

« The traditional Lion is Dead »

The Ambivalent Presence of Tradition and the Relation between Politics and Violence in Mozambique

For development stakeholders, Mozambique is often perceived as a democratic success and is, in regional terms, largely successful ; being seen as politically stable and attaining macro-economic goals of growth¹. This image of a success story may not seem unreasonable : since the 1992 General Peace Agreement (GPA), which formally ended the 15 years of warfare between Renamo and Frelimo, there have been few violent incidents between the two former belligerents. Although Renamo frequently post-GPA has obstructed the course of parliamentary debates and procedures, politics as a whole has remained largely non-violent. This was also the case in the two general parliamentary and presidential elections in 1994 and 1999 which both were widely acknowledged by international observers to have been largely transparent and free². Taken together, these facts may indicate that Mozambique has, since the GPA, embarked successfully on a journey towards « reconciliation » and peace, following the mayhem of warfare. However, as some cases below will illustrate, there is still considerable political tension and antagonisms in Mozambique at different societal levels that sometimes emerge violently. Thus, even though the post-liberation war varied in intensity between localities, regions and provinces, and despite the fact that its dynamics was enmeshed in local practices and structures, its aftermath in the form of legacies of violence continue to permeate many Mozambican local societies in profound ways³.

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1. Works that argue for the success of Mozambique or with good prospects for peace include SAXENA 1995, WATERHOUSE 1996, EDICESA 1998 and BARNES 1998.
 2. See BRAATHEN 2000, CARTER CENTER 2000, EISA 1999, COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT 2000, and HAINES & WOOD 1995, for texts specifically evaluating the elections in 1994 and 1999.
 3. Elsewhere (BERTELSEN 2002), I have explored that both the larger regional and global geo-political setting of the post-liberation war make the term « civil war » analytically flawed with its internist connotations. See also NORDSTROM 1997, HALL & YOUNG 1997, GEFFRAY 1990, and CAHEN 1993, on the complexity of the post-liberation period.
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A Decade of Peace and Violent Presences

One such society is that of « Honde », a peri-urban locality outside Chimoio, the capital of Manica province in central Mozambique, mostly made up of chiTeve speaking peasants, most of which are autochthons to the area⁴. During the post-liberation war, many of the areas around Chimoio were ravaged by the war. Honde was one such location that was destructively transformed : in being close to both the city and the important Beira to Zimbabwe pipeline in the so-called Beira corridor, Honde was in complex ways subjected to contact with various armed groups including Renamo guerrillas, FAM troops, Zanla fighters and Rhodesian soldiers. Throughout the early 1980s, Honde increasingly came under attack, and gradually its inhabitants were captured, killed or fled to the relative safety of Chimoio or elsewhere.

When carrying out fieldwork in Honde from August 1999 to June 2000, people had only a few years before they started their move back to Honde⁵. In confronting a landscape in which compounds, *machamba* (plots of land) and granaries were razed by violence, its post-war inhabitants actively confront these communal and personal memories and presences of past violence in various ways, that may be identified as reconstructive practices⁶.

However, one important string of logic was inherent in this contemporary dealing with past and present, and that was what is often conceived as *tradição*, « tradition ». As many scholars of Mozambique have pointed out, « tradition », a term often bracketed due to its ill-defined character, is integral to an understanding of both pre-war, war and post-war social and political dynamics⁷. This is also the case in Honde where the whole sphere of tradition and traditional authorities, both *régulo* (traditional chiefs of various authority), *n'anga* (healer-diviners, also called *curandeiro*) and other non-formal local authorities were changed dramatically during the war : when armed troops arrived, the local *n'anga* had her house burned and with it all her ceremonial attires, apparel and medicine⁸. However, a feature which is significant in the context of these upheavals, was the dethroning and kidnapping of the local *régulo* by Renamo troops, who, upon his post-war return from a camp in Gorongosa, found himself facing another

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4. Due to reasons explained elsewhere (BERTELSEN 2002 : 18-24), I have chosen to anonymise the name of the location of fieldwork. Suffice to say, the name chosen means « battle » or « war » in Shona and chiTeve, indicating that this site was heavily fought over through several, inter-related wars. The name has no geographical relation whatsoever with the location in Northern Manica province called Honde, or with Zimbabwe's Honde Valley. ChiTeve is a language similar to Shona, and the language has variously been dubbed « Matewe » (ALEXANDER 1994 : 37), « Tewe » (CENTRO DE INFORMAÇÃO E TURISMO DE MOÇAMBIQUE 1975 : 21), « Quiteve » (ISAACMAN 1973 : 397, NEWITT 1969 : 70), « Kiteve » (NEWITT 1995 : 43), « Ci-Tewe » (ARTUR 1999a : 19-21), « Ci-Teve » (ARTUR 1999b : 52 and 69) and « chiutee » (LEGRAND 1993 : 32). The spelling of « chiTeve », that I have chosen, seeks to retain both an understanding of people identifying themselves as *maTeve* and the local pronunciation of their language.
 5. Fieldwork was carried out as part of a research for a Norwegian master thesis (« hovedfag ») in Social Anthropology, University of Bergen, exploring local practices addressing a violent past stemming mainly from the post-liberation war (1977-1992), its presence and impact on post-war reconstructive practices and politics (BERTELSEN 2002).
 6. For this argument, see BERTELSEN 2002, which maps four approaches to re-constructive practices.
 7. For the importance of « tradition », see HARRISON 2000, WEST & KLOECK-JENSON 1999, GEFFRAY 1990, HONWANA 1996, LUNDIN 1996, DINERMAN 2001 and NORDSTROM 1997.
 8. It was not clear if those that razed the *n'anga*'s compound were FAM troops (*Forças Armadas de Moçambique*, Mozambique's post-independence army), Renamo guerrillas or others.
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régulo, not autochthonous to the area, that had risen to power while Renamo had held parts of the region. After the war, both these *régulos* continue to struggle for authority, both claiming support of people and spirits alike. With the coming of the general presidential and parliamentary elections in 1999, the conflicts between these two and their past actions and roles arose as a significant issue for interpreting national politics. One example of it, was that ritual contexts of healing of *pfukwa*, a particular type of evil spirit (see also Honwana 1996, 1999), was widely interpreted among the population of Honde as contexts in which the two *régulos* competed for power based on their political affiliation and their ancestral spirits. This must be seen in relation to the fact that both presidential candidates for the two parties, Afonso Dhlakama of Renamo and the sitting president from Frelimo Joaquim Chissano toured extensively, and that both parties may be seen to have adopted, in local rallies and elsewhere, a rhetoric of invoking tradition and traditional leaders in support of current national politics. Thus, enmeshed in the violent politics of the past and associated with present party politics, the sphere of tradition relate in significant ways to national politics in Honde.

