



Extracted from *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences*

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CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3

Restorative justice and the role of magamba spirits in post-civil war Gorongosa, central Mozambique

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1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the strategies for restorative justice at the community level that developed in the aftermath of the 1976–92 civil war in Mozambique. The General Peace Agreement, signed in Rome, Italy, on 4 October 1992 between the Mozambican Government, represented by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, Frelimo), and the former rebel movement the Mozambican National Resistance (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, Renamo), brought an end to almost two decades of very bloody civil war. The negotiations for peace which unfolded between 1990 and 1992 were preceded and accompanied by a comprehensive set of political changes to the post-colonial Marxist–Leninist regime, and replaced that regime with the pluralistic constitution of 1990 which established a multiparty democratic system and a market-oriented economy. Alongside the peace negotiations, these socio-political and economic changes were determining factors in the resolution of the civil war.

Although the peace agreement brought immense relief to the victims, from a transitional justice perspective the Mozambican authorities did not develop any specific policy to deal with the abuses and crimes that had been perpetrated during the civil war. After having been used and greatly abused, the victims were urged to forgive and forget the grisly past as a supposed part of peace building and national reconciliation.

Within this context of war abuses and crimes, followed by the post-war practices of denial and abandonment, the war victims and survivors in Gorongosa district in central Mozambique were not without hope. By making use of available and accessible endogenous resources, war survivors were able to begin the paramount task of repairing their individual and collective lives. We focus here on the socio-cultural practices that take the form of restorative justice and reconciliation in the aftermath of the civil war. This is the case with the *gamba* (*magamba* in the plural) spirit. *Magamba* are generally the

After the 1992 General Peace Agreement, the Mozambican authorities did not develop any specific policy to deal with the abuses and crimes that had been perpetrated during the short-lived Marxist-Leninist dictatorship and protracted civil war. Instead, socio-cultural practices have developed which take the form of restorative justice, reconciliation and healing in the aftermath of the civil war.

spirits of dead soldiers who return to the realm of the living to fight for justice. In their varied meanings and manifestations, *magamba* both heal war-related wounds and play a pivotal role in the attainment of restorative justice among the survivors of war.

2. The context of conflicts in colonial and post-colonial Mozambique

The Mozambican people have been exposed to social and political upheavals for many decades. Although the Portuguese were present in Mozambique for around five centuries, effective colonization started around the 1930s. The colonial violence took the form of forced labour. The refusal to concede socio-political, economic and cultural rights to the indigenous population was also part of the colonial political system. The Portuguese who settled in the country, on the other hand, were granted full rights of citizenship. In the early 1960s Frelimo initiated an armed struggle for independence in the north of the country. This marked the beginning of the war and violent conflict that would continue for almost three decades.

The anti-colonial war lasted for ten long years (1964–74). Rural areas were the main battlefields and their populations were by far the most exposed and worst affected. The Lusaka Peace Agreement between Frelimo and the Portuguese authorities led to independence at the end of June 1975. Peace, however, was short-lived. Initially, the post-independence violence was provoked by external forces. The Ian Smith regime of the former Rhodesia invaded Mozambique under the pretext that soldiers from the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) had found a safe haven there. The Rhodesian Army wreaked havoc in Mozambique, in 1977 perpetrating the well-known massacre at Inhazonia in Barue district (Manica Province). The civil war, initiated by Renamo, started at the same time. There are major disagreements between the adherents of Frelimo and Renamo, and some academics, over the real origins of this internal conflict. Different opinions on the respective roles of external and internal factors dominate the debate. The Frelimo authorities see the civil war as an extension of the external war of aggression, first led by the Rhodesians and later continued by the South African apartheid regime. Renamo for its part emphasizes the internal component, triggered by Frelimo's post-colonial dictatorship and repressive policies. Others prefer to speak of a combination of both internal and external factors.

The debates on the origin of the post-colonial violence are not explored here. What is

crucial in this chapter is that both conflicts caused overwhelming disruption and destruction in Mozambique. Survivors of both wars agree, however, that the civil war was incomparably worse in terms of the extent of the ruthlessness and the human and physical devastation. Numerous villages were burned to ashes and many innocent civilians were severely abused, tortured and killed. The war zones were usually divided between government-controlled and Renamo-controlled areas, and many civilians shifted continuously between these two areas in search of minimal security. However, extreme traumatic events and subjugation of the people occurred in both.

Gorongosa district was at the epicentre of the civil war. Between 1981 and mid-1985, Renamo troops had their main headquarters in the area and exercised almost hegemonic control of the war zones. This meant that the majority of the inhabitants had much more direct (forced or unforced) contact with Renamo forces than with the Frelimo-led army. Since the civil war was fought mainly through guerrilla tactics, the polarization of the war zones meant that the Frelimo troops considered the people under Renamo control as enemies, and vice versa. The consequences were devastating for all those who lived in the area. Many civilians living in Renamo territory were killed by the Frelimo air force. Renamo, on the other hand, caused tremendous pain and suffering through its policy of so-called *gandira*—a system of forced labour aimed at providing logistical support for its war effort. *Gandira* also involved the use of women as sexual slaves. In this regard *gandira* was profoundly humiliating: people were compulsorily separated from their families, and others were tortured and murdered.

The number of people killed during the civil war is a matter of dispute. Some observers speak of 100,000 civilian deaths; others place the figure at 1 million (Hanlon 1991); still others suggest that 'A more realistic guess would be that some 50 000 victims lost their lives directly as a result of rebel military action throughout the entire war' (Thomashausen 2001: 98). Both Renamo and government troops compulsorily recruited young men to fight in the war. They were forced to destroy their own villages and murder their own kin. Family members were subjugated and forced to spy on one another, leading to the torture and murder of many relatives. A culture of peace was totally replaced by a culture of war. Social capital in the form of relations of trust, reciprocity, mutual support, cooperation and solidarity, and respect for taboos was severely eroded.

3. The transition from war to peace and the cultures of denial in Mozambique

Two different types of transition and two different strategies for dealing with its legacies feature in the recent history of Mozambique. The first transition took place in June 1975 when the country gained its independence from Portugal. As a result of direct negotiations with the Portuguese transitional government in 1974, Frelimo managed to negotiate, through the Lusaka Accords of 25 September 1974, the transfer of total sovereignty and power into the hands of the Frelimo authorities. The second transition, in the 1990s,

encompassed a multiplicity of processes. It meant the transformation of the political regime from a Marxist–Leninist ideology to a multiparty democracy and market-oriented economy, and from civil war to peace and democracy. It was the transition from civil war to peace that most captured the attention of the local populations and of international observers.

