



CIEA7 #6:

(COUNTER-) MEMORIES OF COLONIALISM: REMEMBRANCE,  
RESISTANCE AND TRANSFERENCE IN ANTI-COLONIAL AFRICAN  
NARRATIVES

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### **The past in the present:**

memories of the liberation struggle in Northern Mozambique

*The Mozambican liberation struggle (1964-1974) fought mostly in Cabo Delgado, Northern Mozambique, left strong memories, becoming part of the imagination and construction of the country. It has been more than 35 years since independence with large numbers of the population being too young to remember the liberation struggle. Consequently, recreating the struggle has become an important part of remembering, re-telling and passing on of national and local history to the younger generation. The representation of the past is often appropriated by the state, and has excluded/silenced alternative perspectives and experiences of those who, while living in the province, did not take part in the struggle. Based on fieldwork conducted in Mozambique between 2005 and 2007, drawing on participant observation of public celebrations and extensive interviews with veterans (male and female) of the liberation struggle, I will discuss the importance of public celebrations for remembering and re-shaping the past.*

Mozambique, Memory, Liberation war.

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## MEMORIES OF THE STRUGGLE

The Mozambican liberation struggle (1964-1974) which was fought largely in the province of Cabo Delgado<sup>1</sup>, in Northern Mozambique, is, unsurprisingly, an important part of the official history of the country. It is also extremely present in collective and personal accounts of this period. Although a large proportion of the population is too young today to remember colonial rule and how the war was fought, it still lives with the constant presence of accounts about the struggle and with other, more subtle reminders of the war. Celebrations devoted to the liberation struggle constitute one such reminder. They purpose to remember, retell and pass on the national history to the younger generations, and thus reinforce a sense of belonging to the 'nation'<sup>2</sup>. In these occasions, history is told from the perspective of those who took an active part in the struggle, most of them aligned with Frelimo<sup>3</sup>. In this part of the country this alignment often bears ethnic overtones. The Makonde<sup>4</sup> are strongly vocal about their participation in the *luta* (struggle). Still strongly associated with the ruling Frelimo party today<sup>5</sup>, they have taken part in reproducing the official history of the liberation events, therefore denying the possibility for competing versions to emerge in the public space. However, other groups, such as the Mwani (discussed throughout this paper), whose

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1 Although fighting fronts were also open in the provinces of Nyassa and Tete, the presence of the guerrilla there was much smaller and, consequently, the influence of their administration not as strong or lasting (Henriksen 1983, West 2005, Lubkeman 2008) as in Cabo Delgado.

2 After independence Frelimo's government aimed at building the nation. In the process of creating a Mozambican identity, it strove to eradicate tribalism in order to create a 'new man'. This new man would not be tied to the perceived 'obscurantist' past of the country. His new identity would supersede his former 'tribal' identity. Belonging to the nation - regardless of what was exactly meant by 'nation' - became a crucial aspect of Frelimo's political discourse and policies in the 1970s and 1980s (Cahen 1987, Brito 1988, Cravinho 1995).

3 Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) was formed in Tanzania in 1962 from three different proto-nationalist movements. It has been argued that the way the early history of Frelimo is portrayed is in itself part of the construction of the official national memory (Cahen 1999). Frelimo has been in power since independence, first as a single party, and since 1994 as the elected government.

4 The colonial conquest of the Makonde plateau was only concluded in 1922. By then Makonde had acquired a reputation for being fiercely independent. Although technically administered by the Portuguese the territory they occupied was loosely managed. Its location close to the border with Tanzania and the continuing links with this territory through migration, are some of the reasons that explain the disproportionate inclusion of Makonde men and women in the Frelimo army. The early support of the then Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere, contributed to the strategic importance of starting the war in Cabo Delgado (Kingdon 2002, West 2005).

5 When discussing politics with friends and interviewees I was told that no Makonde would support the main Mozambican opposition party Renamo. 'They would be embarrassed to do that' I kept being told. Regardless of the criticisms to the Frelimo Party that were occasionally voiced, there was a strong allegiance to the Frelimo. General and presidential election results in this part of the country have granted Frelimo the majority of votes, although in the 1999 elections the results were very contested by the Renamo. In the districts of Mueda and Muidumbe where the Makonde live in higher numbers the support for the Frelimo is overwhelming. Israel (2006) places the support for Frelimo in Muidumbe at 94.1% in 2004. However, in the coastal areas the Renamo has considerable support.

experience of this period was different find their histories excluded from the discussion or celebration of the past.

I will discuss how the official version of the past excludes and silences alternative historical experiences of the liberation period. To do so, I will focus on one case: the celebrations of the Mozambican Women's Day<sup>6</sup> in Mocímboa da Praia<sup>7</sup> in 2006. A description of the events will first allow me to present the different groups living in town and their past experiences of the liberation struggle, and to highlight the links between these celebrations and the official state rhetoric and history. It will also allow me to describe the participation of women in the war, and the role and experiences of the Female Detachment. The second part will address the narratives which are excluded from this performance – those of the people who did not take part in the struggle or who collaborated with the colonial power. I will give insights into some of the reasons which explain why these narratives are not only ignored, but also silenced. In the last section I will bring these contrasting experiences of colonial rule and struggle together to show that they are complementary, and argue that looking at both provides a richer, more nuanced understanding of events: as part of a 'collective memory', both are present in what is openly expressed but also in what remains unsaid.

More than the written history, I focus on how history is remembered and how it remains in the imagination of those living in this part of the country and often departs from the written record through the spread of rumours and old tales. I look at how people construct different versions of the same events which are at times radically different.