Informed by this material from Honde, the sphere of tradition include not only aspects of cosmological, social and existential concerns of its immediate surroundings as it is often popularly defined as being constituted by. Rather, it also relates complex political dimensions of both non-local and local character. This article will be an exploration of these relations, and will be using examples from Honde and national politics to explore Mozambican past and present tense relations between violence and politics. Specifically, it will also argue that, given an increase in the use and invoking of tradition by national politics, tensions between different levels of Mozambican society in local communities, due to the ambivalence of tradition in many local settings, may be increasing.

A Note on the 1999 Elections : Local Interpretations and Competitive Embracing of Tradition

Prior to the elections of 1999, both Renamo and Frelimo toured the country extensively, and both Renamo's leader and presidential candidate Afonso Dhlakama and sitting president and leader of Frelimo visited Chimoio. This was mirrored in Chimoio near Honde and in most major town of Mozambique by local party rallies and, at least in Chimoio, by motorcades. These motorcades were widely attended and spoken of afterward, and word spread fast by *rádio boca* that Frelimo had a veritable fleet of glitzy new shining white vans while Renamo had at one parade only one severely battered van. The difference between the motorcades were the subjects of jokes and conversations where Renamo's single van constituted a discursive object. For Frelimo supporters, the state of Renamo's van was often ridiculed. Their jokes generally centred around two themes with one relating the current condition of the car with the *future* poor prowess with which Renamo will rule the nation if it was to be in power, and the second relating Renamo's allegedly sole capacity to destroy *in the past* to a political present. Renamo sympathisers, on the other hand, argued that the shape of the van reflected Frelimo's corruption in general and the unequal

distribution of election resources between the two parties in particular⁹. This was reflected in the slogans most forcefully shouted while in Renamo's motorcade : « Chissano is a thief ! He robs the people ! »¹⁰.

In this way, interpretations of visual display of support by motorcades triggers interpretations were fed by memories of past violence, and also present capacities to steal and destroy, depending on political affiliation. This was also evident in other local interpretations of national politics : as mentioned above, in the elections of 1999 in Mozambique, both presidential candidates from Renamo and Frelimo and the parties local organizations seemed to engage with and invoke the support of local traditional authorities. A striking example was a picture in a major newspaper in Mozambique of president Joaquim Chissano pouring the contents of a cup onto the ground in a ritual setting accompanied by the caption : « Chissano does not forget the origins in his campaign, and remembers the ancestors in the middle of the election campaign »¹¹. This was not a unique event, and these were widely commented upon locally, much as the rallies and radio speeches and news broadcasts. The use and invocation in the *mise-en-scène* of ancestral spirits and settings in which politicians claimed legitimacy from *régulo* for their campaign, caused both confusion and anger in Honde, among Frelimo and Renamo sympathisers alike. What was often pointed out and made relevant in conversations and discussions was that priorly both Renamo and Frelimo had different attitudes towards tradition. Hence, Renamo's and Frelimo's competitive embracing of tradition sparked off local reaction. In seeking causes for this, one needs to probe further these local interpretations of these political practices that relate to communal and personal experiences of the past in general, and memory specifically, in order to understand dynamics of support and/or political cosmologies.

A starting point may be to see the past and violence as integral to post-war Mozambican politics. This article will seek to present the ambivalence of tradition, its supra-local character and the continued and perhaps increasing importance of it in Mozambican rhetoric and practices. It will, thus, be argued that the ambivalent role of tradition makes it apt for politicians to invoke and stage in settings, and that in this context Frelimo may be seen to challenge Renamo's previous role as protector and guardian of tradition as it professed to be during the post-liberation war and after. Also, focusing on the post-war politics of tradition and its violent transformations in Mozambique suggest validity for broader debates on Sub-Saharan African politics. In general, as Geschiere & Gugler has argued in a critical text on national politics and elections, the prevalence of an African « politics of primary patriotism » concerned with establishing autochthony « ...triggers a politics of belonging in which the village and the region assume new importance as a crucial source of power at the national level » (1998 : 309 ;

9. The national electoral body, STAE (*Secretariado Técnico de Administração Eleitoral*), had 236 million Mozambican meticals for election campaigns of all participating parties. Renamo's leadership claimed it never received or received late their share. Frelimo and the electoral body denied this, and claimed Renamo had been given the money in time. Be that as it may, Renamo often used this as an example of corruption within Frelimo and STAE. See *Diário de Moçambique* (Beira), 9 November 1999 and *O Popular* (Maputo), 9 November 1999.

