

**“THE WORLD IS UPSIDE DOWN”:  
WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS  
IN CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE**

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**“The World is Upside Down”:  
Women’s Participation in Religious Movements in Mozambique**

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**Christy K. Schuetze**

To Dina and to her children who carry on

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **“THE WORLD IS UPSIDE DOWN”: WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE**

Christy K. Schuetze

Sandra T. Barnes

In recent years, new Pentecostal-style churches have proliferated around the world. Expanding at astonishing rates in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, the growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches has shifted the global center of gravity of Christianity from the West to the global South. This dissertation takes a new approach to studying the impacts of such powerful new religious developments. Rather than study a single type of religious group, the study follows women, the striking majority of participants in Pentecostal churches and in emergent forms of “traditional” religion, through new networks of spiritual and social healing. Drawing on over ten years of personal connections and more than three years of ethnographic field research in central Mozambique, this dissertation examines the dynamics of these religious developments in the lives of women participants, providing a view into how larger forces associated with globalization differentially impact women. Central to the dissertation is an illustration of how, through participation in new networks of religious and spiritual healing, women are creating and adopting new strategies to cope with increasing strain in their daily lives.

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## Introduction

### **“The World is Upside Down”: Women’s Participation in Religious Movements in Central Mozambique**

#### **Opening**

“*O mundo está virado*”: “The world is upside down.” This was how a young woman in Gorongosa expressed her feelings after losing her eight year old sister to malaria. Her sister’s malaria, a relatively common illness that would normally be easy for an eight-year-old to overcome, became deadly, since it was complicated by her HIV+ status, a result of infection before, during, or shortly after the birthing process. The child’s death from malaria was the latest in a string of tragedies that left the young woman and her nine siblings orphans. As the eldest female, she took charge of the family, becoming a single mother and caretaker for her two children as well as her four youngest siblings.

As death and severe illness have become more common in the context of the HIV/AIDS crisis and as economic changes make it more difficult for the majority of people in Mozambique to make ends meet, the sense that the world is out of balance and dominated by evil forces that are creating social disorder has become commonplace.

How do people manage to live in a world out of balance? When the “world is upside down” what can people do to regain control; to re-establish a sense of security and stability? These are the central questions underlying this study. Based on research conducted in Gorongosa, central Mozambique, the following pages illustrate how people searching for stability are making use of different spiritual and religious frameworks to

understand the disorder around them and to reorder their lives. In choosing “The World is Upside Down” as my title, I emphasize both the larger political-economic context that is contributing to the increasing pressures that people in Gorongosa are facing while also focusing on the actions they are taking to restore balance and regain a sense of security and stability.

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My interest in this topic arose prior to beginning graduate studies—when I lived in Gorongosa for three years. During that time, I was driven to understand why increasing numbers of women were undergoing personal transformations that afforded them membership in social networks of spiritual healing. Specifically, I was interested in understanding two of the most prominent types of religious transformations taking place in the region: the rapid spread of Pentecostal churches, and a simultaneous increase of new spirit-mediums,<sup>1</sup> known as *n’gangas*. These two forms of spiritual and religious practice have been a focus of considerable anthropological inquiry, but rarely are they given equal attention in a single study.

The global spread of Pentecostal churches has been of particular interest to anthropologists. In recent years, new Pentecostal-style churches have proliferated around the world. Expanding at astonishing rates in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, the growth of

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<sup>1</sup> The term spirit-medium indicates a wide variety of traditional healing practitioners in Mozambique. These special individuals and their clients understand that their powers for divination and healing derive from their connections to spirits. They serve as human vessels or mediums for spirits who communicate with them through dreams and/or possession. It is the spirits who have knowledge and expertise, and spirit-mediums, as human vessels of these spirits, can transfer these powers to others.



Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (PCCs) has been one of the most remarkable social-cultural phenomena in recent times (Meyer 2004). In less than one century, church movements of this style, worldwide, have gone from zero to 500 million faithful and have attracted scholarly attention as a particularly salient instance of cultural globalization (Coleman 2000, Hollenweger 1997, Poewe 1994, van der Veer 1996). The extraordinary growth of PCCs in sub-Saharan Africa has shifted the global “center of gravity” of Christianity from the West to the South (Bediako 2000).

Recent studies agree that the appeal of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches lies primarily in their emphasis on divine healing and the protection and deliverance from evil forces they offer (Bays 2003, Comaroff and Comaroff 2003, Marshall-Fratani 1998, Pfeiffer 2002, Robbins 2004, Siebert 2004, Van Dijk 2004). Even more intriguing, social scientists have noted that PCCs attract a membership that is overwhelmingly young and female (Agadjanian 1999, Comaroff 1985, Martin 1990, Meyer 2004, Robbins 2004). Recent studies have also noted that a distinctive aspect of PCCs in every corner of the globe is their characteristically vigorous “antisyncretism” (Meyer 2004, Robbins 2004). Leaders of PCCs pit themselves firmly against “local” tradition. This leads to an apparent paradox: though church leaders appeal to “local” understandings of spirit and occult forces in attracting participants, they demonize “traditional” religious practices and vigorously prohibit members from taking part in them. By a process of demonization, PCCs make indigenous spirits representatives of the devil (Meyer 1999).

Considering these churches' prohibition of traditional forms of religious healing, one might expect the dramatic expansion of Pentecostal churches in Mozambique to lead to a decline in the practice of "traditional religion." Yet, new forms of traditional religious practice have also been on the rise there (Chapman 2004, Pfeiffer 2002). Also, as in the PCCs, an astonishing proportion of recently-initiated spirit-mediums in Gorongosa, as in Mozambique are women (Honwana 1996). Far from canceling each other out, these religious developments mirror each other.

Despite their parallel growth, studies of Christian churches remain sharply separated from studies of spirit-possession and other "traditional" religious forms. The impressive diffusion of "global" religious groups like Pentecostal churches has captured the imaginations of social scientists, diverting attention from equally remarkable transformations in "local" religious practices. Anthropological studies continue to focus on single "types" of religious groups and, though this perspective provides rich accounts, it has led to a significant lacuna in research, preventing examination of how simultaneous transformations across different religious traditions are inter-related (Robbins 2004). Moreover, despite the striking predominance of young women in movements of religious revitalization across the globe, as yet, no ethnographic study examines the implications of women's religious participation across different traditions in a single framework.

Thus, rather than study a single religious group, I followed women, the striking majority in Pentecostal churches and in emergent forms of spirit-mediumship, through new networks of spiritual healing. This approach has allowed me to examine the dynamics of

these two traditions in their co-existence, exploring their relationship and interaction. In particular, I examined how changes in the religious landscape are playing out in people's lives and how these changes are entangled with larger economic and political forces. Seen from this point of view, religious practices are neither static nor isolated, but are continually being re-shaped from within and without, producing diverse solutions to common problems.

### **Looking Within and Between: Scholarly Context and Conceptual Frame of the Study**

Though I examine different types of social organization, action, and expressions typically slotted into the category "religion," my approach is not to test or to find a definition of this problematic category (Asad 1993), nor are its implications confined to studies of religion. Rather than looking at a particular religious group, I describe different religious forms of action and interpretation as a framework for examining how different representations of society emerge and how they circulate in social networks to transform social conditions (Mazzarella 2004).

Many rich studies of religion in Africa reveal the historical depth of religious movements and the variety of their expression (cf. de Craemer et. al. 1976, Fernandez 1978, Ranger 1986). This literature is filled with conflicting theories about the "causes" of narrowly defined religious movements. Religious movements have variously been seen as a form of cultural adaptation to the "anomie" of urban life (Martin 1990, Sundkler 1961); to the intensification of anxieties in neo-liberal economic contexts (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003, Smith 2004). They have been seen as sites of overt resistance to national governments (Borer 1998, Comaroff 1985, Lan 1985) and the hardships of labor conditions

(Ong 1988); or, by contrast, as socially conservative and apolitical (Schofeleers 1991). This array of sometimes contradictory interpretations reveals the diversity and flexibility of religious practices. Yet, the focus on explaining *why* religious movements gain force can give the impression that religious forms float independently above the play of social forces, or that religious practices are a mere instrument of change. Preoccupation with answering *why* has led many scholars to disregard *how* such religious formations transform social meanings in context (Robbins 2004).

Though many recent studies work to examine religious groups in relation to the postmodern contexts of which they are situated, they continue subtly to perpetuate a modernist paradigm. Recent examinations of spirit-mediumship, spirit possession, and other forms classed as “traditional” religion continue to focus solely on single types of religious practice despite contexts of considerable plurality (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2003, Friedson 1996, Geschiere 1997, Lan 1985, Lubkemann 2002). Similarly, studies of PCCs, “African Independent Churches” or other Christian traditions remain narrowly framed to examine practices and discourses of church participants (Agadjanian 1999, Comaroff 1985, Gifford 1998, Green 2003, Marshall-Fratani 1998, Pfeiffer 2002, Poewe 1994, Shorter and Njiru 2001, Siebert 2004, van Dijk 2004, van der Veer 1996). “Local” tradition comes into view only in the periphery, as a pool of elements drawn on in syncretism, or as a topic of church discourse that demonizes local traditions. These works thus give the impression of the “local” as marginal, as against a powerful and dynamic other, reproducing the modernist dichotomy of “traditional” and “modern” in the new language of “local” and “global.”

This overwhelming focus on institutionally bounded religious groups reveals the legacy of the anthropological gaze. This is derived from notions of bounded socio-cultural

forms, such as “cultures” or “tribes.” This way of defining research topics tends to obscure the turbulent environment of flux and conflict that exists within, between, and in relation to religious groups. Geertz’s famous definition of “religion” as a collectively shared and bounded “worldview” remains prominent despite much critique (Geertz 1973).

By contrast, my focus on women takes this analysis across and between very different religious contexts, shifting the aims of ethnographic inquiry from documenting a particular set of religious practices to examining how a politics of identity emerges and unfolds in a religiously competitive and plural environment. To conceptually unify the examination of an extremely complex and fractured religious environment, I draw on Bourdieu’s relational notion of the cultural field. For Bourdieu, the “cultural field” is a space of possibilities in which “every position, even the dominant one, depends on its occupants, on the other positions constituting the field ...” (Bourdieu 1977, 1993: 30). Focusing on the “religious field,” then, entails examining the ways in which analogous sets of religious practices are inter-related and entangled with each other and with a shared socio-historical context. Taking this approach, the dynamics at play in one religious community cannot be understood in isolation from those against which it defines itself.

Finally, because the everyday practices that emerge in and through religious and spiritual healing transcend distinctions between “religion,” “politics,” “economics,” and “society,” taking this approach minimizes the imposition of conceptual categories from Western intellectual circles to contexts with a different cultural logic (Oyèwumi 1997). Expanding the scope of research beyond a single set of “religious” or “sacred” expressions, my analysis is less confined by the category of “religion.” Observation of the ways in which participants across traditions engage in discourses and enact sets of practices, ideologies,

identities, and philosophies allows for examination of the *creation* of boundaries. It allows for observation of the “edges” of religious groups and for examination of how social boundaries are marked out, negotiated, contested, and sharpened in the messy space of everyday life. By thus providing a view of “the production of difference,” this perspective illuminates *how* globalization, as an historical process, can at once “differentiate the world as it connects it” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:16).

### **Ethnographic Context**

Gorongosa is a district of Sofala Province in central Mozambique. It is home to approximately 116,000 residents (INE 2009). In the center of the district lies the district capital, Gorongosa Town, a sprawling city of nearly 40,000 inhabitants, which, despite its large size, nevertheless has the feel of a small rural town, since most residents base their livelihoods primarily on agriculture.



**Figure 1: Aerial view of Gorongosa’s district capital.**



When I arrived in the town of Gorongosa to work as an English teacher at the secondary school from 1998-2000, I found a place still scarred visibly by the war. The road to the district capital had not been repaired in nearly fifty years. The formally constructed buildings in town were nearly all in disrepair and a significant number were visibly marked by pockmarks from gunfire or were so fully destroyed that they had been abandoned altogether. The district hospital had no electricity, and in cases of emergency the single doctor on staff would take the hospital's microscope to the town's only formal restaurant and inn to take advantage of their generator-powered lights. The devastation of the war, even six years after the signing of the peace accords, was still quite palpable.

Over time, as I became involved in relationships with residents of the district, I saw not only the visible ruins of buildings and rusted army vehicles, but also became increasingly aware of the invisible relics of the war that continued to cause hardship, disrupting peoples lives and relationships. Following two years of teaching English, I stayed in town to conduct ethnographic research with spirit-mediums from May to November of 2001. After this period, I returned to the district during the months of June through August in both 2003 and in 2004 to conduct further ethnographic research with spirit-mediums as well as in a variety of Pentecostal churches. Over the course of more than ten years, I was able to take note of rapid changes in Gorongosa following the devastation of this sixteen-year civil war.

Visually, since 1998, the district has undergone rapid transformations. Buildings have been rehabilitated, the hospital has been under expansion, new schools have been constructed and boreholes for safe drinking water have been drilled. The 75-kilometer potholed road that, when traveled, brought a weary traveler to the nearest highway three



hours later, is, after a three-year road construction project, now a one-hour ride along the country's smoothest and most advanced highway. Pedestrians have yielded their dominance of the road, walking along the shoulder of the highway in order to make way for high-speed traffic. The road construction project attracted many new residents from neighboring districts who came in search of wage jobs, and now, following its completion, the highway continues to attract those eager to take advantage of new business.



**Figure 3: Construction of a new highway has made Gorongosa a major thoroughfare along Mozambique's main north-south highway.**

New stores, restaurants, and places for lodging have opened, and now a wide variety of commodities are available for purchase, though the means to buy them still elude most residents. A network for cell phones has recently been installed, and in September of 2005, the town was linked into the national electricity grid for the first time, opening the way for further investments in service and industrial sectors.

Though these “developments” have brought improvements in material conditions for some residents of the town, the benefits of the new transportation corridor, of electricity, of cell phone networks, and of access to more material goods remains outside the means of most residents. Access to clean water, health care, and education is minimal. In fact, in many ways, these changes have increased economic hardship for the majority of residents as the financial means to acquire the many new commodities and services available for purchase seem increasingly restricted to small groups of elites. A growing need for cash has caused many men to abandon subsistence farming in pursuit of work outside the district, leaving many women at home as the sole providers for their children during large parts of the year. Labor migration is also a contributing factor in the regional explosion of HIV-AIDS. The impact of AIDS in the district is increasing, and young people are dying at a steadily increasing rate. Treatments of all kinds are ineffective and thus throw the legitimacy of all types of healing interventions into question.

This context frames recent developments in the realm of spiritual and religious practice. Aspects of these changes are present in much ordinary conversation and discussion around town: at the market, on the street, around the cooking fire, or in the fields. People are talking about the growing prevalence of violent spirits which are plaguing many families, and especially women, in the district.<sup>2</sup> Frequently, they are spirits of men from neighboring regions who were killed and improperly buried or eaten during the war. They are very much feared for their violent nature, and their propensity for destroying entire families. Such spirits often come to dominate women, manifesting in the form of infertility, child loss, and difficulties in marriage. While many of these violent spirits will

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<sup>2</sup> James Pfeiffer has noted the prevalence and influence of similar spirits in the small city of Chimoio, in neighboring Manica Province (Pfeiffer, 2002).

accept payment in monetary or sacrificial form, the rage of others will only be “cooled”

(*kutondborwe*) by the payment of a wife. For a woman afflicted with such a spirit, the only effective therapeutic option is to complete the process of beginning work as a spirit-medium.

Coinciding with these dramatic changes there has been a rapid growth in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, whose increasing numbers are visible on the landscape as new church buildings dot neighborhoods, built adjacent to their pastor’s homes in family compounds. The prominence of new churches is not only striking visually but its social effects have become apparent in church participants’ daily actions. Church participation changes people’s social networks, their relationships with neighbors and with their families. It fosters the formation of individual subjectivities, as many new converts enter churches independent of other members of their close family and often without the support of family or networks of extended kin. In fact, the majority of participants in almost any given church are women who attend with their children (and often without their husbands) and youth who attend without their parents, siblings, or grandparents. Through organized and informal activities, special interest groups, and worship services new bonds of obligation and affect are formed among church participants. In this way, church communities take on a familial quality, supplementing the ties of kinship.

The numbers and diversity of church groups in the region is astounding. During preliminary research in 2003, I compiled a list of over one-hundred separate church bodies based in the district capital (see Appendix I) each with separate histories, leadership, and centers of influence. Each of these churches has numerous daughter congregations spread throughout the district. These churches encompass a complex variety of practices and a

wide range in their degrees of connection to other church institutions outside of the district.<sup>3</sup> However, despite this complex mixture of church groups, nearly all of these new churches, regardless of their particular denomination or doctrinal lineage, share a central emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual healing is a key aspect of these churches and is affected through prayer, fasting, the laying on of hands, and other practices. In fact, this emphasis on healing is one of the primary aspects of new churches that draw large numbers of participants.

Living and working in Gorongosa for different intervals over ten years, I caught glimpses of how these two apparently separate religious traditions were intertwined in a single process. I lived in households where, over time, I began to discern how different sub-groups formed alliances along religious lines, with church participants opting out of ceremonies that traditionally required all kin members take part. Each time I returned for research, I encountered new female spirit-mediums and new churches. I met male spirit-mediums who became pastors, church members who became spirit-mediums and female spirit-mediums who burned their tools in order to begin or to return to church participation. Church participants who had been spirit-mediums in the past spoke openly about how their talents for healing had not been lost, but re-oriented to place God and the

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<sup>3</sup> I exclude the Roman Catholic Church from my reference here, since this church has had a long-term influence in the district as in many other areas of Mozambique. The new churches I refer to here began arriving in the district in 1952 established by labor migrants returning from Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), where Protestant missionary evangelization had been underway since early in the century. Following this initial period, other churches were established in the area with a major peak in growth following the end of the civil war in 1992. At this time, displaced residents returned from neighboring regions and many brought with them aspirations of church leadership. There are a wide range of church traditions in the area. Most prominent are Pentecostal Charismatic- style churches, especially Pentecostal churches such as Assemblies of God (*Assembleia de Deus*) and Apostolic Faith (*Fé Apostólica*). Their ties to international missionaries are minimal. Also present are Zionist churches (with historical links to South Africa) and Apostolic churches such as the church of John Maranke, which has its origins in Zimbabwe. Of these broadly defined “types” Pentecostal Charismatic Churches (PCCs), noted for their emphasis on the divine gifts of the Holy Spirit (Meyer, 2004), are by far the most prominent and fastest growing churches in the area.

Holy Spirit as their source of power. In church services, Jesus was explicitly likened to the type of spirits (*npfukwa*) for which most newly initiated *n'ganga*s in the district were working. Such interconnections illustrate why it is crucial to examine the ways in which these two different religious traditions are entangled and how their inter-relationship impacts social life.

### **Research Design and Methods**

While this study derives insights from over ten years of personal connection to Gorongosa District, it is based primarily on 22 months of field research from September 2006 to July 2008. I was able to build upon long-term relationships, acquired language skills, and knowledge of local norms, practices and histories. My language proficiency allowed me to feel comfortable in environments where both Portuguese and chi-Gorongosi were spoken.

#### Archival research

Prior to returning to Gorongosa to begin ethnographic research, I spent a month in Maputo, Mozambique's capital, conducting archival research at Mozambique's Historical Archives (AHM). Research in the historical archives was limited to documents beginning in the late nineteenth century, up to 1942, since I was only able to access documents of the Companhia de Moçambique. This private company administered central Mozambique until that year, when control was shifted to the Portuguese colonial government. The archives of colonial government documents were inaccessible throughout the period of my research due to a project to rehabilitate the building that houses them. Nonetheless, the records of

the Companhia de Moçambique held rich documents related to Gorongosa. Most useful were annual and bi-annual reports from the administration of the district capital of Gorongosa with detailed information about taxes, labor requirements, agriculture, health, education, and hunting.

### Survey

Once I arrived in Gorongosa, I hired and trained a team of three young women, all native residents of the district who had completed 10<sup>th</sup> grade—the highest available level of education there. The four of us worked together for six weeks conducting a general survey of 334 households<sup>4</sup> in four neighborhoods of the district capital and in the settlement of K’handá at the base of Gorongosa Mountain, 30 kilometers away. In each area, we selected households at random, fanning out in different directions and visiting every third house. We collected basic demographic data as well as information about religious participation, illnesses, deaths, and household members’ order of resort when seeking therapy for physical illness. Once we finished collecting data, I entered it into an Excel database and began analysis that informed my qualitative research.

In addition to this primary household survey, I also conducted minor surveys. I worked with one young man to conduct a survey of Gorongosa’s central market (see

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<sup>4</sup> Defining and using “household” as a unit of domestic analysis can be fraught with theoretical and methodological problems, since careless use of the term can obscure diverse sets of social relations that shape patterns of economic production and consumption (Guyer 1981, Guyer and Peters 1987). Because I did not use the concept “household” as the focus of this study but as a tool to guide sampling for the initial survey, some of the pitfalls associated with the application of this term to my study were mitigated by the ethnographic methods of participant observation and in-depth interviewing that I employed. For the purpose of this survey, I followed Robert Marlin in defining a “household” as those people sharing a cooking fire (2001).

Chapter 3), and with another to conduct a survey of actively practicing spirit-mediums in several district settlements (see Chapter 1). Finally, I worked with two other assistants to collect long-term data on the work of spirit-mediums and traditional courts (see below).

### Ethnographic research activities

Following the survey, my research activities were dedicated to qualitative pursuits. For this phase of the research, I conducted interviews with spiritual leaders and community members and engaged in participant-observation in religious and ceremonial settings. In total, I conducted over 96 semi-formal, audio-recorded interviews with people of different backgrounds, as well as countless informal interviews which I recorded in field notes. A significant portion of my interviews were with female spirit-mediums and women who were active church participants. These semi-structured interviews usually lasted several hours. I asked women about their families, their personal life histories, the circumstances leading to their conversion or initiation to spirit-mediumship and about aspects of healing relevant to their area of participation. In addition to these core interviews, I also conducted many oral history interviews in order to compile a more textured, experience-rich version of recent history. I also interviewed state and local government authorities, church pastors, presidents of the two traditional healers' associations in the district, staff of the district administration, police, health workers, school teachers, and leaders of different NGO projects aimed at AIDS prevention and support.

Though I conducted some interviews in chi-Gorongosi without the assistance of a translator, I soon discovered that people were speaking more slowly and simplifying their answers for me, expecting that I would not be able to follow. Thus, for most of the research period, I worked exclusively with translators—usually women who were residents of the areas where I worked. I discovered that it was most helpful to work with women who were participating in the spiritual healing groups of focus. Their presence often shaped interviews to become like directed conversations, allowing interviewees to feel comfortable to elaborate deeply on the subjects covered.

Apart from interviews, my main research activities centered on participant-observation in each of the two settings of focus: spirit-mediumship and Pentecostal churches. I made video and audio recordings in these settings and engaged in innumerable conversations with participants, including patients and their families, in order to gain a rich understanding of the current dynamics of healing, and patients' experience of suffering and illness.

#### Two locations, dual focus

I focused my ethnographic research activities between two different areas of the district—in one neighborhood of the district capital, and on Gorongosa Mountain, 30 kilometers from the district capital. This dual focus allowed me to compare the varying dynamics of spiritual healing in areas with significantly different histories and patterns of residence. Gorongosa Mountain is widely known in the country as a powerful center of spiritual healing and a stronghold of tradition, so research there added important texture



and context to the research I conducted in the district capital. On Gorongosa Mountain, I worked in the region of K'handá, residing with a family in an area known as Nyalirosa, high on the western slopes. In the district capital, I worked in the neighborhood of Nyamissongora, building on connections I had made with church leaders and spirit-mediums in the area since 2001. Nyamissongora has a pattern of concentrated settlement, but most of the residents continue to rely on agricultural activities for subsistence and for earning cash.

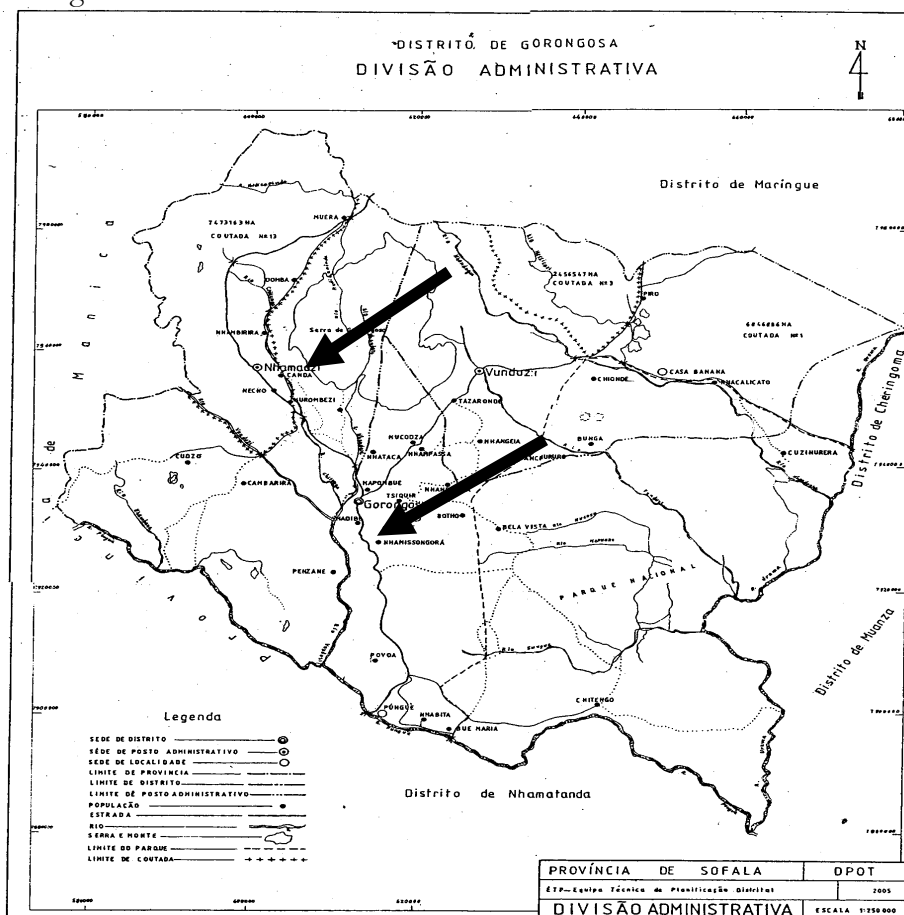


Figure 4: Map of Gorongosa District showing the two locations of research. The top arrow points to Nyalirosa on Gorongosa Mountain and the bottom arrow points to Nyamissongora, a neighborhood of Gorongosa's district capital. (source: GPS and ADG 2006).

Because I studied two very different religious contexts, I divided the ethnographic phase of research into two periods of eight months, each focused on a particular tradition of spiritual healing. In accordance with Pentecostal logics of conversion, I first focused research on the work of spirit-mediums and then switched to focus on Pentecostal church groups.<sup>5</sup> During each of these periods, I spent most days in the presence of women active in the religious tradition of focus.

### *Spirit-mediums*

During this phase of research I lived on the slopes of Gorongosa Mountain from February to July. It was very difficult to find a suitable situation for residing with a female spirit-medium, as had been my plan. There was a great deal of tension in the area, since a

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<sup>5</sup> In this sense, when I came to research in church contexts, I was welcomed as a convert would be—“coming into the fold.” Had I taken the opposite approach and left church participation to spend my days with spirit-mediums, it may have been more difficult to gain their trust and openness.



**Figure 5: A view of Nyalirosa showing the widely spaced pattern of residence. Family settlements are indicated with arrows.**

heated land conflict had begun with the arrival of support for the national park from an American philanthropic foundation. By the time of my arrival in 2006, the American foundation and its staff had come to be seen with disdain. Those who didn't know me from my previous stays on the mountain were suspicious and considered me, as an American, to be a part of the group they felt aimed to take their land. I then stayed on the mountain in Nyalirosa with the family of my research assistant, where I had lived for several months in the past. Though no one in this large family was a spirit-medium, several of their close relatives were, and this connection helped me to gain rapport with a wide array of practitioners. Instead of shadowing the work of a single spirit-medium, I spent days with

several different female healers, and walked extensively to conduct interviews with all the active spirit-mediums in the area. On Saturdays, I regularly attended the court sessions of the *nyakwawa* (traditional leader) of K'handa. His court proceedings often relied on the work of spirit-mediums and this provided crucial insight into the role of spirit-mediums in resolving disputes. Upon my departure, I hired one of the court assistants to log the cases that came to the *nyakwawa's* court in the ensuing months, allowing me a long-term perspective on the types of disputes resolved there.

I shifted research location to the district capital in mid-August when I lived with the family of Adélia, a female spirit-medium with whom I had previously resided for a month and where I had long-established neighborhood relationships. I worked intensively with Adélia from mid-August through early November. In this context, formal interviews became a secondary concern, as she had an extremely active practice, with a line of patients waiting in the shade of the mango tree outside the door of her spirits' house nearly every day. I spent most days with her, participating in her work from sun up to sun down. I travelled with her when she was called away to work in other locations, and took part in most every aspect of her family's life.



**Figure 6: Adélia preparing a treatment at her home in Nyamissongora.**

It was only on the rare days when she had no patients or was not performing treatments in order to attend to other matters that I took the opportunity to conduct formal interviews with other spirit-mediums in the area, nearly all of whom were connected to her network.<sup>6</sup> From this portion of research, I collected many hours of video and audio recordings of various types and stages of spirit healing sessions, ceremonies, and celebrations and kept hundreds of pages of notes. In addition to countless informal interviews with patients and their families about ongoing cases, I conducted and recorded 22 formal individual and group interviews with practicing spirit-mediums and elders in Nyamissongora. Finally, when I completed this stage of research, I hired Adélia's teenage

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 1 for a description of the creation of fictive kin relations among spirit-mediums.

son to continue to keep records of her work during three months. He recorded basic information about patient groups, their troubles, treatments offered and payments received.

### *Pentecostal churches*

For this phase of research, I based my activities at the Free Assembly Church of Mozambique, located in Nyamissongora, a neighborhood of the district capital. This church, led by Pastor Ernesto Zimba, is typical of most Pentecostal churches in the district



**Figure 7: Free Assembly Church of Mozambique in Nyamissongora**

in terms of worship style and organization. Pastor Zimba's church is near Adélia's home and so their healing practices attracted people from the same neighborhood and often from the same families. Also ideal for my research, Pastor Zimba's church was the center for nineteen district daughter congregations scattered around the district, one of which was adjacent to the home where I resided on the mountain. Thus, after a few months of immersion at Zimba's church, I returned to Nyaliroso to continue research, staying in the



same church “network.” Zimba’s church was ideal because I had been a long-time occasional visitor. Pastor Zimba’s son, Tiago was one of my students when I taught English at the district’s high school and, at his invitation, I visited his church regularly over the years. Starting active participation in the life of the church for my field research was thus a natural transition.