The post-colonial era and the post-civil war period led to different transitional justice strategies.

Three years after independence, around the end of 1978, the Frelimo party, via the political speeches of then President Samora Machel, aired a political plan or strategy to deal with some of the intricate legacies of the colonial past. (Machel was the first president of post-colonial Mozambique, ruling the country from independence in 1975 until his death in 1986.) The target of this strategy was a selected group of individuals, called *comprometidos* (the compromised), who had allegedly collaborated in various ways with the ancien régime (the Portuguese colonial administration). This strategy for dealing with those allegedly compromised by the colonial past unfolded between the end of 1978 and 1982, and involved various initiatives that culminated with a general meeting known as the Reunião dos Comprometidos (the Meeting of the Compromised).

In his inaugural speech to the Reunião dos Comprometidos, Machel explained the need for a reckoning with the terrible colonial past by stating that ‘Only by reviewing the past will we know the present. Only by knowing the present will we make a perspective for the future. These are the three fundamental elements in a society—the past, the present and the future. Its pages are marked by history; we cannot go against them; history is history’ (Machel 1982a). He reiterated this at the end of the meeting: ‘We feel the necessity to always deepen the knowledge of the past so that permanently we increase our capacity to understand and resolve the problems of the present and correctly make perspectives about the future that we desire’ (Machel 1982b: author’s translation).

The Frelimo party politics of memory was founded upon the idea of ‘Não vamos esquecer o tempo que passou’ (‘Let us not forget the time that passed’). This overall strategy was conceptually articulated in various ways—as ‘acts of revolutionary justice’, ‘reintegration strategy’, ‘self-liberation from the compromise with the colonial-fascism’, ‘self-liberation from the loaded consciousness’, ‘mental de-colonization’, ‘rehabilitation of the compromised’ or ‘the inner combat to liberate the consciousness’. Despite these conceptual variations, the key features of the strategy aimed ‘to transform the compromised based on presumption of guilt, repentance, punishment and re-education’ (Coelho 2003: 191). This strategy involved grave breaches of the Mozambican constitution of 1978. President Machel worked hard during the Meeting of the Compromised to demonstrate to everyone that above him there was no law; he was the law. On one occasion, when one alleged *comprometido* dared to challenge Machel by demanding more solid or convincing evidence that he had been involved with the colonial administration to hinder Mozambique’s achieving independence, the president became furious. Ignoring the 1978 constitution, he ordered the immediate arrest of that *comprometido* and his transfer to the

far fields of Niassa Province. None of Machel's subordinates who were present at the meeting, carefully witnessing this act, dared to advise the president that he had no legal right to order someone's arrest. Everyone kept silent and witnessed Machel violating the same constitution that he had struggled so hard to bring to his country. In addition, during this meeting the importance of this strategy for the victims of colonial repression was never clearly articulated.

The post-colonial transition in the early 1980s therefore attempted to tackle the problems of the violent colonial past. By contrast, during the transition from the civil war to peace and democracy in the early 1990s no attempts were made to dig into the grisly past and no concern over the plight of the victims seems to have captured the imagination of the Mozambican political elites responsible for the transitional processes.

From a transitional justice perspective there was no public debate in Mozambique spurred, for instance, by the local intellectual elites, journalists and human rights lawyers about the best ways to address the legacies of the civil war and the short-lived Marxist–Leninist dictatorship. In fact, ten days after the signing of the General Peace Agreement of 4 October 1992, the Mozambican Popular Assembly—wholly controlled by the Frelimo party at the time—promulgated Law no. 15/92, which provided for an amnesty for crimes committed between 1979 and 1992. Again, on the occasion of the promulgation of this law, there was no public debate about its moral implications, no statements were made about the potential for truth and justice to right the wrongs of the past, and no official public demands for apology were enacted to acknowledge the suffering of the victims.

An analysis of the official discourse of the representatives of the two main antagonistic parties, (Frelimo, the party in government, and Renamo) at the time of the signing of the General Peace Agreement demonstrates in differing degrees the importance of the victims in their public addresses. Joaquim Chissano, the then president of the country, was completely inattentive to the suffering of the victims in his public speeches. The only political message he uttered was that the signing of the General Peace Agreement was an act of great significance and a victory for the Mozambican people. Not a single sentence acknowledged the suffering the people had gone through during the protracted civil war; not a single word to demonstrate compassion and respect for the memories of the victims came out of the president's mouth.

It was the leader of Renamo, Afonso Dhlakama, who early on dedicated some words of acknowledgement of the suffering of the victims. He stated: 'We recall in the first place our brothers who died; all Mozambicans, combatants and non-combatants, from one or the other side who fell in this fratricidal fight... their blood was not shed in vain and on top of their sacrifice a renewed and reconciled nation is now being built. We recall as well all our suffering people who

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have waited so anxiously for this day in the cities, in the bush. It is to them, and above all to the young people, that we address our message of hope. Let's start anew, let's work to reconstruct the country' (Mozambique Radio; author's translation).

As Priscilla Hayner has noted, 'In Mozambique the accepted, though largely unstated, belief was "the less we dwell on the past, the more likely reconciliation will be". There has been almost no focus in Mozambique on accountability for past crimes... there have been virtually no calls at the national level for justice, accountability, punishment, or banishment from public office' (Hayner 2001: 187). Other observers of the transitional process have confined themselves to acknowledging that the Mozambican peace process 'opened social spaces' (Baptista-Lundin 2002) which allowed 'a more open attention to the historical and ritual ceremonies that had allowed for healing of fractured communities in the past' (Jacobson 2005: 142). Still other observers have pointed out that 'In the FRELIMO political program, in the new constitution [1990] and in the new government policy there is a clear and neat willingness of reconciliation with the different social forces. This is related to the private entrepreneurs, the religious community and other groups that before were opposed to the FRELIMO policies. This process of reconciliation is unfolding in a limited sphere of people and especially at the central level' (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1994: 325). In relation to the rural people who were the direct targets of war, Hans Abrahamsson and Anders Nilsson add that 'At this moment it is not possible yet to glimpse any sign of real reconciliation with this group of population, through a consequent politics of support of the rural areas' (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1994: 326). This reality has not changed much, although there is one exception—the approval of Decree Law no. 15/2000 of 20 June 2000, which establishes the relationships between the state local organs and the community authorities (*Boletim da República* 24, June 2000). It formalized the recognition of some community authorities, particularly the traditional chiefs, who had been stripped of their leadership positions and alienated by the post-colonial policies of the Frelimo-led governments.