10. Various in Portuguese and chiTeve, the forceful slogans went « Chissano é ladrão ! Roube o povo ! » (« Chissano is a thief ! He robs the people ! ») or « Frelimo mbava ! » (« Frelimo steals/is a thief ! »).

11. *Notícias de Moçambique*, Maputo, 27 November 1999 (my translation of caption).

see also Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 2000). Mozambique may then be seen as being part of a larger African post-colonial process in which tradition and traditional authority is reframed and reshaped at different levels and contexts of society.

A Violent Past, Present in Politics

When looking at current political rhetoric and themes in the political debate, one need not probe deeply to find that the past still looms large in Mozambique's political landscape: only in the short period between 16th, April and 6th May, 2003, 5 articles were produced by *Agência de Informação de Moçambique* on accusations and heated debates in parliament¹². These debates ranged from confrontations over fresh allegations from a retired South African intelligence officer accusing President Joaquim Chissano of being involved in the former president Samora Machel's death, to allegations by Renamo of Frelimo having forcibly kidnapped children from families and, thus, « nationalised » these in the period after independence in 1975.

However, the parliamentary tension between the two parties relate to post-war political issues and is not exclusively based on pre-GPA bellicose antagonist positions and experiences: the general parliamentary and presidential elections in 1999, its elections campaign, and its aftermaths were a period when these post-liberation war antagonisms have been re-framed within the peacetime political rhetoric and institutions. The election campaign, for one, was largely riddled with accusations from Renamo against Frelimo of being corrupt and undemocratic, as the local interpretations of the motorcades above also suggest. Conversely, Frelimo accused Renamo of solely being capable of killing, looting and destruction. Renamo's discontent with the outcome of the elections, which Renamo lost marginally to Frelimo, was raised with considerable force throughout the period following the elections. This was epitomised by a threat made by Renamo's leader Afonso Dhlakama almost a year after the elections in December 2000: « We want power before 2002, and if the issue is to blow up the country [...] we are prepared and not afraid of anything »¹³. The immediately identifiable reason for the stark threat of « going back to war » from the long-time leader of the rebel-movement turned into a political party, Renamo, may in this context be related to post-election violence around 9th November 2000. On that date, Renamo staged demonstrations in several locations in Mozambique, as a protest against what they claimed were fraudulent presidential and parliamentary elections held on 3rd-5th, December 1999¹⁴. Throughout the election period, Renamo had claimed the elections were staged by the Frelimo government, and the party was seen as the culprit behind widespread electoral fraud. While some points of criticism have been raised against the elections and election campaign

12. See references list at the end of this article.

13. Opposition Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama quoted by *Reuters Africa Highlights*, 15 November 2000.

14. Though being almost countrywide, the demonstrations with heaviest confrontations were in the provinces of Cabo Delgado (Pemba, Montepuez, Quissanga and Balama), Nampula (Angoche, Nacala and Nampula), Sofala (Beira) and Manica (Chimoio and Machaze).

(Braathen 2000), almost all international observers have dubbed them as overall « free and fair ». Yet, after the elections, Renamo variously boycotted and threatened to boycott parliamentary sessions, calling the new government illegitimate. Instead, Renamo proposed a « power sharing » between the two parties, in which Renamo would be in a position to appoint governors to *their* provinces, meaning the provinces they won by a moderate to a large majority. This and other claims have constantly been rejected by the re-elected Frelimo government as these would mean, as they see it, an undermining of the democratic process, and a threat to « national unity » and « the will of the people ». Thus, instead of initiating negotiations with Renamo, on 14th July 2000 the new Frelimo government appointed new governors to the ten provinces without priorly consulting Renamo. This provoked Dhlakama heavily, saying in a vaguely concealed threat : « I will no longer appeal to the people to avoid violence »¹⁵. The various demonstrations organised by Renamo in November 2000 had a disastrous impact, leaving a considerable number of persons dead, injured or incarcerated, the highest number in Montepuez¹⁶. The clashes between heavily armed elite police and army on the one side and, in some places, armed Renamo supporters on the other, has been dubbed « the worst clash since the country's 1992 Rome Peace Accord »¹⁷.