**Figure 8: Free Assembly Church of Mozambique in Nyalirosa.**

Beginning in December 2007, I started regular participation at this church. I joined the church’s women’s group, took part in organizational meetings, attended the women’s worship and dance service on Thursdays, and general worship services on Sundays. I also participated in many Saturday youth worship services and was appointed treasurer the group.<sup>7</sup> I attended funerals, weddings, and naming ceremonies of church members.

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<sup>7</sup> As will be seen in Chapter 3, collection of money is handled very carefully in Pentecostal church groups due to public scrutiny of church leaders. The youth group of Zimba’s church asked me to serve as treasurer since they saw me as a trustworthy outsider who would not take money for personal use.

Research in this context proved much easier than work with spirit-mediums because the church body runs many organized activities, and because frequent public speeches and meetings made organizational and philosophical aspects of this religious community quite transparent. I joined church members on regular visits to their numerous daughter congregations in the district, making church networks readily accessible. In addition to participating in church activities, I conducted in-depth interviews with church leaders and participants of all ages, and carried out extensive, semi-structured interviews with each active member of the women's group in both locations.

### **Presentation of the work**

Pentecostal church groups and spirit-mediums offer competing forms of therapy for the same set of misfortunes, so participants in each group are searching for resolution of similar problems. In the pages that follow, I focus on the intensification of three types of life difficulties that have been leading women to undergo conversion in Pentecostal churches or to complete initiation to spirit-mediumship: economic pressures, the increasing severity and frequency of physical illness and death, and troubled marriage relations. In my presentation of the situation, I tack back and forth between analyzing larger forces that are contributing to the intensification of these kinds of pressures in recent years and examining how participation in these religious networks affords people contrasting ways to manage or weather different types of difficulties.



Chapter 1 provides an ethnographic introduction for the rest of the chapters. It begins by introducing the contrasting philosophies and modes of healing characteristic of Pentecostal church groups and spirit-mediums. Following this description of the search for healing, the chapter highlights two case studies of women who were each pulled between spirit-mediumship and Pentecostal church participation, and ended up settling in different realms. Finally, the chapter describes the networks of relationships and support that “membership” in each group affords.

Chapter 2 provides a historical sketch of Gorongosa explored through the lens of human-spirit relationships. In this way, it not only presents a brief history of Gorongosa but also provides a basic cosmology of human-spirit relationships in the region. It provides a context for both current political-economic changes and for changes in spiritual healing practices.

Chapter 3 examines economic pressures that have intensified a search for cash—both to make ends meet and to participate in a growing consumer economy. It examines the implementation of neoliberal policies at the national level and describes how they have impacted Gorongosa district in both visible and invisible ways, bringing both the benefits of “development” and a growing sense of exclusion that has accompanied socio-economic differentiation.

Chapter 4 examines the impact of these economic changes in the spiritual realm. This chapter provides an overview of the connection between human-spirit relationships and livelihoods. In changing economic contexts, a new occult economy of spirits has

emerged, revealing the dangers of desire. The chapter also highlights how the practices of spirit-mediums have been both caught up in and have resisted commodification. Finally, the chapter considers how spirit-mediums and church groups are both subject to popular scrutiny in a context where money and the means of its acquisition is the subject of frequent moral critique.

Chapter 5 examines the pressures wrought by the increasing severity of illnesses and the growing commonality of death in the escalating HIV/AIDS crisis. It highlights the constraints of health care provision by the national government and explores how residents' experiences at district health facilities impacts the search for healing in health centers. This provides insight into why and how the healing work of spirit-mediums and church groups provides a vital alternative to biomedical treatment.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 form a triad focused centrally on marriage relationships. In reordering society, marriage is a primary focus of both Pentecostal church groups and spirit-mediums. Marriage relationships are the foundation of social health—the basis from which social, physical and spiritual wellbeing emanates. Economic pressures and increasing illness have both contributed to marital instability. Thus, the effort to bring the world back into balance takes place first and foremost, through social healing focused on sustaining and strengthening marriage relationships.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the normative process of traditional marriage providing critical background for understanding changes that have been taking place in marriage relationships. Chapter 7 describes these changes, detailing both the varieties of

marriage relationships, perspectives on the sources of marital strife and how economic strain and physical illness contribute to marriage instability. Finally, Chapter 8 describes how church groups and spirit-mediums work to re-store order to troubled marriages in an effort to bring about security in difficult times.

Finally, the conclusion revisits the major themes of the work, discussing the ways in which women's participation in networks of spiritual healing points to a need for re-visiting conceptual categories that have been heavily influenced by Western models of subjectivity. The forms of power women gain through "religious participation" provide insights for re-examining the category of "religion" as well as for re-conceptualizing notions of power and agency that have been central to Western feminists' analysis.

## Chapter 1:

### The Search for Healing:

#### Emerging Social Networks of Healing and Reordering Society in a World Out of Balance

The increase in Pentecostal church participation and growing numbers of women initiated into spirit-mediumship in Gorongosa are both related to people's search for healing in a time of increasing strain. Among an array of causes, Gorongosa residents often relate the increasing intensity and frequency of the experience of suffering to a general proliferation of two types of violent spirits in the region that are causing deaths, illnesses, conflict, and economic hardship. These are dangerous spirits—the spirits of people who were killed violently in the past. They are spirits of people from *outside* the region of Gorongosa, and so, they have no kinship ties there. Because they are outsiders, they have little sympathy for area residents. They come seeking revenge, and cause much destruction. A general name of this type of spirit is *mpfukwa*—a derivative form of the word *kupfuka* which means “to avenge.” Others are referred to as *gamba* spirits—where *gamba* means “soldier.” Managing these types of spirits is one of the chief factors leading people to spirit-mediumship or to Pentecostal church conversion.

To confront extreme suffering, people search for ways to treat and manage these and other sources of disorder. Whereas church participants seek healing and restoration by casting out these violent spirits, spirit-mediums work to open channels of communication

with them in order to listen to and meet their demands. This chapter provides an introduction to the contrasting forms of healing that churches and spirit-mediums offer to those searching for stability in a world that has come out of balance. Following this introduction I present two case studies to reveal how women are pulled to both church participation and spirit-mediumship to resolve the difficulties that they and their families face. Each of the women highlighted has similar struggles—marriage instability, economic strain, child loss. Their stories reveal how people’s search to manage the troubles they face is played out on a common field of therapeutic options.

When confronted with extreme adversity, people’s search for healing is likely to lead them to undergo personal transformation. Pentecostal church conversion and initiation to spirit-mediumship both require deep transformations that alter the authority to which they defer to guide their family’s lives. Such shifts alter women’s daily practices and their social relationships at the most intimate levels. These personal transformations also insert women into new social networks—networks that provide material, spiritual and social support in difficult times.

### **Spiritual healing**

Pentecostal church groups and spirit-mediums offer two distinct forms of spiritual healing. They provide contrasting solutions for common problems. Spiritual healing practices in Africa not only address physical illness but they are also a central means through

which people reflect on collective experience and through which they enact strategies to reorder society to bring stability and wellbeing rather than chaos and misfortune (Feierman and Janzen 1992, Feierman 1985, deCraemer, et. al. 1976). These practices play a significant part in processes of individuation, social organization, moral evaluation, and general quests for meaning and value (Lambek 1993). In this sense, Pentecostal church groups and spirit-mediums guide people in spiritual healing practices that are not *reflective* of social life but *constitutive* of it.

Therapeutic techniques and healing practices have long been of interest to anthropologists and other social scientists.<sup>1</sup> In most instances, healing has been approached as an element of culture and social life through which cultural traditions, values, and social relationships are particularly salient and readily observable. Because healing practices typically provide explanation for the causes of misfortune and suffering, they have been examined in connection with religious philosophy and practices. Thus, healing has been regarded primarily as a reflection of an assumed cultural order of social relationships and worldviews. By contrast, in the case studies that form the bulk of this chapter my aim is to consider the ways practices of healing transform social relationships as a central aspect of therapy.

These cases reveal how the domain of healing and therapy is not simply a realm of treating physical illness, but a matrix through which social life itself is established, examined, critiqued, and transformed. For this reason, examining healing contexts and the intricacies

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<sup>1</sup> I do not endeavor here to provide a review of this rich body of literature. For further reading, Feierman (1985) provides an excellent overview.

of healing practices is vital in order to begin to comprehend social formations. Healing practices are not simply an interesting view into concepts of healing, but the very place where social practices and personae are delineated, negotiated, and contested.

### **Churches and spirit-mediums—common problems, different solutions**

In Gorongosa, people question misfortune and adversity of all kinds. Physical illness, interpersonal conflict, material hardship, poor or failed harvests—all of these difficulties are signs of underlying social disorder that must be resolved in order to restore the potential for well-being and prosperity. The healing work of Pentecostal church groups and *n'gangas* addresses the sources of misfortune—but in very different ways.

#### *Spirit-mediums: Diverse causes, diverse therapies*

Spirit-mediums offer a diverse array of therapies that correspond with a wide range of sources. Misfortune is bewildering. It is a sign of disorder, but the causes are uncertain. In the first instance, the work of *n'gangas* is to discover unseen disorder so as to offer therapies to address it. Thus, their initial work is largely aimed at divining (*kudididza*) the causes. One spirit-medium I spoke with likened this process to medical professionals who work with stethoscopes to heighten their senses and uncover what most humans cannot perceive: “We work the way a doctor works with a *kubekha* (stethoscope) to listen to the body and hear what and where the problem is. Doctors also guess the illnesses of patients.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Minyaradzwa; June 6, 2001.

In order to divine the causes of misfortune, *n'ganga*s use a variety of methods, each dependent on the insights of their healing spirits. *N'ganga*s frequently told me things like: “I don’t know ... the spirits do.”<sup>3</sup> In the most common form of divination, a patient rubs a coin, button or other round object (*mbukutiro* or *gumbugwa*) over his or her chest and face, transferring their spirit or essence to the object, and then passes it to the *n'ganga*. The *n'ganga* can then inhale the spirit/essence (*keufemba*) from the object and gain direct insight into the patient’s situation. As one spirit-medium explained: “the spirit [transferred from the patient] appears on the *gumbugwa* and then the spirit begins to speak [about] the things that have happened with the patient ... what they are suffering and if you want to heal this person you should do this, this, this.”<sup>4</sup>

There are also other ways to divine the causes of misfortune. Some spirit-mediums use *hakata*, a collection of special seeds, shells or bones that serve as a communication link between the medium and her spirits. In this form of divination, the patient or the *n'ganga* asks a series of questions. After each inquiry, the *n'ganga* slaps the collection of objects between her hands and allows them to fall on the ground. The way they fall—the direction, arrangement, and relative positioning—are signals from the spirit that provide simple answers to the questions asked. The *n'ganga* is able to interpret these signs for the patient. Through a series of questions, the problem and a course of action for its resolution can be determined. *N'ganga*s also receive insights from their spirits about patients’ conditions through dreams. Often, patients sleep at a *n'ganga*’s home or return after an initial consultation to discover if any insights were revealed to the healer overnight.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Minora Mikitaio; June 5, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Minyaradzwa; June 6, 2001.



Insights from divination can reveal whether a patient's troubles are caused by spirits or other sources. An illness may be naturally occurring—"from God" (*nhenda ya mulungu*) in which case, therapies need only be roots, herbs or other substances that target the symptoms to restore health. More frequently, problems that drive a person to seek assistance from a *n'ganga* are more complicated. In such instances, treatments for symptoms must be accompanied by therapies that address social disorder.

Physical illness may be caused by the violation of traditional norms regulating social behavior (*mikho*) that anger ancestral spirits (*mizimu*). Violation of norms surrounding sexual relations, birth, and death brings risks of illness from pollution (Douglas 1966). Pollution can be spread through family groups following birth (*dzuvade*) and death (*ntsanganiko*), special care and ritual action must be taken to prevent this from happening. Sexual relationships that take place outside the social sanction of marriage can also lead to illnesses from pollution known as *p'hiringanissu*.<sup>5</sup> In resolving illnesses caused by different forms of pollution, it is essential that the person whose violation caused the problem confess their actions openly, otherwise the treatments *n'ganga*s provide will be ineffective.

More "complicated" kinds of misfortune may be "sent" by other people—usually through the agency of spirits—what is often referred to generally as *uroyi*—"witchcraft" or "sorcery." Such human-caused illnesses may be caused intentionally, out of envy or vengeance, or they may be unintentional. Speaking badly about someone or harboring resentment against them can unleash invisible forces that may cause another person's suffering. Other afflicting spirits can attach themselves to a person at random. Malevolent spirits cast out by others are sent to locations—placed in animals, trees, at cross-roads. If

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 8 for further discussion of this concept.

another person “steps on” or otherwise comes in contact with such spirits, they can pick them up. Other angry, vengeful spirits rove aimlessly, attaching themselves to people that interest them. With the assistance of a *n’ganga*, such spirits can be removed and “sent away” and the patients given treatments to “close off” their bodies to prevent their return.

The most difficult cases of all involve spirits who purposefully stir misfortune in a family group because of a particular grievance they have with them. Such spirits often come to claim a debt that has gone unpaid for generations. These spirits may come from within or outside the lineage. If their grievances with a particular family group are legitimate, they usually cannot be sent away until their demands have been successfully fulfilled.

Therapy for these spirits requires calling them to speak their grievances directly to family groups. The group assembles to sing songs that draw spirits to possess any member the family and speak through them. Prior to singing, each member of the assembled group must publicly speak their grievances (*bundu*)<sup>6</sup> with each other. Airing concerns in this way not only serves to strengthen and affirm the family members’ relationships, but also opens the way for the therapeutic process to continue, since “knots in the heart” are thought to block a spirit from possessing a person. Since, at the start, the family does not know the origin of the spirit (whether ancestral or not, what type of spirit, from what time period), the patient group cycles through a repertoire of different songs, each known to attract different types of spirits. These sessions of singing can last an entire night or for several days. If the spirit refuses to possess someone in the family, a *n’ganga* can intervene and “pull” the spirit from a patient into herself (*kufemba*) thereby forcing the spirit to possess her and speak its grievances directly to the family through her physical form.

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<sup>6</sup> *Bundu* are said to be “knots in the heart.”

When a spirit emerges, the events that ensue closely resemble the resolution of disputes at traditional courts. Indeed, *n'ganga*s assist their patients in resolving human-spirit disputes that arise from social disorder that are the root cause of the suffering they face. Spirits make accusations; family groups plead their cases. In the end, afflicting spirits usually make very specific demands, requesting exactly the things that are owed to them. The family members resolve how to meet these demands, pool their resources and in future sessions, they call the spirit once again to receive their payment, hoping this will release them from punishment.

Quite frequently, when misfortune is widespread in a family group—when tragedies, marital problems, illnesses, conflicts, losses, and the like are affecting many members of a descent group—the source is often discovered to be spirits who are not among the family's group of ancestors—spirits often referred to as *npfukwa* or *gamba*. Unlike other sources of misfortune whose effects may be confined to a single person or to a married couple and their children, these outsider spirits seeking payment of debts bring intense and generalized troubles to many. In Gorongosa, it is these kinds of spirits that have become predominant in recent years. Frequently, when claiming payment, they demand to be given a “wife” from among the female members of the family group. As will be described below, becoming a spirit-wife leads many women to become initiated as spirit-mediums and to begin a healing practice. It is this kind of intense suffering and these kinds of payments to spirits that underlie the recent escalation of new initiates to spirit-mediumship.

*Pentecostal church groups: diverse causes, monotheistic solutions*

Let us pray.

Look, now, God: I have laid my hands on your servants' heads. They have come with various problems. Now, they come to have hands laid on their heads because you have ordained that action, saying "All people who are suffering, who come with their illnesses can expect to be healed, if they call on the name of Jesus."<sup>7</sup>

The prayer above was uttered by a church leader during the time of healing at The Free Assembly Church of Mozambique in Gorongosa. This prayer illustrates the basic philosophy of healing taught in such Pentecostal churches. The primary emphasis is that, no matter what kind of misfortune, no matter what the cause, there is a single source of healing. God provides protection and blessings and Jesus and the Holy Spirit intervene to restore order and wellbeing in people's lives. This philosophy is central in church teachings and is also fundamental to the social role that Pentecostal churches play in restoring order to society.

The foundation of Christian identity is understood to be each individual's relationship to God and Jesus, which should ideally shine through them in their daily actions. In this excerpt from worship at Pastor Zimba's church, Christians are described as people who carry the spirit of Jesus with them:

All Christians—those known to others as Christians—are dressed in the skin of Jesus. Those spoken of as Christians have the spirit [*npfukwa*] of Lord Jesus. Where they go they take that spirit [*gamba*] with them—they do not leave it behind on the path.<sup>8</sup>

The speaker makes the explicit connection between *n'ganga*s and Christians by using the words *npfukwa* and *gamba*—to refer to the spirit of Jesus. As seen above, these are the very kinds of spirits with whom most new initiates to spirit-mediumship work. Like an *npfukwa*, Jesus was killed unjustly and returns to bring healing to the living. Christians, then, are not

<sup>7</sup> Prayer during time of healing, Sunday worship service, Assembleia Livre de Moçambique; July 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Preaching, Mãe Conselheira Fariana; Women's worship service, Igreja Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; February 4, 2008.

mediums for the spirits of ordinary people, but mediums for the spirit of the son of God—Jesus. Through this intimate relationship, they are linked into the Holy family. Like spirit-mediums, Christians willingly accept to be servants of their spirit—they do not seek to expel its presence from them—by “leaving it behind on a path.” This comment references a common therapeutic action to remove spirits and place them at a crossroads, as mentioned above.

As mediums for the *npfukwa* of Jesus, the authority and power for Pentecostal participants’ healing are shifted dramatically from that which characterizes the work of spirit-mediums. In this framework, healing comes from God. But God’s protection and healing do not come automatically. These benefits come to the “children of God” who, upon conversion, “make a division.” Converts must place their trust in God for protection and undertake an active Christian lifestyle. They must create a sharp divide between themselves, as members of the faithful, or *wanhu wakuchena*, “holy people” and *wanhu wa dziko* “people of the world.”<sup>9</sup> To make this division, Pentecostals actively separate themselves from the “ways of the ancestors” and traditional rules (*mikho*) governing social behavior. They devote themselves to new *mikho*—divinely ordained rules that are detailed in nearly every event of worship and preaching. Interpreted through church leaders, these rules set out a new social order meant to shore up aspects of traditional society. For instance, the introduction of a booklet written by a pastor of a Pentecostal church in Beira states, “it is the desire of the author that through this work, the Sena people may valorize even more their own culture, and gain knowledge to distinguish things that are useful and

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<sup>9</sup> This is a Pentecostal-specific identity. From this perspective Catholics, who condone consumption of alcohol and tobacco and Zionists who seek therapies from prophet healers (*profitis*) are considered among the “people of the world.” Non-Pentecostals are also referred to as *wanhu wa dima* “people of darkness/sin.”

compatible with their faith in Jesus Christ from things that are incompatible and that should be avoided”<sup>10</sup> (Meque 1999: 1). Among other things, church members work to revive and reinforce traditions surrounding childbirth, initiation and marriage, reinventing them in Christian logics.<sup>11</sup>

Among church-based *mikho* is the prohibition of alcohol and tobacco consumption. Converts must also display their faithfulness outwardly in mannerisms, speech, actions, and inwardly in trust and faith. When faced with adversity, they are exhorted to maintain faith that God will resolve any problem. Pentecostals should thus refrain from contemplating who or what might be responsible for causing their troubles, and thereby desist from visiting *n’gansas* whose primary efforts lie in divining and addressing these causes.

Once a person makes this division, they are no longer beholden to retribution for violations of traditional rules (*mikho*) surrounding sexual relations, birth, and death. They do not need to fear illnesses from pollution. They are also not vulnerable to punishments from ancestral spirits (*mizimu*). In fact, many people explained that when they converted, they made a final prayer (*mbamba*) to their ancestral spirits to advise them that, as Christians, they would no longer make regular showings of respect. However, they told me that their *mizimu* continue to watch over them and look after their family’s well-being. Further, church teachings hold that a person should not suffer for the transgressions of their predecessors. Thus, spirits returning to seek retribution for violence or repayment of debt among the descendents of their offender are thought to have no legitimate claim.

In this way, church-based healing radically alters the understanding of misfortune to one of personal responsibility. In contrast to philosophies underlying the practice of

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<sup>10</sup> My translation from Portuguese.

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 8 for further discussion.

*ngangas*, repercussions for transgressions are radically individualized. As Christians, misfortune and physical illness are due not to transgressions of *mikeho* or disruptions in relationships with spirits, but due to disorder in their personal relationship with God. A person must develop and maintain a close relationship with Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit. The norms and requirements for behavior, the authoritative baseline for moral decisions and judgments, then, come from the bible, as mediated and interpreted through church leaders. Healing requires not only the therapeutic intervention offered by other church members but self-examination to identify where one's personal faith and relationship to God is weak.

It is important to emphasize that participation in churches does not alter “belief” in the operations of spirits or the validity of the idea of illness from pollution. Rather, through active church participation, members are afforded alternate forms of protection and are beholden to different sets of rules. In fact, church members are often afflicted by spirits. Spirits may bring misfortune of all kinds to the family. They may afflict a church participant with episodes of possession. However, whereas spirit-mediums work to open channels of communication with such spirits in order to listen to and meet their demands, church participants seek healing and restoration by casting them out. The identity and grievances of spirits are not important for resolution. In fact, church participants linguistically simplify a complex world of spirits into a single category. All spirits that bring affliction are “*mizimu zva kunyangara*”—evil spirits or “demons.”

In Pentecostal churches, members' misfortunes are addressed through various therapeutic interventions. Primary among them is prayer and the laying on of hands. At the end of each worship service there is a time of healing when those with physical illnesses or

other kinds of troubles go to the front of the church and kneel down to receive prayer from other church members who have been specially “anointed” as healers. Those who have been anointed are thought to have a particularly strong connection to the Holy Spirit. Laying hands on the head of a patient provides a path for the Holy Spirit to pass through the anointed healer into the body of the believer. It is said that when the Holy Spirit arrives in a person’s body, it arrives like flames of fire, producing intense heat that forces out any kind of malevolent forces present in a person’s body.



**Figure 1.1: An anointed healer laying on hands and making prayer to assist someone troubled by misfortune.**

In severe situations, church participants take up fasting and prayer as a therapeutic act. Fasting is a way to purify the body and mind and is thought to strengthen a person’s connection to the divine in order to receive resolution of a particular problem. Sometimes, church participants fast in isolation to address an individual concern. At other times,



groups undergo a period of fasting and prayer together, pooling their energies to receive God's intervention.

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Though they try to separate themselves from “people of the world,” when facing extreme adversity, many church participants resolve to suspend their church participation temporarily or indefinitely to seek resolution from the intervention of *n'gansas*. Likewise, spirit-mediums who face ongoing difficulties—whose troubles are not resolved through their relationship to their spirits—try conversion as an alternative. When their troubles become unbearable, people often search for resolution among any number of therapeutic options available in a common field of spiritual healing.

What follows are two case studies of women in Gorongosa who were both managing to cope with extremely difficult lives by navigating this field of healing. Their experiences are typical of many Gorongosan's struggles. Their stories illustrate how women who are searching for stability are making use of different spiritual and religious frameworks to reorder their lives. Though they end up taking very different paths in a search for social and spiritual solutions for lives that have come out of balance, each of the women confronts similar problems. Highlighting their stories here, this chapter sets the stage for the rest of the study, which is devoted to unraveling the social, economic, and political forces impacting on people's lives and how Pentecostal church groups and spirit-mediums differently work to restore balance and wellbeing.

### **Merecina's Story: Spirit Husbands and the Transformation of Suffering**

Merecina and her husband, Manuel, were the leaders of a Pentecostal church, Igreja Aliança, (Church of the Covenant), in the neighborhood of Nyamissongora in Gorongosa's district capital until 2001, when their youngest daughter Marta became ill, suffering fainting spells. Marta's physical symptoms emerged at a time when she was struggling to manage a failing second marriage. Like Marta's first marriage, her second was also characterized by continual conflict, physical abuse, and financial abandonment. Marta was not Merecina's only child facing difficulties. In fact, none of Merecina's children were free from misfortune. One grown son had lost all four of his first offspring to illness while they were infants. Merecina's eldest daughter had already suffered through two divorces, and her third marriage wasn't looking any better—ongoing conflicts with her third husband had led her to return to live with Merecina again. Merecina also suffered at the hands of Manuel who, since the civil war's end, had taken to drinking and was prone to periodic bouts of rage.

Though Merecina and Manuel had long preached that strong faith in God and fervent prayer was the only true solution to illness or family problems, years passed without resolution or even temporary relief of their troubles. Their family's unending string of misfortunes was shaking their faith. Merecina and Manuel made a joint decision to try other ways to resolve their family's problems. Following strict rules that prohibit church members from engaging in "traditional"<sup>12</sup> practices, they suspended participation in order to

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<sup>12</sup> Note on the use of "tradition": Implicit in the word "traditional" is an idea of stasis. When employing the term "traditional" to describe religious practices or ideas in an African context, there is a danger of conveying an idea of "traditional" as historical relic, or as a kind of "backwardness." Despite the problems with the term, however, I prefer to retain it. It is a word (*tradição*) that Gorongosans use extensively to refer to the "ways of the ancestors." Some people follow "*tradição*" others seek to distance themselves from it. In my use of the term "traditional," however, I do not imply static, unchanging cultural forms, but emphasize that socio-cultural forms referred to as "tradition" build on a foundation of

consult a spirit-medium to see if meeting the demands of spirits might solve their problems. Their consultations revealed the cause of their family's suffering. An *npfukwa* spirit—the spirit of a man who had been killed by Merecina's mother's father—was attacking the descendents of his murderer, causing the suffering that Merecina and her children had seen over many years. The spirit's attacks were both an expression of his anger and a way to communicate that he had serious demands that must be met.

The family's consultations with a spirit-medium allowed them to communicate with the spirit and listen to its demands. Because he had been killed violently, the spirit had no place to rest or family to watch after him. Among his many demands, the spirit insisted that Merecina and her offspring compensate him for his early loss of life by incorporating him into their lineage. Merecina and Manuel decided that to ensure the wellbeing of their descendants, they must respond to the demands of the spirit, leading them to abandon church participation permanently.

Merecina and her husband began a long and complicated process of creating a bond to link the spirit into their family. The spirit demanded Merecina act as his wife so he could work through her to heal others. In order for her to establish this marriage bond with the spirit, Manuel was required to actively demonstrate his approval of the relationship. He traveled far and wide to collect and purchase a basket, stool, medicinal gourd and other tools that the spirit demanded. He also constructed a special house in their family compound that would serve as the spirit's dwelling place. Through these actions, Merecina's husband became like a groom who builds a home for his new bride in his

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innovation and change with changing historical contexts (Glassie 1995). At the same time, however, my use of "traditional" also contains an appreciation for the integrity and continuity of a particular ontology and form of practice through time.

family's compound, gathers the clothing and goods her parents request, and accumulates all of the money to meet the sum they demand for bride wealth.<sup>13</sup>

At the culminating event that concretized this marriage bond and marked Merecina as a spirit-medium, Manuel, their daughters and neighbors sang to call Merecina's spirit to possess her. Like the central event of a wedding ceremony where the groom presents all of the goods he has collected to his wife's family to fulfill their request, Merecina and her family gathered to present the spirit with the goods and the tools that he had requested for his healing work. Before they could present the spirit with his requested objects, they called the spirit to enter the body of Merecina, his new wife and living medium.

Despite the efforts of the group to sing the songs that normally worked quickly to call the spirit into her body, the possession wasn't taking place. Something was blocking Merecina's spirit. The spirit-medium leading the initiation asked Merecina and Manuel: "Do you usually argue at home? Yesterday you weren't talking."<sup>14</sup> Before long, Manuel admitted that he had beaten and insulted Merecina the previous day after an afternoon of drinking. The group demanded that he apologize to Merecina. Once he made an explicit and heartfelt apology, expressing his *bundu* and "untying the knot in his heart," he said, "This is what I did. This is all I did. Now let's do our work here."<sup>15</sup>

The group then resumed singing. Not long after the start of the first song, Merecina began to shiver and quake and the spirit came into her body with little effort. Once the spirit emerged, he directed his attention to Manuel, demanding another apology for beating Merecina. Manuel apologized again, this time directly to the spirit saying, "Those things

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 6 for a discussion of bride wealth (*lobolo*) and marriage practices.

<sup>14</sup> Field notes, August 2001

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

that happened were mistakes!” To this, the spirit replied harshly, “If you do it again, I will beat you from the morning until the sun goes down.” To this, Manuel promised, “I won’t do it again!” And the spirit retorted, “Don’t do it again!” Having defused the spirit’s anger, the group addressed their main goal. Manuel presented the spirit with each of the tools he had collected and ensured the spirit that he had completed construction of the house to serve as his shelter and workplace for treating patients.

This process cemented the spirit’s bond to the family, and Merecina served as the spirit’s wife and living medium—the focal point of his connection to the world. Creating this bond ensured that the spirit’s rage had been “cooled,” transforming him from the cause of the family’s years of suffering into a source of wellbeing and prosperity. This new spiritual marriage bond also transformed the nature of Merecina’s relationship with Manuel. Manuel became Merecina’s assistant for her healing work. She began to refer to him as “*wanhumwa*,” (literally, “the one who is sent”), sending him on errands to fetch objects and plants necessary for her healing practices. Merecina’s spirit husband became the supreme authority of the household and was charged with the responsibility of providing for the material and financial needs of Merecina and her offspring.<sup>16</sup>

Five years after this initiation was complete, I returned to spend time with Merecina. She explained that once she began working as a spirit-medium, her troubles faded and she began to feel happiness again. Before she established this relationship with her spirit husband, Manuel had been disrespectful and abusive. His alcoholism had become a problem: he would spend all his money buying drink, neglecting to provide for their family’s needs. Though he continued to drink, he had been more respectful towards her. Merecina

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<sup>16</sup> Field notes, August 2001.

attributed this change to the spirit's authority. The spirit threatened Manuel, warning that if he abused her, he would punish him severely. Now, Merecina told me, things were dramatically different: "There is never fighting at home ... Now we are living well."<sup>17</sup>

Merecina is no longer dependent on Manuel to provide for their family. Her spirit provides for the family's material and financial needs by drawing patients to her healing practice. Once residents in the area learned that she had a spirit that was practicing healing, Merecina told me, many people came for consultations. The income from this work remains in the control of her spirit husband who makes decisions about spending—dividing portions of the cash among different members of the household. When he receives a significant amount of money from his work, the spirit calls the family together and, speaking through Merecina, specifies whether to buy food, clothing, oil, soap, school supplies, or to pay the fees at the grinding mill.

On the day of her initiation, Merecina's spirit husband addressed Manuel directly in front of the group, giving him instructions on how he must relate to his wife. Among other things, he told him she must be free to travel far away from home to conduct healing rituals at patients' residences. These trips can sometimes last for weeks. Five years later, Merecina expressed her reaction to this new degree of freedom:

... it is different to live as a spirit wife. When you want to go out, travel, go to do work somewhere, you must ask permission of the spirit ... and say goodbye to him [the spirit] when leaving the home. That way, the spirit will accompany you where you go—defend and protect you.<sup>18</sup>

Prior to becoming a spirit-medium, Merecina's husband, like most male heads of household, restricted her movement, confining her mostly to the realm of their home and fields.