Memory and history have recently become a strong focus of anthropological research, especially when dealing with aspects of social memory and understanding the mechanisms behind what is remembered and forgotten and the values associated with these memories in the way history is understood. Though the interest in memory, especially social memory, is a longstanding one with the work of Halbwachs first published in 1925 is still influential. In the last three decades an increasing number of studies have explored the different aspects of social memory (Olick and Robbins 1998) and shaped the ways in which history is perceived and analysed.

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6 Although not a day designed to celebrate the liberation struggle, many of the events do in fact relate to the women's participation in it and are therefore a celebration of women's role during the struggle, more than a general celebration of present achievements of Mozambican women.

7 Mocímboa da Praia is a coastal town in the northern part of Cabo Delgado of about 40,000 inhabitants. The population is divided between the Mwani group (which constitutes about 70% of the town's population) and the Makonde group (a much smaller number but who are very influential, occupying a variety of jobs within the public administration of the town). There are also small numbers of Tanzanians, and Makua from the south of the province.

The idea of 'collective memory' was initially defined by Halbwahcs in 1925 (1992), who asserted that it structures individual relationships with respect to ideas about the past. Social memories are important as a way of developing and forming identities. The focus of his studies was initially placed on the nation. Halbwachs defined history and social memory as distinct. History is the dead memory 'that is no longer part of our lives', while memory is taken as taken to mean what lives on and is still considered meaningful in the present. However most scholars do not make a clear distinction between them (Olick and Robbins 1998). Here I will address mostly what has been termed autobiographical memory and the ways in which it frames historical memory through experience. I address its impact on definitions of identity and the ways this impacts on group relationships. If more recent research of collective memory (Connerton 1989, Parkin 1996, Carsten 2007) have slightly changed from that of Halbwachs, they have in common with it that they are still grounded on the idea that elites (intellectual or political) are producers of the memories which are later appropriated by the general population.

In the case study I focus on here, I look at how the 'official' memories of the struggle are appropriated by the very people who experienced the events first hand, and performed in order to show, and teach, others one aspect of the country's history. I will then discuss memories which are not deemed worthy of celebration.

## THE WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATIONS, 7TH APRIL 2006

The memories of the liberation struggle are extremely vivid in the north of Mozambique where so much of the fighting took place. The active participation of many women in the struggle was a distinctive aspect of it (West 2000). However expectations of change in gender relationships were not met after the end of the struggle. Upon independence the former women fighters returned, for the most part, to their roles as mothers and wives. Their part in the struggle is still celebrated and remembered with pride. Below I describe one such case: the celebrations of Women's Day in 2006.

Early in the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> April<sup>8</sup> the women who were going to take part in the performance celebrating the Women's Day met at the OMM offices (*Organização da*

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8 7<sup>th</sup> April marks the anniversary of the death of Josina Machel. Josina Machel was one of the leading women in Frelimo, and responsible for many of the initiatives which were intended to benefit women. She was part of the Female Detachment from Frelimo (*Destacamento Feminino*), and married Samora Machel, the future first Mozambican president. She died in the hospital in Dar-es-Salaam on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1970.

*Mulher Moçambicana* – the Organization of Mozambican Women) to organize the celebrations. They were rehearsing a military march and preparing for the re-enactment of some of their war experiences. I knew most of the women gathered there from previous interviews, either with them or with their husbands in the neighborhoods of Pamunda, and 30 de Junho, where the majority of Makonde people live<sup>9</sup>.

The president of 30 de Junho neighborhood, a Makonde former army officer named Punda, was leading the rehearsal of the military march, and acting as the officer in charge. The women were divided into two groups: most were dressed in full military garb (which was similar to the uniforms they would have worn as part of the *Destacamento Feminino*<sup>10</sup> – the Female Detachment from Frelimo during the struggle) to play the role of the female fighters, while the remaining others represented the population which supported the army in various ways during the struggle (providing food, hiding places, and helping in the transport of equipment, etc). After the rehearsal, a wreath was made, to be placed at War Heroes Memorial in Buji. Buji is located just out of town and was the place of some skirmishes with the Portuguese army stationed in Mocímboa. When all was prepared we set off to the town centre where, by the administration buildings, a truck was waiting to take us to Buji. The women sang old war songs, which were mostly women's songs, and the spirits were high during the short drive between Mocímboa and Buji.

In Buji the more formal part of the celebrations took place. We formed two rows on both sides of the monument. The district administrator for Mocímboa da Praia made a speech stressing the role of the fighters of the liberation struggle (*luta de libertação*) in leading the country to independence, referring especially to the participation of women in the struggle. He also emphasized the importance of remembering and celebrating the war heroes. His speech was interrupted frequently with cheers to the Frelimo and to Mozambique. The district head of OMM walked to the monument, deposited the wreath and said a few words about the role of women, not just during the war but also in present day Mozambique. She insisted on the many achievements in terms of gender equality and on the active commitment of women during the liberation struggle.

The Buji monument served as a *lieu de mémoire* (Nora 1992), anchoring separate events in one place: a monument that celebrates the dead, helped separate the formal aspect of the celebrations from remembrances and performances which

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9 The Makonde were the backbone of Frelimo's army (West 2003, Israel 2006) and it is not at all surprising that in the neighbourhoods where there was a bigger number of Makonde people I would encounter disproportionate high number of former fighters from the struggle when compared to neighbourhoods occupied in majority by the Mwani.