These relatively recent post-GPA events add complexity to the oft-perpetuated image of Mozambique as a peaceful post-war society by expressing the continued presence of a tense past on a national level. Also, as the rhetoric and threats of violence indicate, the events display how violence is not confined only to the sphere of the post-liberation war. With Richard Werbner, one might say that Mozambique, thus, is resembling a postcolony in which recent wars are mirrored in what he terms the « postwars of the dead » : « [T]he intense peacetime struggles over the appropriation of the heroism, martyrdom or even the last remains of the dead » (Werbner 1998 : 7). This « peacetime struggle » is heavily imbued with morally informed arguments over definitions of past struggles as we saw above in the case of the five recent news items, and is still very much a part of present political rhetorics and practices on the national level. Importantly, these are not events confined to the national level, but rather mirrored in and related to local (or, at least, localised) processes also addressing the continued but changing presence of the past (Bertelsen 2001, 2002, 2004). The continued local importance of the past stems from popular perceptions that « something » vital or important was destroyed or ruptured during the post-liberation war. Thus, tales of indiscriminate massacres and veritable human slaughter abound in popular memory and literature : children were abducted to emerge as child-soldiers after having killed their kin and family ; mothers were forced to kill and devour their babies ; « traitors » were hung from trees to be butchered like goats...

15. Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama quoted in *Mozambique Peace Process Bulletin*, Amsterdam, 25, Aug. 2000.

16. Numbers vary from early estimates at 41 dead, 200 injured and 200 imprisoned (*E-mail and Guardian*, Johannesburg, 17 November 2000) and 49 dead (*Rádio Mozambique*, Johannesburg, 13 November 2000), to later numbers proposing « at least 41 dead » (*AIM News Report*, Brighton n° 223, 14 January 2002). In addition, at least 83 imprisoned « "Renamo supporters"... died of asphyxiation in a grotesquely overcrowded police cell », (*ibid.*). Renamo claim higher numbers of both injured, incarcerated and casualties.

17. *E-Mail and Guardian*, Johannesburg, 17 November 2000.

Reflecting on this horrific suffering, many scholars hold that fundamental aspects of life were ruptured, destroyed or broken by the violence of the war. However, they do not seem to agree as to which terms should be used to close in on this: O'Laughlin recognizes that the war destroyed Mozambique and its *moral fibre* (1992 : 142), while Cliff & Noormahomed forward the notion that the « ...*social fabric* of Mozambican society has been disrupted by displacement, and killing and kidnapping of family members » (1988 : 78). Hall argues that there remains « *psychological wounds* of mass brutalization » (1990 : 61), while Englund points out what he sees as *sociality* to be disrupted, if not destroyed by the war (1998 : 1166). The list of scholarly-cum-commonsensical terms employed to grasp the social and cosmological impact of violence could be made much longer, including Chingono's notion of the destruction of the *social world* (1996 : 180). But the point should, hopefully, have been made that there exists a general scholarly consensus that *something* is destructively transformed or erased in areas that have been hard hit by the post-liberation war¹⁸.

Attempts at conceptualising the nature of destruction and erasure of meaning that violence and war entailed, and the re-constructive and re-inscribing practices in Honde has been done at length elsewhere (Bertelsen 2002). An oft-professed perspective is that tradition as a cosmological and social system may be seen to provide an opportunity to address the practices of violence and their erasing and perverting meaning. Thus, the healing of persons plagued by *pfkuwa*, evil spirits, or the cleansing of returned soldiers are often forwarded by scholars as ways in which tradition socially mend local Mozambican societies (Honwana 1999, Nordstrom 1997). However, in Honde these aspects became more complicated as mentioned in the introduction: when the political conflict between the two *régulos* became evident, the weakening of the relations to the ancestral spirits also became an important topic. In Honde the poor crops and the lack of sufficient rain were widely seen in relation to the violation of the relations to the ancestral spirits in the time of the war when veneration was virtually non-existent. This significance of the violent past was strengthened with the conflict between the two *régulos*. Thus, « tradition » and « traditional authorities » are integral to post-war practices that help endow new meaning to local communities, but these are ambiguous and tense. Hence, « tradition » as a practice and « traditional authority » as the *régulo* are not empty vessels denoting past, autochthony and continuity: both refer to specific pasts but also discontinuities and ambivalences. For this reason, political practices invoking tradition entail specific connotations, shape and inform local cosmologies in particular ways, in tandem with specific local experiences, as in Honde.

18. This is not to say that the post-liberation war was experienced and waged in similar fashions across Mozambique or that peaceful relations between belligerents and local communities did not exist.

Usurping Tradition : Portuguese Colonialism, the War Machine and the State

As part of a strategy to govern, the Portuguese colonial regime appointed *régulos* to oversee (often mandatory) production, as Dinerman has shown for Nampula province where African smallholders were legally obliged to produce cotton (Dinerman 2001). In Mozambique, the Portuguese in different ways relied on the *régulo* the regime appointed. They were variously recruited from lineages of chiefs or headmen, or picked by the colonial regime for strategic purposes from commoners' ranks that had no or little royal or chiefly blood. Building on evidence from the districts of Bárue, Macossa and Sussundenga in Manica province, Alexander notes that the colonial regime was deeply repressive and violent against the « traditional » authorities (Alexander 1994 : 37-39). But as the Portuguese also privileged chiefs, providing wine, clothing and other commodities for ceremonies, Alexander argues there was a certain degree of interdependency between the colonisers and the « traditional » *régulo* from which the latter profited also (*Ibid.*). This last aspect of the relation is similar to Frelimo's early position of seeing *régulos* largely as relics of colonial and authoritarian structures. Being conservative and colonial elements that fomented « obscurantism » and « dis-unity », they had no legitimacy in the population, Frelimo claimed. In many, but not all, areas Frelimo aimed at dethroning these, instating instead Party secretaries that were elected by « the people » and seen therefore to represent them more fully. In Honde, reflecting on the coming of independence, one *p'fumo*, a former aide to a *régulo*, said during fieldwork :

« Samora [Machel, Frelimo head and first Mozambican president] said that "we don't want *régulos* here". So there were none. Only later they returned again because Renamo said that "this system of *régulos* is good". So then the *régulos* or their sons came back ».