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Merecina Alfiate, October 17, 2007

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

Soon after Merecina established this relationship with her spirit in 2001, her youngest daughter Marta also began the process of becoming a spirit-medium. Marta's domestic conflicts that led to divorce with her previous two husbands and the ongoing crisis with her current husband were understood as the actions of a spirit who destroyed her marriages with living men in order to be recognized as her primary husband. Like so many women residing in this area, Marta followed her mother's path and managed to find stability by accepting the spirit. Later, Marta's older sister Graça also began the process of initiation in response to the recent loss of her infant and years of struggle with her husband.

### **Regaining Control—Women as Mediums for Spirit Husbands**

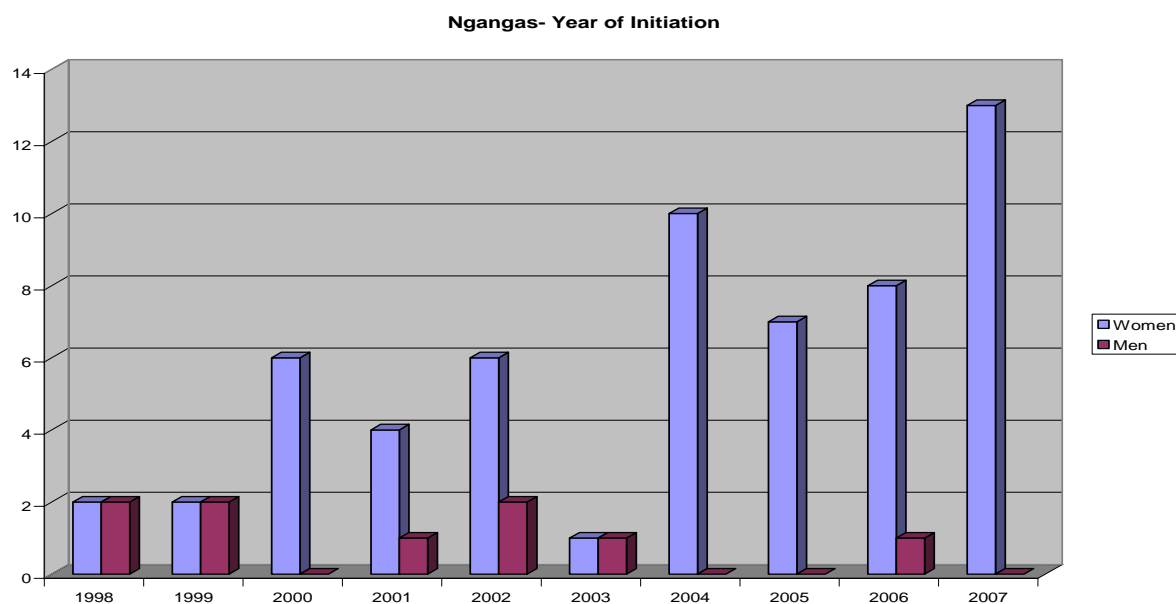
Merecina and her daughters are just three women who are transforming misfortune into wellbeing through the process of becoming spirit-mediums. They are part of a rapid and ongoing increase of spirit-mediums in Gorongosa, nearly all of whom are women. In the recent past, spirit-mediums and “traditional healers” (*ngangas*)<sup>19</sup> were much fewer in number in the district, and more equally balanced between male and female practitioners. By 2008, the number of women in Gorongosa entering into marriage with spirits was a new trend that residents widely considered to be troubling and ominous. They characterized this phenomenon as an *epidemia*<sup>20</sup> (epidemic) because, all at once, women with spirit husbands seemed to have appeared everywhere.

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<sup>19</sup> *N'ganga* is a term in chi-Gorongosi used to refer to a diverse array of “traditional healers.” *N'gangas* in Gorongosa may have various specialties which usually include one or all of the following: spirit-mediumship (like Merecina and her daughters), divination, and specialized knowledge of herbal remedies. What distinguishes *n'gangas* from others is their special connection to healing spirits.

<sup>20</sup> “*Epidemia*” is a Portuguese word meaning “epidemic.” Even when speaking in chi-Gorongosi, people use Portuguese to characterize the rapid increase in spirit-mediums.

In the Gorongosa neighborhood where Merecina and her daughters reside, there is hardly a homestead among dozens of scattered residences that does not house at least one recently initiated female spirit-medium. In this neighborhood, composed of 331 households and over 1500 residents,<sup>21</sup> there are more than fifty actively practicing spirit-mediums—only two of whom are men. Countless other women establish marriage relationships with spirits, similar to that of Merecina’s, but do not actively practice healing. Some spirits request their hosts to be healing practitioners while others are happy to “sit to the side” and simply keep watch over the family.



**Figure 1.2: Year of initiation of spirit-mediums<sup>22</sup>**

In the early months of 2008, I collaborated with leaders of two traditional healers’ associations in the district, AMETIM and AMETRAMO,<sup>23</sup> to conduct a basic survey of

<sup>21</sup> Interview, with sub-chief (*mfumu*) of Nyamissongora settlement, November 1, 2007. Figures are from his annual census conducted in September, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Source: Data from my survey of practicing *n’gangas*/ members of Ametim and Ametramo in Gorongosa’s district capital, conducted with the assistance of Ngirazi Nyacanhai Bola, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> AMETIM-- Associação de Medicos Tradicionais Independente de Moçambique (Independent Association of Traditional Healers in Mozambique) and AMETRAMO-- Associação de Medicos



actively practicing spirit-mediums in several areas of the district. This data provides an overview of the contours of recent growth. Since it was gathered from a selection of settlements within and outside the district capital, it does not capture all active spirit-mediums in the district. Further, these figures do not account for the many women who accept spirits but do not work as healers, nor do they include women who were initiated to spirit-mediumship in the past and abandoned the practice. The results, however, ground the widespread sense of a rapid increase in new spirit-mediums in numerical evidence. Figure 1.2 illustrates two things: the vast majority of new spirit-mediums are women who have begun practicing since 2000, and the numbers of new initiates is rapidly increasing.

The striking changes in the world of spirit-mediumship in the region, however, are not confined to demographic trends. Recently initiated spirit-mediums are also transforming the practices of spiritual healing. Most female spirit-mediums are working with a class of spirits relatively uncommon in the recent past. Older spirit-mediums who have been practicing for many years typically work with *madzvola* spirits that are typically inherited through family lineages.<sup>24</sup> *Madzvola* mediums work with white and black colors, which symbolize the dual nature of these spirits (see Figure 1.3). Because they are already incorporated in the lineage, *madzvola* spirits do not attack a family with destruction and ill will but are dedicated to work for its protection and prosperity. Thus, the white color symbolizes their primarily a benevolent nature—however, if neglected or mistreated, they will cause problems. Also, because they have been inherited across many generations, these are spirits of people who lived in the distant past. Mediums for this type of spirit use fly

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Tradicionalis de Moçambique (Traditional Healers' Association of Mozambique). AMETRAMO is an organization created by the Mozambican national government shortly after the civil war's end in 1992. AMETIM was created with government permission in 2005 and arrived in Gorongosa District in 2006.

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of *madzvola* spirits.

whisks (*mutchira*) as their central tool when performing their work (see Figure 1.3). The fly whisk was an object used by royalty and important leaders long ago. As the central object of *madẓvoka* mediums' practice, the *mutchira* indicates both the elevated stature of these spirits and their ties to the past.

Because they are inherited ancestrally, mediums for *madẓvoka* spirits specialize in treatments for troubles caused by ancestral or family spirits. Also, since their spirits lived long ago—they are the guardians of traditional social norms (*mikho*) that governed people's actions to keep them safe from pollution associated with death, menstruation, child birth, and marital infidelity. Thus, mediums for *madẓvoka* spirits also specialize in treatments for illnesses that arise when people break these norms and come in contact with pollution from *madẓvade*, *p'hiringaniss,u* or *tsanganiko*.



Figure 1.3: A *madzvoka* medium dressed in her healing clothing. Notice the black and white cloth draped over her lap, the headdress made with black and white feathers and the fly whisk (*mutchira*). These items are characteristic of *madzvoka* mediums' tools, indicating their ties to spirits from long ago.

By sharp contrast, most recently initiated spirit mediums, because they work with different kinds of spirits, have visible changes in their tools and working style. As mentioned above, most new initiates work with *nɸfukwa* or *gamba* spirits. *N'ganga*s who work with the now- prevalent violent spirits wear clothing that is bright red—a color that represents the blood spilled



**Figure 1.4:** Red clothing and the use of *m'pene* characterizes the tools of mediums for *npfukwa* and *gamba* spirits. In addition to the *m'pene*, this *n'ganga* holds two tools that assist with divination—a blue plastic rattle and an amulet, (known as *nkhunga*). Both of these tools are commonly used by *madzvoka* and *npfukwa/gamba* mediums.

when the person was killed, and it symbolizes the rage that spirit has. Also, instead of the fly whisk, these violent outsider spirits use small two-edged daggers (*m'pene* or *ntchorora*) as their primary tool. The *m'pene* recalls the bayonet at the end of a rifle—the tools of a soldier—which symbolizes the violent death the person suffered, while also indicating that this spirit is still volatile, and potentially dangerous.

In some cases, *npfukwa* and *gamba* spirits are content to gain formal acknowledgement and material payment from the family of the person who wronged them. In many cases, however, they yearn to have a fixed place on the earth. They want a place to

work and a family to provide for, and thus they demand reparations in the form of a wife who provides them a lasting connection to her lineage. When a spirit is married to a living woman, he is given a stable place to reside and kin among the living to call his own. This security of place and new social relationships transforms spirits from a destructive force into a productive force.<sup>25</sup> In this way, the process of spiritual marriage transforms malevolent forces into benevolent relationships that bring prosperity. Through this process, the social relationships of those involved shift dramatically. This is especially true in the case of the spirit's wife and her present or future husband.

Some families give young unmarried girls to spirits to become their wives. Other women, as in the case of Merecina and her daughters, establish marriage bonds with spirits when they are adults with children. In the case of a woman who is a spirit-wife but has not yet married, any creation of a marriage bond with a living man must be negotiated with her spirit husband who has ultimate control of the outcomes. In most cases, a spirit husband will welcome the prospect of his wife marrying a living man, because this will allow her to produce offspring that are considered to be his progeny. But, in practice, this “marriage” to a living husband is not a marriage in the full sense of the term. In fact, many of my informants described the husband of a spirit wife as a “lover”—someone who resides with her as any other husband would, but without a formal bond linking their lineages.

Unlike an ordinary marriage relationship,<sup>26</sup> where a groom must procure the requested goods and money that constitute the bride wealth in order to solidify the marriage bond between their two families, a man who establishes a relationship with a spirit wife does not have to provide bride wealth or *lobolo* to her family, for she is already married.

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<sup>25</sup> See Chapter 2 for further discussion.

<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 6.

Accordingly, the children of such a relationship do not become the descendents of his lineage. For this reason, he does not make *roora*<sup>27</sup> payments to his wife's family after the birth of each child. In the event of a divorce, a woman who is a spirit wife will retain possession of her children, whereas when an ordinary marriage ends in divorce, a woman leaving her husband's home leaves her children behind.

These transformations in the nature of a woman's marriage bond drastically alter her domestic relationships. At marriage, a woman with a spirit husband does not leave her home to live with her husband and his family, as is the usual state of affairs in this patriarchal, patrilocal society. Instead, in practice, this union becomes matrilineal, and a spirit wife's living husband must leave his kin to reside with her at her family's compound. Living away from his family places a man in a subordinate position in relation to his wife's kin. What is more, the husband of a spirit wife is most directly subordinate to her spirit husband. As seen in Merecina's case, a spirit wife becomes the living medium for decisions of the household, which are made by her spirit husband. The final word on all major decisions comes mediated through the spirit wife.

Finally, as Merecina's case demonstrates, establishing a marriage bond with a spirit often has the effect of controlling the abusive behavior of living husbands. Men in Gorongosa understand that a spirit will vigilantly protect his wife from abuse. They think twice before insulting or physically abusing a woman known to be a spirit wife, out of fear of punishment or retribution from their spiritual senior. One interviewee illustrated this sentiment clearly:

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<sup>27</sup> *Roora* are payments in material goods and services that a man makes to his wife's parents after the birth of each child, see Chapter 6.

When a woman receives these spirits to stay with her, her husband can't beat her. If they don't obey, her other husband, the spiritual one, will get angry and will turn against him. Sometimes they kill him, sometimes they will make him seriously ill. Then he will go to a spirit-medium for help with his sickness and he will be told, "This woman here, she can't be hit or abused. Don't you know she is someone else's wife?"<sup>28</sup>

This type of control led some men to express their aversion to marrying a woman with a spirit: "I would never marry a spirit-wife," one man told me, "I won't be ordered around by a woman!"<sup>29</sup> Other men, however, are drawn to marry women who have spirit husbands because, through their healing practice, they offer a stable source of income for the family. Becoming a spirit wife, as Merecina's case clearly illustrates, is a way to gain a new degree of autonomy and control in a household without resorting to its dissolution.

### **Becoming a *n'ganga*: Expanded networks of support**

Women who work with their spirit husbands to heal others enjoy increased social status both within their own households as well as among neighbors and kin. Outside the home, a spirit-medium finds herself in the midst of new social relationships. Initiation inserts a woman in a social network of other *n'ganga*s, expressed through the language of kinship. For instance, a woman who oversees the initiation of a new spirit-medium becomes known to her as "mother." Later, if this new initiate oversees the initiation of another new *n'ganga*, the newest initiate will refer to the first woman as "grandmother." Likewise, a *n'ganga* who oversees a woman's initiation refers to her as "daughter" and so on. Figure 1.5 shows a group of *n'ganga*s who were all a part of Adélia's network. Each woman pictured had been initiated to spirit-mediumship in recent years and shares membership in a

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Mae Terezinha, March 3, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Eusébio Antônio, January 7, 2007



common lineage—meaning the initiation of each woman pictured can be traced back to a single *n'ganga*.



**Figure 1.5: Adélia (back, center, wearing red) in at her home in Nyamissongora with a gathering of *n'ganga*s in her network. Merecina and Marta are also pictured.**

These kinship terms are not merely symbolic but enacted. Relationships between *n'ganga*s are characterized by obligations and reciprocity, similar to those which characterize kinship relations. Within these networks, spirit-mediums provide each other with support in the event of illness or death. *N'ganga*s visit each other frequently, refer patients to each other, offer each other treatments at no cost, and so on. *N'ganga*s who share the same network also gather regularly.

Annually, each *n'ganga* prepares a feast in honor of her spirit(s). The centerpiece of the celebration is *barhwa*, a special type of ceremonial beer, made of sprouted sorghum. This feast is an all-day celebration of dancing and singing when everyone in the area is



invited to join. The members of a *n'ganga's* network are especially likely to attend. The *n'ganga's* spirit(s) will emerge through possession to distribute their *harhwa* to the guests. Food is also served for everyone. Following the feasting, everyone enjoys singing and dancing for most of the day. Other *n'ganga's* present are usually possessed by their spirits who join in the festivities.



**Figure 1.6:** Adélia, possessed by her spirit at her annual *harhwa* event. The spirit is distributing the beer to guests.

Significantly, *madzʒvoka* mediums and *npfukwa/gamba* mediums do not share the same networks. As one *madzʒvoka* medium put it:

Wherever spirits of war [*npfukwa/gamba* spirits] come out, we are not there. Wherever our spirits come out [*madzʒvoka*] those spirits of war flee. You don't encounter the two together. They [*npfukwa/gamba* spirits] are thieves. We are good.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Interview with Minyaradzwa; June 6, 2001.

In this statement, she was referring to these annual feasts where spirit-mediums gather.

While a *madzvola* medium may be in attendance at a feast honoring an *npfukwa* spirit, her spirit will not emerge in possession. Thus, *npfukwa/gamba* mediums' ties create parallel and distinct networks from those of *madzvola* mediums. However, all types of spirit-mediums are united in a broader network. *N'ganga*s with an active healing practice usually join official associations of traditional healers (AMETIM or AMETRAMO) that provide them with legitimacy and visibility in the eyes of government officials.

Finally, practicing as a spirit-medium elevates a woman's social standing. A woman's healing practice not only has the potential to bring respectful relations and income to her family but also can place her into dense networks of support. Those who have been healed by a *n'ganga*'s therapeutic interventions in the past remain grateful to her into the future. Thus, wherever a respected healer goes, she is likely to find a place where she is welcomed as a respected guest.

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Incorporating spirits into one's lineage to re-order family relationships is an example of just one resource of spiritual healing that women are drawing on to manage lives of turmoil and insecurity. Other forms of spiritual healing are gaining force in the district, providing women with a different way to manage the suffering in their lives. The following case of a female participant of a Pentecostal church illustrates an alternative and competing source of social and spiritual healing. Unlike the case of Merecina and her daughters whose new spiritual relationships re-ordered and solidified relationships with kin, participation in a Pentecostal church does not always repair divides in the family, but rather places women in

a new social network of spiritual kin that, for many people, comes to replace blood relations as a source of support in difficult times.

### **Anita's Story: Divine Protection and Spiritual Kin**

Anita is a middle aged, successful trader with seven children. When she married, she moved from her birthplace in Gorongosa to live with her husband outside the port city of Beira, about five hours away. In 2006, when living with her husband became unbearable, she returned to Gorongosa, building a house for herself near the homes of her parents and younger siblings. At her husband's residence, Anita had been a devoted member of a Pentecostal church. When she left her husband, she had to abandon the church she had attended for many years and leave behind many close relationships with other church members.

Anita's problems began when her daughter's infant died from mysterious causes. Anita's older brother, who resided near Anita and her husband, accused her of causing this infant's death through sorcery. This set off a tumultuous breakdown in Anita's relations with her brother. She made counter accusations that he was *drogado*<sup>31</sup> and that he had caused the death of her grandchild in order to gain wealth and material success. Anita and her brother took their dispute to the neighborhood Secretary, a government official tasked

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<sup>31</sup> "Drogado" in Portuguese corresponds to the English word "drugged." In colloquial usage, it has gained a different meaning. "Drogrado" refers to the act of paying a spirit-medium to acquire special powerful substances that aid in gaining material wealth. It is understood that people use "drogas" (drugs) to convert human life into personal success and material wealth. An accusation of "drogado" is similar to accusations of sorcery, but, whereas it is understood that women, by nature, have the potential to cause death through inherent powers of witchcraft, it is usually men who are accused of seeking the "drogas" from powerful spirit-mediums to have the same power to inflict supernatural death, but in a directed act that takes someone's life force and deliberately harnesses it for personal gain. Infant death often leads to suspicions that a family member is taking the life of the newborn to "feed" the nefarious powers that ensure their owner's success in business or other pursuits. See Chapter 4.

with conflict resolution in community courts. At Anita's request, two male church leaders accompanied her to testify on her behalf and defend her character. The Secretary was unable to resolve the case, and sent them to a spirit-medium who could discover the truth or falsity of these accusations. Anita was found innocent and bright white flour was sprinkled generously over her head as a sign of her purity and integrity.

Despite this resolution, she feared for her personal safety and for the safety of her children. She was afraid of retribution from her brother, who she still believed to be "*drogado*," prepared to wreak more destruction. During this difficult and uncertain period, Anita found great comfort and protection in her Christian faith.

In one of our interviews Anita told me, "my younger brother wanted to acquire "*drogas*" to kill me ... in order to seek his own success and wealth ... but he wasn't able to conquer me."<sup>32</sup> She explained that her strong and active faith provided her with protection from evil forces, allowing her to "see" the *mitombo*<sup>33</sup> or magical substances her brother planted in her home to bring harm to her family. The same night that he would come and place the malevolent substances in her home, intending to cause more death and destruction, she would receive a vision and God would speak to her showing her where her brother had placed the dangerous substances. This happened on more than one occasion. Each morning, Anita would pray: "God in heaven, if an evil person comes ... may his *mitombo* lose all power."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Interview, February 20, 2008: "Meu irmão mais novo queria arranjar droga para me-matar ... fazer a vida dele ... mais não estava me-conseguir." "*Drogas*," here, refers to substances imbued with power that one uses to cause harm to someone else. (see Footnote 21)

<sup>33</sup> Here, Anita uses *mitombo* as a synonym for *drogas*.

<sup>34</sup> Interview, February 20, 2008: "*Mulungu Baba muri kudenga. Se munhu wa kuipa wazvika ... mitombo yatche abwera na iye ngaipere simba.*"

Troubled by mortal threats from her brother, accusations of witchcraft, and a husband who was becoming financially and emotionally consumed by his drinking, Anita decided to relocate to her parents' home in Gorongosa, five hours away, taking her youngest and as yet unmarried children with her. To make this change, she gave up her prosperous kiosk by a major highway and a lifetime of connections with neighbors and fellow church members. When she arrived in Gorongosa, she immediately began participating in the Free Assembly Church of Mozambique where her parents were active participants. This Pentecostal church was very similar to her home congregation. From the start, Anita was absorbed into a large network of spiritual kin, which gave her a constant source of strength and hope in the midst of difficulties.

In Gorongosa, Anita was able to distance herself from the deteriorating relationships with her brother and husband, but her troubles didn't end. She financed the construction of a solid mud house with several rooms and a sturdy zinc roof. This visible sign of wealth made her the object of others' envy. When her youngest son fell ill, she suspected one of her neighbors of directing sorcery at her offspring out of jealousy. Church members, especially fellow participants of her church's women's group, came to visit Anita and her children at their home, bringing water and offerings of food. They prayed for her and for the restoration of her son's health, asking the Holy Spirit to protect her from the malevolent forces plaguing her family.

A few months later, Anita's mother and father temporarily withdrew from church participation to begin consulting spirit-mediums in an effort to resolve the source of their family's suffering. Of primary concern was their elderly father's worsening condition as he was becoming crippled by a debilitating illness. Anita's mother was second in the hierarchy

of women at the Free Assembly church, and her father was also a respected elder there.

But, when crisis hit their family, they took a hiatus from church participation to consult spirit-mediums. At one consultation, an *mpukwa* spirit emerged, claiming responsibility for causing the turmoil in their family. He also claimed responsibility for causing the dissolution of Anita's marriage and demanded Anita as his wife. Anita's family urged her to accept the spirit's marriage request, but she was incensed at the suggestion. Accepting this spirit would mean that she would have to abandon the church entirely. She refused to give up her Christian faith to follow her family's demands.

Speaking about her family troubles one day, Anita quoted biblical scripture, and argued that she could not give in to the demands of this "demon" who wanted to "enslave" her in a spiritual marriage bond. She told me that her disobedience of her elders led her family to disown her. Though she was distraught that her Christian faith was leading her to betray her own family, she remained resolute. She explained: "They are sacrificing me to hell so that they can gain salvation! And me? Will I abandon paradise just because of their desires for me? I will never do that! ... I am not afraid; afraid to die? This flesh, this can die, but my spirit must be saved!"<sup>35</sup>

While her family's church abandonment was temporary, what they asked of Anita—to become a wife of this troubled spirit—would have required her to abandon church participation permanently. Unlike Merecina and her daughters, when Anita was faced with this situation, she chose the opposite course. Like countless women in Gorongosa pressured to bear the burden of their family's suffering, she chose to follow the teachings of her Christian faith, even if it meant alienating herself from her family. Anita considered her

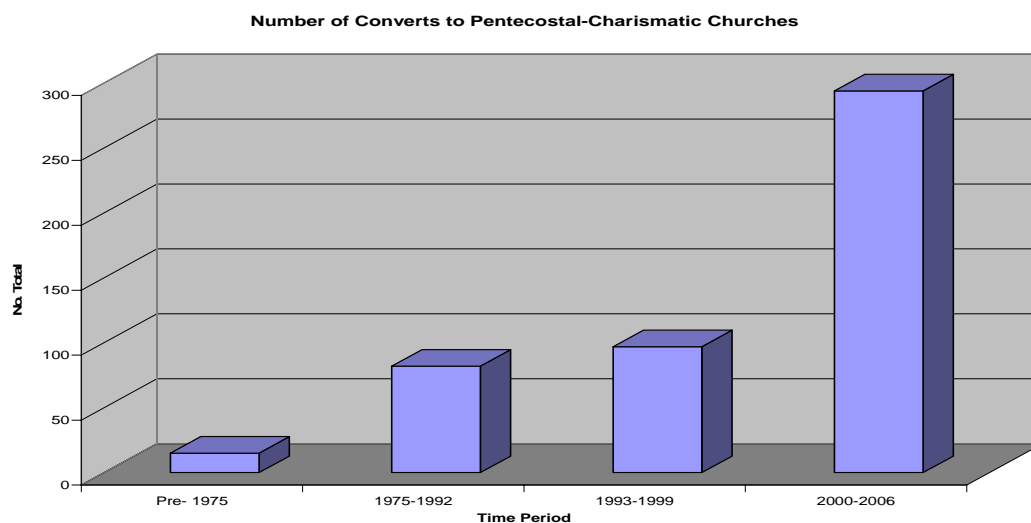
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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Anita Pascoal, June 23, 2008.

real family to be her fellow church members, and trusted that she could rely on their support in any situation.

### Hope for Salvation—Participation in Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches

Anita's story illustrates many of the reasons Pentecostal churches are attracting followers, especially women. After independence in 1975, and especially after the end of the civil war in 1992, Pentecostal-Charismatic churches (PCC) in Gorongosa proliferated around the district, paralleling similar growth around the region. There are currently over 100<sup>36</sup> different distinct Pentecostal-Charismatic church groups in Gorongosa District, each with its own network of congregations. The recent dramatic spread of Pentecostal-Charismatic style churches in Gorongosa is simply one instance of this powerful global movement. Results of the survey of over 300 households<sup>37</sup> clearly reveal the contours of this growth:

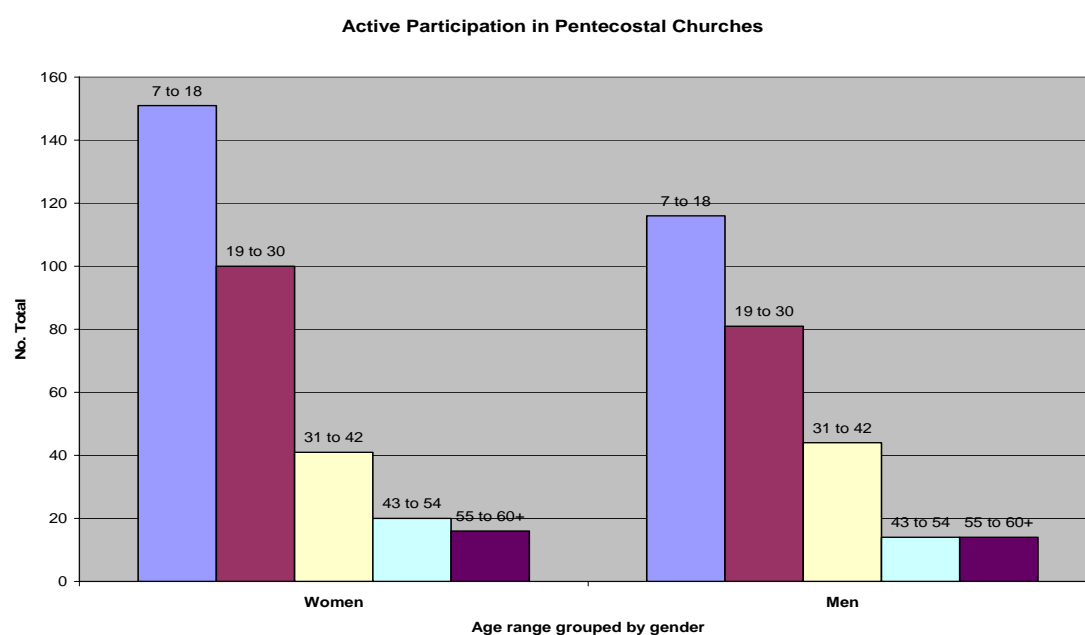


**Figure 1.7: Number of converts to Pentecostal-charismatic churches**

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix I for a list of churches.

<sup>37</sup> A description of the methodology of the two-month household survey that I conducted with a team of three women residents of Gorongosa can be found in the Introduction.

As shown in Figure 1.7, over 65% of converts in Gorongosa joined PCCs in period between 2000 and 2006. The growth of Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa is so widespread, and its social impacts so profound that it cannot escape notice. The results of our survey also illuminate the predominance of youth and women's participation in PCCs, as shown in Figure 1.8:



**Figure 1.8: Active participation in Pentecostal Churches in Gorongosa, by Gender**

While this chart reveals that youth and women are more numerous among converts to such churches, it also reveals something puzzling. The data show men's levels of participation to be somewhat close to women's. These results do not match with my experiences participating in a variety of church groups in Gorongosa since 1999. At the worship services of The Free Assembly of Mozambique church, for instance, on any given Sunday, the number of adult women in attendance was always at least three times that of adult men.



Each Sunday, the women's side of the sanctuary would overflow with so many participants that younger women would have to sit on the men's side of the sanctuary, where only a handful of adult male leaders who attended regularly were seated in special chairs (see Figure 1.9). This was also characteristic of other Pentecostal churches also on typical Sundays.

The discrepancy between my observations and these quantitative survey results reveals an interesting difference between the nature of men and women's church participation. This apparent inconsistency is likely due to a tendency of men to claim that they are active participants when they have participated in churches in the past. This is especially true when they are asked to respond to formal survey questions. Women, on the other hand, cultivate a Christian identity through very active and regular attendance at worship services and through daily practices and participation in church groups and activities.

The difference between men and women's style of church participation is striking, and is not confined to Mozambique. This leads many observers to postulate that women are somehow more naturally "spiritual" and inclined to religious participation. But, looking more closely at the nature of women's church participation reveals a more plausible explanation: that women's "spiritual nature" derives not from an innate predisposition to religious faith, but from their structural position in society that makes their lived experience considerably more insecure and vulnerable than that of adult men. When the world is upside down, it is women who shoulder a greater deal of the burden.



**Figure 1.9** These photos, showing the male and female sides of a church building were taken on the same day at about the same time. The photo on the left shows the side of the church building reserved for men. Aside from one adult man in the front row on the far left, all people pictured are youth or children. The two young men pictured were both leaders of the church's youth group. Near the back, young women take advantage of empty pews on the men's side. By sharp contrast, the women's side of the sanctuary (right photo) is overflowing.

Under present circumstances, where the majority of the rural population lives in circumstances of extreme poverty, social health suffers. Poverty creates the conditions for increasing incidence of malnutrition and chronic and deadly illnesses while also limiting people's means to manage such crises.<sup>38</sup> Economic hardship leads men to travel far and wide to engage in trading, find wage labor, or search for other sources of cash.<sup>39</sup> All of these factors contribute to strains in marriage relationships that place women in particular danger to lose social and material security.<sup>40</sup> In this context, women shoulder a disproportionate share of the family's burden. Upon further examination, women's active participation in Pentecostal churches in Mozambique can be seen as a quest for more stability and security in lives unsettled by a structural dependence on men in a patriarchal society.