10 The *Destacamento Feminino* (Female Detachment) was created in 1967.

would take place later in town. This was also a more private event. While the celebrations in town were located outside the administration buildings in a place where anyone could go, see, and take part, this was only for the former fighters, (mostly women former fighters) and a few representatives from the town's government and from the district's Frelimo hierarchy.

Following this short, but formal part of the celebrations, we headed back to town. The second part of the day began with a re-enactment of the women's war experience staged as a theatrical performance. The women re-played their participation in the liberation struggle, some in full military garb, to represent the soldiers of *Destacamento Feminino*, while others, dressed in old tattered clothes, played the role of the population (*população*). Although the performance did not last long it did portray a diversity of aspects characterizing the lives of the women who participated in the struggle as Frelimo members.

Punda, provided the context and explained the actions of the women by narrating the history in a very didactic way. When acting out an attack by the Portuguese, the women showed how they would run and hide and make sure that the arms and food they were transporting were safe. Their role extended beyond this, and they were instrumental in the administration of the liberated areas (running literacy courses, nurseries, health posts, etc). The performance also depicted the conditions of life in the camps, showing how to set up a camp and leave without trace, how to eat in a hurry, and how hard it was to live in the bush.

Though an obvious embellishment of the war experience, the women were portrayed as heroic and brave. This was a constant feature in accounts I heard, usually accompanied by the pride of having fought in the liberation struggle. The play did not, however, neglect to bring out the harsh conditions under which the Frelimo soldiers lived in those years, and the dangers of taking an active part in the liberation struggle, which only added to the heroic value of the women's experience.

The performance was followed by speeches delivered by the district administrator, the council president and Frelimo's secretary in town. In turn each of them drew attention to the role of the Frelimo in changing traditional gender relationships. They praised Frelimo's aims and achievements in liberating the country from the Portuguese and later achieving peace with Renamo<sup>11</sup>. The district

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11 Renamo (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana – Mozambican National Resistance) was formed in 1976, with the support of the Rhodesian government until 1980, and following that with the support of South Africa, and waged a war against the Frelimo government. The war was to last 16 years and had devastating consequences for the country. For a long Renamo was considered a movement without support in Mozambique. However, research came to show that the movement profited from the dissatisfaction created by Frelimo policies to garner important levels of support in the centre and centre

administrator pointed out the importance of having a woman doctor in town, and how it was something the young girls should look up to, highlighting the importance of education, and that Frelimo created the chance for women to access the same roles as men. He also pointed out to the women who were a part of the administration and who were the heads of certain units within the district administration, such as the head of the Education and Culture division. However he did not remark on the high proportion of women who leave school early, or the high rate of teenage pregnancies, nor the fact that most women had to contend with traditional gender roles. Both the performance and the political speeches displayed a uniform vision of gender balance which does not reflect the realities of neither the war experience nor the present day experiences of most women.

The changes alluded to, in gender roles and relationships, have not been as dramatic as claimed. During an interview with a former fighter named Bernardete where we discussed the problems women faced, she stressed the need for more rights for women. She described her role as a member of a local court aimed at solving cases brought forward by women, mainly in the realm of family law. Bernardete said it was only then (2007) that gender equality was receiving more attention. Even during the war, she said, there were problems for women despite equality claims. However, even during the struggle many of the tasks reserved for women were in the realm of the traditional female sphere. They worked on preparing food, caring for the soldiers, raising the children who were in orphanages and nurseries created by the Frelimo, working in the refugee camps, contributing to the transport of material, organizing the population in the liberated areas. Even though the women received military training in Nashingwea in Tanzania and knew how to use a gun, talked about what they had done during the struggle and viewed their role with pride, they were generally confined to supporting roles and not put in the frontline.

Apart from the period of the struggle when women had a role which extended beyond the household, and an active participation in the war effort, which can be considered a 'golden age' of active political and social participation (West 2000) in this part of the country, their roles are now very much confined to the house, the children, and agricultural tasks. They have limited rights when it comes to marriage, divorce and inheritance. After the struggle the changes in status and in gender expectations and differences did not necessarily materialize as expected. For some this brought disillusionment. West (2000) describes how their expectations for change were not met

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north of the country (Geffray and Pedersen 1986, Geffray 1991, Manning 1998, Hall and Young 1997). A peace agreement was signed in Rome in 1992, and the first elections were held in 1994.

after the end of the war, and mentions the resentment with which some of his interviewees talk about the broken promises which had been made during the time of the war and which in the post independence failed to come into being. Despite the frustration and disappointment over the lack of improvement in their lives, the women who took part in the celebrations did so with enthusiasm. Long before the day they were discussing the celebrations and their role in them. They were also recalling their part in the struggle and sharing their memories of the time. The changes in gender issues claimed during the celebrations are especially not remarkable in this geographically, socially and economically 'marginal' (Tsing 1993) region of Mozambique. Though the state rhetoric may suggest otherwise, with its emphasis on gender equality, gender roles and perceptions have not changed dramatically.

The last event of the day, a visit to the maternity ward in the hospital and the symbolic offer of presents to a newborn baby, was again more formal. More than a direct reference to the memory of the struggle, this visit re-enacted the role of Josina Machel within Frelimo and the memories of her work in health and welfare. Josina Machel is remembered as a woman who developed important aspects of the Frelimo administration in the liberated areas and in Tanzania. Her role in creating nurseries for the children of women who continued fighting, and orphanages was praised several times during the day. Given that the Mozambican Women's Day is the day that marks the anniversary of her death, it was deemed appropriate to remember her during the celebrations.