The agricultural, administrative and political upheavals and ruptures brought about by both the liberation and the post-liberation war were experienced as great¹⁹. Suffice to say here that *régulos* have been interwoven in external political projects, but also that complex local settings arose, during the liberation war, where many also supported the struggle against the Portuguese²⁰.

During Portuguese colonialism and following the almost three decades of a liberation war (1964 to 1975) followed by a post-liberation war (1977 to 1992), tradition and traditional authority have, then, been subject to profound transformations and shifting political contexts in Mozambique, influencing the perceptions, position and power of these. What is striking is that on a general level these upheavals have not in any way entailed making tradition and traditional authority invalid in public discourses, in local and national political settings and in ritual contexts : the notions of *tradição*, tradition, and *autoridade tradicional*, traditional authority, are still widely used, and referred to, to describe these. Although both practices and content vary greatly across Mozambique, both are meant in general to connote

19. See WEST & MYERS 1996 on the introduction of state farms, with cases from Manica province.

20. Space does not allow for discussions of the complex role of *régulos* here. But see HARRISON 2000, 2002, LUNDIN 1996, WEST & KLOECK-JENSON 1999 for contributions to these debates.

autochthony and authenticity invoking practices of old, thus creating legitimacy and authority. However, as described above, in many contexts in Mozambique, the transformations that these entities have been subject to, have imbued both with ambivalence regarding their content and nature. Further, this makes, as also pointed out, the current practices of tradition and traditional authorities sometimes controversial and creates tensions. In this context of transformation of tradition, Renamo and Frelimo are perceived as widely different. To understand these differences, one option is to look at the formations and dynamics of violence forging tradition.

It has been argued that the post-liberation war was extremely complex and violent, but space does not allow this article to probe its origins and violent dynamics. However, as several scholars have pointed out, the violence of the war not only maimed and killed persons or razed physical structures, but reconfigured social relations, cosmologies and outlooks²¹. Violence, therefore, is also about transformations of meaning and control. Given that the war was largely fought in rural areas and over the control of the population, one perspective on the dynamics of war and its violence may be to view it as a dynamic practice of power and control. Two of Deleuze & Guattari's (1987) concepts, « state » and « war machine » (hereafter unbracketed), may elucidate two of these modalities of power in operation in the Mozambican post-liberation war²². In terms of Honde, the applicability of these analytical terms is that they may aid in describing processes on the ground without reducing these to institutional approaches. For Deleuze & Guattari, the notions of the « war machine » and « the state » are best seen as concepts that are meant to analytically capture practices of power. These are interwoven but separate, antagonist but dependant; hence, one cannot be perceived without the other. The *war machine* is « rhizomatic », implying « [i]t connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature [...] and] has no beginning or end » (Deleuze & Guattari 1987 : 21, 25). This indistinct, complex shape is complemented by fluidity and mobility, and its form is exterior to the state apparatus. *The state*, on the other hand, is characterised by territory and control, sedentation and lack of mobility where hierarchy are important features, and Deleuze & Guattari asserts that « the State has no war machine of its own » (*ibid* : 355). The two concepts illustrate well some of the practices and features of Renamo and Frelimo but, more importantly, some of the logic inherent to the dynamic of the war in Honde²³.

Frelimo, in control of the government for most of the post-liberation period, fits somewhat the concept of the state as it throughout sought to control territory. As Deleuze & Guattari write, « [o]ne of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which it reigns » (*ibid* : 385), and a central feature of the state in general was the inscription of meaning to urban and rural space. This was also an important priority for Frelimo. The reordering of agricultural practices and the transformations of the

21. WILSON 1992, NORDSTROM 1997.

22. As Kapferer notes, using the terms about the context of the dynamics of power and Sinhalese sorcery, « [t]he war machine [...] and the state describe power *in its dynamic* as this materializes in a diversity of structuring processes on the ground », KAPFERER 1997 : 284, (italics retained).

23. It should be noted that the « war » of the war machine and the state for Deleuze and Guattari is probably forwarded as potentiality and not actuality, although here these are applied to look at larger structures of war practice.

communal village to the militarily protected village when confronted with threats, in Honde as in other Mozambican localities, illustrate these practices. Through this, structures that were deemed « colonial » by Frelimo, as the *régulo*, were in part substituted by the Party secretary and other entities.

In the above, Renamo's practices benefit well the features of the *war machine*, as it confronts and « dehierarchizes » the structures of the state: razing physical structures as roads and buildings, and killing representatives of the state. In erasing signs of the state, the war machine, in Deleuze & Guattari's terms, « deterritorializes » the state as it loses its grip on the rural areas: « the war machine is directed against the State, either against potential States whose formation it wards off in advance, or against actual States whose destruction it purposes » (*ibid* : 359). Renamo also fits the notion of the war machine in how this is a feature of how war is waged: « guerrilla warfare explicitly aims for the *non-battle* » (*ibid* : 416, italics retained). Fluid entities as *tradition*, magic and sorcery are, again in a Deleuze and Guattari's term, « metamorphosised » so as to serve the war machine which recruits through violence, coercion and abduction. On the other hand, there is also ample evidence that this was also done by Frelimo troops in many contexts, that they also « travelled with *curandeiros* » as a former guerrilla fighter in Honde coined it²⁴. However, and this is important, in many contexts in Mozambique and certainly in Honde, Frelimo is nonetheless *perceived* as having led an antitraditional war and politics.