As Anita's story reveals, most women are drawn to Pentecostal churches because their participation promises a new degree of control in their lives. Anita was able to draw on aspects of her church membership to manage difficult situations with her kin. Her deep

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 5 for discussion of increasing illness and the financial and social burden of physical illness and death and Chapter 7 for discussion of malnutrition.

<sup>39</sup> The current economic situation in Gorongosa is presented in Chapter 3.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 7 for a discussion of the impact of financial strain on marriage.

faith allowed her to establish a strong relationship with the masculine trinity of the “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Through this relationship, she was protected in times of danger, and given visions that led her to uncover material threats to her wellbeing and the safety of her children. In her daily life, Anita, like so many other women, was able to draw on her knowledge of scripture and the support of fellow church-goers to make judgments about the correct course of moral action. She relied on these resources even when defying the wishes of her family. Her church participation gave her direction and hope.

Women who participate in Pentecostal churches are able to use biblical stories, verses and tenets of faith to uphold their actions that may be in contradiction to societal expectations and norms for behavior. Their ability to mobilize these spiritual resources endows women with a considerable degree of authority and legitimacy. Much like female mediums for male spirits, women in this patriarchal society are able to gain new levels of authority by channeling the masculine authority of Christian figures and the authority of male church leaders. When Anita went against her family’s demands, she did not express her choices in terms of personal preference, but claimed obedience to the masculine authority of the bible and the teachings of male church leaders to justify her actions.

Anita and many women like her are able to use their active and visible Christian identity to defuse accusations of witchcraft leveled against them by family members and neighbors. Likewise, they trust that a faithful Christian lifestyle will ensure that God, via the Holy Spirit, will intervene to protect them from malevolent forces. And, as Anita did, if the need for intervention in times of acute domestic crisis arises, women call on the assistance of church leaders, who impart healing through prayer or who can intervene by making home visits to counsel couples in dispute. Having a group of spiritual kin who share a strong Christian identity is of great benefit to women. For instance, when Anita fled from her

husband's home to Gorongosa, she immediately became a member of another church family. Enmeshed in this network, her fellow church participants visited her at home when she or her children were suffering. Without this safety net, fleeing her husband's home and refusing her family's demands would not have been an easy option. Though Anita's opposition to her family's desires led them to ostracize her, she told me that her "true family is [her] church family."<sup>41</sup> She counts on them for continued social and material support. Indeed, taking this position in opposition to her kin only increases Anita's standing among church members who admire her courageous actions and strong faith.

For a host of reasons, church participation can be attractive to both men and women, but women's real and perceived insecure position in society leads to their predominance in these contexts. Church participation provides women with a rich set of spiritual and social resources, enabling them to manage a common set of problems. Women share testimonials of this kind of support with others, and this informal evangelization fuels the growth of Pentecostal churches where a new emphasis on spiritual kinship leads to profound transformations in social relationships.

### **Church Participation, the Women's Group and Social Support**

Just like initiation to spirit-mediumship, women who convert to Pentecostal church groups are inserted into new and powerful social networks conceived of in kinship terms. Church members consider themselves to be part of a global church body—whose members are all children of God. More importantly, each church group conceives of itself and acts as a family, performing significant roles in the life of their church members in the way that an

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<sup>41</sup> Interview, Anita Pascoal, June 23, 2008

extended family group would.<sup>42</sup> Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa are almost always built in the pastor's compound. This spatial location serves to emphasize the role that church pastors and their wives serve as "mother" and "father" of their church members.

Church members' identities in Gorongosa are shaped very strongly by this notion of family. While they conceive of themselves as members in a wider church body, church members identify first and foremost with their particular church family. The history of Pastor Zimba's church provides a clear example. Though, from 2006-2008, Zimba's church was known as the Free Assembly Church of Mozambique, in the past, his church group had been known by different names. First, his church was Assemblies of God, then Bread of Life Church, then Independent Gospel Church of Mozambique. The frequent name changes were due to disputes in the leadership of each of these church bodies. Because Pastor Zimba has two wives, something which is frowned upon by most high-level church officials, when leaders at the top levels discovered that they had a pastor in Gorongosa who was polygamous, they removed him from leadership. Each time he was removed, he went to neighboring cities to find another church that he could establish in Gorongosa.<sup>43</sup> Each time the name changed, his congregants remained the same. Many of the older members had been part of his "family" since the 1980s and remained fervently devoted to him, since they regarded him to be more respectable and generous than other pastors in the area.

This illustrates how church participants create very strong ties to each other. On this basis, they provide each other significant material, spiritual and social support, as they would for blood relatives. For women participants like Anita, the women's group provides the

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<sup>42</sup> For further discussion of the active family role church groups take in marriage, birth, and other significant life events, see Chapter 8.

<sup>43</sup> According to official regulations of the Mozambican government, founding an independent church body is difficult. Thus, the vast majority of churches in Gorongosa are branches of churches that have their "centers" in neighboring cities or in the capital. To establish a church in Gorongosa, most pastors find a church that does not yet exist in the district and negotiate with its leaders to receive permission to start a branch there.

densest network of support. The leaders of Pentecostal churches divide their members into groups based on gender, age, and role in the church. Adult women who have married and had at least one child are considered part of a group that is of great value to the church. As can be seen in Figure 1.10, clothing using the same pattern is an important aspect that fosters the identity of the women's group.



**Figure 1.10: Members of the women's group of the Free Assembly Church of Mozambique gathered for Thursday women's worship service.**

Of special importance at Pastor Zimba's church is the women's worship service that always takes place on Thursday mornings. These worship services provide a forum for openly sharing one's deepest fears, difficulties, and frustrations. At the start of the service is a period of witnessing when worshippers share their struggles to ask for assistance or to praise the effects of God in their lives. In comparison to the witnessing made on any given Sunday, on Thursdays women feel more open and free to speak about the difficulties they face at home with their husbands, or with their co-wives. This intimate sharing reveals how women



in the group create meaningful and trusting relationships. The period of testimonials is also a time when women can alert other group members that they need help or special support.

Another central aspect of the women's services is preaching. In this portion of the service elders in the group provide counsel to women based on scripture that provides them with detailed strategies for how to navigate the early years of marriage in order to maintain stability and wellbeing of their children.<sup>44</sup>



**Figure 1.11: Women visit the homes of sick members of their group bringing flour, water and other offerings to help relieve her of her domestic duties. During the visit, they offer individual prayer and counsel for their group member in need.**

At the end of the service, there is a time of healing, when those with physical illnesses or other kinds of troubles go to the front of the church and kneel to receive prayer from other women who have been specially anointed as healers. After the worship service, women walk around the area to visit sick members of their group. They bring 25 liter jugs of water, firewood, and flour—all products of women's labor—in order to relieve a woman

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<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 8 for detailed discussion.

who is sick of some of her household duties. Once they arrive at the home of the ill person, the women sings songs and offer their fellow church member individual prayer. After this, they sit together for a while, conversing and listening to the whole story of their situation and what they are suffering.

Beyond the women's group and the local church family, church participants enjoy added legitimacy and visibility among the network of church groups that extends to a district, national, and international level. They also gain increased "legibility" and trust from non-governmental organizations working in the region. Many Christian-based charity groups active in Mozambique are more likely to trust church participants and hire them as paid staff. Groups such as Food for the Hungry International and World Vision often direct their programs' services to church participants.

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Once converting to Pentecostal Christianity or becoming initiated as spirit-mediums, women are inserted into networks of spiritual healing that complement or even replace the support that comes from networks of extended kin. Anita and Merecina's stories illustrate the profound ways in which spiritual and religious actions shape the lives of women in central Mozambique. Participating in these networks of spiritual healing provides growing numbers of women a rich and flexible set of resources that allow them to better manage disordered lives. Both Merecina and Anita found avenues of escape and control in their lives through their participation in spiritual forms of healing. Though they drew on very different sources of spiritual healing power, their relationships to male spiritual authorities transformed their social identities and altered their social relationships in a way that allowed them to become vessels for masculine authority. This dramatic shift allowed Merecina and Anita to gain more control in their lives.



### **Discussion and Conclusion: Spiritually Mediated Control**

In the current context of Mozambique, where over seventy percent of the population lives a rural lifestyle, and where the cost of the “food bundle” has more than doubled in most parts of the country, people’s lives are characterized more and more by insecurity (Hanlon 2007: 9). Newly initiated female spirit-mediums and recent converts to Pentecostal churches share many aspects of their life histories. As the cases of Anita and Merecina illustrate, they are frequently people who have been enduring significant hardship. Most Mozambicans depend on networks of kin to meet financial and social needs. This has been the primary safety net. But, overwhelming strains like those becoming prevalent in Gorongosa can weaken or even lead to the dissolution of these lineage-based relationships.<sup>45</sup>

In Gorongosa, women who live amid “economic uncertainty and moral flux,” seek to sustain domestic relationships that are in jeopardy (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004: 198). Becoming spirit-mediums or converting to Pentecostal churches provides women with contrasting means to manage situations of instability. Both of these processes change a woman’s identity, insert her in new social networks, and provide her with a means to both make sense of and transform suffering. These networks of belonging provide women with increased levels of stability and influence in their households. However, this increased authority is not “power” that a woman holds directly. Women’s new levels of power and authority are mediated through male spiritual authorities. In the case of a spirit-medium, it is her spirit husband who has the ultimate power and authority. In the case of a church participant, a woman draws on her reciprocal relationship with the masculine figures of the divine trinity and with male church leaders to gain protection and healing and to increase her

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<sup>45</sup> A detailed discussion of the dynamics of illness, death and accusation can be found in Chapter 6.

influence in the domestic sphere. These new networks of spiritual healing are extremely powerful, largely, because they do not replace or condemn, but complement, existing social relationships of a patriarchal society.

A great deal of feminist scholarship conceptualizes women's agency in terms of resistance to dominant patriarchal norms (Strathern 1987). What is happening in Mozambique with these new networks of spiritual healing does not represent direct resistance to patriarchal society. These examples cannot simply be considered a case of "women's empowerment," the stated goal of many development programs operating in the country that are based on Western models of feminism (Casimiro 2004, Mejía et. al. 2004). Instead, what is happening with women's insertion in new networks of spiritual healing calls for closer examination. It requires us to move away from the idea of "power as resistance" and to acknowledge that history, culture, and larger socio-cultural forces often influence one's agency. Like Mahmood has argued, it requires us to take a more fluid and multiple, rather than a singular theory of agency in which modalities of agency which defy the logic of resistance to and subversion of norms are also accepted (Mahmood 2005). Women who become spirit-mediums and who convert to Pentecostal churches do not attempt to change existing social structures in order to reposition their place in society. They work within and around the norms of a patriarchal society to manage experiences of hardship and suffering, but in the process manage to actually gain new levels of authority and control of their situations. Though Western feminists might not recognize women's participation in spiritual healing in Mozambique as a form of empowerment, in their efforts to transform their misfortune into wellbeing, women's actions are, in effect, leading to real transformations in society that increase women's power over their life situations. Their actions help to bring stability; to bring their world back into balance.

The inordinate stresses that women in Gorongosa must bear are historically grounded. Gorongosa's history has been characterized by years of social and political turmoil. The following chapter provides historical context for Gorongosa's recent changes, offering insight into how strategies to manage suffering have emerged from and been changed by different historical periods.

## Chapter 2:

### **The Production of Suffering: The Ordering of Society in Historical Context**

The intense difficulties of life that have fostered the recent increase in numbers of spirit-mediums and Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa have been historically produced. Gorongosa's marginal position in an economically and politically marginalized nation is the product of many years of history in which Gorongosa's physical and human resources were appropriated by outside powers. Just as suffering in the present has resulted from a long history of social and political turmoil, the strategies people use to manage affliction have been shaped over time. This chapter offers a historical sketch of Gorongosa, providing context for the contemporary changes I describe in subsequent chapters. It provides insight into the struggles Gorongosans have faced and how different strategies to manage social and political turmoil have been historically situated.

As seen in Chapter 1, the intensification of suffering in Gorongosa's recent history has been attributed to a recent proliferation of violent spirits. Spirit-mediums and Pentecostal church groups position themselves differently in managing relationships with afflicting spirits. This historical overview provides background for these changing relationships by introducing the array of human-spirit relationships that have both emerged from and played a key part in shaping different historical moments. In this way, descriptions of past contexts are framed by introductions to aspects of the cosmology of human-spirit relations in Gorongosa. Arranging the account this way takes seriously the central role of human-spirit relations in political, economic, and social life. Spirits both disturb and fortify humans' access to power, both at the level of society and at the level of

family. Spirits contribute to the failure or success in different livelihoods; and they are called upon to discern things in the present, providing moral direction in times of rapid change. On the other hand, different manifestations of Christianity, notably Gorongosa's Catholic mission and Pentecostal church groups, have provided supplementary strategies to manage life in difficult circumstances. Christian philosophies have provided alternative groundings for social organization, which have at times been complementary to and at other times opposed to traditional sources of authority. As noted in Chapter 1, Christian philosophies have provided people with tools to manage suffering and to provide direction in times of turmoil.

The historical account begins with a focus on relationships with ancestral spirits that have shaped Gorongosa's political organization past and present. This provides context for traditional sources of authority that have operated in parallel with overarching political structures throughout most of Gorongosa's history. From there, the account moves to describe afflicting spirits that have emerged from periods of turmoil and that have been transformed into benevolent forces through the work of spirit-mediums. The account then moves to the colonial period—the time from which many of the *nɸfukwa* spirits troubling people today have emerged. Finally, the chapter considers changes in human-spirit relationships that emerged during the civil war. During this period, Gorongosa residents came to rely heavily on both Pentecostal Christianity and relationships with new *gamba* spirits for protection from war's dangers. The turmoil of the civil war period laid the foundations for innovations in human-spirit relationships and the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches that has characterized Gorongosa's recent history.

### ***Mbondoro*- Spirits of Royal Ancestors**

The basic human-spirit relationships that provide order for traditional society are relationships with ancestral spirits. Like the spirits of deceased lineage heads of any given family, known as *mizimu*, clan spirits, known as *mbondoro* maintain direct connections to their descendents, remaining in communication and providing protection and wellbeing in return for people's respectful behavior and their maintenance of social norms. Just as *mizimu* watch over the direct descendents of their lineage, *mbondoro*—the spirits of founding chiefs—watch over the country or the wider territory of their people, operating on a broader political level.

To maintain direct communication with the living, *mbondoro* may choose to work through a living medium. A *mbondoro* spirit chooses its own human medium among descendents of its clan. The medium may be male or female or from any family group. *Mbondoro* are also able to manifest themselves as lions and rove their territory to keep watch. Thus, *mbondoro* lions are a combination of “supernatural” and “natural” beings. These are “magical” lions: both visible and real, yet, because they are the embodiment of the founding ancestor of a territory, they are at once human, divine, and animal. When encountering lions in the bush, people are often unable to distinguish whether they are simple or spiritual lions (c.f. West 2005 and 2007). To this day, residents living in different areas of Gorongosa claim to have seen *mbondoro* lions or heard their roar.

*Mbondoro* protect the residents of a territory from harm and also act as moral guardians. Writing about *mbondoro* in the Barue kingdom in Mozambique, Allen Isaacman has pointed out that territorial spirits “provided the vital link between man, the earth and

the moral order” (1973: 397). *Mbondoro* are the source of the fertility of the land itself. They “provide the rain for the fields and protect the crops as they grow” (Lan 1985:32). However the protection and fertility that *mbondoro* provide do not come automatically. Protection, rain and fertility will be withheld if the *mbondoro*’s laws are disobeyed. Breaches in the moral code, “especially murder, incest and thievery, ultimately create a disequilibrium in the natural order” (Isaacman 1973: 397). Drought, famine, pestilence or epidemics—any type of misfortune that affects the population in a given territory—are signs of displeasure of territorial spirits, and can lead to a current leader’s loss of legitimacy and authority. In this way, *mbondoro*, the spirits of past political leaders, continue to play a political role in the lives of their descendents. *Mbondoro* spirits and their human intercessors reveal how, as Feierman has noted, “healing and harming the land” are central to politics (1990:7).

### **Following the Bones: The First Settlers of Gorongosa**

Oral histories about the settling of Gorongosa center on *mbondoro* spirits as central figures. The founding of Gorongosa and, thereby, the establishment of political leadership and control of the territory was led by *mbondoro* spirits who still oversee the population today. Following a brief historical contextualization, the account below is one version of the founding narrative of Gorongosa, as told to me at different times by elders considered to be the keepers of history in the area of K’handu,<sup>1</sup> on the western side of Gorongosa Mountain. Though the details of each person’s account differed slightly, the basic narrative is undisputed.

The first settlers of the Gorongosa region came from Mbire of the Eastern Highlands of present-day Zimbabwe. Mbire was a Rozvi dynasty that began to build its

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<sup>1</sup> Also spelled “Canda” following Portuguese orthography. This term means “skin/leather.”

power in the fourteenth century (Newitt 1973:23). The Rozvi rose to pre-eminence among the Shona that dominated the plateau under the leadership of Changamire Dombo—a minor Karanga chief who “built up an impressive reputation as a soldier and a ‘magician’” (Newitt 1995: 103). The Rozvi Empire came to supplant the powerful Mwene Mutapa Empire which rose to pre-eminence through control of a vast region of trade that linked to major trading ports such as Sofala and Kilwa on the Swahili coast and built the impressive stone structures epitomized by the Great Zimbabwe (Bourdillon 1987: 8, Martin 1998). Gold and ivory were gathered throughout the country and brought to trading fairs to be taxed by the chief and sold to the merchants. The Mbire Empire flourished most vigorously after the successful war against the Portuguese in 1693 (Newitt 1973:25), when Rozvi fighters destroyed a Portuguese trading fair, creating “a real barrier ... to their expansion” that “sketched in vague outline the lines along which this part of Africa was to be partitioned in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century” (Newitt 1995:104). The settlement of Gorongosa coincided with political conflict and population pressures on land in what is now eastern Zimbabwe that pushed groups out to found dynasties elsewhere (Bourdillon 1987:9).

According to narratives of the founding of Gorongosa, one of the earliest Mbire chiefs had three wives from different lineages.<sup>2</sup> The names of these three lineage groups were: Changamire, Chipinge, and Kukankha. For generations, succession to power in this chieftaincy circulated among the three different houses of this original chief's wives. The

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<sup>2</sup> The details of this story have been confirmed to me by various elders of the Gorongosa region, but primary is Sr. Celestino Sacaune Canda, a member of the K'handu dynasty. When there are questions about history and ancestors among residents of this part of the district of Gorongosa, he is always the authoritative source of information, and I found many elders, male and female, defer to his authority as a keeper of the history and memory of the region. I worked with Sr. Celestino and one of my research assistants to produce a separate booklet on the history, customs and stories of the K'handu portion of Gorongosa entitled, “Nossa Gorongosa: Uma Introdução à história e cultura de Regulado de K'handu, Distrito de Gorongosa.” This book was written and conceptualized by three residents of K'handu, and I played an editorial role. This section draws heavily on the account written in this unpublished booklet.



founding of Gorongosa arose out of a conflict between these three groups over the succession to power. During what was probably the mid-to-late 1600s, when one of the royal chiefs died, a dispute arose among the brothers of the three lineages that were eligible to take the throne. A son of the deceased chief claimed the throne instead of passing power to the next “house” according to the usual rotation. This led to a conflict so heated that the royal family split. The story, as a member of the K’handu dynasty told it to me is as follows:

The founders of Gorongosa were two of these three brothers from different lines of the same royal family. They each had elder brothers who had taken turns in the rotation of the chieftancy in the past. Before their deaths, each of these brothers requested that they be placed in sacks made from elephant skin. Their final wish was granted to each of them, and the elephant skin sacks containing their remains were kept inside the house where the sacks were constructed, each on top of a *talimba* [raised platform/bed made of bamboo and mats of cane]. Each day, these sacks of the ancestors’ bones would go outside of the house to warm themselves in the sun, and then later return on their own to their beds (Canda, et.al. [n.d.]).

One day, in protest to the conflict over the succession to the throne, the sacks fled from this region of what is now Zimbabwe, towards present-day Gorongosa, in Mozambique. The sacks holding the bones of these royal ancestors advanced in the direction of an uninhabited region to the northeast where, when they were still alive, these two brothers used to hunt elephants<sup>3</sup> to trade ivory with Swahili merchants (*muenbe*). This region, what is now known as Gorongosa, was an ideal location to settle because it was rich in resources—wildlife, forests, plentiful water in a network of streams, and fertile lands suitable for farming. The sacks holding the bones of the brothers moved over the landscape, leaving a wide path through the bush—opening the way for their followers.

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<sup>3</sup> The importance of elephant hunting in the early history of Gorongosa is signaled frequently in the practice of *madzvoka* mediums (described later in this chapter) who often use a “ceremonial axe” known as *gano* in possession dances. I was told that the *gano* was used by elephant hunters to butcher a fallen animal. *Madzvoka* spirits that state a desire for the *gano* indicate that they lived during the period when elephant hunting and trade in ivory was an important economic activity.

The two brothers who were denied chiefly power in Mbire chased after those sacks, following the clear path through unfamiliar terrain. When they realized that the sacks had gone far away, the brothers returned home to inform authorities in Mbire that the sacks were fleeing and that they must follow with their families. They received permission to take their kin to follow the sacks. These lineage groups followed the sacks for several days until they came to the region of Gorongosa where they settled and where their descendents live until this day.

Three lineage groups made the journey. The first was the family of Matso Ausiku (which in English, means “eyes of the night”). They were followed by the family of K’handanda, and finally, the family of Sadjundjira. The family of K’handanda was the first to arrive in the area, because the Matso Ausiku group stopped along the way to light a fire and feast on an elephant they found dead along their path. When the K’handanda group passed them on their way, the Matso Ausiku group invited them to share in the feast. But before beginning their journey, the K’handanda group had been told by their lineage ancestors not to eat any part of an animal that died on its own. For this reason, they refused the invitation of the Matso Ausiku. But, rather than insult their hosts, the leaders of the K’handanda group asked for a piece of the skin of the elephant to take along with them. Along the way, they threw out this piece of skin, in order to remain true to the cautionary orders they had received before embarking on the long journey.

The K’handanda group continued their journey and after a while, came to the area presently known as “K’handanda,” on the Western side of Mount Gorongosa. When they arrived there, the lion of their people, known as Nyamadzi,<sup>4</sup> was sitting on the mount above

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<sup>4</sup> “Nyamadzi” literally means “place of water” emphasizing the important link between *mhondoro* and rain, water, and fertility of the land.

the Burutu<sup>5</sup> stream, and for this reason, this hill, to this day, is known as Nyamadzi.

Seeing their *mbondoro*—their royal ancestor in the form of a lion—signaled to the group that they had arrived at the place where they were to settle.

Because the K’handa group was the first to arrive in the region, settling on the western side of Gorongosa Mountain, their autochthonous status gave descendents of the K’handa group the power and authority to act as political and economic rulers of that territory. When the second group, Matso Ausiku, arrived after them, they were already in a subordinate position relative to the K’handa, and approached the headman of the K’handa family to request a place to stay. They were given an area known as “Nyawaroi.”<sup>6</sup> The last group to arrive was that of Sadjundjira. This group did not ask the K’handa group for territory in which to settle, but travelled around the base of the large massif mountain to settle on the eastern side, where they too were able to clear the land and establish ownership of their own territory.

The subordinate relationship of Matso Ausiku to K’handa continued. At the end of the first year, the family of Matso Ausiku brewed beer for a feast to thank the K’handa lineage for giving them their place to stay. It was at the end of that celebration that the K’handa group gained the name they are known by today. At the celebration, many men and women were drunk and commented over and over that the people who gave us this

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<sup>5</sup> The name of this perennial stream and spring is certainly not the name it held at the time the region was settled. The term “burutu” comes from the Portuguese word, “bruto,” a word that literally translates as “brute,” which was often used by the Portuguese during colonial times to mean “uncivilized.” Those labeled “bruto” were men and women who didn’t go to schools, who did not follow Portuguese aesthetic standards for cleanliness and neatness of appearance. The Burutu stream acquired this name because it is a spring with abundant water even during the dry season, and is very difficult to cross over, without coming out very dirty and looking like a “bruto” on the other side.

<sup>6</sup> This name leads to the assumption that this was an inferior piece of land, as, in English, this term translates to “Land of Witches.”

place were the people we gave a piece of skin (*k'handa*). From this time forward, this group and the territory they settled came to be known as “K'handa.”

### **Land and Politics in Gorongosa**

As the account of the settling of Gorongosa indicates, from their first arrival, land has been central to the life of Gorongosans. It is critical to comprehend the central importance of land in order to fully grasp how land conflicts and the loss of control over land and resource use has been one of the most powerful sources of suffering in the past and present experience of Gorongosa residents.

Deep ties to the land are embodied in *mbondoro* spirits who are the founding ancestors of the owners of the land. For the residents of Gorongosa, as for people from all around the region, land control and land distribution are the source of power, wealth, wellbeing, and prosperity. As Tabona Shoko has noted, the land “is regarded as a special gift from the ancestors. All the products of the land such as crops, trees and animals emanate from the spirits who own the land”(Shoko 2007). In the account of the settling of Gorongosa, it is not the people, but the spirits of their ancestors, in the physical form of a sack of bones, and, later, in the shape of a lion, who lead the way to the new territory. It is these same ancestors who watch over their people and their territory—protecting them from dangers and bringing them health and prosperity.

A conflict over succession to power—a political conflict—was resolved through the relocation to a new land. In Mbire, when political power was not rotating through the houses of the chief as had been the custom, members of the excluded lineages were being disinherited from their rights to power and control of the land. Their ancestral and

protecting spirits resolved this conflict by leading the groups in dispute to a new territory.

They were the first inhabitants to settle in the area, transforming it from *tsanga* (wild land) to domesticated spaces of human habitation and which allowed them to claim ownership (French 2009:125).

The notion that first occupants are the political leaders and owners of the land is widespread in central and southern African societies. What scholars have variously referred to as the “principal of pioneer primacy” (Shipton 1994: 350), or the “the principal of first arrival” (Isaacman 1972:26), is the basis upon which rights over land and political authority is established and legitimized. *Mbondoro*—the spirits of the first chiefs to open and occupy the territory, enact this land-based political sovereignty. Each *mbondoro* rules over a specific territory and the descendents of this clan are the owners of the land. In Gorongosa, different *mbondoro* spirits work through human mediums to regulate the ownership and use of their area’s land.

Outsiders wishing to settle in the area must first gain permission from the *mbondoro*, via consultation with the current political leader and direct descendent of the *mbondoro*, known as *nyakwawa* or “chief.” Consulting with the medium for the *mbondoro*, the *nyakwawa* will introduce a newcomer to the *mbondoro* who will assign a piece of land for the newcomer to reside and cultivate. In this way, new settlers in an area are able to come under the spirit’s protection but they are forever in a politically subordinate position to the descendents of the original settlers of the area. Even when the “newcomers” to the land arrive only a day or two after the original settlers, as is seen in the case of the Matso Ausiku group arriving soon after the K’handu group had encountered their protective lion and settled into their area, they are still subordinate to the original occupants of the territory, and

dependent on the owners of the land for land use rights as well as for spiritual and political direction.

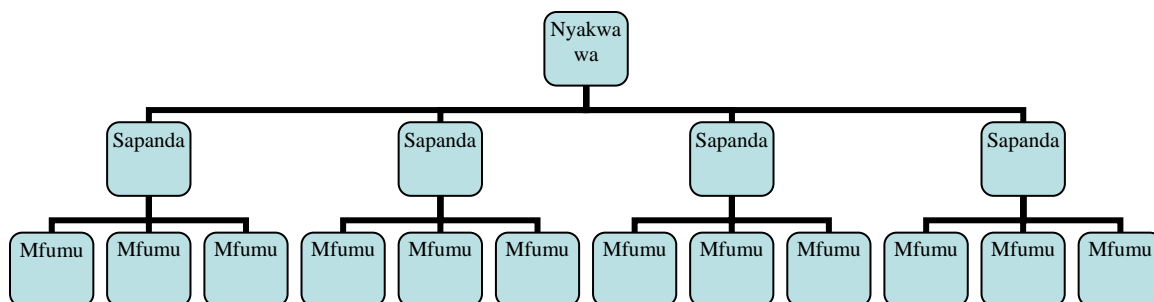
### *Traditional Government Structures in K'handa*

Though Gorongosa's history has been characterized by social and political turbulence, the basic structure of traditional government has retained relative continuity over a long period of time. The following section describes traditional structures of government in Gorongosa. These structures continue to play a large role in governing in Gorongosa, particularly outside of the district capital. Despite the Mozambican state's creation of parallel structures of government, traditional leaders in most areas of Gorongosa continue to be a center of gravity for most people's search for political and social direction in the territory. Many women and men appeal to traditional leaders in times of need. They seek resolution of disputes at these leaders' weekly courts. They seek guidance with decisions and support in times of need. Further, as will be discussed in greater depth below and in Chapter 4, Pentecostal church groups fit into people's lives in much the same way as traditional leaders. For this reason, in order to understand the organization of Pentecostal church groups in Gorongosa it is important to examine the basic structures of traditional government and how they have shaped society, politics, and land use.

Presently, in K'handa, succession to power blends monarchical and democratic processes. Following the political structure of their founder's society as it was in Mbire, the transfer of power in K'handa rotates between three different sub-lineages of the chiefly family. The three lineages are K'handa (skin), Mbawala (Gazelle), and Kanyoka (Little Snake). Each of these lineages are from the clan: Nkhonde (Canda, et.al. [n.d.]). When one

leader dies, the next is chosen from the lineage of the next family in the order of rotation.

Eligible male descendents in this lineage are nominated by a large assembly of the population and then a vote is taken. Votes are cast by dropping stones into vessels representing each candidate.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 2.1: Traditional government structure in K'handa**

In K'handa, the traditional structure of government takes the form illustrated in Figure 2.1. Leadership and decision-making power are arranged hierarchically, with the *nyakwawa* holding supreme authority. The *nyakwawa* (known in Portuguese as *régulo*)<sup>8</sup> of K'handa is a male descendent of the founding dynasty. Under his direct leadership is a set of local chiefs, or *sapandas* who oversee sub-areas of his large territory and serve as his close advisors. Beneath the *sapandas* are a larger group of sub-chiefs or *mfumus* who respond directly to the needs of families residing in their sub-region.

A vital aspect of these leaders' governing activities consists in court sessions held weekly at the home of the *nyakwawa* and at the home of each *mfumu*. The *nyakwawa* is responsible for the most critical decisions affecting the residents of the territory. The

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Eugenio Almeida; July 10, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> The term *régulo* comes from the Portuguese “regular”—to regulate or govern. This modern-day term was brought into use during colonial times, when Portuguese administrators appointed chiefs or recognized existing ones and brought them into an indirect system of rule. Today both the terms *nyakwawa* and *régulo* are used to refer to the supreme traditional authority of a given territory.

