira	A kind of exorcism
Ku zwi dziua	To know
Mabatiro	A girl’s sanctioned loss of virginity, whereupon the parents ask for a gift, or bride price
Madembe	Old places of residence
Madzoca	Ancestral healing spirit and the name of a healer
Mai	Mother
Mainato	A Mozambican employed to wash and iron the clothes of his Portuguese employers
Majibas	Renamo’s paramilitary forces
Mambira	Socialization of virgin girl in the house of her to-be parents-in-law
Macava	Holes in the ground used as shelters
Machambas	Crop fields
Madzawde	Ritual for a born-baby
Maguere	Maize
Makodzo	Respect
Makuio	A child that belongs to the family genealogy of the mother
Mambira	Virgin girl experiencing the socialization process for getting married
Mandara	Virgin girl
Mano	Elder brother
Massambas	Leaves of trees
Massuco	Breasts
Matako wa ukulo	Buttocks of the old men
Matchessa	A hut used for resting or conflict resolution
Matoro	Lower fields
Matropa	Frelimo soldiers
Matsangaissas	Soldiers that belong to the army of André Matsangaissa
Mawewe	Very frightening nightmares
Mehete	A symbolic amount of money that represents the engagement of a fiancé with his fiancée
M’fumo	Traditional authority
Micero	Conflict
Moio	Heart
Mpamba	To worship the spirit and deliver his goods
Mubari	Brother
Mudoko	Young brother
Mudzico	Country
Mukadzi	Woman
Mukwambo	Son-in-law
Mulungo/Muari	God
Muno	People
Mussuto	Penis
Mutarato	Forced labour created by the Portuguese colonial administration
Mutemo	Rules
Mutendere	Peace
Muzimo	Ancestral spirits
Muzimo wadziko	Territorial spirits
Muzimo wapatchisso	Spirits of the zone
Mwamuna	Man
Nbanje	Cannabis sativa

Nbumbandongo	Toys made of clay
Nbuto	Place
Ndanda	Panties
Ndoko	Go away
Ndondo	Suffering
Ndzala	Famine
Nfute	Weapon
Ngomwa	Male sexual impotence or infertility
Nguenje	Testicles
Nhakwa	Traditional chief
Nhamankunda	Virgin girl
Nhampena	Impartial
Nhariposse	The male lover of a married woman
Nhumba	House
Nipa	Local alcoholic drink
Nkanga	Chickens of the bush
Nkondo	War
Ntchange	Jealousy
Ntchorora	Bayonet
Ntsanganiko	Ritual for the dead
Ntsima	Porridge
Paza (plural: mapaza)	Hoe
Paza	A healer specialized in disclosing the truth in a legal dispute
Piça wega	“Burn it yourself”
Povo	Civilian person
RENAMO	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance)
Sankulo	Godfather or witness
Seculos	Grandfathers
Shi nhadzo	Shameful
Tchaka	Year
Tchakade	Correct
Tchintchino	Now
Tchirema	Disabled person
Tchiwara	The education of the new generations around the nightly bonfire
Ter vida	To have a life
Thambo	Healing space
Tribunais populares	People’s courts
Txiquire	Host of a spirit
Upoca	To refuse persistently
Uputa	Prostitute
Vinga	A violent man against women
Walendo	Visitors, or aliens
Wa nhankondo	Soldiers
Waseculos	Ancestral spirits
Watongui	Traditional judges
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union

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## **Samenvatting**

Deze studie onderzoekt de sociale wereld van verzoening en genezing na afloop van de langdurige Mozambikaanse burgeroorlog. Met behulp van een multidisciplinaire benadering (sociologie, geschiedenis, rechtsantropologie, medische antropologie en internationaal recht), gaat dit onderzoek na hoe verzoening en genezing zich ontwikkelen teneinde een vernielde sociale wereld te herstellen. Onderzocht worden de oordelen van de geweldslachtoffers aangaande potentiële bijdragen van de diverse vormen van overgangsrecht aan het schadeloosstellen van oorlogsmisdaden, maar ook de bijdragen van de landbouw cycli en het traditionele recht aan verzoening en van genezingspraktijken aan herstel van gezondheidsproblemen.

Het uiteindelijke doel van dit boek is om helder te maken op welke wijze diverse vormen en soorten van sociaal handelen die besloten liggen in processen van verzoening en genezing, een bijdrage leveren aan de wederopbouw van de sociale werkelijkheid, vrede en sociale stabiliteit in Gorongosa, een regio gelegen in centraal Mozambique. De studie toont aan dat temidden van de verschrikkelijke en vaak onbeschrijflijke sociale ontworteling en materiële vernieling, gevoegd bij de naoorlogse politieke cultuur van ontkenning, overlevenden in Gorongosa er in geslaagd zijn om vrede en stabiliteit te scheppen door de cycli van onrecht en onaansprakelijkheid te doorbreken, oorlogswonden te helen, en vrede te sluiten met voormalige vijanden.

De studie vangt aan met een onderzoek van bestaande, internationale literatuur die zich richt op overgangsrecht na oorlogsgeweld, en haar bijdragen aan verzoening en genezing van slachtoffers - personen, gezinnen, families en hele gemeenschappen - zoals dit wereldwijd gestalte gekregen heeft. De resultaten van deze literatuurstudie leiden tot het formuleren van vragen betreffende het empirisch onderzoek naar overgangsprocessen zoals die zich op het platteland van Mozambique recentelijk hebben afgespeeld. Een zorgvuldige analyse van de lokale dynamiek van de oorlogsstrijd en het oorlogsgeweld toont duidelijk de onhoudbaarheid van de begrippen “oorlogsfront” en “thuisfront” aan. Het extreme geweld van strijders uitgeoefend op burgers die in het oorlogsgebied woonden, ging ver over de grenzen van wat draaglijk is.

Het proces van de wederopbouw van de sociale wereld in Gorongosa wijst op tradities en menselijke vermogens die in staat zijn om vernietiging en lijden ten gevolge van oorlog te boven te komen. We spreken hierbij over een cultuur van geïnvolveerdheid

zoals die waarneembaar is in de processen van verzoening en genezing. Deze betrokkenheid bestaat vooral uit het door oorlogsoverlevenden beoordelen en gebruik maken van de lokaal beschikbare hulpbronnen voor verzoening en genezing. Deze hulpbronnen wortelen in de (sociaal) geografische omgeving van Gorongosa, die een specifieke (landbouw)economie deed ontstaan, als mede in de sociaal-culturele en politiek-juridische praktijken die in dat gebied de basis vormden voor het sociaal kapitaal van de regio.

De centrale karakteristieken van de genoemde hulpbronnen wijzen erop dat de mensen in Gorongosa in een uiterst complex ecologisch systeem van wederkerige relaties en wederzijdse afhankelijkheden leven. Deze kunnen of beperkingen representeren, of het potentieel voor het volledig benutten van de beschikbare hulpbronnen. Het is deze opmerkelijke combinatie van zowel aanwezigheid als toegankelijkheid van hulpbronnen met hun toepassingsmogelijkheden die een opnieuw functionerende gemeenschap mogelijk heeft gemaakt. Vanuit dit gezichtspunt verleggen de beschreven ontwikkelingen in Gorongosa de grenzen van ons huidige begrip van de menselijke capaciteit tot verzoening en genezing na afloop van wrede burgeroorlogen. In het slot van deze studie worden de theoretische en praktische implicaties van de gevonden resultaten gepresenteerd.