By fighting the war machine, the state creates spaces of control, communal villages, safe roads, but it also becomes a war machine as it engages in war. Likewise, Renamo is drawn towards sedentarization, creating zones where captured are held, camps etc.; it is thus, likewise, transformed into becoming a state. Both processes are evident in stories from Honde where the state, Frelimo, rarely emerges as merely controlling and executing power, but is also seen as « dirty » or as « doing a lot of bad ». The concepts of war machine and the state are modalities of power only, and do not correspond fully to neither Renamo and Frelimo practices, but serve to illustrate different aspects of the dynamics of the war. More importantly yet, both Renamo and Frelimo in retrospect are often seen as enemies of continuity, autochthony and tradition. The examples below will illustrate how Frelimo and Renamo are perceived differently in relation to the violent transformations of tradition.

The Death, Resurrection and Dislocation of the Traditional Lion

« If you went to the stream to wash the pots of *sadza*²⁵ instead of washing them in the compound like you should, the lion would roar and you would be reminded that you were about to break an ancestral rule. If you went to the stream and you were thirsty and the water looked good, you would like to drink. Forgetting yourself, you would bend down to put your lips to the

24. *Curandeiro/a* is the Portuguese term for *n'anga*, healer-diviner, often used in Mozambique. In this context, the former Renamo guerrilla fighter explains his view that Frelimo also invoked and used tradition for war purposes during the war.

25. Shona name for stiff porridge prepared variously with maize, millet, sorghum or rice according to region, season and social strata but among maTeve normally with crude maize flour.

water, like an animal, you would here the lion roar, reminding you that you are not an animal and should drink with your mouth to your hand. No more. The lion is dead now ».

In Honde as in many locations in Mozambique, the local articulation of experienced struggles and problematic issues are important elements of social life, and these may also give key insights into perspectives on politics and society. One such example encompassing relations between violence, politics and tradition is the fate of the traditional lion outlined above. In Honde, the local rainmaker entitled *Chirenge*, simultaneously in charge of most ceremonies regarding the spiritual realm, explained some of the complexity of the issue to me of which the quote above forms part of one of many conversations²⁶. As is evident above, before the post-liberation war the traditional lion used to roam the woods as a manifestation of the ancestor spirits and a moral guardian. During the war, however, it all changed : the lion disappeared or, as many see it, was killed by the violence of the war and/or Frelimo, and the fate of the lion therefore can be taken as a metaphor for tradition, as an experienced rupture with perceived past ways. In Chirenge's view, Frelimo destroyed tradition when rituals and traditional authorities were outlawed, and the process of war finalized this process of destruction. This outlook is supplemented by another oft-recounted story underlining this general point about Frelimo : the fate of sacred goats that prior to the post-liberation war grazed Cabeça do Velho (lit. « The Old Man's Face »), a mountain outside Chimoio. Within the local cosmology, the goats were related to ancestral spirits. Hence, they would not be eaten and generally left alone save for ritual occasions. But in communal memory the goats were slaughtered and killed by Frelimo soldiers during the war. The fate of the goats thus popularly epitomize Frelimo's perceived antagonist role towards tradition, for local people.

Thus, the « traditional » is in some respect still experienced as stigmatized and targeted, even though this is changing in other contexts. This was most evident during the election campaigns before the 1999 presidential and parliamentary election. Then, both Renamo and Frelimo attempted to invoke « traditional authorities » and values in their campaigns. A case in point was the political haggles for control of the influential *régulo* Luís in Beira. In subsequent attempts that received widespread media coverage in the region, both Renamo and Frelimo endeavoured to coerce him into supporting its campaign. *Régulo* Luís himself wavered to and fro, and « supported » seemingly the one part the one day, while the other one the next day. Be that as it may, the struggle triggered a succession fight where his nephew claimed himself to be the new *régulo*, and being also clearly in support of Renamo when his uncle in the end refused to choose sides²⁷. Cases analogous to that of *régulo* Luís in Beira abound, and the politicization of the *local* traditional sphere by *national* politics was also clear in Mocuba, Zambezia province prior to the same elections : in the regional newspaper, Frelimo boasted of having « won » twelve *regulos* from Renamo, thus rhetorically communicating the party was gaining traditional territory in more than one sense²⁸.

26. For an « indigenous » account of maTeve culture, see SUANA 1999 and for a history of Manicaland see BHILA 1982.

27. *Diário de Moçambique*, Beira, 8 November 1999 and 18 November 1999.

28. *Diário de Moçambique*, Beira, 20 November 1999.

Nationally the politics of tradition in this way has seemingly changed from having one protector and one persecutor in Renamo and Frelimo, to two parties embracing its prominent representatives in blatant bids for control, recognition and definition. The example shows that what is often represented and analysed as indigenous and local tradition, is, in its perpetual transformation, interwoven with national processes, and that people partly appropriate, but also re-articulate and re-formulate these. Locally, forming part of what is perceived as tradition, the absence of practice of important rites in the proper setting during the post-liberation war, results in « something » as viewed as having been lost. Due to the flight of most of the population in the area of fieldwork, proper rites, related to ritualized sites within the local landscape, were impossible to execute. Thus, when returning in the years after 1992 many long-neglected rituals and ceremonies were held to address the past upheavals, in attempts to mend relations with ancestral spirits.