*nyakwawa* works closely with advisors including *sapandas* and a group of male and female judges who assist him in making rulings. *Mfumus*, on the other hand, resolve minor disputes that arise between residents of their sub-regions. Issues not resolved in the *mfumu*'s weekly court are appealed to the *nyakwawa*. After determining the guilt or innocence of the accused, the leaders of these courts determine what compensation should be paid to the victim and the victim's family. The guilty party is also required to pay a fine to the presiding authority. Usually, the fine is a combination of manual labor and a monetary fee.

One of the primary responsibilities of these leaders is to regulate the use and distribution of land. Because he is the principal intercessor for the spirits that watch over the land, the *nyakwawa* settles internal disputes over land use and boundaries. In the past, the *nyakwawa*'s ownership of the land was reaffirmed through residents' payment of annual tribute (*mussonko*). Isaacman postulates that this tax might have been satisfied with a bushel or two of grain, goats or chickens (1972:27). Also, predetermined portions of large animals killed on his lands were presented as symbolic tokens. This type of payment remains in effect to this day: in 2006, when buffalo escaped a private reserve in the territory and began posing a threat to residents of the area, hunters dispatched by the *nyakwawa* of K'handanda returned to offer him specific portions of the animals that were killed.

Land in the forests cloaking the upper elevations of Gorongosa Mountain is reserved for the use of direct descendants of the founding lineages. The summit of the mountain is sacred territory since it is the dwelling place of numerous spirits. The forest in K'handanda is divided into three different subdivisions that correspond with three of the principal lineages of the K'handanda dynasty. Access to forest resources in each of these sections is limited to direct descendants of the corresponding lineage. Cutting large trees



was prohibited, but hunting, beekeeping, and the harvest of understory plants for construction and medicinal uses was welcomed. The *nyakwama* still exercises authority over the use of forests, punishing violators of regulations at his Saturday court. However, in recent years, the creation of an independent body to manage land use known as the Comité has diverted some of his control.

Past leaders of K'handá did not keep their lands closed to outsiders. According to oral history accounts, *nyakwama* of K'handá were welcoming to anyone who sought to settle there. They received people who had no family or who were in exile. For this reason, K'handá's leaders came to be known as "*nyakufuya*" which translates roughly as "protectors" or "shepherds"<sup>9</sup> (Canda, et. al. n.d). Whoever came to the house of the *nyakwama* was welcomed and given a place to stay in exchange for tribute, services and productive labor.<sup>10</sup> All newcomers settling in the area fell under the authority of the *nyakwama* and also had to observe the regulations governing land use. Though newcomers were allotted portions of land for farming, they were not given access to forest resources at the top of the mountain.<sup>11</sup>

To this day, when newcomers desire to settle in the area, they must consult with the *nyakwama* and local leaders to make their intentions known. In consultation with his judges and advisors, the *nyakwama* decides what land should be given and the terms of its use. Temporary visitors to the area also must consult with these leaders. Since it is spirits who guard the land from threats, outsiders must make their presence known. If this does not happen, they are at risk of spiritual attack or retribution. For this reason, when newcomers arrive in the territory, they should first introduce themselves to the *nyakwama* and then to

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<sup>9</sup>*Kufuya* means "to raise" and is used in the case of livestock of all kinds (but not human children). The prefix "nya" transforms the verb to a noun meaning person who raises [animals]. Shepherd is perhaps the best single-word equivalent in English.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Celestino Sacaune Canda; May 8, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Samuel João Baptista; August 21, 2007.

each leader of the sub-region that they visit. When consulting each of these leaders, they must provide a set of goods including a black cloth, a white cloth, tobacco, and some amount of alcohol. The *nyakwawa* or *mfumu* takes these goods to perform *mbamba*—a ceremony that opens communication with ancestral spirits. Through *mbamba*, these leaders alert *mbondoro* to the presence of the newcomer. Thus, as intermediaries for the spirits that watch over the land, the local leaders regulate the actions of all its visitors and inhabitants.

In Gorongosa, church groups have come to supplement traditional structures of government. Church leadership is organized hierarchically and pastors serve as social guides for their followers. However, rather than representing *mbondoro* as moral guardians, pastors serve as intermediaries for the authority of Christian figures. If followers live according to this authority, they can expect to receive wellbeing and prosperity from God. Like *nyakwawa*, church pastors are also like shepherds, welcoming all sorts of people in need into their fold. Church leaders serve as patrons for their followers. They accept tribute in the form of offerings and tithes of money, labor, and goods from church members and in return, offer their members with assistance in times of need. Like the weekly court sessions of traditional authorities, church leaders resolve disputes that arise among their members, particularly (as will be seen in chapter 8), marital disputes.

*Balance of Power—Samatenje, medium for rainmaking spirit*

In Gorongosa, the authority of any *nyakwawa* is balanced by the overarching power of a rainmaking spirit that resides on Gorongosa Mountain. As described above, in Gorongosa, the *mbondoro* or spirits of the royal ancestors are the source of rain, fertility, and prosperity of the land. But the *mbondoro* are subject to a greater, regional rainmaking spirit

who resides on the top of Gorongosa Mountain and whose human medium lives at a sacred site or shrine on the eastern side of the mountain. Unlike *mbondoro*, this territorial rain spirit is not the spirit of a founding ancestor. The rain shrine on Gorongosa Mountain is associated with a medium who carries the title Samatenje. Samatenje resides near the shrine on an area of the mountain known as Nyamatenje. Each human medium for Samatenje is a male from the same family, and at the death of any given medium, the spirit will choose a successor.

Samatenje is a formidable figure in the Gorongosa region. To this day, he holds an almost legendary quality for his ability to control the rain. Though Samatenje operates outside the day-to-day social interactions of the region, this medium has a powerful political influence. Samatenje's power is of a different order above the figures of *nyakwawa*, *sapanda*, and *mfumu*. By retaining a close connection to territorial spirits that provide rain, fertility, and prosperity to the region, Samatenje is respected and feared. Just as *nyakwawa* have their territories and populations who pay them tribute, *nyakwawa* whose territories fall within the region of Samatenje's spirit subjugate themselves to this medium as vassals. To ensure rain and fertility, *nyakwawa* collect small contributions of grain from those in their territories to contribute to an annual feast held at the site of the rain shrine.

In central Africa, rain spirits and their mediums have played a critical role, wielding considerable political power. Samatenje's position in Gorongosa's society and politics fits what has been termed a "territorial cult" in the historical and anthropological literature on central and southern Africa (Daneel 1970, Schofeleers 1978, 1992). Victor Turner has described such cults as "earth and fertility cults," distinguishing them from "ancestral and

political cults” (1974). Turner’s crucial distinction between these types of cults captures the different realms of influence accorded to Samatenje and *nyakwawa*:

Ancestral and political cults and their local embodiments tend to represent crucial power divisions and classificatory distinctions within and among politically discrete groups, while earth and fertility cults represent ritual bonds between those groups and even ... tendencies toward still wider bonding ... In studies of African cults of the first type, we find frequent reference to such topics as lineage segmentation, local history, factional conflict and witchcraft. In cults of the second type, the accent is laid on common ideals and values, and, where there has been misfortune, on the guilt and responsibility of all rather than the culpability of individuals or factions (1974:185).

As is evident here, in contrast to “ancestral and political cults,” rainmakers such as Samatenje have an integrative potential. A number of historians and anthropologists have noted how rainmakers and shrines have been an important basis of political continuity across time and space, enduring through multiple political shifts and connecting fragmented settlements throughout central Africa (e.g. Mitchell 1961, Schofeleers 1978 and 1992, Turner 1974).

### **Political plurality and spirits of resistance**

In various historical contexts, Gorongosans have been subordinated to different overarching polities—the Kingdom of Barue, the Afro-Portuguese *prazeros*, administrative rule of private subsidiaries of the Portuguese colonial government, and presently the democratic state government. While different political figures and centers of power created various relationships with governing authorities in Gorongosa, and while they have been shaped and altered over time, nothing has completely replaced the organization of local political power as described above. As Newitt notes, drawing on David Beach (1986), the “little society” of “tightly knit ... village communities” is “durable and lasting” while the

different forms of paramount rulers or the “great society” are “evanescent and kaleidoscopic” (Newitt 1995: 43).

At times, “great societies” have existed in relative harmony with traditional polities, at other times they have been at odds with each other. Below, I offer two historical examples, revealing how territorial spirits and the authority of traditional leaders have been respected, and how at other times, when they have been offended, territorial spirits have been an organizing force for widespread resistance. These examples offer insight into the powerful relationship of spirits to governance. They also provide insight into how, for centuries, Gorongosans have been in a subordinate position to outside powers. Maintaining parallel autonomous governments has allowed people to collectively manage the suffering brought about by various forms of oppression. When the welfare of the collective has been placed in jeopardy, territorial spirits have allowed for the rapid organization of resistance across wide geographical areas.

#### *Prazos and co-existence*

One “great society” that co-existed in relationship to local political organization was Portuguese *prazos*. *Prazos* were territories of Portuguese influence concentrated mostly in the Zambezi River Valley. They existed from the 1500s until the 1930s, thereby proving to be “one of the most durable and influential of the country’s institutions” (Newitt 1995: 217). The *prazo* system emerged slowly, initially beginning with individual Portuguese figures who were able to acquire positions of influence in networks of trade dominated by Muslim traders. Originally, the objective of a *prazo*-holder was not “to populate the land

with a thrifty Portuguese peasantry but to exact tribute from a subject population.<sup>12</sup>

Through marriage and tribute to existing leaders, individual Portuguese *prazeros* were able to integrate themselves into existing relationships of power in order to benefit from trade between the coast and the hinterlands.

This syncretic political and economic culture led such leaders to be referred to as Afro-Portuguese since their society “was a unique interface between Africa, Asia and Europe.”<sup>13</sup> For instance, Newitt tells of one Portuguese captain who, in the mid-1600s, acquired a private jurisdiction from Monomotapa, the powerful ruler of the Karanga, as part of a peace settlement. The captain then “assumed the role of chief, carrying out religious ceremonies, raising military levies and tribute and rewarding his warriors with distributions of women and booty after successful campaigns” (1995: 218).

In the mid-to-late 1700s, *prazos* became more formalized as the Portuguese crown leased large estates (*prazos de coroa*) to settlers in the Zambezi River Valley. *Prazos* were leased for three lifetimes and were granted to women on the condition that they marry a Portuguese man. *Prazos* were inherited matrilineally, being passed from mother to daughter (Newitt 1995: 224). The owners of *prazos*, known as *senhores* and *donas*<sup>14</sup> typically lived on their land and took an active role in the lives of the free peasants of their territory (known as *colonos*). *Praço* organization overlaid existing polities in their domain. As Isaacman has noted, “the recognition of a *prazero* did not radically alter the intimate relationship between the land chief and the indigenous population” (1972: 29). Traditional government

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<sup>12</sup> Newitt 1995: 220

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Female *prazo* owners (known as *donas*) played an active role in their organization, commanding armies of slaves, etc. Newitt posits that this system of matrilineal inheritance was adopted from Portuguese India and came to blend with the matriarchal societies of Zambezia (Newitt 1995: 224). At different times, women controlled *prazos* in Gorongosa, namely Ursula Ferreira and *Dona* Inês de Almeida Castello Branco (*ibid.*: 228-232).

structures remained in place and *colonos* continued to live on their land under the leadership of their headmen.

*Praço*-holders played a vital role in the lives of the *colonos*, ordering the commercial and agricultural life and exacting annual tribute (*mussonkeo*) from their territory's population. In this way, *prazeros* fit neatly into the social role of chiefs—a kind of social interaction that was quite typical of European settlements in the region from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Muller 1999:35). In fact, many married into chiefly families in order to solidify their influence. The *prazos* were particularly interesting because of the different perceptions that people held of them: “to the Portuguese they were land grants held under Roman Law contracts of emphyteusis, but from the African point of view they were essentially chieftaincies and as such part of a complex system of social and economic relations binding together all the peoples of the region” (Newitt 1995:217).

However, in the position of “chiefs,” the authority of *prazo*-holders was balanced by the local chiefs of their territories who retained their status and influence among the population as intermediaries for rain spirits. These leaders continued to resolve disputes and to select successors according to the preferences of their spirits. *Prazeros* were obliged to show their respect for the authority of these chiefs, often presenting them with gifts. Any attempt of the *prazero* to interfere in succession could be met with opposition. For example, in Prazo Chemba, when the *prazero* appointed one of his slaves as the successor to a deceased chief, the population rebelled (Isaacman 1972: 29).

Outside their own territories, *prazeros* also respected other independent polities. In the region of Gorongosa, *prazos* coexisted in an uneasy relationship with the Barue Kingdom whose leaders carried the title “Makombe.” From its formation in the 1600s, the

Kingdom of Barue played a prominent role in the history of the region, maintaining independence up until 1917. The Barue controlled a large area of land between the Karanga Plateau and the Portuguese *prazos* of the Zambezi Valley (Isaacman 1973: 396). This geographical position allowed them to control the Sena-Manica trade since traders had to cross the Barue territory in order to reach the Manica fairs—a center for trade in gold, ivory, and other goods. In return for safe passage, Portuguese *prazeiros* offered tribute and periodic military assistance to the Barue.

In the Barue Kingdom, the spirit of the senior ancestral chief, a *mbondoro* known as Kabudu Kagodo, held considerable influence in political and social life. The uneasy peace that *prazeiros* established with the Barue Kingdom centered on their shows of respect for the spirito-political power of the Makombe. Beginning in latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, this peace began to erode as the Portuguese tried to bring the entire region under their administrative control. These aggressive attempts led to a series of revolts in the region, finally erupting in a massive rebellion in 1917 that extended across a wide geographical area.

### *Spirits and Resistance—The Barue Rebellion*

Following the partitioning of central Africa between European powers with the Berlin Act of 1885, Portugal's aims in Mozambique changed. The Berlin Congress established the principle of effective occupation rather than prior discovery as the criterion for recognition of land claims (Newitt 1995:341). In the face of threats posed by Britain and Germany, Portugal sought to bring the fragmented polities of the Zambezi Valley under



centralized control. At the time, however, Portugal was facing financial crisis and could not fund increased occupation and control of its vast territories.

In this context, the Portuguese government sought to end the *prazo* system and contracted out the administration, pacification, and development of most of Mozambique to private concessionary companies. A huge territory of central Mozambique came under the control of the Mozambique Company, originally financed by a Parisian investor. The charter granted the company the right “to raise taxes, to grant mineral and land concessions, and to issue currency and postage stamps” (Newitt 1995: 369). In return, in addition to pacification and administrative control of the territories, the Mozambique Company was obliged to pay the Portuguese government 7.5 percent of all profits.

In early years, the Mozambique Company was unable to gain control of Gorongosa. After the death of the powerful Afro-Portuguese ruler Manuel Antonio de Sousa,<sup>15</sup> who had once maintained his center at the base of Gorongosa Mountain, one of his captains, known as Kambwemba, established a defensive settlement. Without funds or soldiers to bring this region under their control and after failed attempts at co-operation with Kambwemba, the Mozambique Company subleased the area to the Gorongosa Company in 1895 under a ten-year agreement that stipulated that public order be maintained, that no less than 2,000 hectares be brought under agricultural production in five years, and that 40 percent of taxes received should go to the Mozambique Company in return for rights to forest resources and hunting (DSNI 1955 and CM 1896-1907).

Soon after this agreement, the Gorongosa Company set up three agricultural plantations, but its posts were repeatedly attacked by Kambwemba’s forces in 1897. In 1898, when reinforcements came from Manica, Kambwemba signed an agreement with the

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<sup>15</sup> In Gorongosa, Sousa is known as Gouveia.

Gorongosa Company that “in exchange for peace, they will build a 200 kilometer road between Pungue and Manchega” (CM 1898). Despite this accord, resistance to the new administration did not disappear. In 1899 the Mozambique Company sent a military expedition from Beira to Gorongosa to force two resistant polities founded by two of Kambwemba’s sons into submission (CM 1899: 1-18).

In 1902, revolt in the Barue Kingdom to which “people of Gorongosa adhered” spread through the region, and after attacks on its outpost, the Gorongosa Company was forced to rebuild in a new location (DSNI 1955). This revolt emerged at a time of severe famine. In an annual report of 1906, Chefe Gustivar, the administrator of Gorongosa Company at that time, described his first arrival to Gorongosa in 1900 a year after the revolt of Kambwemba:

The land was in peace, but the scarce population which hadn’t fled [during the 1899 the revolt] contended with the horrors of famine, feeding themselves with the most improbable things, and even giving in to, according to what people confirmed to me, cannibalism. The situation was so horrific (*horroroso*) that, with the permission of the director of the Gorongosa Company a census was not held that year. (CM 1906: 2)

Given the extent of the calamity Chefe Gustivar described, it is likely that the Barue found support among the population of Gorongosa for the 1902 revolt, in part, because of the prolonged suffering they had faced. Drought and famine were a sign of the *mbondoro*’s displeasure at the new administration. Rather than a revolt in opposition to the idea of the new administration of the territory, this rebellion was likely a reaction to the failure of the new leadership to bring prosperity to the inhabitants of the land. The tensions underlying this revolt simmered, reemerging in periodic outbreaks over the ensuing 15 years. Under increasingly harsh imposition of administrative control, this tension eventually led to the widespread Barue Rebellion against the administration of the Mozambique Company.

In Gorongosa, after a series of failed projects to make the Gorongosa Company profitable, including planting rubber trees and coffee (CM 1896-1907), the administration was under pressure to collect enough taxes from the population to make the concession profitable for French investors. Further, the Gorongosa Company faced strong pressures to bring 2000 hectares of land under cultivation in plantation agriculture within its first ten years, in keeping with the original agreement of the charter. Unlike the voluntary system of tribute that characterized the *prazos*, the administrators of the Gorongosa Company, like its parent Mozambique Company, hired “African police” known as *sipais*<sup>16</sup> to collect taxes, recruit labor, transmit orders and arrest dissidents. The *sipais* used fear tactics and the threat of violence to coerce taxes and labor from inhabitants of the region.

In the years leading up to 1917, the pressures associated with the new administrative system intensified. In 1914, for instance, the Mozambique Company stepped up forced labor recruitment for road construction. The loss of so many men to forced labor contributed to a series of famines from 1916 to 1920 (Isaacman 1976: 158). World War I also contributed to increasing strain as the Portuguese drew on manpower from the central region to protect its territory. In 1916 the Portuguese began to use *sipais* to press-gang thousands of men in Barue to serve as soldiers and porters in the north of the territory to protect from the threat of German invasion (Newitt 1995: 417).

In 1917, the Barue Rebellion<sup>17</sup> became a full-fledged war against the Portuguese presence in the region, and the conditions under the new administration. The revolt attracted massive support from across a wide spectrum of separate polities in the Zambezi Valley. According to Newitt, “as many as 15,000 men may have taken up arms, operating

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<sup>16</sup> Pronounced “see-pies”

<sup>17</sup> Known in Gorongosa as the “Guerra de Makombe”

out of fortified stockades” (1995: 417). With the assistance of Nguni troops (perhaps as many as 30,000),<sup>18</sup> the Portuguese quickly contained the rebellion, but Barue groups continued to launch attacks on Portuguese positions into 1920.

Arising from increasing pressures associated with shifts from the *prazo* system to administrative control, The Barue Rebellion of 1917 was a massive and spontaneous show of resistance. The *mbondoro* spirit Kabudu Kagodo, mediated through a young female medium named Mbuya, played a prominent role in launching a rapid and large scale rebellion. The medium’s message that “Mwari said we are to drive out the whites and have the country to ourselves” was “transmitted by subordinate spirit-mediums throughout the Zambezi and became a rallying cry of the rebel armies” (Isaacman 1976: 173). The influence of Kabudu Kagodo in Barue and beyond illustrates the unifying power of territorial spirits in fomenting rapid and widespread uprisings against outside forces. Numerous cases of the powerful unifying influence that territorial spirits have had in leading uprisings have been documented in historical studies of the region. One example is the Shona Rising of 1896-97 known as Chimurenga, where, through the influence of territorial spirits, a rebellion against colonial rule spread over a vast area with impressive rapidity (Beach 1979, Ranger 1967). This spontaneous uprising took place in a context of harsh economic conditions and relations with white settlers over a wide area as a way to take action to “heal the land”—a philosophy underlying political action and dissent in the region (Feierman 1990).

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<sup>18</sup> Newitt 1995:418

### ***Madzvoka* spirits—The Integration of Suffering**

Like territorial spirits that work to restore political order and bring healing to the land, human mediums for individual healing spirits play a powerful role in restoring order to family groups. The historical period described above has given rise to spirits that, through the work of spirit-mediums, remain in continual contact with the living. In general, periods of social turmoil unleash harmful forces in the lives of the living, enacted particularly by spiritual agents. Spirits do not necessarily emerge to cause harm with immediacy. They often emerge years or generations after their death. In this way, the effects of past violence and turmoil are carried across time.

In their healing practices, spirit-mediums give form and voice to past historical figures. The variety and personality of spirits they mediate, classed generally according to the time periods in which they lived, encapsulates and embodies history. Through their speech, dress, style of dancing behavior and preferences for songs, objects, food and drink, the spirits that possess *n'gansas* bring the past vividly into the present. Through the work of spirit-mediums, these historical figures and the time period they evoke remain salient in the present.

In traditional social organization, the past is experienced in the present quite vividly and profoundly as continual human-spirit interactions are transferred across generations. In this way, Gorongosans' relationship to the past resonates with what Lambek describes in Madagascar, where the Sakalava “are not alienated from the past but busy living with it, moving in time with, drawing from, beholden to and engaged with history” (2002: 13). Accumulating and integrating spirits from different historical periods, the work of spirit-

mediums reveals how history is additive, and that “later generations do not displace earlier ones but perdure alongside them” (Lambek 2002: 51).

In Gorongosa, spirits that emerge from the distant past are known as *madzvoka*. The name for these spirits is derived from the Shona word *-dzoka* or “to return,” indicating that these spirits repeatedly “return” over many generations to play an active role in people’s lives. Unlike *mbondoro* and *mizimu*, *madzvoka* are not ancestral spirits, but the spirits of outsiders, which are typically inherited along lines of descent. They may also be obtained from the water or can reside in other areas of the environment and choose their human hosts at random.

Two prominent *madzvoka* figures are the spirits of Nguni warriors (see below) and the spirits of *sipais*, the African police who collected taxes and coerced labor under colonial administration. Both *munguni* and *musupai* are outsider figures who threatened the moral order, using violence to instill terror in order to impose their power. Through spirit-mediums, these threats to society are transformed, and their powers are harnessed as a force for healing.

### **Fearsome power: Nguni Invaders and Sipais**

Migrant Nguni warbands which began passing through the area in the mid 1800s were one of the major outside forces to impact the political world in Gorongosa. The influence and character of Nguni warriors in Gorongosa is retained vividly in the present through *munguni* spirits which are also known as *mabzviti* or *mashangaan*. *Munguni* spirits hail from the time of Gaza Nguni invasions that spawned from the *mfekane* (The Great

Scattering) of Zululand and swept the region in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Newitt 1995).

According to Newitt, the rise of the Zulu monarchy and the dispersal of the Nguni throughout central and eastern Africa was “as an event without precedent in African history” (1995: 257). Newitt argues that “drought which placed strains on the traditional economy” as well as pressures from the European slave trade were important factors leading to this migration.<sup>19</sup> One band of Nguni, led by Nxaba moved into southern Mozambique, “rounding up cattle of the conquered people and seizing young men and girls to boost their numbers.”<sup>20</sup> By 1834 the center of Nxaba’s Nguni state was somewhere in present-day central Mozambique, and Newitt speculates “it may be that Gorongosa was the region he most favoured, just as 150 years later it was to be the base of operations for the Renamo bandits ...”<sup>21</sup>

The memory of the Nguni in Gorongosa disputes Newitt’s hypothesis that they established a permanent base there. Oral historical narratives of the Nguni in Gorongosa emphasize the defeat of the Nguni rather than their political influence, where the most often related account is of a failed Nguni attack. A historian who worked the region in the 1920s came to the same conclusion: “Gorongosa was the only area in the whole Territory of Manica and Sofala that never paid tribute to the Vatuas”<sup>22</sup> (CM 1928: 14, cited in Galli 2003: 55). In fact, the name of Gorongosa itself is widely held to emerge from the period when Gorongosans defeated an advancing Nguni army.

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<sup>19</sup> Newitt 1995: 257

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*: 258

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*: 260

<sup>22</sup> Vatuas is a word used for Nguni in Portuguese documents of the time.

As this narrative goes, Gorongosans fled to the protection of the upper elevations of Gorongosa Mountain where caves provided hiding places and defensive positions. A column of Nguni soldiers (*mabzivi*) pursued them, and, as one elder told it:

So, they [Gorongosans] waited there on top [of Gorongosa Mountain] while that army of Gungunyana followed the path. These people [Gorongosans] gathered boulders there on top. They positioned the boulders. Then, from their position, they let the boulders loose ... they destroyed [the army]. Everyone dead. A few that survived, when they returned to their homes they said, “*Goro kuna ngozi!*” [“There is danger in the mountain!”], and that’s where the name “Gorongosa” came from.<sup>23</sup>

Whether or not the Nguni were able to establish a permanent presence in Gorongosa, their influence was nevertheless powerful. Nguni crossed the territory frequently, at times controlling regional trade routes and gaining a reputation for pillaging, raping, and capturing wives, creating a powerful fear among the population. During the Barue Rebellion of 1917, the Nguni again came to play a prominent role in Gorongosa as the Portuguese relied on thousands of Gaza Nguni soldiers to quash the uprising. Nguni soldiers “were given free reign to punish and command obedience from the Gorongosa population ... [they] captured and raped the women of collaborators, took members of their communities as slaves, and burned huts and fields to the ground” (French 2009: 138).

Like the Nguni, *sipais* have also been fearsome historical figures in Gorongosa who have abused the population in order to serve the interests of the Portuguese. The tactics *sipais* used to forcibly collect taxes and “capture” people for conscripted labor recalled those used by the Gaza Nguni. Since it was in the interest of the Portuguese for *sipais* to foment fear in order to create submissive subjects, *sipais* were not expected to demonstrate respect for the population. In fact, “their principal function was to intimidate the local population”

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Celestino Sacaune Canda; May 8, 2008



(Isaacman and Isaacman 1983: 31). *Sipais* thus gained a reputation for their tendency towards pillage, rape, and corporal punishment.

Today, as *madzvoka* spirits, the terror-inspiring character of Nguni warriors and *sipais* are domesticated and transformed into an unusually strong force for healing. In each *madzvoka* medium's hierarchy of spirits, *munguni* usually fall at or near the top. In their healing work, *munguni* perform some of the most dangerous tasks, such as *kufemba*—the removal of dangerous spirits from patients' bodies. Thus, in mediumship for *munguni* spirits, the fearsome qualities of historic Nguni soldiers and their power to subjugate huge territorial expanses is captured and transformed into a particularly powerful resource to assist patients who are suffering.

When possessing their mediums, *munguni* spirits are said to speak Tshangaan and prefer to wear bands of cloth that crisscross the chest and head dresses made of feathers—garb that recalls the dress of the Nguni warriors. They also ask their mediums to provide them with spears (*dipa*)—the preferred military implement of these warriors. Mediums for *munguni* carry their spears when dancing at annual celebrations honoring their spirits. Other mediums for *munguni* spirits have shields (*shango*) that also hearken to the days when these outsiders swept through Gorongosa.

*Musupai* are not considered to be as powerful as *munguni*. Many *n'gangas* told me that their *musupai* spirits act primarily as “guards,” watching over and protecting the homestead to protect it from threats that are imperceptible to humans. Some *n'gangas* told me they work with their *musupai* to perform divination, but I didn't encounter anyone whose *musupai* spirits worked in the most difficult and dangerous of tasks: exorcising spirits. This work is left to more powerful spirits. *Musupai* spirits typically speak Sena, as most *sipais* working in

Gorongosa were from this region. Their clothing preferences were not esoteric like *munguni* but they prefer a short staff, recalling the clubs *sipais* used to intimidate the population.

Working as mediums for such powerful figures reveals the ambivalence of healing. As Feerman notes, “powerful medical substances cannot be used to heal unless they also have the capacity to harm” (1990:11). In spirit-mediumship, powerful spiritual figures have both the capacity to destroy and to heal. Incorporating spirits of threatening and powerful outsiders into Gorongosan social life through spirit-mediumship improves the chances that they will choose to protect, rather than harm members of the medium’s lineage and the general population.

### **Domesticating power: Transferring *madzvoka***

As mentioned earlier, *madzvoka* spirits are passed down across many generations. This transfer happens when a *madzvoka* medium transfers the powers of these spirits to a deserving descendent. For instance, while alive, spirit-mediums may choose one of their children to inherit their spirits at death, integrating them in their healing work from childhood in a long-term apprenticeship (see also Reynolds 1996). At death, or before the medium dies, their chosen inheritor will be initiated, transferring the spirits to the new medium.

Another possibility for transfer comes after death, when the spirit of a former medium chooses a descendent to inherit the spirits. This desire to transfer healing spirits can be made known through illness, which is one form of communication available to spirits. As one spirit-medium put it: “*“kulonga kwawo unaduala ive”*: [spirits’] way of speaking

is that you will fall ill.”<sup>24</sup> Illness will lead a person to search for the cause. Then, through therapeutic intervention, they discover the spirits’ desire. *Madzvola* spirits may also be transferred after death through a more direct route—dreams and inspiration. Farença, a *madzvola* medium, beautifully explained this process and the benevolent intentionality behind it:

[Pointing to girls pounding grain across the swept courtyard] That girl is my sister’s daughter. When I feel pity for her, if I can go into her body, wouldn’t she be helped with things? If I am dead, my spirit will go and stay with a child like this. I will pass my medicines to her. I can see how a person lives ... because a *dzvola* is like a judge who is able to know how to resolve problems. He’s able to see what another person is suffering ... It’s the same thing as a *dzvola*.

So I will go stay with a girl like that one ... when I’m in her body living with her, she may think to give me tobacco ... when I see that she’s thinking of me, when she sleeps I will enter her dreams and show her to go and dig a certain root the next day. The medicine cures X illness and Y illness. When she wakes up, she thinks, “Why did I dream of my deceased mother?” If she’s an intelligent girl, she will go and take that medicine. Before she digs it, she’ll make a ceremony for it (*kusemba*) ... Then, when someone comes along with that illness, she will know what she was told. Then she starts to experiment. She takes the medicine and gives it to the sick person ... When he’s cured he’ll tell another person. That person will tell someone else. And that’s how people will begin to know that the girl knows medicine. Then people will start saying, “She has *madzvola*!” When someone [a patient] comes, they enter the house and she’ll play her *n’tsokoso* (rattle) for the spirit to come out and then she’ll be able to say “You are suffering needlessly! Your illness is because of X, Y, and Z.” Then she’ll go dig the medicine she was shown, and when she returns give it to the patient.

A *dzvola* is a spirit with *ntsisi* (pity/concern). Soon people will come in large numbers for help and she will move ahead. She will be known in the whole area. It’s just like teaching about medicines to a child when you’re still alive.<sup>25</sup>

As Farença’s description reveals, the transfer of a medium’s spirits can be a way for them to intervene to assist a descendant who is suffering. Fully incorporated into the family group,

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Racida António; September 14, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Farença Sozinho; July 5, 2001.

a medium's spirits blend together with the benevolent desires of a spirit ancestor (*muḥimu*)—becoming a source of wellbeing for descendents.