## WHAT THE CELEBRATIONS TELL US

The celebrations described here, were heavily imbued with Frelimo rhetoric. They were as much a celebration of the role of women during the struggle as they were a celebration of the part of Frelimo in the country since the 1960s. During the celebrations there was no open critical engagement with the official version of the history of the country portrayed. The didactic nature of the performance was explained by the participants by a desire to teach the younger generation the 'accurate history'. Frelimo has consistently won the majority of votes in all national elections in the province<sup>12</sup>, and when interviewing people who took an active part in the struggle I was

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<sup>12</sup> Frelimo has consistently won elections in Cabo Delgado since the establishment of the multiparty system. Along with the southern provinces this is the area where Frelimo generally has the majority of

not in any way expecting a version of history which departed strongly from the official version which praised the Frelimo. The version presented does not stray from the official version of the history of the country. This is hardly surprising.

The celebrations followed the pattern which is usual for the rest of the country, and were in that sense unremarkable, there were strong reasons for an extra effort when celebrating women's day in Mocímboa in 2006. In September 2005 the town had had riots following contested local elections. The results of these elections were considered unclear by the Renamo who demanded various recounts. After Frelimo's candidate was declared the winner. Renamo supporters demonstrated their disagreement for months. Following the swearing in of the new council president, Renamo conducted their own swearing in of their candidate. The following day people rioted. The election results polarized ethnicity, along party lines with a clear division between Frelimo and the Makonde and Renamo and the Mwani. Old grievances were brought to the fore again, and memories of the liberation struggle featured prominently in discussions about the riots. Following the riots, the district administrator started a series of campaigns aimed at bringing together supporters of Renamo and Frelimo. The celebrations of important dates, both religious and secular were all seen as possibilities to bring people together and more effort was placed in organizing them.

Although these celebrations have, unsurprisingly, full official support – the 7<sup>th</sup> April is a bank holiday – not many people attended in 2006. The Women's Day celebrations attracted mainly people invested in them: former fighters, people attached to the state administration, people taking part in the various stages of the celebrations, and children.

Some groups were conspicuously absent from the celebrations<sup>13</sup>.

The younger generation were also mostly absent. Born long after the country became independent, their knowledge of the war derives from what they learned at school and at home. They appeared to find the celebrations uninteresting, re-enacting stories they had learnt about in school and not adding much to them. Many would have seen some of the performances in earlier years as well.

The Mwani, composing about 70% of the inhabitants in town, were largely absent. Mwani claims to participation in the *luta* (struggle) are minimal, and their allegiance with Renamo post independence has contributed to marginalize and alienate them further from the Frelimo-led state. Their experiences of the liberation struggle are

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votes. In some of the coastal districts, however, Renamo has a strong support and in two consecutive municipal elections the results have been very close. In the election of 2005, there were 13 recounts before victory was awarded to Frelimo.

<sup>13</sup> The divisions presented here are rough divisions of groups in the city, and for lack of space I will not present a more nuanced break down.

not included in the narrative. It is their perspective that I describe in the following section.

Along with a lack of interest, and personal reasons to take part in the celebrations, both these groups are often resentful of the former fighters because of the benefits (in the form of pensions<sup>14</sup>) they are given, and which do not extend to them. Former fighters are seen as privileged members of the state, having access to pensions and benefits that most people are not able to get. If this situation creates tensions within households between generations (with children and young adults often demanding, or at least expecting, to be given a part of their parents' pension<sup>15</sup>), it has a similar effect among the different sections of the population.

The tensions between generations and ethnic groups are spoken off openly and easily acknowledged with constant references to newly built houses with tin roofs which cause envy for example. The celebrations are not only a reminder of the liberation struggle, but also of the present disparity in socio-economic power which resulted from having participated in the struggle.

Literature on state supported celebrations<sup>16</sup> suggests that these are ways in which the state emphasizes the 'right' kind of history, and the staging of this history is part of the construction of the nation. The Mozambican case is one such case, with the state focusing on the heroic aspects of its history, in which the liberation struggle features prominently. Similar celebrations were taking place in most other towns in Cabo Delgado. Kyed describes recognition ceremonies for community authorities elsewhere in Mozambique and argues convincingly on the that these ceremonies are forms of inclusion and that they are 'not only a clear reproduction of the party-state, privileging Frelimo as embodying state and nation, but also political exclusion' (2007: 208). The same can be said of the ceremonies described here. They represent the ideal portrayal of the struggle and, although, they aimed at being inclusive, since they can be witnessed by everyone in town, they exclude all those who do not see themselves in that image of the struggle and whose memories and experience of the

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14 The Frelimo started registering war veterans in 1988, and giving them pensions. Many of the former fighters were receiving them by the time of my fieldwork. In spite of this in summer 2007 the government issued a final call for registration of war veterans which led large numbers of yet to register people to do so. Many people were transported from the villages into larger centres in order to do so.

15 In one of the neighbourhoods I was told, about what had happened the night before at a friend's house. His son, after being denied a bicycle, said he would kill himself. He then drank battery acid and left a suicide note. He did not get hurt, and it was speculated that this was possibly a staged attempt. Most thought this was disgraceful behaviour, but noted the fact that it was becoming increasingly common for children to demand more and more from their parents, and sometimes even to go to the extent of threatening them, or stealing from them.