Unquestionably, the end of the civil war brought relief from the horrors and the appalling forms of human disruption and degradation. But the peace agreement was founded upon *cultures of denial*: the political authorities 'encourage turning a collective blind eye, leaving horrors unexamined or normalized as being part of the rhythms of everyday life' (Cohen 2001: 101). As a result of the post-war cultures of denial in Mozambique, the plight of the victims and survivors was completely disavowed. The immediate consequence of the post-civil war official strategy of denial was that the victims and former perpetrators and their associates had to share and to live in the same villages where the most appalling abuses and egregious crimes had taken place.

The debates on transitional justice suggest that this type of post-war settlement gives rise not only to feelings of revenge but also to actual physical violence as a form of reckoning with war-related abuses and crimes. However, as is demonstrated below, in Gorongosa such acts of physical violence largely did not take place at family and community level.

One of the most important ways of addressing the abuses and injustices of the civil war,

without setting in motion new cycles of physical violence, can be observed through the *life situations* in which the survivors of war actively make use of the community resources that are available to them to deal with the multiple wartime legacies. This is the process of healing and the dispensation of restorative justice by *magamba* spirits and *magamba* healers.

The debates on transitional justice suggest that this type of post-war settlement gives rise not only to feelings of revenge but also to actual physical violence as a form of reckoning with war-related abuses and crimes. In Gorongosa, such acts of physical violence largely did not take place.

4. The legacies of the civil war and the socio-cultural landscape of Gorongosa

The people of Gorongosa inhabit a pluralistic environment in terms of the sources of power and legal order, and traditional and Christian religious beliefs and practices. All these resources have interesting histories in the light of the Portuguese colonial policies and the post-independence Marxist–Leninist ideologies promoted by Frelimo. In spite of the historical metamorphosis that some of these resources have gone through, particularly traditional power, justice, and medicine, all of them, including the Christian religious groups, have played a role in dealing with different aspects of the legacies of civil war.

For instance, in the aftermath of the 1992 peace agreement and in the months immediately following, traditional chiefs and judges assumed increased importance. The whole process of population resettlement and relief operations required a major coordination effort, to which the local chiefs were indispensable. Also of key importance was the immediate peaceful resolution of conflicts among people who had been bitterly divided because of the war. The chiefs' overall message to their fellow war victims was to insist upon reconciliation and to rule out *ku hirindzira* (revenge). The chiefs advised the people to do *ku lekerera* (to forgive) and *ku lekererana* (to forgive one another) as the best strategy to end the cycles of violence brought about by the civil war. Traditional healers in particular played a key role in the reintegration of the ex-soldiers not only in Gorongosa but also in different regions of the country. They conducted reception and reintegration rituals for former soldiers as a way of reconnecting to their former alienated communities in the post-civil war Mozambique (Dolan and Schafer 1997).

Christian religious groups also participated in the post-war reconciliation processes. The majority of the churches in Gorongosa engaged in spreading a clear and strong message of peace and reconciliation without any type of *justiça terrena* (earthly justice). Ideas about obtaining formal justice and *ku hirindzira* were totally discouraged. The responsibility for enacting justice against those individuals who had abused and killed innocent people during the war was left to God. In parallel to preaching reconciliation through forgiveness, religious groups engaged energetically in healing the sick.

In Gorongosa, the war-related *magamba* spirits and *gamba* healers are the only post-civil war phenomenon that relates closely to transitional justice in a broader sense. They engage with the grisly past discursively, bodily and by means of a performance to create post-war healing of war-related wounds. They also create public spaces where restorative justice is attained in a context of the transition from a civil war to peace.

These agents and the resources at their disposal play an important role, but they do not actively engage with the violent past. They instead promote reconciliation through forgiveness, and a unilateral forgiveness, as it were, which requires no acknowledgement of responsibility from the perpetrators. For this reason, we have opted here to examine only the war-related *magamba* spirits and *gamba* healers. They are the only post-civil war phenomenon that relates closely to transitional justice in

a broader sense. *Magamba* engage with the grisly past in a profound way—that is discursively, bodily and by means of a performance—to create post-war healing of war-related wounds. In their multiple meanings and manifestations, *magamba* also create public spaces where restorative justice is practised and attained in a context of the transition from a civil war to peace.

5. The role of *magamba* spirits in post-war Gorongosa

The *magamba* spirits emerged into the socio-cultural world of Gorongosa, which historically was already inhabited by a plethora of spirits and healers, in the context of the Mozambican civil war, and are particularly prominent in the Gorongosa region. They play different roles in society. The various spirits initially cause suffering, but then the suffering is transformed into a healing power. Particularly with *magamba* spirits, the procedures followed to transform affliction into healing disclose the existence of social spaces and momentum for the enactment of restorative justice.

The *magamba* spirits initially cause suffering, but then the suffering is transformed into a healing power.

People in Gorongosa, as in many other parts of Africa, live in a social world that traditionally practises the belief that the death of individuals through traumatic acts, or the breaking of taboos such as the

killing of human beings without metaphysical and/or social legitimization, is an offence that requires immediate redress through atonement rituals. If wrongdoing is not acknowledged, the spirit of the innocent victim will return to the realm of the living to struggle for justice.

Historically, *madzoca* healers have controlled the world of the spirits in Gorongosa. These healers worked under the guidance of ancestral spirits. They were specialized in divination and had the monopoly of states of possession or trance. This monopoly had three implications. First, only individuals who belonged to families with a history of ancestral healing spirits could work as healers. Second, during the healing of any affliction the

patient did not have a voice. There was a socio-cultural expectation that by using the very powerful ancestral spirits the *madzoca* healer would disclose the aetiology of the health or social problem. Through a technique called *ku fema* (to sniff), which was enacted in a state of possession by the spirit or trance, the *madzoca* healer was capable of transferring the problem from the body of the patient or client to his or her own body. Thereafter the healer would disclose all the invisible dimensions of the problem at hand and define an intervention strategy to be followed. Finally, these healing procedures concentrated a great deal of power in the hands of the *madzoca* healers and their ancestral spirits, and the patient was expected to take a submissive role.

Perhaps because the Gorongosa communities were functioning under conditions of relatively bearable stresses, the role played by the *madzoca* healers was never greatly contested.