*Madḥvoka* mediums typically work with multiple spirits. Often included among a medium's numerous spirits is a direct ancestor who often is said to “sit to the side.” In the above case, for instance, Farença's spirit would be among the spirits in her niece's group of spirits. The spirits Farença worked with in life would take active roles in the healing process, while she would also be present, overseeing everything. Following this logic, let us assume that there was an “original” medium for a spirit that is connected to Farença through lines of descent traced across many generations. She and her family suffered significant turmoil and misfortunes that were discovered to be caused by a spirit of an Nguni warrior (*munḡuni*). Resolution of her family's difficulties was resolved by incorporating the Nguni spirit into the lineage as a healing force, in much the same way as is happening currently around Gorongosa for spirits emerging from the civil war period. Many generations later, Farença passes this Nguni spirit (among others) to her niece. Thus, this spirit remains a healing force among her descendents.

Incorporating the spirit in the family across generations has tamed and removed its destructive powers allowing it to be a positive force that is handed down in the interest of providing protection and prosperity for the next generations. In this way, inherited spirits or *madḥvoka* are generally forces for good, while spirits from recent time periods that have yet to be incorporated in a family group are typically destructive, violent, and dangerous.

Destructive and violent spirits that are responsible for a great deal of the turmoil Gorongosans have been facing in recent years emerge from recent history. Often, they are

spirits of people killed during the late colonial period. Also, quite frequently, they are spirits killed during recent wars.

### ***Npfukwa*—Integrating Recent Social Turbulence**

“*Npfukwa* come to destroy, *madzvoka* come to work”<sup>26</sup>

In contrast to *madzvoka* who come to benefit their medium, *npfukwa* come seeking revenge for a past wrong. *Npfukwa* spirits, it is said, are more powerful than ancestral spirits (*mizimu*). They can overwhelm the protective abilities of *mizimu*, thereby leaving families vulnerable to their attacks. From the verb, *kupfukwa*- “to be woken up,” *npfukwa* are the spirits of innocent people who were unjustly killed or mistreated. Most were the victims of murder and were often away from their families at the time of death, so the proper funeral rites that incorporate the deceased into the spirit world were not performed, leaving them to roam the earth, angry and without a place to settle.

*Npfukwa* spirits and spirit possession involving altered states of consciousness are a relatively new phenomenon in the region. *Npfukwa* spirit possession became a widespread phenomenon in southern and central Mozambique in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the interaction of resident populations with foreign Nguni groups (Honwana 1996: 52, 62). Nguni soldiers fighting in wars at this time were said to imbibe a special medicinal concoction that would allow them the powers to return after death to seek revenge. In Gorongosa, most *npfukwa* are not soldiers, but ordinary people. Most frequently, their attacker killed them in order to steal the valuable goods that they carried. In this way, they embody moral transgressions that place desire for goods over the value of human life.

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Farença Sozinho; July 5, 2001.

*Npfukwa* spirits illustrate a different way in which the past reverberates into the present, and another way in which spirits are a form of cultural memory of past violence. *Npfukwa* manifest the social turbulence of the recent past. While *madzvoka* spirits are inherited and thus already domesticated, *npfukwa* spirits arrive to a family for the first time. Their anger, violence, and desire for vengeance are still raw. Their influence takes the form of extreme suffering. While *madzvoka* may indicate their choice for a medium by causing that person to fall ill, *npfukwa* manifest more violently, often killing multiple family members before finally being calmed enough to “sit down.” As communication, the illnesses caused by *madzvoka* are mild and easily remedied, whereas the afflictions of *npfukwa* spirits often have no remedy.

The phenomenon of *npfukwa* spirits ties people’s suffering in the present to the suffering of others in the recent past. Their influence in the lives of the living is seen as the direct repercussion of severe interpersonal conflict that took place in the past between members of different family groups. Thus, managing relationships with these spirits provides indirect lessons for how to create and maintain social order in the future. As seen in Chapter 1, therapeutic processes to manage *npfukwa* center on payments of debts to resolve their grievances or, in the case Pentecostal healing, casting these spirits out. Listening to and resolving a spirits’ grievances frequently involves incorporating the spirit into a lineage group. Payment in the form of a wife who often becomes the spirit’s living medium incorporates an *npfukwa* into a family. In this way, their destructive powers are transformed into constructive powers characteristic of *madzvoka*. Their hatred and vengeance are transformed into benevolence. Managing *npfukwa* restores order that was broken in past violence. Suffering is transformed into wellbeing, hatred into kinship.

Emerging from the turbulence of the recent past, most *mpfukwa* in Gorongosa were people living during the period of colonial administrative control. As seen above, the Portuguese faced pressures to retain their claim to African territories, leading them to bring their territories under centralized bureaucratic control. As the Barue Rebellion illustrated, the new form of administration was much harsher and did not allow for the relative political autonomy characteristic of *prazos*. As will be seen below, intense pressures from economic policies, forced labor, and taxes tore at the moral fabric of society. In this context, it was not just soldiers or colonial operatives who became threatening figures, but ordinary people motivated by greed.

### **The Mozambique Company and Portuguese Colonial Rule**

In 1906 the Gorongosa Company was dissolved, returning the administration of Gorongosa to the full control of the Mozambique Company (CM 1906). Gorongosa remained under the administration of the Mozambique Company until 1942, when control of the area was transferred to the central colonial government. After the vestiges of revolt following the Barue Rebellion disappeared, the Mozambique Company was under pressure to advance the economic development of Gorongosa in order to garner profits. The setback from the continual series of revolts in Gorongosa intensified pressure on administrators to extract the resources and wealth of the area. Because Portugal's economy during this period was on the verge of bankruptcy, it could only extract resources by mobilizing and controlling bound labor (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983: 31).

Hut taxes were originally designed to create a pool of cheap labor. All heads of household were required to pay a tax in European currency known as *mussonko*, or in lieu of

cash payment, they could meet tax requirements by “volunteering” for conscripted labor (*muteratu* or *chibalo*)—temporary employment on public works projects or on European plantations. To ensure that a sufficient proportion of the population paid taxes through labor, “the colonial state also attempted to strangle peasant agricultural initiatives by imposing artificially low prices for their commodities and by restricting the activities of the Asia merchants to whom peasants had historically sold their cash crops” (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983: 32).

The administration in Gorongosa never managed to establish the infrastructure to extract resources on any significant level. Projects to create large scale plantation agriculture in the district repeatedly failed. Thus, throughout the colonial period, the administration in Gorongosa’s primary source of revenue came from taxes and labor recruitment. In the earliest years of the administration, this reliance on tax and labor from the peasant population was most pronounced. For instance, in 1923, income from *mussonkeo* represented 88 percent of the administration’s revenue and in 1924, after raising the rate of *mussonkeo* 100 percent, income from taxes rose to 93 percent of revenue (CM 1926).

Recruitment of labor to send to plantations in neighboring regions also brought in significant revenue for Gorongosa’s administrators. Figures from annual reports reveal that, in effect, Gorongosa had become a labor reserve for plantations in Manica and along the Zambezi. In 1926, Gorongosa sent 1,223 laborers to work on European farms in Manica province (CM 1926). In 1934, the number of laborers sent rose to 1,336 (CM: 1934). Plantation owners developed a preference for workers from Gorongosa who reportedly were “appreciated for their good quality of work and for their diligence” (CM: 1934).



At the same time, administrators of Gorongosa were wary that high taxes and harsh labor conditions were too severe. Annual reports written by administrators of the *circunscrição*<sup>27</sup> in the 20's and 30's repeatedly contained requests to central authorities to lessen the labor and tax requirements. With memories of the Barue Rebellion still fresh in their minds, they feared forced labor could provoke another revolt. In a confidential letter sent to the Secretary of Indigenous Affairs in 1922, an inspector wrote that there were widespread rumors of future revolt in the population, motivated by excessive forced labor (DSNI 1922). He noted that many locals have firearms, citing incidents where *sipais* were attacked by armed groups in the region. In neighboring Chupanga, *nyakwamas* had met with local leaders to tell their people not to pay the recent tax increase (DSNI 1922). In 1926, Alberto Silva da Paes—the administrator of Gorongosa at the time—recommended that the 100 percent increase in the *mussonko* be rescinded to avert rebellion (CM 1926).

While another large scale revolt never materialized, Gorongosa residents resisted the harshness of colonial rule in various ways. In response to the demands for labor and taxes, many residents fled to neighboring regions. One man, for instance, told me that though he was born in Gorongosa, his parents fled to Cheringoma, to the east, when he was a young boy to escape *mutaratu*.<sup>28</sup> Others fled to Barue to the west. The administration was well aware of the population's mobility and recorded dramatic population fluctuations between annual censuses. Population totals decreased rapidly following tax increases and rose when they were reduced. For instance, in the annual report of 1934, the administrator Pedro da Cunha Carmona e Silve noted that after a recent decrease in the *mussonko*, the population jumped, up 880 people from the previous year (CM 1934).

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<sup>27</sup> *Circunscrição* is the Portuguese word used during this period to refer to administrative areas that correspond roughly to present-day districts.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Sr. Murais; September 11, 2007.

## Memories of Violence and Forced Labor

Early in the period the Mozambique Company's rule, Gorongosa was administered by a man popularly referred to as Gunhe. An *njole*<sup>29</sup> still sung at celebrations today recalls the harsh conditions of this period, repeating the refrain:

*Tsiya mwana—Gunhe*  
**Leave your child—Gunhe**

Under Gunhe, labor requirements were so harsh, even women were forced to leave behind their children to perform forced labor. I was told that people used to sing this song when their time to perform labor for Gunhe was approaching.<sup>30</sup> Gunhe is remembered by Gorongosans as a merciless administrator who instituted conscripted labor for the arduous task of opening up roads in the district.<sup>31</sup>

The harsh social divisions of the colonial period remain vivid in many Gorongosans' minds. Gunhe and other Portuguese authorities from the early 1900s are remembered for being carried from place to place on a *machila* or litter. The painting shown in Figure 2.1 captures this kind of image powerfully.

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<sup>29</sup> *Njole* is a genre of popular traditional songs in Gorongosa. Today, *njole* are sung at festivals and celebrations.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with *Mfumu* Tofito, Murais Jacopo Lenço and Chirima Maelosi Diqui; September 11, 2007.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

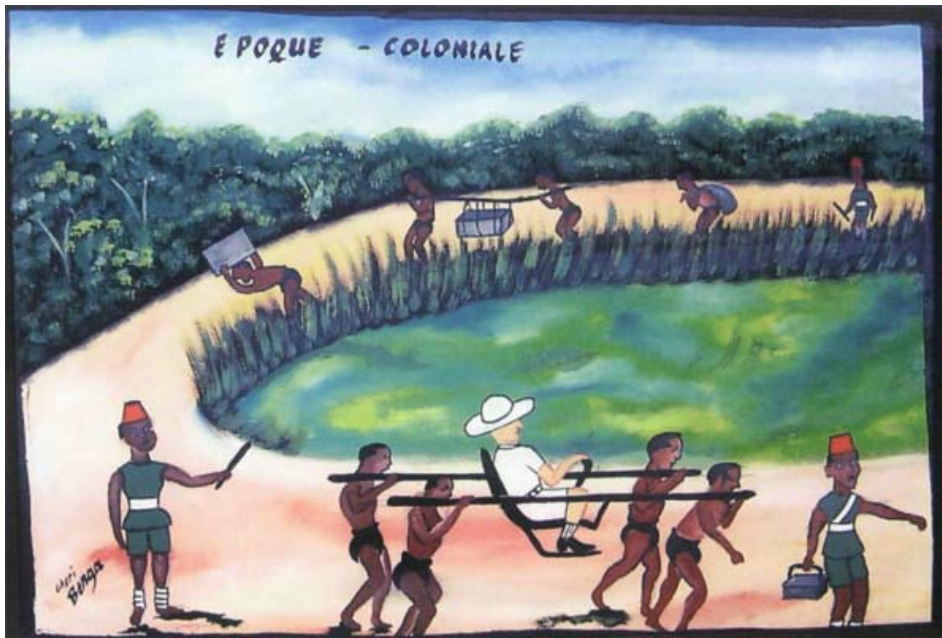


Figure 2.2: Cheri Benga, "Epoque Coloniale" painting. Democratic Republic of Congo, 1970s. Paint on floursack 32cm x 47cm (13 " x 19 ") (Credit: Turner 2005: 71).

While this painting depicts colonial divisions in the Belgian Congo, it is not unlike scenes played out in Gorongosa. It also illustrates how the harsh work conditions imposed by colonial administrators were made possible by the threat of violence of African police, illustrated here in uniform with batons and red caps. In Gorongosa, as discussed above, *sipais* were able to coerce taxes and labor through a regime of fear. Gorongosans I spoke with still recall the use of the *mbalamatoja*—a wood block on a cord that Portuguese overseers and *sipais* used to beat people on the palms of their hands. If they were caught trying to evade work requirements or if their work performance on a project was not satisfactory, they would feel the sting of the *mbalamatoja*.<sup>32</sup>

Because resources to apply effective administrative control of Gorongosa were limited, the administration had to resort to fear and coercion to enforce their requirements. Widespread immigration resulted in a chronic labor shortage throughout the colony and

<sup>32</sup>Interview with Mfumu Tofito; September 12, 2007.

“policies were evolved that resulted in extreme brutalization of the local population”

(Vail and White 1978: 239). In addition to annual censuses, other bureaucratic measures were put in place to control the population. Passes were issued that showed each person’s status in terms of paying taxes and meeting labor. To control “clandestine emigration” passes to travel outside Gorongosa had to be obtained. Anyone found without a pass or travelling outside the bounds that had been set for them met with imprisonment, labor camps and often corporal punishment. Recalling this period, elders in the district capital told me:

If you didn’t pay taxes or tried to evade the labor requirement, you would be severely punished. If captured, people would be sent to the sisal (*gave*) plantations [in Zambezia] ... which was very harsh work ... they used to say, “if you returned from the sisal plantations you’re lucky.”<sup>33</sup>

In addition to harsh punishments, the administration made it a policy to punish the wives of men who fled. Even those who fulfilled their *mutaratu* duties were forced to perform additional work. After what was usually six months of *mutaratu* in faraway places, returning laborers were forced to work for the local administration for one week in what became known as *tangata*. *Tangata* was a week of unpaid forced labor on public works within Gorongosa.<sup>34</sup>

Older Gorongosans remember the colonial time as having distinct periods according to the style of different administrators. Some administrators had a heavy hand, while others, I was told, “Didn’t do bad here.”<sup>35</sup> Each administrator acquired a nickname. This likely cut down the mystique and social distance that colonials sought to project, while also allowing people to talk about the officials in code. As mentioned above, one of the earliest

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Mfumu Tofito, Murais Jacopo Lenço, Chirima Maelosi Diqui; September 11, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Ambrosio; September 12, 2007. Interview with Mfumu Tofito, Murais Jacopo Lenço, Chirima Maelosi Diqui; September 11, 2007.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Mfumu Tofito, Murais Jacopo Lenço, Chirima Maelosi Diqui; September 11, 2007.

administrators was known as Gunhe or “tall drum”. Nyamuzinga, “beehive” was also known as Nyuchi or “honey.” Nyamuzinga acquired this nickname because he would tell people that he stings like a bee, but that he gives sweet things for their pain.<sup>36</sup> Following Nyuchi, the next administrator was a former military commander who was so heavy-handed he was given the name Massango, or “wasp.” I was told that his sting was “much worse than the bee’s” and that he gave nothing sweet in return.<sup>37</sup>

The colonial period of intense control, taxation and forced labor is still fresh in the minds of Gorongosa residents. Many of the spirits who emerge from these times are still unsettled and are causing intense suffering in the present. They come as *npfukwa* spirits, revealing how matters of social turmoil from this period have yet to be resolved.

### ***Npfukwa* spirits and the colonial experience of labor migration**

Quite frequently, *npfukwa* spirits that emerge from the colonial period were migrants to Southern Rhodesia who were killed during their return journey. Hut taxes and forced labor under the various iterations of the colonial regime in Gorongosa led a large number of people to migrate out of the region into neighboring Southern Rhodesia. With more advanced industry and a white settler economy, migrants from central Mozambique were welcomed in Southern Rhodesia and had little difficulty finding work.

Longer term migration became an even more attractive option for Gorongosans as information spread about the better working conditions and higher pay across the border. Sr. Madola told me his immigration story, illustrating why immigration to Southern Rhodesia became such an attractive option for many young men:

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Ambrosio; September 12, 2007. Interview with Mfumu Tofito, Murais Jacopo Lenço, Chirima Maelosi Diqui; September 11, 2007.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

When I lived in Mukodza, I was taken for one six month period of *muteratu*. They took us to Chimoio. We were cutting down trees and digging up the stumps for six months. It was very difficult work. Those six months felt like a year. I never wanted to go back. I fled to Zimbabwe. I had to leave secretly and use back ways ... through Cantandica to Penha Longa to arrive in Mutare. From there, I was well received ... I was given a “pass” and a place to work. I stayed there for five years without coming home ... I worked in Harare in a shop that sold goods like soap, cookies, and jam. I was well treated by the whites there.<sup>38</sup>

Sr. Madola’s narrative contrasts the labor conditions and treatment he received in Zimbabwe with his experience of *mutaratu*, revealing how immigration was a form of protest against the labor conditions in Mozambique.

In Rhodesia, a laborer could quickly earn enough money to meet his household’s tax requirement and still have surplus income to buy material goods. Many young men also migrated prior to marriage in order to save money for *mabatiro*,<sup>39</sup> so that, on return, they could complete the marriage process. Sr. Madola also made this point, saying: “this was before I got married. I had to go there “para *kuona dinyero la mabatiro*” (to make money for *mabatiro*).<sup>40</sup> Southern Rhodesia’s economy also provided better access to material goods at lower prices than could be found in the territories of central Mozambique. Motivated for many reasons, young men from central Mozambique set out on foot for the arduous journey to Southern Rhodesia, prepared to risk the dangers of the trek in hopes of a better life. After working for extended periods of time, sometimes five years, migrants returned home with money and large bundles of material goods to trade and to offer those who stayed behind.

Returning migrants faced many dangers on their way. In order to reach Gorongosa, they had to cross the region of Barue, just to the west. During this period, Barue came to

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Sr. Madola; October 18, 2007.

<sup>39</sup> *Mabatiro* is the material goods and money that a groom gives to his bride’s family to create a marriage. See Chapter 6 for more detail.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Sr. Madola; October 18, 2007.

be notorious as a dangerous region where returning migrants were assassinated by long-term residents eager to steal their goods. Barue was vast, making it impossible to traverse in one day. Also, the region was sparsely populated, requiring long journeys between settlements.<sup>41</sup> Residents of the region built guest quarters to host returning migrants. *Npfukwa* emerging from this period often tell stories about their journey home. They stopped in these guest houses, and while they were sleeping, they were killed and their goods stolen. In these acts of murder, their hosts took advantage of their vulnerability and violated the norm that guests are to be shown generosity and respect. The political ties that once united Gorongosans with the Makombe during the Barue Rebellion were also violated.

While not all *npfukwa* were labor migrants and the circumstances of their deaths vary, they all share the same basic story—that their assailant murdered them in order to take their possessions. Creating misfortune in the present, *npfukwa* seek to restore the social order that was broken. The grievances of these spirits re-assert the value of human life over material goods—a persistent theme in the current practice of spirit mediums. This is a lesson that has grown in importance in the current context where attaining material goods can take precedence over human dignity (See Chapter 4). *Npfukwa* illustrate the ways in which the colonial period had deeply impacted the moral fabric of society. Church groups that emerged in the colonial period illustrate one way that people sought to re-order society during that period of turmoil, re-asserting a form of autonomy where it had been removed.

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<sup>41</sup> It is important to note here that the stories of Barue are not the stuff of legend. I spoke to several elder men in Gorongosa who had made the return journey from Zimbabwe and explained in detail how they averted deception of residents in the area who attempted to offer them lodging. One man explained how, sensing danger, he and his companion responded to another man's offer, feigning gratefulness and then slipped away from danger to sleep "out in the bush" that night next to a stream (Interview with Celestino Sacaunde Canda; May 8, 2007). The anxieties of migrants returning at this period were well founded. Both the violence of that time and the ramifications of anti-social acts of murder to attain material wealth continue to surface in the present.

### **Churches, popular opposition to colonial rule, and the war for independence**

Since the decades following the Barue Rebellion, anticolonial resistance in Gorongosa had primarily consisted of labor migration and other forms of protest against colonial policy rather than attempts to overthrow colonial rule itself. Churches also provided a significant source of heightened political consciousness and forums for expressing anti-colonial sentiment. As early as 1927, colonial government officials noted the “anti-nationalist” force of foreign mission churches. In one set of documents, colonial government officials repeatedly noted that the “influence of foreign missions among the indigene, from the point of view of politics, is prejudicial to our sovereignty” and resolved to “make it difficult” for foreign missions to obtain land concessions (DSNI 1927). On the other hand, Portuguese Catholic missions were given favorable status and encouragement as an arm of the colonial government and were considered “to fight for the homeland, and their actions in this regard are indisputably nationalist” (DSNI 1927). In this way, the Portuguese used national missions as an ideological extension of the colonial regime, extending and legitimating colonial political power.

The Portuguese only managed to contain the influence of foreign missions in part of the territory. However, in the southern and central regions of the country foreign missions and independently-established churches came to have a considerable presence, especially during the late colonial period. Ironically, the influence of Christianity gained force in Mozambique as a result of labor migration. Protestant churches active in mining areas of South Africa became interested in establishing stations in the home-regions of Mozambican migrants. As Newitt notes, in 1930, of 794 foreign missions in Mozambique, 783 of them were in the two southern-most administrative areas: Lourenço Marques and Inhambane



Districts (1995: 436). The most powerful Protestant foreign missions in Mozambique were the Suisse Romande Mission, American Board of Foreign Missions, the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Free Methodists.

As anti-colonial movements spread through Africa in the 1950's, the Portuguese secret police (PIDE) heightened their monitoring of foreign missionaries (FGDB 1953). Fearful of anti-colonial sentiment of the kind that had been fostered in church settings in other parts of southern and central Africa, the Portuguese government quickly intervened when church leaders made political statements in opposition to colonial rule. For instance, one report detailed the message shared during one Sunday mass held at a mission in Marromeu just north of Gorongosa: The document states that during mass, one of the priests

... tried to demonstrate to the faithful ... that whites, instead of helping to elevate the population, have on the contrary, come to give bad and harmful examples, without care for the laws of Christ and for this reason, the negroes (*sic*) needed to lift themselves up, convinced of their rights as Christians ... (FGDB 1959).

For spreading such messages, the two Scottish priests leading this mission were forcibly removed.

Independent churches were also closely monitored. Unlike Protestant foreign missions which were confined largely to the south, in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, independently-established churches began to appear in the center of the country, including Gorongosa. Virtually all of these churches traced their origin to church movements in neighboring South Africa or Southern Rhodesia, some of which had overtly political leanings. Labor migrants returning to Gorongosa from Southern Rhodesia established

Pentecostal churches that were autonomous sects of churches to which they had converted while abroad.

The first two churches established in Gorongosa were each quite different—one was the Assemblies of God—a Pentecostal church established in Southern Rhodesia by foreign missionaries. The other was what has been termed an “African Initiated Church” (AIC) established by a prophet figure in Southern Rhodesia, known as the Apostles of Johane Maranke. While it is unclear how much overtly anti-colonial preaching occurred in these churches in Gorongosa, just their existence was a powerful statement of autonomy. This kind of political threat was recognized by Portuguese authorities who tried to bar their establishment. Pastor José Jofrisse, the man who established the Assemblies of God Church in Gorongosa in 1953 recalled the difficulty he had in gaining sanction from local colonial administrators for his new church organization.<sup>42</sup> Independently operated churches “represented another arena of ‘free space’ within an enclosed authoritarian system, in which oppressed workers and peasants could enjoy a modicum of self-rule and racial and cultural dignity (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983:73).

In colonial times, when traditional leaders and colonial administrators were unable to bring stability and healing to the land and its people, participation in independent church groups became both a supplementary way to manage suffering and a powerful form of protest against ineffective and harmful government. During this time, the establishment of independent church groups in Gorongosa represented a strong attempt to re-order society according to Christian logics. As noted earlier, church leaders took on the role of traditional political figures, and worked to create a parallel social order. The church and its leaders

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Pastor José Jofrisse; June 30, 2003.

became the moral and social center of gravity for church participants. This is similar to what Charles Fuller, noted about Protestant Christian missions in Inhambane District:

The Christian evangelist preached, gave out medicines, and acted as judge. In the last function, he combined the task of a diviner, for whom he substituted on the religious level, with that of the subchief, in which capacity he acted when the Christian community separated itself from the supervision of hereditary authorities below the chief (Fuller 1955: 196).

As seen in Chapter 1, Pentecostal churches focus on healing as a central aspect of re-ordering society. The Apostles of Johane Maranke, though not a Pentecostal church, also exercise social and political authority by controlling and claiming a monopoly on the only legitimate domain of healing. This church prohibits not only the use of spirit-mediums and other “traditional” sources of healing, but also the use of any form of Western medicine. The colonial government’s attempts to control ideological opposition emerging from church contexts were not successful. In fact, significant impetus for Mozambique’s organized struggle for independence came from Mozambicans schooled in Protestant foreign missions in the southern region of the country (Cruz e Silva 2001). Once the independence war reached Gorongosa, liberation soldiers found widespread popular support.

### *The War for Independence*

Independence came quickly to Gorongosa since the main battles were waged far beyond the district’s borders. The organized struggle against colonial rule did not emerge from the center of the country, but from the north and from border areas where expatriates could safely organize a movement of resistance.

The establishment of Frelimo in 1962 marked a turning point in the struggle for independence, ideologically uniting divergent nationalist groups on the basis of patriotism and opposition to foreign domination.<sup>43</sup> On September 25, 1964, Frelimo soldiers attacked the Portuguese base of Chai in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique, marking the start of the armed struggle for independence (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983:84). Like this first battle, most of the liberation war was waged in the far north of the country, where Frelimo drew on the support of bases in newly independent Tanzania to create liberated zones in Cabo Delgado and Niassa. In 1971, fearing Frelimo advances in the center of the country, the Portuguese government began to forcibly remove peasants into strategic hamlets or *aldeamentos* in Manica and Sofala Provinces (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983: 100-101). In Gorongosa, the Portuguese army occupied and defended their position in the district capital and other rapidly-formed *aldeamentos*, while Frelimo operated from “the bush” relying heavily on support from rural peasants. In this way, the dynamics of the liberation struggle foreshadowed the way the civil war was to be waged in the district several years later.

By 1972, the situation for the colonial regime had become desperate. Frelimo soldiers were estimated to number 10,000 and were waging successful campaigns in Sofala and Manica Provinces. They raided settler-owned plantations and managed to disrupt major transportation corridors. The strength of Frelimo forces contributed to growing opposition to the war among soldiers of the colonial army and in Portugal (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983: 106). In 1974, younger army officers in Portugal overthrew the authoritarian regime of Marcello Caetano, leading to a rapid end to the liberation war in Mozambique. On June 25, 1975, Mozambique gained its independence. At the

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<sup>43</sup> These groups had relatively narrow regional and ethnic characters and included UDENAMO (National Democratic Union of Mozambique), MANU (the Mozambican-Makonde Union), and UNAMI (National African Union of Independent Mozambique), (c.f. Isaacman and Isaacman 1983:80-81).

independence celebration, President Samora Machel warned that “although the first phase in the struggle had been won, the young country still had to overcome illiteracy, disease, poverty, and economic dependence, which were the legacies of colonialism (Isaacman and Isaacman 1983: 107). These aspects of the war have yet to be won.

### **The Civil War: Conflicts Over Land and People**

In Gorongosa, the civil war certainly “turned the world upside down.” The conflict and the way it was fought created such intense suffering and social turmoil that people came to rely heavily on new means to cope. During the war, spiritual and religious practices flourished as people sought to re-gain control over their lives. The opposition army drew heavily on traditional authorities to gain legitimacy and popular support in Gorongosa. Spirit-mediums’ work was revitalized and flourished. People relied more on spirit-mediums for assistance with illness and especially to provide special protections from the dangers of war. The intense suffering of the war created the conditions for the emergence of *gamba* spirits, a new type of afflicting spirit that, as seen in Chapter 1, has become a major source of suffering in Gorongosa more than 20 years hence. The civil war also created an environment for independent churches to flourish in the district. During the 16-year period of war, the number of officially established church groups in Gorongosa rose to be nearly eight times the number that existed during the colonial period.

The spiritual and religious forms of establishing social order and managing suffering that flourished during the war also contributed to the emergence of the conflict. Soon after independence, these bases for social order became a target for eradication. As will be seen below, the post-independence government’s efforts to prohibit traditional and religious

forms of social organization in order to establish a new social, economic, and political order contributed significantly to the sentiment underlying the conflict that ensued.

Ironically, post-colonial attempts to remove the influence of religious, spiritual, and political figures ended up leading to their expanded influence.

### **Independence, disillusionment, and the emergence of civil war**

In Gorongosa, the euphoria that accompanied independence in 1975 was short-lived, quickly changing to disappointment and frustration. Frelimo's policies and attitudes in the years immediately following independence created a solid base of discontent that fueled the conflict that ensued. The civil war between the Mozambican government and the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) lasted nearly 16 years from 1976 to 1992.

After independence, Frelimo quickly mounted a program to fundamentally transform Mozambique in an effort to remove the vestiges of colonial rule at a deep level. For over 100 years, Gorongosans had seen the comings and goings of various powers that drew what they could from the peasantry, yet allowed the fundamental organization of social and political life to remain intact. Even during the colonial period, administrators in Gorongosa had not sought to replace the traditional structures of government. Because *nyakwawa* had to receive the approval of *mbondoro* spirits to be seen as legitimate, colonial officials in Gorongosa were largely unsuccessful in manipulating political succession (French 2009: 157). Rather, colonial administrators depended on traditional leaders to carry out administrative functions.<sup>44</sup> While leaders such as the *nyakwawa* and *mfumu* were directly

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<sup>44</sup> In fact, colonial documents reveal that *nyakwawa* received a portion of *mussonko*, at least in early years of the Gorongosa Company, carrying over the mutual relationship of tribute that existed in the *prazos*. In 1910, the annual report shows that 40 percent of the *mussonko* was paid to *nyakwawas* (CM 1910). In

involved in the widely hated collection of taxes and labor recruitment, they also had enough autonomy to assist people in subverting aspects of colonial control.

With minimal interference in their leadership from colonial authorities, *nyakwawa* were able continually to reaffirm their authority and prestige as intercessors for *mbondoro* spirits who owned the land and brought rains and fertility. They maintained their control over land use and distribution. By contrast, the transformations that the Frelimo government sought to impose after independence were all-encompassing—aimed at creating fundamental shifts in economic, social, and political life. This form of centralized power was unprecedented. While Gorongosans embraced the Frelimo project at the start, before long the imposed changes began stirring deep levels of discontent and resentment that eventually fueled the sentiments behind the civil war that ensued.