16 Analysis of how public state rituals are ways of reinforcing state authority and the legitimacy of leadership can be found in Mbembe (2001), Apter (2002), Falasca-Zamponi (1997).

period are not celebrated. They also stress the link between Frelimo and the state and their role in the history of Mozambique as a nation.

## THE UNTOLD HISTORY

During the liberation struggle the Mwani and the Makonde had a very different experience. Their accounts of this period and their experiences of the ensuing years are distinct. Mocímboa da Praia had been a basis for the Portuguese army during the struggle in the province and this meant that its inhabitants, who were largely Mwani, had a very different experience of the struggle. Below I will attempt at presenting the contrasting experience of life during the struggle, and look at the memories of the struggle from a different angle. I will do this by describing below the experience of living in a 'fenced town'.

During the liberation struggle Cabo Delgado became spatially divided into areas controlled by the Portuguese and areas controlled by Frelimo. The actions of both armies contributed to redesign the landscape and introduced long-lasting changes to social relationships. Although people would sometimes describe these areas as completely separate, others would recall moving between liberated areas and fenced towns depending on perceived danger, family connections or political opinions. One informant who had lived in both areas described it as follows:

I worked in Mocímboa at the start of the war. My mother's uncle called me and told me to get out of the city because I could die if the war got there. I went to the bush. On that same day I saw troops from Mocímboa [Portuguese] and the troops from the bush [Frelimo] caught me. I was arrested because I was wearing a watch and nice clothes, and the soldiers suspected I was *turra* (Portuguese soldier) and I spoke in Portuguese which made them more suspicious. I was sent back to Mocímboa and told to build houses in the area of Nautchemene [on the outskirts of town]. Some time after that Frelimo got in contact with us and we left for the bush on a Saturday. This was before they made their controls tighter. (Safia Sinepo)

From the start of the war in 1964, and as soon as some control of the territory was established by Frelimo, they would gather population in bases they controlled. Throughout the war these bases became bigger and gave rise to what were to be

known as the *zonas libertadas* (liberated zones). As the war progressed Frelimo began to administer and control parts of the hinterland of Cabo Delgado (Henriksen 1983, West 2005) and Niassa, and was able to establish military bases and civilian areas under its administration where the population on which they drew support lived. In these areas they provided social services, organised production and political administration (Meyns 1981:46). The experience of administering these areas was used as a template after independence for some of the policies followed in the administration of the country.

In early 1965 entire settlements were moved to the areas of Cabo Delgado under the control of Frelimo. In some cases the heads of settlement moved as well (West 2005). The power structures of the abandoned villages would be thus maintained. The groups of people who moved would remain in the liberated areas until the end of the war. When the new settlements grouped people from various smaller settlements, people would group together according to the areas they originated from. However in these areas, even when the heads of settlement accompanied the people, they seldom continued to rule them. Instead this would be done by the younger generation who had started work with Frelimo earlier (West 2005). This would continue the change in power and authority that had been occurring in the plateau for several decades.

In the liberated areas Frelimo imposed an administrative structure and provided services to the population. At the same time, the people living in there provided Frelimo with food, shelter and information. Life in these areas was at the beginning extremely difficult. Some accounts tell of suffering and fear while living in the *mato* (bush):

In the bush there was a lot of suffering, people had lice, couldn't wash, or look for clothes, they would wear the same clothes for days. At night if there was an attack they would have to run [...] and could only return after learning that there were no soldiers. When they came back sometimes they would start to cook and would have to run away again. It was very bad. There were many attacks. They [the Portuguese] would come by helicopter, by foot. There would be no food and no salt. They could not look for salt or for clothes. (Eugenia Bwanda)

While talking about the lack of food and basic goods, my interviewees would also remember the excitement of building a free area within Mozambique which was to be controlled and administered by Frelimo. The experience of those who fought and those who moved to Frelimo controlled areas became glorified in the official history of the country and the province.

There are, however other experiences of the same period which do not receive similar response.

Different versions of the history of the liberation struggle were alluded to by people who had stayed in Mocímboa or in villages controlled by the Portuguese, and who did not take active part in the struggle. When telling their personal history, they would describe what it was like to live in a fenced town, what their everyday life consisted of, how their movement and options were confined by the presence of the Portuguese army. They would stress especially what the implications of being considered aligned with the Portuguese, by the fact that they had lived in a town occupied by the Portuguese army, would have for their future.

Some of these changes were introduced by the colonial government, with the creation of *aldeamentos*, where people would be contained and monitored, especially in a way which would prevent their contact and cooperation with Frelimo fighters. Large areas of territory were emptied of people and they were relocated by the Portuguese to bigger villages. One of my informants described the process in these terms:

When the war started I was making a *machamba* (field) in N'totwe and we ran to Nanchemele. The government ordered that people were gathered and taken to the town. Trucks came and took the people to the area where the administration buildings are, even if people did not want to do. There was food, but we were all cramped around the administration, until they finished surrounding the town with barbed wire. I stayed here until independence, but my brother didn't because he was selling cards, and sold cards here too. He was arrested and sent to Machava. Inside we had a signal to know who had bought cards and who hadn't, and we would go at night to talk to those who hadn't bought cards and sold them to them. (Issa Jabili)

Concentrating the population in order to better exercise control was widely used in Cabo Delgado (Henriksen 1983). The traditional villages which had been relatively small, with only a few families under the leadership of a lineage head (Dias 1964, West 2005), grew much bigger, gathering hundreds, sometimes thousands of people. The concentration of people in larger villages had an impact on the way villages were organized and changed the traditional patterns of land use and power (West 1998, 2005), as well as population distribution and group relationships. The villages would concentrate mostly population from similar ethnic backgrounds, but in some areas they would have a mix of people particularly in areas of transition between territories mostly occupied by one ethnic group.