In addition, in the 19th century, as a result of the migration of Nguni ethnic groups from the south to subjugate the populations in the centre of Mozambique, many acts of generalized violence and killings of members of local groups are reported to have taken place. As a corollary of this generalized violence, without any metaphysical or social legitimization, a new spirit was introduced in the centre of Mozambique, called *n'fukua*. This spirit, which returns to the realm of the living to seek justice by afflicting the culprits and their social group, signalled the presence of human-made mass pollution in the Gorongosa communities. The *n'fukua* phenomenon was also seen in the south of the country (Honwana 1996). However, the *n'fukua* spirits never managed to establish themselves to the extent of creating a solid institution among the Gorongosa people. According to testimonies of older people in Gorongosa, *n'fukua* spirits remained a concealed phenomenon and there are very few material traces of them now left. Perhaps one important aspect to consider is that *n'fukua* spirits can be considered the predecessors of the *magamba* spirits in terms of the logic of their operation—revenge for an alleged unjust death. Yet, unlike the *n'fukua* spirits, the *magamba* spirits went further by establishing themselves as a local institution of healing activity alongside the existing ancestral *madzoca* healers.

6. *Magamba* spirits: a new era, serious afflictions and social spaces for healing

Against the background of the *madzoca* healers, who embodied the ancestral spirits, *magamba* spirits ushered in a new era in Gorongosa. This new era featured rejuvenation, the strength and 'voice' of young people, and an attempt to achieve a balance between individual and collective responsibility. *Magamba* spirits also ushered in a new period in that reformed rules and procedures were introduced in the healing activity. In order to understand the restorative justice embodied by the *magamba* spirits, we need to examine the ethnographic facts and contrast them with the procedures of the institution of *madzoca*.

A key feature of the *gamba* spirit is its randomized dimension, that is, the spirits broke with the conservative rule which maintained that only individuals belonging to families with healing histories could become possessed by spirits and work as healers. *Magamba* spirits can possess anyone in Gorongosa so long as the individual or his/her family has a history of abuse, abandonment, trauma and victimization through murder. Since the protracted civil war was a fertile period in which extreme human-on-human abuses, humiliation and suffering of all kinds took place, the *magamba* spirits rapidly gained prominence. Many people, particularly young women, started to become possessed by them. Possession by a *gamba* spirit brings severe health and social afflictions in the life of the victim/host and his or her close kin. However, the spirits also create the possibility for healing to take place.

Magamba spirits bear witness in multiple forms to the violent events that occurred during the civil war. For instance, unlike the *madzoca* healers who have as their main working instrument a *mutchira* (the tail of an animal), which is the indication of the interconnections between the ancestral spirits and nature, the *magamba* healers have as their main instrument a bayonet, which represents the violent past. These bayonets are said to be those found attached to the Kalashnikovs (AK-47s) that were used many times to stab and kill people. *Magamba* healers suggest that if these spirits are to be dealt with successfully the violence of the past cannot be ignored. There is a need to engage with the past, to find out what injustices were done, to acknowledge the wrongdoing and to repair the damage.

Magamba spirits bear witness to the violent events that occurred during the civil war. If these spirits are to be dealt with successfully, the violence of the past cannot be ignored. There is a need to engage with the past, to find out what injustices were done, to acknowledge the wrongdoing and to repair the damage.

This process is illustrated here with two related case studies—of Cenoria and her mother Amelia—which epitomize the healing and restorative justice dimension of the *magamba* spirits.

6.1. Cenoria: the background to the case

Cenoria is a young woman of 27. She was born amid the civil war in very traumatic circumstances. Her parents were living in a Renamo-controlled area, and one day three Renamo troops arrived at their house to take them to do *gandira*. At the time, Cenoria's mother, Amelia, was in a very late stage of pregnancy, carrying Cenoria. Cenoria's father intervened to ask the soldiers not to take his pregnant wife to do *gandira*. The soldiers became very annoyed, beat Cenoria's father severely and forced Amelia to go on the *gandira* mission. On the way they were ambushed by Frelimo-led government troops, and everyone ran away. The shock and fear led to Cenoria's mother giving birth to Cenoria alone and in the middle of the bush. Miraculously, both mother and baby

survived and the whole family decided to move away from Renamo area to the government-controlled area.

However, the elder brother of Cenoria's father—Zeca—refused to move to the government-controlled area and remained living under Renamo control. Strangely, three weeks after Cenoria's parents moved to the government-controlled area, Renamo soldiers invaded the area, forced the door of Cenoria's parents' house, kidnapped her father and took him back to the Renamo-controlled area. He was severely tortured and accused of treason. The fact that Renamo soldiers were able to find Cenoria's parents raised rumours that Zeca had betrayed his brother by leaking information to the soldiers about his whereabouts, and this denunciation almost cost him his life. Cenoria's father permanently severed relations with Zeca.

When the war was over in October 1992, amid advice from the political authorities to forgive, forget and be reconciled, Cenoria's father and Zeca remained alienated from one another and never attempted to get together or restore their relations. In the meantime, Cenoria grew up, reached the age of marriage and married a young man from the neighbourhood. She became pregnant, and some weeks before giving birth began to be seized by a spirit. They went to a healer and the presence of a *gamba* spirit was diagnosed. Since the date for the birth was coming closer, the *gamba* healer decided to perform an ad hoc ceremony to placate the *gamba* spirit so that the baby could be saved. Indeed, Cenoria managed to deliver the baby safely.

The *gamba* healer had indicated that a more comprehensive ceremony was needed to call up the *gamba* spirit lodged in the body of Cenoria so that the problem could be solved definitively. However, as Cenoria gained strength and the baby was growing up healthy, she and her family did not follow the healer's instructions. Two years passed, she continued to live with her husband, and she became pregnant again. This time the baby died some weeks after it was born. They mourned, buried the dead baby and moved on, living their own lives. Two years later, Cenoria and her husband began to realize that she was failing to get pregnant. They decided to continue trying for another baby for one more year, but failed. In the meantime, Cenoria started having very frightening nightmares and sometimes experienced dreams as if she were releasing spirits. According to the local interpretation, this indicates the presence of a bad spirit.

Cenoria and her parents decided to consult a *gamba* healer again. During the initial consultation, Cenoria became possessed and the spirit came out. The spirit disclosed that he was revenging a wrongdoing perpetrated by Zeca during the civil war, and that unless Zeca acknowledged and made restitution for the damage done Cenoria was doomed to suffer even more.