The traditional lion in this respect may seem to constitute a local cosmological casualty of war. However, this is not to say it does not exist, as the *chirenge* told me: « the *chitengwa*²⁹ lives there in Gorongosa. Oh yes, it lives there! And it has a lot of power ». As a place of force and power, Gorongosa is at the same time a location perceived as a Renamo stronghold, and in this way a convergence between local cosmology, national territory, political rhetorics (i.e. the rhetorics of tradition), and local perceptions, which are informed by memory and experience³⁰. The zone of the perceived (and experienced) traditional power centre coincides with a location where tradition is thought of as preserved, and where the political opposition has one of its bases of old.

The seemingly logical assumption of a « group » displaying or enacting a bias towards its what is perceived as its « own » cultural practices and perspectives may then be questioned. This is so at least in relation to the case of the traditional lion and Honde: given the context of war and violence and its erasure, the vanishing of the lion, an extremely powerful symbol of ancestral strength, moral guardianship and traditional ways, the allocation of the lion elsewhere represents a surpassing of the assumed preferences for what is recounted as « maTeve traditions »: importantly, a doyen of maTeve tradition allocates and establishes the « traditional », some 200 kilometres away, in an area where the language spoken as a mother tongue is chiSena, and in which the ethnic maSena group is in majority. Tradition, then, is recreated and reformed in an interstice between several processes: the experience of Frelimo's antagonist rhetoric and practice towards tradition form one, and Renamo's rhetorically embracing tradition forms another. A third point relate to locally accentuated war-induced experiences in general, and to the spiritual strength of certain zones specifically, where Gorongosa forms a specific locus of traditional force and struggles. But, importantly, the particular example of the traditional lion and its dislocation also demonstrates the cosmologic constructive capacity, continuously exercised in many

29. *Chitengwa* is a term for the traditional lion of Gorongosa in chiTeve.

30. Gorongosa, a national park, is located in Sofala province about 200 km North-East of Chimoio. The maBarue seem to historically share some considerations for the territory of maSena and Gorongosa with the neighbouring maTeve, viewing it as « sacred and therefore immune from military attack », ISAACMAN 1973: 401.

communities faced with a sphere of tradition mangled by war and entangled in politics.

The Political Potency and Ambivalence of Tradition

The dislocation of the traditional lion to Gorongosa seems immediately to support an argument of Renamo emerging victorious from the post-liberation war, literally its « War » of the spirits' rewarded with politico-traditional dominance of areas like Honde by way of a convergence of the traditional lion territory and Renamo territory. But on the other hand, the traditional lion may also be seen to have been transformed by Renamo. Through their use of it, it was rendered territoryless : again, in abducting and transforming the traditional lion, Renamo may be seen to be rhizomatic, a war machine de-territorializing and metamorphosing in its violent practice. Taking it away, Renamo made the maTeve traditional lion theirs, and brought it to Gorongosa, the guerrilla base of old, and the present powerhouse of tradition in Mozambique. Thus, there is a clear ambivalence to tradition and the traditional lion in that it is taken away or died, but lives on in a different spot, imagined elsewhere.

Due to its bush guerrilla bases, Renamo is often related to the bush while here Frelimo is seen as the entity killing the lion or, better, purging the bush and the woods for the lion. In this perspective there is then a dualism, where the national context of two political parties and antagonists enter the local arena in relation to bush and lion : Renamo being both the bush, tradition and abductors of the lion to Gorongosa, and Frelimo's anti-traditional practices, consuming the local sacred goats and killing the traditional lion, then introduce the national political context locally in the politics of tradition. In this perspective, Renamo is then the war machine, cannibalizing tradition, transmutating it through its practices and enactments. However, as traditional practices and concepts relating to autochthony, authority and spirits are deeply part of Mozambican communities and cosmologies, tradition emerges as ambivalent.

In the context of ambivalence and tension between local interpretations and national level practices, another way of approaching the issue of the lion is seeing it as constituting « a third », *i.e.* not relating to Renamo orientations towards Beira nor to regional and ethnic affiliations *per se*, but posing an alternative to the perceived Maputo orientation of Frelimo and the Renamo's Beira : a traditional epicentre balancing the scales and from whence to allocate tradition and from where to draw spiritual strength and insights emanating from it. The « traditional » now come to take on all new meanings : the « locals » are relocating the « traditional » to nontraditional areas, thus exposing how the approach of « invented traditions » *à la* Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983) may fail to communicate the complexity of how conscious people are of the relativity of their own cultural constructs : a sharp focus on denaturalizing tradition presupposes people unaware of constructive aspects of tradition. But more importantly, a one-eyed focus on the invented nature of tradition bars exploration into how innovative reconstructions after war may be in cosmological and political terms. The specific local dislocation of the traditional lion to a different setting probably mirrors a multitude of local reconstructive post-war processes around

Mozambique, and this « third » may then merely not stand out as unique, but as part of a wide range of processes of shifting affiliations and changing or expanding geo-political identities based on local memories and experiences. Alternative navigational points within the nation may thus be seen as part of local reconstruction of affiliation and group adherence. The reframing of tradition in the wake of its violent transformations is in that context pivotal.