It was in this context that the civil war in Mozambique began, just years after independence. Much analysis has focused on the role of foreign governments in instigating the war, suggesting that, without foreign intervention and support for the opposition group, Renamo,<sup>45</sup> there may have been no war at all.<sup>46</sup> While it is undeniable that foreign support, especially from white-minority governments in neighboring countries, played a major role in the scale and duration of the civil war, such a perspective overlooks the widespread discontent that fueled the war's outbreak. Further, the notion of Renamo as a “created insurgency” has been bolstered by a view of Renamo as a “terrorist” group that gained popular support only through violence and fear tactics.

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later years, colonial authorities provided privileged access to education and other opportunities to traditional authorities and their families.

<sup>45</sup> Resistência Nacional de Moçambique—Mozambican National Resistance army.

<sup>46</sup> For instance, Vines (1991) devoted an entire chapter to this perspective titled “Created Insurgency.”

However, subsequent studies have revealed that the war produced a variety of local dynamics in different regions of the country and at different time periods (Hall and Young 1997, Nordstrom 1997, Lubkemann 2008, Finnegan 1992, West 2005). Even within Gorongosa, the nature of the war changed as the years wore on, and the dynamics of the conflict varied considerably from place to place. For instance, many people I spoke to who lived in Renamo “liberated zones” for certain periods of the war characterized their relationship to Renamo soldiers rather positively—similar to a patron-client relationship. Renamo worked with traditional authorities to create a system of tribute similar to the political economy of the *prazos* (French 2009: 261). They provided protection in return for occasional offerings of food and service. As the years wore on, however, the benevolent nature of this relationship would change.

Soon after independence, the policies of the new Marxist-Leninist Frelimo<sup>47</sup> government worked toward the creation of an idealized socialist society. The Frelimo party adopted official rules for membership that included, “to reject the accoutrements and practices of ‘traditional society’” and “to adopt the tenets of ‘scientific socialism’” (Hall and Young 1997: 52). This, in effect, excluded many Gorongosans from taking leadership roles in the new government. As part of the aggressive push to implement “scientific socialism,” official Frelimo policy opposed any kind of religious activity it deemed to be *obscuritanismo*—or obscuritanism. Many kinds of religious activities were prohibited. In 1976, the new government nationalized the Catholic mission in Gorongosa along with all its property. In 1977, the last Catholic sister fled the district and in that same year she and the Bishop of

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<sup>47</sup> In 1977, Frelimo held its Third Party Congress, formally declaring itself a Marxist-Leninist party. From this time forward, Frelimo established a more “drastic political agenda” characterized by “more intense state intervention in social, economic and political life at the grassroots level” (Lubkemann 2008: 120). It is from this point forward in the leadership of Frelimo that my descriptions of Frelimo in Gorongosa derive.



Beira were imprisoned when they attempted to return to visit their parishioners in Gorongosa (Tomás 1999:77). Spirit-mediums were also forced underground and in some cases publicly humiliated by Frelimo officials (Lubkemann 2008: 121).

Highly respected traditional authorities were removed from power. They were particularly targeted for working with colonial authorities as their go-betweens. Many were publicly humiliated, attacked, killed or forced into exile with the threat of death (Lubkemann 2009: 121). The *nyakwawa* of K'handá narrowly escaped death and fled to Tete.<sup>48</sup> After the war began and most of Gorongosa Mountain came under Renamo control, he sent one of his brothers to serve in his place. In the Renamo controlled area of the mountain, the *nyakwawa*'s brother and the *mfumuso* of the area "were still working" throughout the war.<sup>49</sup>

For Gorongosans, removing traditional leaders and replacing them with authorities representing the central government was one of the most resented aspects of the post-colonial government. This action essentially threatened not only their political self-determination but also their ownership and control of the land. The leaders who held the ability to maintain the fertility and prosperity through their connections to guardian spirits were stripped of their authority. K'handá's *nyakwawa* was too far removed from the region to be able to maintain the annual ceremonies that ensured the wellbeing of the people and the fertility of the land. The dissolution of the Catholic mission and prohibition of other church groups similarly created a sense of alienation and threatened people's sense of control over the world.

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Eugenio Almeida; July 10, 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Sr. Bento; March 21, 2008.

Frelimo attempts to control land use and production further alienated residents of the area from the new centralized government. In an effort to create a new society with a socialized economy, Frelimo officials began replacing private shops with *lojas do povo* that were ill supplied and overpriced. As had been done with the property of the Catholic Mission and with private businesses in Gorongosa, the new regime confiscated private property. Despite the limits to economic participation that colonial rule had brought, especially in the late colonial period, many Gorongosans had prospered in the growing market economy, accumulating material wealth through labor migration, cash cropping, and trade. Those who had labored hard for many years to buy grinding mills, cars, or motorcycles saw them taken away in an instant.<sup>50</sup>

Additionally, Frelimo officials began establishing rural farming collectives known as *machambas do povo*. These community fields were created with the idea that both the labor and the produce would be shared. Since, in the past, each family had been responsible for maintaining its own land through both physical and spiritual actions, this communal labor was unpopular. At first some people participated willingly, but they quickly grew discontented. In K'handá, for instance, I was told that, *machambas do povo* lasted for only two years. Forty men were assigned to share the work of each field. But tensions quickly arose:

Working together on one field is really bad. To be assigned to a field with a *nyaporora* (lazy person), a *nyakumwa* (a drinker) and all kinds of others who don't work hard. We don't want that! Is this how to govern?!

*Machambas do povo* quickly came to an end when the promise to share the produce was false.

“At the harvest, no one saw where all the produce went. The *chefes* sold it. They didn't give

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Celestino Sacaune Canda; March 9, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Sr. Bento; March 21, 2008.

any to the people.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, communal labor became reminiscent of the hated institution of forced labor and these broken promises quickly led people to distrust the new centralized authority that Frelimo *chefes* represented.

Another reason for Gorongosans’ discontent with the new Frelimo government was the existence of social divisions within the new regime. Indeed, divisions along class lines within the party plagued Frelimo since before gaining independence. Members of a well-educated modern class, primarily from southern Mozambique, were given preferential appointments to top positions in the new government. This created fissures that led to the creation of Renamo (Ncomo 2003). Top Frelimo officials who administered the district were typically soldiers and well-educated party members from distant areas. Gorongosa residents quickly came to feel undermined and disrespected. As one person commented: “... it was as if they were bringing in again everything that the whites had done ... We were made into their *bichos*<sup>53</sup> again.” He continued, describing how the new government tried to control people’s movements, issuing passes to permit travel just as had been done in the colonial period. Finally he concluded: “Frelimo officials from the army started to treat us as their servants, and if we did something wrong, they would beat us the way the Portuguese had done.”<sup>54</sup> Because of Frelimo’s abuses, when Renamo soldiers moved into Gorongosa and set up their base on Gorongosa Mountain in 1979, they found widespread popular support. As one person explained, “Everyone wanted Frelimo to fall. People were very happy with Renamo.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> “*Bicho*” literally means “animal” or “vermin” and in this context is used to refer to belittling, disrespectful treatment.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Ricardo Baptista; April 2, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> “*Wakhada kuti yagwa Frelimo. Wanhu wadeketerhwa maningi Renamo.*” Interviewee anonymous; March 2008.

The conflict in Gorongosa was brief at first. In this early period, the main Renamo base on the mountain received frequent air drops of food, supplies, and equipment from Ian Smith's white-minority ruled government in Southern Rhodesia. With significant outside support, Renamo soldiers maintained relatively agreeable relations with mountain residents near the base.<sup>56</sup> However, after 1980, when Zimbabwe gained independence, the material support from Ian Smith's regime evaporated. Under the leadership of André Matsangaisse,<sup>57</sup> Renamo soldiers fled to South Africa to regroup and to receive training and other support from the Apartheid government. On their way south, they staged a large attack on Frelimo's base in Gorongosa's District capital, which proved disastrous, ending with Matsangaisse's death.

Gorongosans who had been in Frelimo protectorates from the start remember the period between Renamo's departure and their return to Gorongosa in 1983 as a brief but welcome respite from the conflict. However, those who had been in Renamo controlled areas remember this time differently. Without protection from Renamo, Frelimo soldiers scoured rural areas to force people into protectorates. Former Renamo operatives and their close relatives risked beatings, humiliation or even execution.<sup>58</sup>

When Renamo soldiers returned to Gorongosa in 1981, they re-established their base on Gorongosa Mountain with the permission of Samatenje. Soon after their return they attacked communal villages around the base of the mountain in an effort to liberate

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<sup>56</sup> Todd French (2009), describes how under the leadership of André Matsangaissa, Renamo failed to abide by all the terms of the agreement they made with Samatenje. When Renamo returned in 1981, they were more respectful of Samatenje's rules and conditions for their establishment of the base.

<sup>57</sup> Renamo soldiers came to be known as *matsangas* after their first commander, André Matsangaissa.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Aliança Almeida; April 2, 2008. Numerous people in K'handu recounted an event when Frelimo tricked people who had ties to Renamo soldiers to reveal this information, then forced them into sacks and beat them. Several of the victims died.

people to return to their homesteads (*madembe*).<sup>59</sup> Renamo resumed an agreeable relationship with the population and its leaders. *Nyakwawa* and *mfumu* collected flour and grain from the population which Renamo soldiers periodically collected (French 2009: 261).

Over time, this relationship became strained. With less outside support, Renamo depended heavily on the rural population to support its efforts. Recruitment to the army, known locally as *rujiga*, resumed, intensifying towards the end of the war. During periodic droughts, Renamo soldiers had to resort to coercion to receive sufficient food from the peasantry. They relied on peasants to serve as porters for *gandira*—to carry heavy loads back to their bases. Before long, those who supported Renamo's effort early on became disillusioned. By the end of the war, nearly everyone, whether they lived in protected settlements under Frelimo control or in Renamo controlled areas, came to feel that they were caught in the middle between two different enemies.

### **“When Elephants Fight, it is the Grass that Suffers”**

As discussed earlier, land is central to politics, governance, and the spiritual and social life of Gorongosans. Struggles over the control of land use and residence patterns have been a central aspect of recent political and social struggles in the region. As rain making spirits reveal, these are also economic struggles tied tightly to livelihoods and the conditions and possibilities for prosperity. During the civil war, control of land and its inhabitants and productivity, became a focal point of the conflict. Examining the civil war from the perspective of land struggles provides insight into the nature of the conflict, the suffering it created for residents, and the lasting impacts on society in the present.

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<sup>59</sup> Several people told me that prior to these attacks, Renamo sent informants to the communal villages to advise former residents of the Renamo area of the army's attack so they would be prepared to escape.

When recalling the civil war, Mozambicans often encapsulate their experience with the proverb: “when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.” This proverb highlights how civilians were down trodden by the violence and disruption of sixteen years of war. Though the nature of the conflict and the tactics involved varied from region to region according to local dynamics, overall, the war was characterized by its extreme violence (Wilson 1992). With no clear frontline of battle, the struggle took place largely in rural areas, as both sides “struggled for control of civilian populations” (Honwana 1998: 1). In Gorongosa, the conflict was primarily a war waged for control of *people* not for control of a particular resource or territory. People who were struggling to control their land—the source of their livelihoods and security—were caught between the two sides. To expand the popular metaphor, it was not fighting elephants inadvertently trampling on the grass below, but elephants fighting over that grass, tug of war style, ripping at the very fabric of social life in order to gain an upper hand.

This continual tug of war created intense suffering in Gorongosa. The struggle was between concentrated Frelimo settlements and “the bush” which was primarily under Renamo control. The concentrated settlements were based on a modernization scheme from the colonial era. Prior to the outbreak of the war for independence, the Portuguese had envisioned a program of creating “aldeamentos” or *aldeias*—concentrated settlements that would be a tool for modernizing the state, making it easier to control the population and to provide education and healthcare. Before this program was fully implemented, however, the war for independence broke out and the motivation for creating *aldeias* shifted. At this time, Frelimo revolutionary fighters attacked Portuguese centers of power from “the bush” and received food and support from the rural population. The Portuguese took a

defensive position and began forcibly removing people from their rural homesteads to *aldeias* which now were used as a tool for cutting off Frelimo's base of support.

Prior to the civil war, Frelimo expanded on the Portuguese villagization scheme, incorporating what they called *aldeias comunais* or "communal villages" as a key part of their socialist vision to create a new society. At this time, Frelimo used propaganda to entice rural populations into concentrated settlements with the promise of education, healthcare, and free government services. During the civil war, the Frelimo army slid into the position of the Portuguese during the war for independence, only now it was Renamo "in the bush." Over the course of the war, the urgency to cut off Renamo's access to the rural population's support progressively intensified, and Frelimo's tactics of moving people into the communal villages became harsh. The early enticements turned into coercion where armed guards (*milicias*) escorted people from their homes all the way to the *aldeia*. Later, Frelimo resorted to a scorched earth campaign meant to leave peasants with no other option but to relocate.

In turn, Renamo, focused on communal villages as their primary target. Renamo soldiers staged periodic attacks, often coming from the countryside in the dark of night. They raided warehouses of precious supplies such as oil, salt, grain, clothing and other dry goods, attacked Frelimo positions, and targeted suspected spies. They hoped to create disarray and shortages that would push people to move back to their rural homesteads. In this tug of war, the population was not just the grass underfoot, but the focus of the pulling. It was these violent campaigns to control the population from both sides that people invariably remember as the most terrible aspect of the war.

One of the major sources of trauma was the forced removal from ancestral lands and the experiences of a refugee life, even while close to home. Many people attribute the

“loss of tradition” today to the war time, since the long-term dislocation and permanent separation of families forced people to abandon ritual observances that maintained the social and moral order. One man put it this way:

People slept in the bush and in *makhava* [holes/hiding places]. How could you possibly follow these *mitemo*? [traditional ceremonial observances] Where are you going to do *mhamba*? How could a woman stay inside for *madzvade*? And, at the end of *madzvade* how were you to gather the entire family together to do *kupukuta madzvade*?<sup>60 61</sup>

Inability to keep observances such as the *madzvade* ceremony following birth and proper burial rituals allowed pollution to spread in the population causing physical and social illness.<sup>62</sup>

The experience of living in concentrated settlements in close proximity to unrelated families led to a loss of privacy that deeply offended people’s sense of decency. Those who were living in the *aldeias* also feared Renamo attacks. They were afraid to sleep in their homes at night and routinely slept out “in the bush” which not only brought serious psychological trauma. Sleeping in the bush on the ground also carried the dangers of pollution from death (Igreja 1999). It insulted a person’s humanity on the deepest level since they were forced to dwell outside the human realm.

While living in Frelimo *aldeias*, adult men and women were required to perform military service and attend regular military training exercises. Women, especially, were sent on non-combat missions—frequently to harvest grain from fields well into Renamo

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<sup>60</sup> *Kupukuta madzvade* is ceremony to conclude the *madzvade* post-partum period requiring all family members and the birth assistant to be present.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Sekulu Fazenda; February 28, 2008.

<sup>62</sup> *Tsanganiko* is contamination from death that can spread through a family group. Spread is prevented through a ceremony known as *kupukuta kufa* that requires all family members to participate. Similarly, contamination related to birth, known as *dzvade* must be controlled through ritual action. See also Chapter 1.



controlled areas which was a very dangerous task.<sup>63</sup> The intense social and spiritual strain of living in communal villages, food insecurity, poor sanitation, outbreaks of disease, and periodic violence led to a loss of control over the world. As will be seen in the next section, people turned to various forms of religious and spiritual support in an effort to regain a sense of control. Another strategy that many residents in the *aldeia* employed to regain a sense of control, was to cultivate their fields outside the protective space of *aldeia*, despite the threat of violence or suspicion of being a Renamo spy.

On the other hand, those who remained on their homesteads risked brutal attacks from Frelimo and had to endure living under the authority of Renamo soldiers. Residents who stayed on Gorongosa Mountain during periods of the war recall Frelimo's scorched-earth campaign as one of the most horrific aspects of the war. After 1987, Frelimo troops periodically fanned out through rural areas, destroying and burning homes, crops, livestock and any possessions in order to force the populace to relocate to communal villages in order to survive. However, many Gorongosans who had remained on the mountain for most of the war said that they preferred to risk punishment from Frelimo or capture by Renamo troops who periodically raided homesteads to recruit men for the army. One woman described how she and her family managed to evade capture from approaching Frelimo troops who were forcibly removing people to a nearby protectorate:

Frelimo wanted to take us to the *aldeia* to live in close with everyone like pigs in a corral. We ran to my mother's home in Nyabirira. That day, my co-wife was pregnant and gave birth in the woods as we fled around the side of the mountain to the north. We buried our maize harvest because we knew the soldiers would burn it with the houses. Every week, we would come back and dig some up to take with us until one week, after the rains came, we returned to find it rotten."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with Mãe Fanita; February 14, 2008; Interview with Maria de Fatima Joni; June 20, 2008.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Aliança Almeida; September 7, 2006.

As the above account illustrates, even when remaining on their land meant severe food shortages, Gorongosans often preferred facing hunger to the conditions of the *aldeias*. Others who were captured and taken to *aldeias* managed to flee. Some told me that later in the war when Frelimo had the support of the ZNA,<sup>65</sup> they began to stage helicopter attacks on the mountain.<sup>66</sup> These attacks targeted both military and civilian settlements, since, according to the strategy of this war, they were one and the same. During this period, people fled to live in caves on the mountain summit since any settlement visible from the air was at risk of attack. Like living in *aldeias*, this was a great hardship, not only in material but also in social terms. As one man explained, “all the men and women had to sleep mixed together.”<sup>67</sup> But living in caves provided significant security from both armies:

High up on the mountain it is difficult to find people ... Both Frelimo and Renamo were unable to capture us. After the war ended, I met people in town who couldn't believe a young man my age had passed the whole war outside the *aldeia* without being captured. But it is true! We had a great place up there. From high up we could watch out and flee long before an enemy arrived.<sup>68</sup>

This account reveals the sentiment that many people shared, especially as the war dragged on: that they were caught between two different enemies.

Evading capture from two separate forces required a great deal of vigilance and savvy. To avoid being visible from the air, people stopped agricultural production altogether or only cultivated small plots hidden deep in ravines.<sup>69</sup> Spreading flour out to dry in the sun was also dangerous, as the white patches were like beacons guiding Frelimo air

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<sup>65</sup> Zimbabwe National Army soldiers (known in Gorongosa as *khomeredede*) came to reinforce Frelimo positions in Gorongosa in 1985.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Sr. Bento; March 21, 2008; Interview with Aliança Almeida; September 7, 2006; Interview with Pastor Eusebio; March 13, 2008; Interview with Felizardo; April 7, 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Felizardo; April 7, 2008.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Pastor Eusebio; March 13, 2008.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Sr. Bento; March 21, 2008; Interview with Pastor Eusebio; March 13, 2008.

attacks to people's settlements.<sup>70</sup> Other minutiae of daily life had to be carefully concealed. Some people told me that since Frelimo and Renamo both looked for smoke to locate settlements, they collected the charcoal that forms on trees and logs during seasonal fires in order to could cook without producing smoke.<sup>71</sup> People "had to be afraid of making any noise."<sup>72</sup> Women would bury their *dulis* (large wooden mortars for pounding grain) so that the top was level with the ground, thereby preventing the rhythmic pulse of pounding from resonating around the area, revealing their hiding place.<sup>73</sup>

Even those who were taken by Renamo sometimes managed to escape. One man told me he was captured twice by Renamo, but each time managed to flee. On one of these occasions, he was escorted to a Renamo base by armed guards. When their group stopped to rest, he asked to be excused to defecate. When he was out of sight, he fled. He rushed home to tell his family where he would be hiding, and remained hidden in the bush for weeks so that the soldiers would not find him at home.<sup>74</sup> Hiding in the bush in *mak'hava* ("hidden places") was a widespread strategy to avoid capture.<sup>75</sup> Many men spent months living in hidden camps in the bush. Women would secretly bring food to them during the day, being careful not to leave a visible trail. Women also risked capture and rape, as Renamo soldiers occasionally abducted women who were serving as porters. Young, attractive women were particularly targeted and were kept in Renamo bases as "wives" of soldiers.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Pastor Eusebio; March 13, 2008.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Sr. Bento; March 21, 2008.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Ricardo Baptista; April 2, 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Group interview with Fabião, Tereza and Mecerina; June 3, 2008.

Hunger was a frequent companion during the war—a difficulty facing both residents of *aldeias* and those who managed to stay on their land. Some felt that those who stayed on their land were better off since they could move over a wide territory, relying on their encyclopedic knowledge of wild foods to get through the toughest periods. But the disruption of the war often prevented people from cultivating sufficient food. Periodic droughts exacerbated the situation. Renamo's reliance on the population for labor and food only intensified the shortages.<sup>77</sup> Famine hit hard especially towards the end of the war. A drought which lasted more than two years was so severe that even the wild plants began to dry out, threatening the only remaining food source for people in Renamo areas.

The severity of the drought eventually brought an end to the war. Renamo and Frelimo leaders both signed the Rome Peace Accords in 1992, recognizing that the fighting could not go on under such extreme circumstances. Many Gorongosans attribute the drought to the displeasure of rain spirits who were angry at the moral transgressions of the war and the pollution of the ground with the blood of so many. Others told me, it was God's way to save the people: "God helped us ... if it wasn't for the drought, I think the war would still be continuing to this day ... it is God who made it [the drought]"<sup>78</sup>

### **Spirits, churches, and protection during the civil war**

The intensity of suffering and violence that characterized the drawn-out period of civil war in Mozambique had a profound and enduring impact. It pulled people in opposite directions, but no place offered much security. Gorongosans found hardship whether they found themselves in Frelimo protectorates or in Renamo territories. Confronted with

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with Gina João; March 24, 2008.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Sr. Bento; March 21, 2008.

extreme circumstances, Gorongosans used various strategies to cope with threats and constraint. Religious and spiritual innovation flourished, providing flexible resources to commanders, soldiers, and civilians searching for protection from the war's dangers.

Renamo leaders famously drew on spiritual forces to gain power and protection. They frequently proclaimed they were fighting a “war of the spirits.” The population as well as the Frelimo armed forces “came to regard Renamo as possessing strong magic that brought them victories in battles” (Marlin 2001: 167). To gain such power and reputation, Renamo leaders sought protections from both spirit-mediums and territorial spirits (Vines 1991: 74). Gorongosa Mountain was an ideal base, not only because it was an easily defended position, but also because of the protective forces of its territorial spirits. As seen above, Renamo reinstituted the governing role of traditional authorities in the areas it controlled. This was as much a political statement as it was a strategy to gain protection. Explicitly lifting up traditional society was a way for Renamo to quickly gain popular support in a war effort that depended heavily on civilian labor. Gorongosan's political authorities were once again respected and allowed to exercise authority, creating a situation of relative autonomy that made living in Renamo areas preferential to the *aldeias*. In cultivating respectful relations with local leaders, Renamo leaders also hoped to gain the protections of the territorial spirits of the mountain.

Renamo leaders, following traditional protocol, consulted with Samatenje to receive permission to create their base on the mountain. When they returned from South Africa in 1981, they consulted with Samatenje to seek his blessings to re-establish their bases in different parts of his domain.<sup>79</sup> Samatenje welcomed Renamo on both occasions, provided they follow certain prohibitions. Renamo commanders agreed to respect rules of land use

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<sup>79</sup> Interview with Fabião, Tereza and Merecina; June 3, 2008.

and sacred areas on the mountain. Among other things, they promised not to launch attacks against the population of the territory or recruit men too young to have armpit hair (French 2009: 259). For the majority of the war, Renamo abided by these rules, enjoying benefits of protections of the *mbondoro*. Stories abound of Frelimo troops whose attacks against Renamo positions on the mountain were thwarted by the intervention territorial spirits—during attacks on Renamo positions, Frelimo soldiers were struck by sudden storms or became disoriented and lost.

The potential for spiritual protections represented by Samatenje was also something that both Frelimo and Renamo sought to obtain. Like Renamo, Frelimo commanders also took a respectful approach to Samatenje. The following story, told to me by a young man who grew up close to Samatenje's sacred area, illustrates the power that commanded respect from both sides:

Zimbabwean troops [who assisted the Frelimo cause in Gorongosa after 1982] were becoming frustrated. They were never having success attacking the Renamo base on the mountain. Each time, many soldiers would get killed. They couldn't see the enemy. Renamo seemed to be everywhere, but they couldn't beat them. Sometimes, inexplicable storms or winds would sweep up when they were making an attack, and they would become disoriented. There was just too much spiritual power. At one point, Chissano ordered the troops to kill and attack everything in sight. Because of the power of the spirits on the mountain, and the force that Samatenge had over them, Renamo was everywhere. Anything that moved, any creature ... even the rocks—all of it should be attacked and destroyed because all of it was Renamo, though through magic it did not appear to be soldiers. But Mugabe<sup>80</sup> said that they could not destroy everything. They needed to capture Samatenge—the one with the spiritual power.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Robert Mugabe was the one of the leaders of the liberation movement against white minority rule in the former Rhodesia. Following independence in 1980, he was elected head of the government of the new nation, re-named Zimbabwe. He served as Prime Minister from 1980-1987 and as the first executive head of state since 1987.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Viola; March 31, 2007.

Continuing, he explained that Frelimo had captured the *nyakwawa* from Sadjunjira—the region of the mountain where Samatenje’s rain shrine was located. With information from the *nyakwawa*, they planned an attack to coincide with the annual fertility ceremonies hosted at Nyamatenje. Preoccupied with the festivities of this annual celebration, a helicopter drop of Frelimo soldiers went un-noticed:

When the Frelimo soldiers got to the edge of Samatenje’s area, they wanted to raid and attack. But the *régulo* [of Sadjunjira] told them that they couldn’t. They had to leave their weapons, remove their boots, everything according to the tradition there. They were terrified to go there without any of their weapons. But they went in. Samatenje left with them peacefully. They were flown to the [Frelimo] base at Casa Banana and from there to Chimoio and then to Harare ... where Samatenje met with Mugabe ... They confronted him, saying that they want him to neutralize his power over the spirits. Frelimo is losing because of his power. They told him they would set up an “*aldeia* de Samatenje” in Chimoio ... water, electricity—everything. He refused. He wanted to be where his spirits live. They ended up making an “Aldeia de Samatenje” up on the mountain ... in Caravina Serra, near where the old school is. It is now no longer there.<sup>82</sup>

Because the sacred territory around his home was respected by both sides, it became what Nordstrom referred to as a “peace zone” (1997: 151). This “peace zone” reveals how Samatenje’s spiritual power was recognized by leaders of both armies. As discussed earlier, as far back as memory allows, outsiders coming to Gorongosa Mountain have sought permission from the spirits governing the area through their intercessors or else risk personal danger from spiritual retribution. This was the case long before the civil war, and remains a practice widely followed today. The “peace zone” in Samatenje’s area was a product of the respect shown him as part of an overall strategy of war.

While, in relations with Samatenje, both armies in Gorongosa sought to attain the protection of territorial spirits in order to succeed in battle, as will be discussed below, soldiers on both sides also sought individual spiritual protection from the dangers of

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<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*

combat. Less noted, however, was soldiers' use of church participation as a source of personal protection. One pastor I spoke with converted to Christianity in 1982 as a soldier on a Renamo base. He told me:

I was saved by the Holy Spirit. I was never wounded or anything because God saw: 'no, he is working for me.' Other combatants were praying as well. We organized a church inside the base there. Some days, we would leave the base to pray with others outside ... We were always asking God to end the war. We made a major effort, asking with all our force to end this war.

Those who didn't go to church asked spirits to protect them. When they were going to enter combat, they would kneel down, clap their hands<sup>83</sup> ask the spirits of the land and their ancestors [for protection]. It's the same way that we were asking God [for protection]. Leaders asked protection for everyone, individual combatants asked for protection for themselves.<sup>84</sup>

In this description, the direct parallel between God's protection and protection from ancestral spirits was clear, and neither was valued above the other. Rather, during the war, many Gorongosans began to convert to churches in an attempt to broaden the scope of their protections.

War-time hardship led both Renamo and Frelimo leadership to seek aid from Protestant Christian organizations. Vines points to 1985 as the time when "the Christian dimension of Renamo" saw a major increase (1991:107). As part of fundraising efforts and in an effort to obtain legitimacy and support, Renamo encouraged Christian religious activity, and even organized religious conventions (Vines 1991:106-109). As Pastor Moises's description reveals, conversion was welcomed on Renamo bases and in surrounding areas. In fact, on Gorongosa Mountain, many people pointed to the civil war as the time when small churches began appearing across the landscape.

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<sup>83</sup> Clapping here refers to a ceremonial gesture of supreme respect taken when addressing a prayer to a spirit.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Moises Carlos; July 3, 2004.



Church conversion also gained force in the district capital. Foreign missionaries of Christian relief organizations and of churches such as Assemblies of God International arrived in the district capital to distribute aid and evangelize. Pastor Zimba and many of the older members of his congregation converted at this time. Missionaries held public revival meetings, drawing large crowds with showy stage performances. Wide-scale mobility assisted in the creation of churches outside the *aldeias*, each of which was established as a branch of a larger congregation in the district capital. This set the foundation for the hierarchical organization that characterizes Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa today. Some missionary groups preferentially distributed relief supplies to church members. Gorongosans recalled this period as a time when membership in these churches swelled, gaining large numbers of “false” converts who were only interested in the material benefit of church participation. But war-time church conversion was not only tied to material gain.

As Pastor Moises’s description illustrates, church participation offered the promise of personal protection from a large force beyond what was offered by territorial and ancestral spirits. His account also illustrates how, through fervent prayer, church members could take initiative in influencing bringing the war’s end. Ultimately, many felt they were successful in this spiritual work, as God answered their prayers with a catastrophic drought. Though the drought caused much suffering, the pressures it created forced both armies to come to the table to sign peace accords, finally bringing an end to the war.

### **Gamba spirits—harnessing destruction for personal benefit**

While most people called on ancestral spirits or the Holy Spirit for protection, some sought additional defenses. The dangers of war time led some people to seek personal

spiritual treatments that gave them special abilities or enhanced protection. As has been widely noted (e.g. Englund 2002, Lan 1985, Marlin 2001, Nordstrom 1997, Vines 1991), spirit-mediums prepared treatments that promised to make soldiers invisible to the enemy and to turn bullets into water. They also provided similar treatments for civilians hoping to evade capture. These treatments were distinct from prayers to ancestral spirits or to Christian figures in that they involved the use of substances to convey extraordinary powers and insight to a person. *Gamba*<sup>85</sup> spirit acquisition was one such innovation.