As already mentioned, Cenoria's parents had had no contact at all with Zeca since the days of the civil war. Since they had accused Zeca of betrayal, how could they approach him and convince him to go to a *gamba* healer with them to respond to the accusations

of the spirit lodged in Cenoria's body? On the one hand, accusing Zeca could trigger another cycle of bitterness and even violence between Cenoria's father and his elder brother. On the other hand, if Cenoria's father failed to comply with the *gamba* spirit's request, that is, to bring Zeca for the healing session, Cenoria would not survive and would certainly fail in life. There was no other way out because *magamba* spirits cannot be definitively healed unless the person who is accused and his/her relatives come forward, acknowledge wrongdoing in front of everyone present at the healing session, and accept making restitution for the war-related havoc (when *magamba* spirits manifest themselves their voices target not individuals but entire collectives).

Under these circumstances, Cenoria's father decided to tell his brother Zeca about the problem. There was no violence, but Zeca denied any wrongdoing during the civil war and adamantly refused to take part in any ceremony related to his younger brother. Since Cenoria's father could not force his elder brother, he decided to report the case in the community court. Zeca was called before the court, and the judges enjoined him to attend the healing session for Cenoria's sake and referred the case to the headquarters of AMETRAMO (the Mozambican Association of Traditional Medical Practitioners). In this way the entire family of Cenoria and the two brothers were eventually reunited for the first time after many years. The presence of the *gamba* claiming justice broke the silence and enjoined the alienated people to come together and address their war-related conflicts.

6.2. Amelia: the background to the case

Amelia is aged 40. Part of her traumatic experience has already been described in the context of the birth of her daughter, Cenoria. What can be added is that during the war Amelia was separated from her kin—her father, mother, brothers and sisters. In the very early stages of the civil war, Amelia's parents decided to abandon their *madembe* (place of origin) to live in an area controlled by the government authorities. They remained under government control until the end of the civil war. Amelia stayed behind in the *madembe* with her husband and under Renamo control until the very late stages of the war when they also decided to escape to a government-controlled zone.

Amelia's problems started during the civil war. After the dangerous but successful birth of Cenoria, Amelia started to have reproductive health problems. Sometimes she would become pregnant, but after some months she would have unplanned miscarriages. On other occasions she gave birth, but the baby did not survive the first six months of life. On still other occasions she simply failed to get pregnant.

To seek a treatment for Amelia, she and her husband joined a Christian religious group. They remained loyal to the Christian life for many years, to the extent that Amelia's husband even became a pastor, but Amelia was not healed. Amelia asked for help from her father and he advised her not to give up praying, since he is also a Christian. After many years without a resolution Amelia and her husband gave up the Christian religious

life and her plight almost fell into oblivion. It was the case of their daughter Cenoria that resurrected Amelia's case.

6.3. Transmutation of voices and truths about the past: Cenoria and Amelia

Within the context of political impunity and silence that characterized the Mozambican post-civil war period, the emergent *magamba* spirits create social spaces where alienated people can get together to address their war-related conflicts. In order for the *gamba* spirit to create healing and restorative justice, a ceremony has to be performed resulting from a collective endeavour under the closer monitoring of a *gamba* healer. At this level, the role of the *gamba* healer is to ensure that the performance unfolds adequately in order to convince the *gamba* spirit, lodged in the body of the afflicted patient or the patient's kin, to manifest itself to the public.

Usually when any healer (*madzoca* or *gamba*) receives a patient in his/her house who is in need of *ku socera* (a diagnosis ceremony), the healer beats a drum to tell the neighbours about the forthcoming ceremony. In the night, the neighbours appear at the healer's house to help perform *ku socera*. In a diagnosis and healing session, the *gamba* healer and the participants sing songs that evoke the events of the war, suffering and death. While they sing, the patient is placed sitting in the middle of the participants. The *gamba* healer enters a trance, takes hold of his/her bayonet and starts re-enacting events from the civil war. He or she begins to crawl, shoot, fight, make strange movements, run, smoke *nbanje* (cannabis) and drink alcohol. The principal objective of this performance is to trigger a combination of fear and empathy in the patient in order to induce the state of possession. As a result, the patient begins to be hyper-aroused, making uncontrolled body movements, and the participants—no longer singing—start screaming loudly to call upon the spirit to manifest itself. This is a moment of suspense in the ritual since it is unclear to the participants at this point whether the patient will be able to let the spirit assume full control of his/her body. Just before the spirit manifests itself, the patient gives a loud scream as if s/he is being hurt. The patients acquire extraordinary physical strength; they become violent in their body movements and speech, and glare fixedly. The Gorongosa theory is that the spirit is returning to take revenge for past misdeeds, and for this reason the *gamba's* presence is marked by very violent acts.

The *gamba* healer, in a state of trance, manages to appease the patient's *gamba* spirit by empathically asking the spirit to disclose what happened during the war. When the *gamba* spirit subsides, the healer then returns to his or her normal state and a transmutation of voices and roles takes place. The focus is now solely on the patient who is possessed by the spirit. The spirit starts disclosing what happened to him so that every participant can hear.

The *performance* by the *gamba* healer and the other participants is extremely important because the spirit who is afflicting the patient has to manifest itself to the public through the patient's body. This is greatly in contrast to the procedures practised by *madzoca*

healers. As is stated above, these *madzoca* healers were believed to have extraordinary powers, to the extent that during the diagnosis process the patients were not expected to have a voice; it was the voice of the ancestral spirit that disclosed the whole truth. *Magamba* spirits transmuted this logic by giving a central position to the patients' bodies instead of the healer. When the *gamba* spirit is ready to make the indictments, the role of the *gamba* healer is then to mediate the public deliberations in order to reach a settlement.

It was with these expectations—a public ceremony to disclose the truth about the violent past and determine individual responsibilities—that Cenoria, her parents and Zeca and his family went to AMETRAMO. The *magamba* healers affiliated to this organization performed *ku socera* and the *gamba* spirit came out through Cenoria's body. His name was Fernando. He said that he was a former Renamo soldier and that he had died in a battle. After his death, Zeca had secretly taken parts of his body to make a spell in order to cope with the extreme famine of the time by increasing his agricultural production.