For the Portuguese counter-insurgency campaign it made sense to concentrate people in larger villages on two counts. On the one hand this was a military strategy: it was easier to control the population, by creating vast 'empty' spaces throughout the provinces and therefore cut the access of the guerrilla to the population. The towns and *aldeamentos* were isolated as much as possible from Frelimo, but it was always possible for people not to return to the villages or towns from the fields at night, and join the guerilla, or help them while working, especially by providing food or information about the movements of the Portuguese troops. On the other hand it was a propaganda strategy: it was easier to provide the larger villages with services, and thus counter Frelimo's claim that it was providing the population with health and education services in areas it controlled that the Portuguese were unable or unwilling to supply (Henriksen 1983).

The confinement of people in larger villages had another consequence: it contributed to increase divisions between the various ethnic groups of the north, separating them along those who supported the Portuguese and those who fought against them. Most of the people who stayed and lived here – and sometimes became a part of the Portuguese administration – were Mwani. They were the ones who, while I was conducting fieldwork, remembered the colonial administrators better and described the life in town at the time of the liberation struggle. The Mwani became more closely associated with the Portuguese, fostering resentment between them and the Makonde which were actively fighting the Portuguese. The rift between coastal (Mwani) and inland (Makonde) societies increased. Although the coastal population had been active in their support for the liberation movement up until 1968, after that their support seemed to wane. The actions of the PIDE (large numbers of arrests, torture, murder and exile of Muslim leaders) between 1965-68 may have stopped people from being as active as before in the liberation movements. As with other political prisoners these people would be considered *comprometidos* (compromised) (West 2003) by Frelimo in the post-independence period (Bonate 2009: 290-291). Between 1968 and 1972 the Portuguese administration undertook a campaign for the support of the coastal population (Monteiro 1993; Bonate 2009).

When interviewing a neighbourhood leader in the summer of 2007, he stopped the interview where he was talking about the implications of this role, to 'clarify' a number of issues linked with the relationship between Makonde and Mwani during the war and at present:

They [the Mwani] want to get pensions as well, but we remember them, and we know they stayed here. If they want to claim pensions we will say: 'You stayed with the Portuguese and fought with them. I remember you'. They did not want to go live in the bush.

He insisted that the Mwani who had fought with the Portuguese as a special unit created in Cabo Delgado, and had not joined Frelimo were 'lazy'. He claimed that it was their fault they were not eligible for the pensions<sup>17</sup> Frelimo was awarding the former fighters and that they could not even fake the fact that they had been fighters because he, and others like him, still remembered all the people who stayed behind and helped the Portuguese while the former fighters did all the work of liberating the country.

One of my interviewees in Diaca had been part of the militia created by the Portuguese to assist the army in the villages and towns under Portuguese control. This man had been in the Portuguese army, having undergone military training before the start of the liberation struggle. He described what the militia was supposed to do:

Our job was to go out in the morning and make the rounds in the *machambas* (fields) around the village. If the situation was good [meaning that they hadn't encountered Frelimo guerrillas] we would shoot into the air and the population would get to work. We would control the population, and would also work in our *machambas*. We would return from the fields at noon. The village was surrounded by barbed wire and had three well guarded doors: one on the side of Mocímboa, one on the side of Mueda and another door which the population used to go to the fields. (Rashid Momade)

Rashid stressed the lack of a relationship with the Portuguese military, claiming that: 'we'd go get leftover food from them, but there was no conversation'. However, the situation was still difficult for these men once the war was over, and Frelimo rose to power.

The soldiers went with the population to the fields, so that they would not escape. They suspected that we might give information to Frelimo, or that we might be captured, and let them know what was happening here. [...] Often the porters were not the white. All the older people were militia and they stayed at

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<sup>17</sup> The pensions awarded to the former fighters are one of the issues of contention in this area, and a source of resentment for those who are not eligible, be them Mwani people who lived in the fenced towns or younger Mwani and Makonde who are too young to have been able to take part in the liberation struggle.

the door. Because they had family or personal relations it was easy to ask to go to the bush. There were ways to communicate with those in the bush. There was a round, but the porter could organise the coming and going of people.  
(Fatima Suleimane)

In the early days of colonial conquest, the coastal Mwani had been considered better suited for working within the Portuguese administration, which had a stronger implantation along the coast than in the hinterland, where the infrastructure was harder to put in place. Being more open communities, with flexible structures, and economic activities that were harder to frame than those of the peasants, the coastal people had a different perception and experience of colonial exploitation. They were not taken into forced labour as often as the Makonde. They were, instead, employed by the sisal and cashew plantations along the coast for extended periods of time on a voluntary basis. This allowed them to pay taxes and thus avoid the six months of forced labour conscription which many people from the hinterland had to endure.

Mocímboa, a big centre in the northern Cabo Delgado, was controlled by the Portuguese. Many of the Portuguese military were placed there before going on missions on the hinterland or being stationed to smaller garrisons. This was a strategic town for the Portuguese because of the port which provided easy and safe access by sea to the south of the province if compared with overland convoys facing the possibility of attacks. Sea travel proved fundamental in the years of the civil war as well. The presence of the Portuguese army is still marked in the town landscape today. Remains of the main barracks occupy a large area on the side of one of the main streets in town and being used as a primary school, though the buildings are in a state of decay.