As has been argued above, local reconstructive practices in relation to tradition, cosmology and autochthony are not processes separate neither from historical transformations nor from the violence permeating these changes. Further, the orientation in current national level politics to involve local and regional traditional authorities, as *régulo* Luís in Beira, imbue local tradition with a renewed ambivalence strengthened by national political practices. The advancing of the two parties into domains of tradition create tension between the political reframing and invoking of tradition and local realities related to the experience of violence, colonialism and war.

This ambivalence of tradition and its potency is also demonstrated in another example surrounding the celebration of Gwaza Muthini. This is a celebration of a battle of 1894 seen as the first major rebellion against « the Portuguese invaders », and was celebrated on 2^d February 2000³¹. These celebrations in 2000 received a lot of popular attention and Frelimo government also emphasized its importance. However, an issue equally important to the celebrations itself were the many road accidents in their aftermath that received a lot of media attention. The accidents provoked many discussions as to whether accidents actually were caused by Frelimo's deteriorating relations to the ancestral spirits, as Afonso Dhlakama claimed. According to Dhlakama, it was incorrectly celebrated because it mixed tradition and « politics », and this led to an unleashing of spiritual wrath, rain and a host of road accidents. Hence, Dhlakama claimed, Frelimo should the spirits « forgiveness »³².

In this public claim, Dhlakama seeks to portray himself as the defender of tradition and at the same time accusing Frelimo of not understanding or revering tradition: Frelimo is seen to have brought on the wrath of the spirits, in this way, again mirroring the bellicose position of fighting a « war of the spirits », *i.e.* supporting or being supported by ancestral spirits. The wrangles over the conduction of Gwaza Muthini, and Dhlakama's accusations received some media attention, and it was also widely discussed in Honde where Frelimo's formerly antitraditional stances were recounted. These popular concerns and the fact that space in newspapers is devoted to discussing the issue illustrates that when Chissano visits ancestral shrines in the south of Mozambique, this is not merely folkloric ritual but a bid to attach traditional and ancestral legitimacy to Frelimo's political campaign. As such, this example where spiritual legitimacy is called into question does not merely show how traditions are increasingly embedded in national

31. For a review of the historical background for «Gwaza Muthini», see *Notícias de Moçambique*, Maputo, 2 February 2000, and for an introduction to the rise and fall of the Gaza Empire and its prominent King Gungunghana or Ngungyane, see NEWITT 1995, LIESEGANG 1996 and WHEELER 1968.

32. *Rádio Moçambique*, Johannesburg, 11 February 2000 and *Domingo*, Maputo, 13 February 2000.

contexts. Further, it also highlights how these are used meaningfully in rhetoric and moral arguments over past and present, finding resonance in media discourse and national politics as well as in local settings very distant from the capital in Honde.

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Informed by material from Honde outside Chimoio, this text has sought to trace some elements in the formations and changes of tradition in Mozambique and its relation to politics and violence. In doing so, it has related several issues and levels. Firstly, it has sought to demonstrate that the transformations of tradition need to be understood within the context of Mozambique's political history seeing tradition as never merely a result of localized histories and dynamics. Local dynamics and efforts also intersect with different political regimes. Secondly, tradition and traditional authority need to be analysed not simply as vessels or relics of the past. Rather, they need to be understood as being part of people's continued aspirations towards coming to terms with past violence, and this past violence is part of present concerns. The accounts from Honde of the fate of the traditional lion are in this respect instructive for the understanding of how these reconstructive practices relate to meaning and cosmology. Thirdly, it has been suggested that the ambivalence of tradition imbued with violence and the past coupled with the pivotal role in popular cosmologies and practices make it an apt material for politicians, and this gives it potency. However, taking into consideration that these politicians are seen as cannibalizing tradition and, on the other, as making antitraditional politics, the tensions emerging between national political reframing of local tradition and popular outlooks should be evident. The ambivalence of tradition mirrors the perception in many rural areas of the ambivalence of Renamo in relation to its self-professed role as custodians of autochthony, ancestral spirits and tradition: the abduction of the traditional lion is a brilliant metaphor for the ways in which Renamo's war machine imbued tradition with violence and destruction, but also how, in locating the lion elsewhere, resurrecting it, people in Honde faced the abduction and violence constructively. Leaving the whole complex of tradition in ambivalence, this paves way for Frelimo's challenging of Renamo's role, in that the former tentatively appropriates and reframes tradition, as the government-driven celebrations of Gwaza Muthini illustrates.

If Geschiere & Gugler's assertion of a renewed African « politics of primary patriotism » is valid for Mozambique, a continued and perhaps renewed focus on tradition and autochthony in political practices and rhetoric may harbour a few dangers. The triangle of the continued importance of an intrusive violent past which still saturates political haggles and rhetoric, a renewed politics of autochthony or authenticity, and the oft-dormant but important and pressing aspects of regional difference and antagonism might make Mozambican politics tense as the riots in Montepuez might testify to. However, in order to understand the forms the violence in Montepuez took, the relations between politics and violence on several levels need to be focused upon. This article has attempted to

illustrate that an exploration of tensions between local and national levels of practices and perspectives of tradition offers a particular vantage point from which to explore Mozambican relations between politics and violence.

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