Initially, Zeca adamantly denied this. He said that he had seen many corpses during the war, but he had never touched the dead body of a soldier. There were very heated arguments; the *gamba* healer in charge was mediating the discussions and the entire audience was listening carefully. The spirit further disclosed that after the civil war Zeca had decided to 'launch' (*ku tussira*) or to take him to the house of his young brother in order to live in the body of Cenoria. The other *gamba* healers present at the session urged Zeca to confess the truth surrounding these allegations so that the spirit could be appeased. After many hours of deliberation Zeca stated that someone during the war had advised him to seek out such spells in order to cope with the famine. Zeca also said that after the war, since his younger brother did not try to meet him to count the number of their dead and worship them, he decided to launch that spirit to dwell in the body of Cenoria.

Zeca acknowledged wrongdoing and the *magamba* healers asked the spirit to determine how he should make reparation. The *gamba* ordered that Zeca should bring back the scattered parts of his body and build him a house in the nearby forest close to a tree called *mussequessa* (often found in cemeteries) where he would live. In turn, the healers ordered both Zeca and Cenoria's father to look for the parts of the body in the bush, and the healers tried to identify a location with the *mussequessa* tree. After that Zeca and his brother built the house for the *gamba* spirit.

The following day, very early in the morning, the *magamba* healers together with Cenoria, both her parents and Zeca went to the bush to perform the reparation and closure ceremony. The few participants sang the calling songs and the same *gamba* spirit came out again through the body of Cenoria. The healers showed the house to the spirit and Zeca and his brother were urged to utter some reconciliatory words for the spirit. Zeca in particular respectfully apologized to the spirit and asked him to leave Cenoria's body. The *gamba* spirit ordered Cenoria's entire family to stop *ku dungunha* (murmuring) in private, to remove the grudges harboured within their hearts and to live in peace (*mutendere*) and with understanding (*ku verana*).

While the *magamba* healers were performing *ku socera* for Cenoria, something strange happened to Amelia, who was also helping to sing and clap her hands. She suddenly started doing *ku tekemuka* (shaking), which is an indication of the presence of a spirit. The *magamba* healers and the whole audience noticed her plight and indeed Amelia became possessed. The name of this spirit was Alberto. He disclosed that Amelia's paternal grandfather had killed him at the beginning of the civil war and had secretly offered Amelia to the spirit as compensation for the damage. However, the grandfather was already dead. In such cases, where the indicted person is dead, the only person who could do *ku himirira* (the senior member of the kin group who assumes responsibility for the kin group) was Amelia's father. Since he was not present that night, the *magamba* healers terminated the session. They ordered Amelia and her husband to request Amelia's father to come to AMETRAMO to deal with their past estrangement.

The case of Amelia was very complicated because, as stated above, her father was a Christian. Usually, Christian believers refuse to assemble with what they call *wanu wa dzico* (people of this world)—people who do not follow the lifestyle prescribed by the Christian canon. Amelia and her husband spoke to Amelia's father about the need to take part in a healing session at AMETRAMO, but he refused. Worse, he stated that he would rather die than step into the house of a traditional healer. Despite many attempts to convince him, he never changed from his very inflexible position, but made it clear that any attempt to force him to enter the house of a healer would end in tragedy since he would kill himself. In these circumstances, neither Amelia and her husband nor the *magamba* healers could go any further. No public ceremony, and no voices and collective truths about the past were discovered that could pave the way to addressing Amelia's condition. She would have to live with the spirit of someone her grandfather had murdered; and, worse, this spirit was blocking her reproductive wellbeing and that of her husband.

Traditional healing practices are holistic, and magamba embody this tradition. They are as much about healing as about restorative justice and reconciliation.

6.4. The efficacy of a gamba healer's interventions

The lives of Cenoria and her mother were followed for three years. One year after the intervention Cenoria managed to conceive and gave birth to a baby. In the third year, once again she managed to conceive and delivered another baby. Currently, she lives a peaceful life with her husband and three children. The side effects of the intervention were that Cenoria's father and Zeca re-established their family relations (Zeca was imprisoned, accused of cultivating cannabis in his fields, but released some months later because of lack of solid proof).

For Amelia, Cenoria's mother, the situation had not changed at all. She did not manage to become pregnant and her relationship with her husband experienced difficulties. He was convinced that the failure to conceive children was the fault of his wife and her

paternal kin. The relationship between Amelia and her father deteriorated since he was apparently blocking the possibility for his daughter to procreate and consequently to have a dignified and happier life. In turn, Amelia's father believed that he was not blocking anything; he argued that he preferred his daughter to continue in the church and seek a solution via the Christian God. However, the problem of the Christian religious groups is that they neither encourage discourse and practices that revisit the violent past nor demand any form of responsibility of people involved in war-related conflict. Christian religious groups in Gorongosa rely entirely on unilateral forgiveness since God is considered to be the most important figure in the resolution of conflicts. This is not to suggest that this is a bad strategy. The dilemma is that when a conflict persists, and as a result people experience profound agonies and serious afflictions, the Christian approach is lacking in terms of providing sensitive interventions that respond to the real needs of war survivors. For people like Amelia the Christian religious approach represents a serious limitation since the source for the resolution of their problems lies precisely in the capacity of living people to engage with the violent past. It is through the re-enactment of the violent past by the *gamba* spirit that the aetiology of current problems can be unveiled, healing, justice and reconciliation attained and communal stability restored.

For people like Amelia the source for the resolution of their problems lies in the capacity of living people to engage with the violent past.

7. Legacies of the civil war, *magamba* spirits and practices of restorative justice

The cases of Cenoria and her mother Amelia are not unique. They mirror the plight of many survivors in the post-civil war period in Gorongosa. Although the two cases described here concern mainly women, there are also men who become possessed by *magamba* spirits and undergo similar resolution procedures. The procedures followed by the *gamba* healer demonstrate powerfully that healing and war-related justice cannot be conceived as two separate phenomena. Traditional healing practices are holistic, and the *magamba* spirits embody this tradition. They are as much about healing as about restorative justice.

As is stated above, the civil war seriously weakened various features of the social capital that for many years had contributed to trustful relations among family members and social stability in the communities. Many families were divided and family members were sometimes forced to spy on one another, which resulted in the killing of their kin. When the war was over, very few families decided to reunite to count their dead and worship their angry spirits. Family members wanted to forget the horror. They tried to take refuge in silence and avoided getting together in order to look back seriously and thereby move forward. However, the Gorongosa people live in a socio-cultural milieu in which histories of abuse, humiliation and (particularly) innocent killings do not easily

vanish away. In fact, unless a crime is properly addressed, it will always come back to haunt the culprits, their relatives and society as a whole.