Those who stayed in town remember the war as a difficult time. Fatima and her daughter Tonga, two Mwani women who lived in town most of their lives, described the life in Mocímboa during the war.

Life here was also running. Frelimo would bomb here while the Portuguese bombed there [in the interior, where the Frelimo had their military bases] and we took refuge at the beach. It was all surrounded by barbed wire. We went to the fields with the soldiers. They shot to the air and that was the signal to return. We had cards with our name and picture which we left when we went to the fields. They were returned when we got back. If someone didn't return, it was because they had been captured by Frelimo. Some ran away, but many were caught.

Far from easy, the life of those who stayed in town, was dangerous and full of fear. Fatima and Tonga described this as well.

When the war came, I was here. Frelimo came until Nkomangane [a village near the town] and started bombing. Those in Milamba could see the houses burning and heard the shots. A bomb hit a store and it burnt down. A rocket launched to the market hit a woman who was going to the bathroom and she was cut in two. In the garrison a soldier and his wife died. They [Frelimo] couldn't come in, but bombed from afar. There was war here and there. Nowhere was safe. We had PIDE [the Portuguese secret police]. Many people were denounced, and were arrested, beaten, killed.

The stories from those who stayed behind are not those of people who chose to stay away from the war, but stories of people who had little choice. Their experience of the period of the struggle was in many ways similar to the experience of those living in the liberated areas<sup>18</sup>. These experiences are seldom mentioned in the official accounts.

Those living in town faced suspicion from the Portuguese and Frelimo equally and were placed in an increasingly difficult position.

We suffered with the Portuguese here, because they suspected we were supporting Frelimo, and Frelimo suspected that we supported the Portuguese. My family was kidnapped [by Frelimo]. Sometimes the Portuguese troops would beat us. We were in a very difficult situation. (Lukia Ali)

It would be beneficial to understand the memories of the armed struggle in light of the persistence and worsening of identity divisions. The relationships between different groups in the area which had changed with the introduction of the slave trade in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Alpers 1975) were manipulated for the colonial interests. The coastal people took a more passive stance during the period of the struggle, and stayed within the confines of the Portuguese controlled areas eschewing a more active part in the events. The divisions during the war replayed old relationships: those between a world that thinks of itself as more developed (the coastal population) and a world that presents itself as more traditional (the people from the hinterland) that explains the opposition and lack of commitment on the side of the coastal people as opposed to the peasant population from inland (Conceição 2006:195). This situation is however reversed at present. The people who were considered, by the Portuguese,

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<sup>18</sup> These were the areas under the control of Frelimo during the liberation struggle.

more open to development, the coastal Mwani, are now considered backward by the some of the Makonde I spoke with. The latter will claim that Mwani are not interested in development, are complicated people, do not want to study, and as a consequence oppose the government and align with the Renamo. That the a large number of Mwani does indeed support the Renamo Party appears to offer the proponents of this view the confirmation of their viewpoint.

When told from this perspective, the history of the struggle gains different overtones and becomes a much richer picture. It allows us to understand the situation with all the subtleties and none of the perfect black and white separations which we get from the official history. It also provides a basis to understand some of the present day relationships between groups in this part of Mozambique. The memories and the representation of the past are not a truth set in stone (Das 2000). Looking at how people remember events and celebrate them can help us understand the present – especially when this present follows a violent past.

For an understanding of local history, and especially group relationships, it is fundamental to look at the unsaid in these celebrations described above and at the memories which are not celebrated, but instead repressed. The performances of the day were intensely political and belied a strong subtext of allegiance to the ruling party of the country. The fact that the town where I observed these events was not a town where the majority of the population was strongly supportive of Frelimo, but where, instead, political allegiance was divided is worth addressing.

It can be argued that since the Women's Day is a state-sponsored/state-supported event, 'forgetting' some past events which stray from the master narrative is not surprising. The experience of women from the town was not mentioned. The events which do not conform to the official version of history to be celebrated were ignored, brushed aside, and a more nuanced version of the past was not presented. However, this was not an isolated case: the history of the struggle is often told without reference to its nuances, to the many internal struggles, to tensions which arose between different factions over which direction to take.

While conducting interviews and trying to learn about the history of the region and the dynamics in group relationships, I was often presented with a seamless, polished version of history, almost straight out of a history book. N'janjaula, a former Frelimo fighter of Makonde origin, and neighbourhood chief for one of the neighbourhoods in town presented a seamless version of the history which started with the formation of Frelimo in Tanzania, followed by the importance of Nyerere's support

for the movement, and then the inevitability of the war, despite efforts to the contrary from the leaders of Frelimo.

This version was recounted mostly by former fighters, who had had first-hand experience of the events, but whose perspective was biased towards the official version and the need to recount the heroic role of Frelimo during the liberation struggle. They would present a short account of the struggle, and of how Frelimo liberated the country, naming the most prominent leaders. They would not discuss the complexity, contradictions and entanglements of events. It was only after finishing recounting the official version that they would describe their more personal experiences of the period. However their stories would never describe the other side of the story, that of the people who had stayed in the Portuguese controlled towns and villages. Different versions of the history were alluded to by people who had stayed in town or in a few of the fenced villages, and not taken an active part in the struggle. When telling their personal history, they would describe what it was like to live in a fenced town, what their everyday life consisted of, how their movement and options were confined by the presence of the Portuguese army. They would stress especially what the implications were of being considered aligned with the Portuguese, by the fact that they had lived in a town occupied by the Portuguese army, for their future.

## THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

The liberation struggle brought faster, dramatic changes to the northern province of Mozambique. The occupation of the territory and the changes in social geography were extremely important for this change. As were the alliances that the population was, sometimes forced, to make. Being placed on the side of the Portuguese or on the side of Frelimo meant different things and led to the establishment of allegiances and more importantly resentments which have developed into cleavages and political and ethnic divisions with unforeseen consequences. For an area where different ethnic groups come together and share the same living space, this heightened divisions and especially the impressive awareness of this division make coexistence difficult. This becomes increasingly relevant when the Makonde who have arrived and are occupying spaces in town in recent years are perceived as occupying a higher social position and as having access to more (in economic and political terms).

Memory, especially when it relates to war and fighting, is constructed to legitimize belonging to the nation. Those who cannot claim their participation in the liberation struggle, or worse, who were aligned with the colonial powers, happen to be marginalized in present representations of the nation and its people. Their remembering of the liberation period is repressed and de-valued. Their experience is never put forward, and the part they played during the liberation struggle is negated.

In Mozambique the experiences of those who stayed in the towns controlled by the Portuguese are not considered part of the same history, similarly to the experiences of the political prisoners whose experiences are silenced (West 2003). Their memories of the liberation struggle are ignored, like a past that never happened. The memories of the struggle deemed worthy became part of the uniform, official narrative of the past and the only politically and socially sanctioned history. When asked about the history of the area, the former fighters would present, along with their personal history, a very uniform history of Frelimo and the struggle to liberate the country. Most of them would not go beyond the official version of the story. Even when their personal history was contradicting some elements of the official version they would still not change it or acknowledge the different, sometimes contradictory elements in the two histories. In some cases they expressed contempt for the experiences of those who lived in towns occupied by the Portuguese during the struggle. Their experiences were not valued, and if expressing disagreement or resentment for preferential treatment the former fighters received, their argument would not be perceived as legitimate. They were considered outlandish since, having not fought, or lived far from Portuguese controlled areas, they had no right to make claims.

I argue that memories of the armed struggle contribute to the persistence and worsening of identity divisions. Old rivalries between ethnic groups, which were exacerbated, and in some cases manipulated by the Portuguese during the struggle (Henriksen 1983), come up at times of conflict. Especially at times of economic and political conflict the fissures became more visible, and were often directly associated to the period of the liberation struggle. At the time of the elections of 2005 reasons for fighting were as much part of the present political situation, and current rivalry between Frelimo and Renamo, as they were anchored in the past and in the belonging to different sides, and ethnic groups, throughout the colonial period and the struggle. The divisions during the war replayed old relationships: those between a world that thinks of itself as more developed (the coastal population) and a world that presents itself as more traditional (the people from the hinterland) that explains the opposition and lack of commitment on the side of the coastal people as opposed to the peasant population

from inland (Conceição 2006:195). This situation is however reversed at present. The people who were considered by the Portuguese more open to development (Conceição 2006), the coastal Mwani, are now considered backward by the some of the Makonde I spoke with. The latter will claim that Mwani are not interested in development, are 'complicated' people, and do not want to study.

The period of the liberation struggle, as any other in the history of this area, can not be defined by one single narrative: it was a time for defining alliances and fighting for the liberation of the country, but also a time when some people allied with the Portuguese. People moved within the territory, and had very different experiences of the struggle. What comes out of many reports, and especially of the official history (Cahen 1999), is a very homogenous treatment of the population and their approaches to the struggle. However there was a fair amount of internal tension and the allegiances chosen during the struggle reflect this (Bonate 2009). The experience of colonial rule was different for different groups and even within a group for different categories of the population, and this determined what people choices people made. In this case, the representation of the past is very much appropriated by the ruling party of the state, which has excluded/silenced the alternative perspectives and experiences of all those who, while living in the province, did not take part in the struggle or fought with the Portuguese. The Makonde are strongly associated with the ruling Frelimo party, and take part in reproducing the official history, denying the possibility for competing versions. This history is mostly told from the perspective of those who took an active part in the struggle and these are at the moment very much aligned with Frelimo. The representation of the history has a large participation from Frelimo officials and the state and council administration in Mocímboa and the surrounding villages. When told from this perspective, the history of the struggle gains different overtones and becomes a much richer picture. It allows us to understand the situation with all the subtleties and none of the perfect black and white separations which we get from the official history. Looking at how people remember events can help us understand the present – especially when this present follows a violent past.

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*A luta de libertação de Moçambique (1964-1974) teve como palco principal a província de Cabo Delgado e deixou memórias importantes em questões de identidade e legitimidade na construção da nação. Desde o final da luta passaram-se mais de 35 anos e uma larga proporção da população do norte é demasiado jovem para se lembrar da luta. Recriar a luta, especialmente através de representações teatrais, e celebrações do passado, torna-se uma forma de re-contar e relembrar esta história, e de ensinar a gerações mais novas. A representação do passado é frequentemente sancionada pelos representantes do Estado que defende o conhecimento da história 'verdadeira', enquanto versões alternativas do passado são silenciadas ou ignoradas (especialmente as experiências daqueles que não participaram activamente na luta). Tendo por base trabalho de campo levado a cabo no norte de Moçambique entre 2005 e 2007, com participação em celebrações públicas e entrevistas a veteranos de guerra e civis, esta comunicação pretende apresentar uma discussão da relevância de celebrações públicas na construção da memória.*

Moçambique, Memória, Guerra de libertação.