The *gamba* spirit embodies this value—extreme suffering and violent killings will never end unless they are properly addressed. Within this context, the *magamba* spirits broke down the walls of silence that the official authorities of the nation state, including many survivors of the war, had built in order to deny and to forget the past. The *gamba* spirit challenges the prevailing politics of denial and compels war survivors to deal with some of their unsettled war-related disputes.

The cases of Cenoria and her mother Amelia demonstrate that *magamba* spirits create the social space where the past can be worked through. In these post-war social spaces, the anger of the *gamba* spirit is dealt with by bringing together the plaintiff, the defendants and their respective families. Most of these families were torn apart during the civil war and remained divided in the post-war period. *Magamba* spirits force them to come together and address aspects of their amoral and shameful past. Above all, they allow many people to feel that they are victims and to reassert that they were wronged during the civil war. They also serve as an agency for the war survivors that permits them to redress the legacies of the civil war at the family and community level.

In the past (before the civil war), *madzoca* healers were the most important figures in the healing procedures and patients hardly had any agency. *Magamba* spirits re-formed this logic. Now, it is the aggrieved survivor who has a voice and has to take responsibility. The voice acquires a compelling power and authority through the presence of the *gamba* spirit. It is this power and authority that allow war survivors to deal with certain truths of their violent past.

Yet several questions can be asked.

First, whose truth do the *magamba* spirits evoke?

Magamba spirits do not primarily evoke individual factual truths. What counts in the scenes of *gamba* spirit possession are testimonies of *collective* truths of victimization and post-war responsibility and accountability. This is because, according to this African logic, responsibility and guilt are collective (Amadiume 2000: 52). This is not to suggest that testimonies portraying the factual truths of individual agents are not evoked during the *gamba* healing sessions. They are. It is perhaps appropriate to mention what Annette Wieviorka writes in relation to processes of cultural production of testimonies. She states that ‘testimonies, particularly when they are produced as part of a larger cultural movement, express the discourse or discourses valued by society at the moment the witnesses tell their stories as much as they render an individual experience’ (Wieviorka 2006: xii).

In this sense it is possible to explain how the presence of the *gamba* spirit in the case of Cenoria paved the way for the traumatic history of Amelia to be told. Although the

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testimony of her life history was not the key factor that allowed the healing ceremony to take place, there were moments during the deliberations when Amelia brought up aspects of her past to argue that the suffering they were going through had to stop. In one of these moments Amelia said in an disenchanted way: 'I suffered a lot with this

child [Cenoria] (...) this child was born in the middle of the bush and we were both about to die because of the war. Now the war is over but the suffering is continuing, how is this possible? How can someone build a house [family] in this way?' The *gamba* healer gazed at her and responded, 'That is why we are here tonight. The spirit is a person; he is seeing that we are very concerned with his complaints. When the family of your husband follows what the spirit is saying, when they pay what the spirit wants, your problem will be resolved and this case will end'.

One very important aspect of the answer of this *gamba* healer is that it is not devoid of meaning. It carries a profound message of hope since it acknowledges the suffering of the patient and promises to restore their dignity so long as the violent collective history is not avoided, the discursive practices of confession are enacted and the reparation is performed. These types of narrative, evoking personal experiences of suffering, are often disclosed in the middle of the highly agitated sessions of *gamba* healing. Yet the most significant narratives are the ones that evoke the *collective* truths and it is the responsibility of the *gamba* spirit to air this collective truth.

A second important aspect to consider vis-à-vis the voice of the victim heard through the presence of the *gamba* spirit is the following: in general, a *gamba* is the spirit of a dead soldier, that is, a former perpetrator. How is it possible for a former perpetrator to return to the realm of the living to fight for justice? Whose victimization and whose justice are at stake in cases of possession by a *gamba* spirit? It may seem paradoxical that the former perpetrator does not return to apologise and ask for forgiveness, as Christian religious practices would expect. Instead, the former perpetrator comes back as a victim. Looking at the dynamics of the civil war in Mozambique, it could be argued that many of the young men who actively took part in the fighting could indeed claim that they are victims. Those on the side of Renamo were usually abducted and those on the side of the Frelimo-led government army participated as part of compulsory military service, which was sanctioned by the law. Should we not therefore be struggling for justice vis-à-vis those who were directly responsible for the abductions and forced military recruitment?

How is it possible for a former perpetrator to return to the realm of the living to fight for justice? Magamba spirits reflect the profound contradictions of surviving a civil war.

Although it is very reasonable to raise such a question, this is not the main issue among the *magamba* spirits and the people who believe in the inner logic of the way they operate. The heart of the matter is that *magamba* spirits reflect the profound

contradictions of surviving a civil war at the very epicentre of where the war was fought. These contradictions bespeak that actions for post-war reparation cannot be driven by fixed categories—‘perpetrator’, ‘victim’, ‘bystander’, ‘coward’ and so on. Surviving a protracted war compels the survivors to acknowledge the extreme plasticity of personal identities at the time of the war and the consequent recognition of the need for flexibility in post-war conceptualizations. It is the capacity to conceive of and to accept the malleability of identities and categories that permits war survivors in Gorongosa to achieve resolutions to their war-related conflicts.

Within this context of acknowledgement of malleability or plasticity—that is, from the socio-cultural perspective of the Gorongosa people—it is precisely the impossibility of a spirit asking for forgiveness that creates the possibility for those living to achieve reconciliation and healing through mechanisms of restorative justice. The perpetrators of extreme abuses and crimes during the war come back as *magamba* spirits and as victims. The struggle of the spirits creates the social spaces where the war survivors who were the victims of abuses and those who have perpetrated abuses, as well as their families and the entire community, get together. In the social spaces that are thus created, the violence of the past is re-enacted: the grudges, bitterness and discontent in the hearts of the survivors can be conveyed without the risk of starting fresh cycles of abuse and violence.

To generalize, ethnographically, *magamba* spirits present (a) the violent history of the region and of the living and dead collective: *gamba* is about the *manhadzo* (shameful) acts of the past war; (b) the possibility for negative feelings and bad memories among the war survivors to be channelled in a positive way: when *magamba* spirits come out they disclose what happened; (c) a safe and social space for a communal dialogue and transformation of communal war legacies: *magamba* spirits insult people because they are very annoyed with what happened; and (d) restorative justice by repairing the dignity of individual war survivors and their families who until then were living with deep divisions and afflictions: ‘your problem will be resolved’.

In the social spaces that are created in the *magamba* healing ceremonies, the violence of the past is re-enacted: the grudges, bitterness and discontentment in the hearts of the survivors can be conveyed without the risk of starting fresh cycles of abuse and violence. They channel negative feelings and restore the dignity of individual war survivors and their families.

The idea and the practice of restorative justice are reinforced since, during the procedures to deal with *magamba* spirits, the ethnographic facts demonstrate that *gamba* healers do not use, for example, the communal concepts of healing or curing (*ku lapa* or *ku londziwa*). Instead they apply legal concepts such as *ku tongwa* (to judge), *ku vundzissana* (to interrogate one another), *ku bueca* (to confess), *ku lipa* (to pay), *ku lekerera* (to forgive) and *ku verana* (understanding).

When the momentum created by the *magamba* spirits is socio-culturally explored, the individual victims and their families are able to achieve reconciliation and to move on in

life with dignity and social stability. This is well demonstrated by the case of Cenoria. On the other hand, when denial persists among the war survivors, the outcome is sadness and continuous suffering. This is illustrated by the case of Amelia.

Finally, despite these very positive aspects, we should also take a critical approach to the content of *gamba*. It carries a gender bias. That is, the women killed during the Mozambican civil war are unable to return as spirits to the realm of the living to claim justice. Only the spirits of men can do this. In this sense, although *magamba* spirits break with the silence of the past, structurally the justice they offer helps to reinforce patriarchal power in a country that is struggling for gender equality. Within this context, there is a need to establish a political agenda that is informed by well-established socio-cultural knowledge to address the gender bias imposed by *magamba* spirits. Female war survivors and women in general in Gorongosa need complementary (outside) interventions that can give them voice and agency not only in the domain of healing and through the language of spirits but also in other domains of the social, legal and economic organization of their communities, so that they can more effectively transform their present predicament.

8. Conclusion

The Mozambican peace agreement put an end to the violence of the civil war and brought relief from the horrors and appalling forms of human suffering. However, from a transitional justice perspective the peace agreement rests on very unjust foundations. Through a culture of denial, the Mozambican political elites precluded any legal or political process for a reckoning with the gross violations of human rights and the crimes perpetrated during the civil war.

In the aftermath of a protracted civil war, to reconcile deeply divided families and communities is a very complicated task. The challenge is more difficult and overwhelming when those who bear direct responsibility for the violence abandon the war survivors (the victims and former perpetrators) to resolve their profound war-related conflicts by themselves. Yet, in spite of this deliberate official neglect and abandonment, the war survivors living in the former epicentres of the civil war in Gorongosa have neither resorted to violent revenge (as Richard Wilson (2001) describes in relation to the townships in post-apartheid South Africa) nor gone along with the official authorities, who urged survivors to ‘forgive and forget’. Instead, inspired by their own cultural wisdom, the survivors in Gorongosa managed to develop their own socio-cultural mechanisms to create healing and attain justice and reconciliation in the aftermath of the civil war.

Through the emergence of the *magamba* spirits, social spaces were created in which the grisly past is rescued from silence and individuals, families and members of the community are forced to come together to address the legacies of violence. These performance-based

practices and the procedures they involve heal war-related wounds and create a local form of restorative justice, which gives dignity to the survivors. From a political perspective, *gamba* is not a response to the failure of the state institutions to provide accountability measures as part of a transitional justice process in the aftermath of the civil war. *Gamba* is part of the development of a well-established local tradition of settling accounts with histories of individual and collective violence. When an innocent person dies unjustly, no matter whether or how the secular justice system intervenes, the spirit of the dead person returns to the realm of the living to haunt the culprits, their families and their communities. Unless the appropriate rituals are performed the culprits and the collective are doomed to suffer. In this regard, *magamba* spirits evoke socio-cultural forms of justice and reconciliation in the aftermath of a horrific past which allows war-torn communities to contain violence, re-establish social order and foster a sense of continuity and communal identity.

In the process of determining the general impact of *magamba* spirits in Mozambique, it is clear that these spirits and the practices they evoke are making a decisive contribution to everyday forms of post-war reconstruction of the Mozambican state institutions through the provision of health care and access to certain types of truth and justice. Moreover, *magamba* spirits and healers reinforce the idea of the plurality of the African institutions of justice, reconciliation and healing.

Socio-cultural processes such as those enacted by *magamba* spirits and healers belong to what we term *entangled truths*. That is, *magamba* spirits and healers allow war survivors to attain justice, and this is creating healing and reconciliation in central Mozambique.

Yet in spelling out these important local achievements, *magamba* and other similar post-war phenomena run the risk of being wrongly used by the national political elites. For instance, political elites can use the success of *magamba* spirits and healers as arguments to justify their option for post-war amnesties, impunity and silence. The argument revolves around the idea that ‘Mozambicans have their own way’ and it is therefore not necessary to unleash formal justice processes to reckon with the abuses and crimes perpetrated during the civil war and the Marxist–Leninist dictatorship. This position is confirmed by what former President Joaquim Chissano told journalists on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the General Peace Agreement, on 4 October 2004. Mozambican journalists quoted him inveighing against any investigation of the crimes of the past: ‘We do not need to know who killed more between one and the other’ (*Diário de Moçambique* 2004). The newspaper indicated that ‘Chissano reiterated that he was against the creation of a truth and reconciliation commission, as it happened in the “post-apartheid” South Africa, to investigate anything related to the armed conflict in Mozambique (...) Chissano said that reconciliation in Mozambique is being made in a Mozambican way, with daily actions, and this is being applauded worldwide’ (*Diário de Moçambique* 2004; author’s translation). Chissano is right in his assertion, since socio-cultural phenomena such as the one presented by *magamba* spirits both bear witness to the experiences of extreme war violence and bespeak everyday forms of engaging in post-civil war justice, reconciliation and healing. However, on two counts Chissano is not so correct. First, he

confuses community and state responsibilities, and, second, he fails to develop a critical approach to the ‘Mozambican way’ and to the actions of the national political elites over the past.

In the end, the fact that war survivors are engaged in everyday forms of attaining justice, reconciliation and healing should not be used as an excuse for state inaction vis-à-vis the violent past. The responsibility of individuals and families that survived the war within the former war zones is one thing; the accountability of those who were directly responsible for the indiscriminate violence that killed thousands of people and destroyed large parts of the country over a period of 16 years is another. In relation to post-war accountability, the former statesman Chissano remained mute. So far, no organized groups have emerged in Mozambican society to systematically chivy the political authorities to investigate the crimes perpetrated during the civil war. The result is that politicians from both Frelimo and Renamo use the memories of the civil war as weapons for political gain.

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