*Gamba*, a word meaning “soldier” in the Shona language of eastern Zimbabwe, refers to what is widely regarded in Gorongosa to be a new class of spirits that emerged during the civil war (see also Marlin 2001). During the war, *gamba* were spirits of young Zimbabwean soldiers who were killed during the conflict. As soldiers, they were considered to be especially powerful—able to confront the intense dangers of war time. When they emerge through possession, *gamba* spirits are recognizable through their use of Shona language and by their fiery attitude and strong will. Like *npfukwa*, *gamba* are restless spirits of people who were unjustly killed. Having died far from their homes and families, these young men did not receive a proper burial that would have incorporated them among their family’s spirits. However, what distinguishes *gamba* from *npfukwa* is the intentionality behind their acquisition. During the war people sought out spirits of dead soldiers for enhanced protection. The social and moral disorder of the war provided the context in which this new phenomenon of *gamba* acquisition could emerge.

In Gorongosa, the most commonly-referenced story about the new phenomenon of *gamba* spirits places its origins with a massacre of soldiers of the Zimbabwe National Liberation Army (ZANLA) in western Mozambique. During Mozambique’s civil war, a

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<sup>85</sup> See Chapters 1 and 4 for further discussion of *gamba* spirits.

struggle against white-minority rule was ongoing in Rhodesia. The newly independent Frelimo government in Mozambique offered ZANLA soldiers support with military assistance and training. They provided a training camp for liberation soldiers in Nyazonia, just across the border inside Mozambique. After receiving intelligence about the ZANLA camp, Rhodesia's Prime Minister, Ian Smith, sent airplanes to bomb it in an effort to quash the black nationalist movement. According to one Gorongosa man:

Many people died there [Nyazonia]. When they died, people here in Mozambique had also begun the war. Spirit-mediums went to take bones of the dead people [Zimbabwean soldiers killed in the air attack]. Now, when a person wants to be possessed by an evil spirit, he/she will go there [to a spirit-medium] to ask [for it]. So, that person will take a small pot, with a small amount of flour, grate a bone of the person the spirit-medium took, put it in the pot with the flour and make porridge, eat it and a spirit will come out [through possession].<sup>86</sup>

This account of the origin of *gamba* spirit possession reveals what is unique about the phenomenon. *Gamba* spirit possession centers on people *seeking out* ties to alien spirits, rather than establishing ties as a therapeutic action in response to a spirit's call. The physical action of consuming the bones of Zimbabwean soldiers creates this spiritual connection.

During the civil war, a wide range of people sought the intervention of *n'gangas* to create ties to *gamba* spirits for assistance from the dangers they faced. Soldiers procured protective treatments from *n'gangas*. The most powerful protection, widely regarded to have originated in the practices of *n'gangas* in Gorongosa (see also Marlin 2001) came from treatments that established ties between the host and a *gamba* spirit. *Gamba* afforded soldiers insight about when and where an attack might be launched. They also made soldiers impervious to injury from bullets. Such treatments offered protections beyond those that territorial spirits could provide. For instance, one man told me that André Matsangaisse—

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with Celestino Sacaune Canda; May 8, 2008.

the leader of the Renamo army during the early period of the war—had especially powerful protections that corresponded to his superior position. “During battles,” he told me, “Matsangaisse would stand out in the open and nothing would hit him.”<sup>87</sup> It was only because “someone discovered his secret” and was able to undo his special protection (*kusuruza*) that he became vulnerable and died leading an attack on Gorongosa’s district capital.<sup>88</sup>

Civilians armed themselves with spiritual protections as well. Long-distance traders who traversed vast and dangerous areas to bring valuable consumer goods to Gorongosa from Zimbabwe sought treatments from *n’ganga*s that would place them under the guidance and protection of personal spirits. Those who acquired *gamba* spirits would be shown a safe path to avoid confrontation with soldiers. Insights would come through dreams and intuition about the right day and time to travel and which route to take. It is said that even when people under this kind of special protection encountered dangerous individuals on their journey, their spirit’s protection would allow them to go unseen or un-noticed.

*Gamba* possession among women highlighted a different aspect of the phenomenon. While men sought out *gamba* for protections, women received them. This mode of acquisition brought *gamba* into closer alignment with *mpfukwa* possession in that women were chosen by spirits to establish a link to the social world of the living. However, unlike *mpfukwa*, *gamba* who came to women during the war were not following lines of ancestry to seek retribution or repayment of debts. Violence and death such as the massacre at Nyazonia unleashed *gamba* spirits who roved the countryside, sometimes choosing to attach themselves to women as their wives (see also Marlin 2001).

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with Sr. Bento; March 21, 2008.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*

*Gamba* spirits vigorously protected their wives from war-time threats. It is said that women with *gamba* spirits were able to avoid capture and rape by Renamo soldiers. As one man explained, women who were being taken for *gandira*<sup>89</sup> by Renamo troops would sometimes become possessed by their *gamba* spirit. In such possession instances, the *gamba* spirit would come out and threaten the soldiers: “You can’t take my wife and make her suffer!” Fearing future retribution from these powerful spirits, soldiers would often leave such a person alone.<sup>90</sup> Since these incidents of *gamba* spirit possession were effective in preventing capture by Renamo troops, women sometimes feigned possession. Renamo soldiers made it a habit to gauge the validity of instances of possession, paying attention to whether or not the spirit was speaking Shona, or if threatened with death, the possessed person showed any signs of fear or awareness of danger.<sup>91</sup>

*Gamba* spirits, feared as they were, made for effective protection. But their involvement in human affairs was said to come with a price. Men’s and women’s modes of establishing links with *gamba* spirits were morally evaluated in distinct ways. While women’s mode of establishing relations with *gamba* spirits through acceptance and integration was generally seen as a legitimate response to being chosen, men’s mode of acquiring *gamba* spirits was widely considered to be an unambiguously dangerous and an explicitly nefarious activity.

Seeking out *gamba* spirits is closely aligned to *uroyi* or “witchcraft.”<sup>92</sup> Consuming bones of deceased soldiers to attain their services is not “free.” Once acquired in this way,

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<sup>89</sup> *Gandira* is a word that refers to porter service for Renamo.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Felizardo; April 7, 2008; Interview with Sr. Bento; March 21, 2008; Interview with Nicolão João Baptista; April 7, 2008.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Nicolão João Baptista; April 7, 2008.

<sup>92</sup> *Uroyi* is anti-social action that frequently involves killing and “eating” others in order to gain special powers and personal advancement.

*gamba* spirits seek annual payments in blood from their hosts to maintain their power and vitality. *Gamba* are said to “kill within [their host’s] own family in exchange for the work they perform.”<sup>93</sup> In this way, seeking *gamba* places its host in continual position of indebtedness. Unlike *npfukwa*, whose debts are satisfied through payment of a wife and incorporation into a lineage group, *gamba* that are placed under the employ of their host are not integrated into society. Though their host harnesses their powers for personal benefit, they remain a dangerous and destructive force. Whereas therapy for *npfukwa* spirits resolves past violence, *gamba* acquisition carries it into the future.

*Gamba* spirits are both a product and an enduring influence of the civil war. As will be seen in Chapter 4, *gamba* have become a troublesome problem in Gorongosa in the postwar period. Women’s initiation into spirit-mediumship is one strategy people have used to change their relationships to *gamba* spirits and transform them into a positive social force. At the same time, however, more people have been seeking to “buy” *gamba* spirits to help with the challenges of postwar life. *Gamba* spirits, as an embodiment of the turmoil and violence of the war reveal how, even after the conflict’s end, the effects of the civil war have continued to reverberate throughout society.

## Conclusion

As this chapter reveals, the suffering that Gorongosans face in contemporary times has been produced by many years of subordination, conflict, and turmoil. Along with suffering, Gorongosans have inherited a rich range of strategies for managing difficult circumstances that have emerged in different historical contexts. Territorial spirits have provided direction to maintain social order in their lands, fomenting rebellion when that

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with Felizardo; April 7, 2008.

order and the wellbeing of the population have been under threat. In times when traditional leaders and other politico-religious figures have failed to bring wellbeing to the territory, churches have provided alternate means to restore order. Church groups have sought to establish a parallel social order, altering the source of moral authority and providing direction and support in times of crisis. Their connections to God substitute for the role of *mbondoro* in bringing rain, fertility, and prosperity to the land. Churches thus offer their own strategies for collective and personal healing. Spirit-mediums have also mediated for spiritual figures that serve as moral guardians. *Madzuvoka* and *mpfukwa* mediums both help people manage threats to the moral order. Through initiation, they domesticate fearful outsider figures and harness their power for constructive uses of healing. In treating patients, they also afford people means to confront the challenges they face.

The end of the civil war laid the foundations for the growth and revitalization of the spiritual and religious practices that have provided Gorongosans with a wide range of ways to manage intensely difficult circumstances. While Renamo did not emerge victorious, the war's end was a triumph for the war-weary population. After the Peace Accords in 1992, the new democratic government sought to make amends for its alienation of traditional and religious authorities. Even though it was not until Decree 15 of 2000 that the Mozambican government officially recognized *nyakwava* as "community authorities" (Buur, et.al. 2007), traditional authorities in Gorongosa had been able to re-establish themselves in parallel to the state government since the war's end. Thus, despite generations of turbulence, traditional structures of government have maintained relative continuity, adapting, and transforming in different contexts. The *mbondoro* that guided people to settle in the region

continue to watch over their people and their territory, intervening in times when their descendents are threatened.

Post-war changes have opened the way for the rapid growth in church groups and innovative forms of “traditional healing.” Many people displaced by the war’s events returned to their homelands to reclaim their land and their livelihoods. This return added new dimensions to the geographical dispersion the war created. In addition to resettlement internal to the district, refugees returned to Gorongosa from nearby cities or neighboring countries. Converts to Christianity often established branches of their churches in home regions. The post-war government also made amends to spirit-mediums, creating AMETRAMO, which officially recognized and condoned the practices of spirit-mediums and other traditional healers.

However, political tensions in Gorongosa remain and support for Renamo is widespread, especially on Gorongosa Mountain. New struggles are being waged in political battles and elections. As one person put it: “EVERYONE here is of Renamo ... if you encounter someone of the Frelimo party, they’ve been bought. At heart they are not Frelimo.”<sup>94</sup> For the most part, however, people are contending with the impact of more powerful and elusive forces. Pressures that have troubled Gorongosa residents throughout history have continued, but are cloaked in different rhetoric and different logics. As political dissension reveals, Gorongosans continue to feel alienated from control of their lives and their social worlds.

In this context, spirit-mediums and church groups have come to play an even more vital role in people’s lives than they had in the past. The recent growth of rich spiritual and religious practices that continue to provide Gorongosans with a wide range of ways to

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<sup>94</sup> Anonymous; March 21, 2008.



manage the difficulties they face have emerged from historical practices, melding seamlessly into the social fabric. Suffering has been intensifying since the civil war, leading people to rely more heavily on *n'ganga*s and church groups as they confront extremely difficult circumstances. Christians and non-Christians alike account for the intensification of inordinate strains in their lives to the proliferation of *npfukwa* and *gamba* spirits. *Npfukwa* and *gamba* spirits embody the ways that past disorder penetrates into the present. Emerging from the recent past, these afflicting spirits reveal how the colonial period and especially the civil war laid the foundation for enduring social problems. Though contemporary pressures may differ in intensity, they are of the same nature as those experienced in the past. Spirit-mediums and church groups offer contrasting forms of healing to help people manage these forces

While spirit-mediums are an arm of society performing healing work that is supplementary to the collective healing of traditional authorities, church groups seek to provide *both* collective and personal healing. Pentecostal churches have come to be more popular, in part, as a response to the weaknesses of traditional authorities. In relation to the national government and its secular order, *nyakwana* and other traditional leaders are relatively impotent. Their power as politico-religious figures has been diluted, and the new political economy is the major social force regulating and constraining people's lives. In this context, church groups offer people the option of aligning with a different moral authority. Pentecostal church groups seek to revitalize religious and spiritual authority in Christian terms. They seek to re-invent a traditional social order that is in line with Christian philosophies. In this way, church groups seek to bring more all-encompassing change, attracting people not only for the material, social, and spiritual support they provide, but

also by providing renewed hope that society may be re-ordered to bring about collective wellbeing.

The following chapters detail the ways in which suffering has been intensifying in Gorongosa since the civil war. The next chapter explores how economic pressures have created another sort of forced labor as people struggle to find ways to survive the pressures of changing economic circumstances. Sharp social divides are no longer confined to a colonial class, but are widening among the population at large. The struggles, anxieties, and real suffering that people face underlie and shape the religious and spiritual practices that are currently gaining so much force.

### **Chapter 3:**

## **The Search for Cash: Recent Socioeconomic Changes in Gorongosa**

### **Introduction**

In the past 15 years, Gorongosa has transformed significantly, changing from a small, quiet town into a small city, with a bustling central market place. In fact, the local economy of Gorongosa has changed so rapidly in the past 10 years that the town no longer seems like the same place that it was when I arrived there in 1998. Completed in 2003, a highway construction project funded by USAID transformed Gorongosa from a small town at the end of a deteriorating road, to a significant trading center along the only highway linking the north and south of the country. Gorongosa now is a major stop for travelers on this main highway. With the growth in town comes the promise of business opportunities and this has attracted investments in technological infrastructure. In 2005, Gorongosa was connected for the first time to the main electric power grid, cellular phone networks and national TV networks. The availability of modern comforts has made Gorongosa a more attractive destination for a broad range of people. Gorongosa's district capital is receiving a large influx of outsiders, who come in search of new opportunities. The majority of recent arrivals are people from neighboring provinces who come to set up businesses, changing social dynamics in the area.

This chapter describes recent changes in Gorongosa in relation to neoliberal economic reforms, focusing especially on the growth of the market and the arrival of public electricity to the district. Such infrastructural changes in town contribute to economic and

social transformations and to a growing sense of insecurity, danger, and need for protection and spiritual intervention that fuels the spread of Pentecostal churches and increased participation in different forms of spiritual healing. Rapid changes of this sort are taking place all around the region. Like a stone dropped into a pool, one such major change has effects that spread out in every direction. Every aspect of life is affected in visible and invisible ways. Subsequent chapters follow this ripple effect to examine the impact on health and illness and marriage and gender relations, and the ways in which people make use of spiritual healing to manage changing pressures. But in order to comprehend the experiences and motivations of actors in these realms, it is essential to understand the profound shifts associated with neoliberal transformations in the country.

### **Mozambique's changing economy in the context of neoliberal economic reforms**

Mozambique gained its independence from colonialism in 1975, but no independence is real without economic independence. Our independence is fictitious; we are just servants of the rich countries. We have gone from colonialism to a much stronger one—economic colonialism. And the new colonizers use immoral means to do their colonization—war and corruption. The old colonialism had a face; this new one is worse because it has no face ... Mozambique is threatened politically, economically and culturally. The main threats are the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

- Dom Manuel Vieira Pinto, Bishop of  
Nampula

(cited in Hanlon 1996: 1)

Facing the effects of the devastating civil war, in the mid-1980s Mozambique's government gave in to pressures from foreign powers in an attempt to stave off economic collapse. By 1983, Mozambique had no foreign exchange and could not pay its foreign debts. Imports plummeted and shortages of fuel, consumer goods, medicines and industrial production, stalled by a lack of raw goods, forced government leaders to swallow their pride

and begin informal talks with the IMF and the World Bank (Hanlon 1991: 113). In his book, *Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots?*, sociologist Joseph Hanlon documents Frelimo's struggle to maintain control of the economy and their unsuccessful battle to follow a socialist path in this difficult context. At initial talks with the IMF and the World Bank, Mozambican officials stressed that "there had been real per capita economic growth between 1977 and 1981, which was better than in the late colonial period" (Hanlon 1991: 115). Hoping to retain control of economic policies, Mozambican government officials pointed out that there had been a budget surplus in the 1980s, and claimed their fiscal policies to be sound. They argued that the current economic crisis was caused by the impact of the war, not faulty fiscal policy. However, IMF officials claimed that Mozambique's economic woes were due to nothing more than "state control of the economy, excessive management of foreign exchange, and too few exports" (Hanlon 1991: 115). The Cold War's satellite stage in Mozambique was finally won through economic pressures, and in 1984 the Mozambican government finally gave in to overwhelming pressures and joined the IMF and The World Bank. By 1987, Mozambique had implemented these institutions' structural adjustment measures. Foreign control of Mozambique's economy continues in practice over 20 years later, and has had profound social and economic impacts.<sup>1</sup>

Between 1993 and 2001, the IMF dominated economic policy in Mozambique, implementing a harsh structural adjustment program (Hanlon and Mosse 2009: 2). As Hanlon has put it, "structural adjustment is based on a package of de-s: deregulation, devaluation, denationalization, decreased government deficit, decreased demand, and

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 5 for discussion of the impact of structural adjustment on government health service provision.

deflation” (Hanlon and Mosse 2009: 2: 123). In line with the tenets of neoliberalism, structural adjustment requirements of the IMF called for maximum use of “the market” and sharp limits on the role of the state, emphasizing private sector expansion and trust in the market’s “invisible hand” to allocate resources efficiently through increased competition. Structural adjustment programs in Mozambique began with devaluation of the currency, which led to rapid price increases and a sharp drop in consumer purchasing power. Decreased ability of the government to provide social services for its people impeded Mozambique’s ability to rebuild following the end of the civil war in 1992 (Hanlon 1996). The IMF limited postwar reconstruction spending and introduced caps to the aid that Mozambique could receive (Hanlon and Mosse 2009:2).

“Stabilization” policies pressed by these institutions drove wages down so low that, beginning in the mid-90s, two-thirds of Mozambican civil servants lived below the poverty line and one-third of public service households lived in “abject poverty” (Hanlon and Mosse 2009: 49). This situation has continued, leading to the current state of endemic corruption among civil servants in education, healthcare, and government administration who use their power and position to gain income to supplement insufficient wages. Popular faith in government service provision has plummeted, and has led to a palpable sense of anxiety and exclusion from basic services. As Harry G. West has noted, popular experience of neoliberal economic reforms has been seen among the populace as “the transformation of beneficent authorities into maleficent actors” (2005: 8).

Ironically, as the World Bank and other foreign economic powers demand a smaller role for the government, they recommend major new government expenditures for large-scale projects. By the end of 1995, The World Bank had authorized \$1266 million in loans

to Mozambique. This money, of course, has come with strings attached. The World Bank's power comes not only from "policy conditionalities but also from its importance as a supplier of development money" (Hanlon 1996: 38). The Mozambican government's acceptance of pressures from the World Bank and IMF and its embrace of Western Capitalism has led to an era of "savage capitalism," in which the state was forced to withdraw from the economy. Widespread privatization helped to form and solidify a new elite business class comprised mostly of members of the ruling Frelimo party (Hanlon and Mosse 2009:2). Foreign NGOs, largely European and American, operate freely throughout the country and influence the political process through grants and technical assistance.

Currently, the bulk of Mozambique's annual budget continues to come from a group of donor countries, known collectively as "The Programme Aid Partnership" (PAP). PAP comprises the African Development Bank, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Britain, and the World Bank. In May 2009, PAP leaders signed an agreement with the Mozambican government for an aid package totaling \$804.5 million, representing nearly 55 percent of the total national budget (Mangwino 2009). The package stipulated that \$471.8 million go directly to support the budget with the remaining \$332.7 million set aside for development projects. This dependence on budgetary support from international sources, combined with the heavy presence of international NGOs and aid organizations operating in the country, has earned Mozambique the notorious nickname "donor darling of southern Africa." So much reliance on outside support for the national budget and development projects erodes the ability of top government officials to shape public policy. Member countries of The Program Aid Partnership have significant leverage

to steer decisions about governing that in most democratic societies, are left to elected officials (UNHCR 2007). In drawing up the agreement for 2010's budgetary support package, two PAP member countries reduced their contributions of aid because of what they called "unsatisfactory performance" of the government in regards to corruption and other factors.

For the most part, in recent years, Mozambique's national government has been lauded for sustaining the country's democratic transition and for transforming the devastation from 16 years of civil war into an economic success story, with one of the highest growth rates in the world. What has stood out most strikingly to major foreign powers has been Mozambique's impressive economic growth. Real GDP growth since 1993 has averaged 8.1%, while inflation has decreased from more than 50 per cent in the mid-1990s to near-single digits today (Games 2007: 9). While this impressive growth rate has led to resounding praise from the international community, it belies a more sinister reality: macro-economic growth in Mozambique has not corresponded with improvements in the quality of life for the majority of citizens. In fact, poverty is increasing in Mozambique, and the immense gap between the rich and poor continues to grow.

Ironically, the party that, at independence, championed socialist ideals and the reduction of poverty through rapid industrialization is now synonymous with Mozambique's new wealthy business elite. A symbol of the new Frelimo party, President Armando Guebuza is one of the richest people in Mozambique. Beginning as a Marxist, Guebuza used his links in transport and government to gain control of profitable businesses in fishing and port management. Now, as the country's president, he is a partial owner of Intelec, "which is involved in electricity transmission and equipment, telecommunications, gas,



consulting, cement, tourism, construction, Tata vehicles and fishing” (Hanlon and Mosse 2009: 6). In contrast to government policies at independence, Frelimo’s actions as a champion against “*pobreza absoluta*” (absolute poverty) have moved away from textile mills and other large-scale industries to place “more stress on electrification, computers, and mobile telephones” (Hanlon and Mosse:4).

Mozambique’s impressive GDP growth rates are largely the result of large-scale investment in the country by private interests that fuel the power of Mozambican business elite, but lead to little real improvements in the livelihoods of most Mozambicans. The Mozal aluminum smelter is a symbol of these kinds of mega-projects which usher in apparent macro-economic benefits, but contribute little to the country’s overall development. Built just outside Maputo in 1998, initial investment in Mozal amounted to approximately 40 percent of GDP, but only created around 1,500 jobs, of which nearly a third are held by foreigners (IRIN 2007). Mozal's exports have increased Mozambique's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by between 3.2 and 5 percent and its output represents almost half the country's growth in manufacturing. As part of the deal with the government, Mozal “imports most of its raw material and equipment duty-free and enjoys an extensive list of incentives ranging from discounted electricity to a prolonged tax holiday. The result is an isolated economic enclave that uses large quantities of scarce resources without returning revenue or jobs to the economy” (IRIN 2007). Mozal adds much of the sparkle to Mozambique’s glimmering economic statistics, providing three-quarters of the country’s exports. Meanwhile, two-thirds of Mozambicans still live in the countryside and depend on small-scale farming, sliding in and out of poverty as they work to manage life in increasingly difficult circumstances (Economist 2008). Critics have recently begun to point

out that aid in Africa has not been a help, but a hindrance. Arguing that aid fosters dependency, stifles enterprise, and encourages corruption, authors such as Dambisa Moyo have called for an end to aid in Africa altogether (Moyo 2009).

Faith in the market and in capitalism has created conditions that lift up the emerging and ever more numerous members of the elite class. This growing social divide is permeating every region of the country, even as far away in distance and in socio-economic space from the capital as Gorongosa.

What follows is a description of how residents of Gorongosa District have been impacted by the economic processes that are the direct result of neoliberal policies implemented in the capital. Changes in the local economy since the end of the war have been so fast-paced and widespread that they leave younger generations unable to relate to the experiences of their elders. Social relationships have been impacted by economic pressures on a very deep level, and the rapid emergence of new forms of religious practices and networks are tied closely to this climate of rapid transformation.

### **Visible index of rapid changes: Transformation of Gorongosa's central market**

The socio-economic transformations associated with Mozambique's insertion in the global neoliberal economy are leading to sweeping social impacts on the ground in Gorongosa. The most dramatic manifestation of macroeconomic changes in the region is visible in the district's central market. As around the region, this market is the focal point of many people's daily activities. It is not merely a place where money and commodities are exchanged, but one where social interactions take place: where social images of personhood are read and projected and where information and stories are exchanged. In recent years,

the amount and range of commodities for sale has increased rapidly and novel, expensive items have become locally available. As people of various means act on their ability to acquire such goods, differences between social classes are becoming more visible.

When I first arrived in the district in 1998, the market consisted of a crowded cluster of informal bamboo stands with rickety structures for shade cobbled together from black plastic, sections of thatch and occasional blue tarps stamped with the UNHCR<sup>2</sup> logo—remnants of the struggles of the civil war days. These informal stands surrounded a small, central cement market place built during colonial times when the administration attempted to encourage commerce and increase its revenues from trade. In 1998, items for sale in this conglomeration of mini stands consisted primarily of piles of small dried fish transported from coastal areas and a limited offering of locally grown produce (primarily cherry-sized tomatoes, tiny heads of garlic with fingernail-clipping-sized cloves, and miniature onions). Through the years, whenever I returned to Gorongosa for periods of field work, I was impressed by the rapid increase in the number and variety of products available for sale in the marketplace.

In 2001, the district government constructed a large square cement marketplace to accommodate the rapid expansion of the market. It was off the main road, set behind a group of permanent cement kiosks and the town's central elementary school. This large airy structure now houses the vendors of dried and fresh fish, meat, flour, bread, and dry goods such as beans, rice, and salt. But, district officials miscalculated the booming growth of Gorongosa's market. The formal cement building is inadequate to house all the new traders' stalls, which overflow into the surrounding area. Two rows of informal bamboo

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations High Commission for Refugees

stands encircle the formal cement structure forming a central walkway around the periphery. Early each morning, vendors pack these bamboo stands with an attractive display of goods: oil, soap, matches, cigarettes, batteries, cookies, canned goods, especially small cylindrical cans of pilchards,<sup>3</sup> kerosene, and sugar. A section of stands offer parts for bicycles and hardware for general construction: nails of all varieties, rope, nuts and bolts, fasteners, etc.



**Fig. 3.1: Gorongosa's central marketplace now has expensive consumer goods for sale previously available only in larger urban centers**

Another section is reserved for vendors of footwear: flip-flops, plastic “jelly” sandals, and all manner of used shoes from second hand clothing distribution centers. Ever since the arrival of electricity to the district at the end of 2005, stands selling electronics have appeared outside the central market building and young men dressed in the latest urban hip

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<sup>3</sup> A type of small ocean fish, similar to the sardine from the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Angola and Namibia.

hop styles sell radios, televisions, light bulbs, megaphone speakers, car batteries, solar panels, and assorted electronics accessories such as wires (see Figure 3.1).

The old marketplace at the central crossroads of town now exclusively houses vendors of produce who offer a seasonal variety of colorful fresh fruits and vegetables of great variety (see Figure 3.2). Large, round, juicy red tomatoes have replaced the tiny cherry-sized fruits. Garlic for sale is the size of a child's fist with thumb-sized cloves. Vendors sell fresh lettuce from their low-lying wet fields throughout the cool season, and there are always



**Fig. 3.2:** Improvements in local agriculture combined with easy transport to more fertile regions have resulted in increased variety and quality of vegetables for sale

greens including cabbage, collards, chard, lettuce, and local varieties of leafy vegetables of various kinds for sale. Even green peppers, carrots, and eggplant are occasionally offered.

### **A closer look at recent changes in Gorongosa's central market**

In order to describe these changes and their impact more concretely, I worked with a young man named Zito to conduct a survey of all current market vendors. At the time, Zito worked for the local administration to monitor and regulate the activities of market vendors, collecting the small daily taxes required by the government. He had been working in this position for over five years by the time we paired up for this survey, and had acquired intimate knowledge of the ins and outs of the market and the contours of its drastic changes. Zito (a.k.a. “Dog” after the American rapper Snoop Dog), is an easy-going, sociable character who was on good terms with many of the market sellers, despite, or perhaps because of his position as a market tax collector.<sup>4</sup>

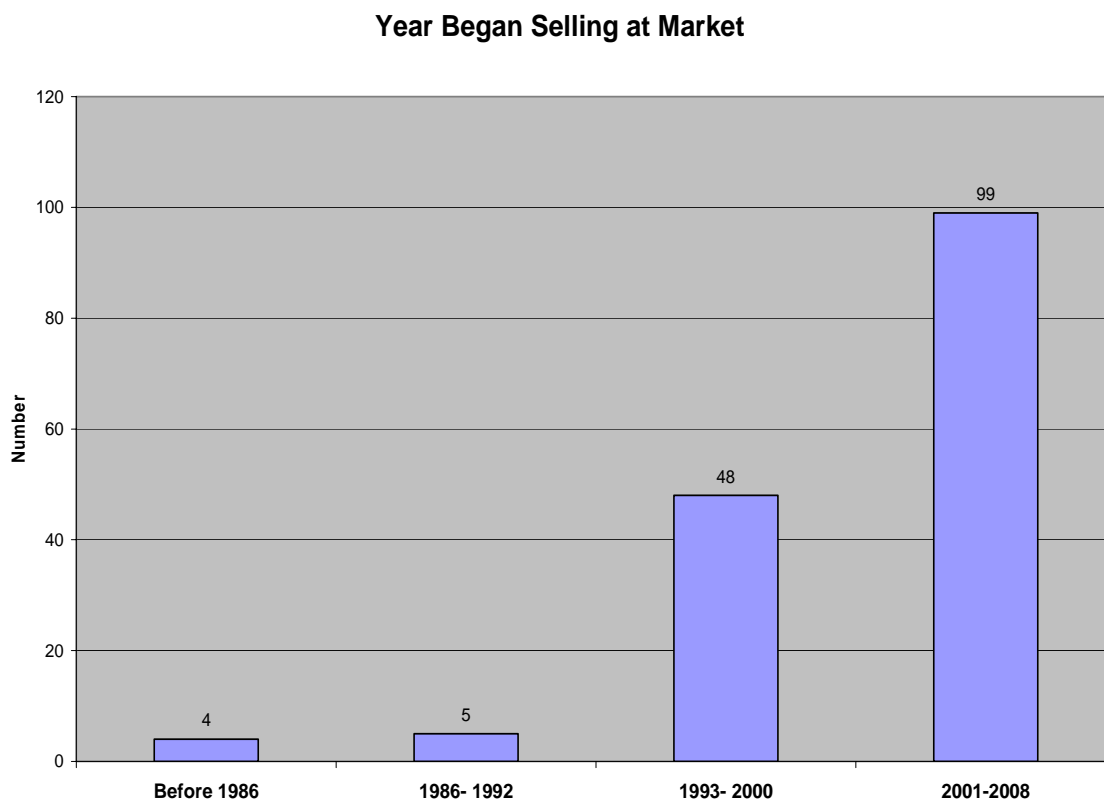
Because traders at the market occasionally travel to obtain their goods for sale, their presence at stalls in the market is semi-permanent, and so the composition of market vendors varies from day to day. The results of our survey provide a snapshot of the market at a particular time in early 2008. For the survey, we gathered basic data on over 163 vendors in Gorongosa's two central markets.<sup>5</sup> We asked vendors their age and birthplace, when they arrived in Gorongosa, and when they began selling at the Gorongosa market. We then noted what goods they were selling at the time, and inquired if they had sold different merchandise in the past. Finally, we compiled this information to provide a quantitative picture of the recent dramatic changes in Gorongosa's district capital.

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<sup>4</sup> It is in market vendors' best interests to maintain amicable relations with Zito “Dog” since they may one day need to call on his assistance to forgive a fee or turn a blind eye on a day when they cannot pay the daily tax for selling goods.

<sup>5</sup> As mentioned above, the two markets are divided by product sold: with fresh produce separated from all other goods for sale.

First, we found that nearly fifty percent of the vendors began selling there between 2001 and 2008:



**Fig. 3.3: Chart of market vendors in Gorongosa showing year of initiating sales**

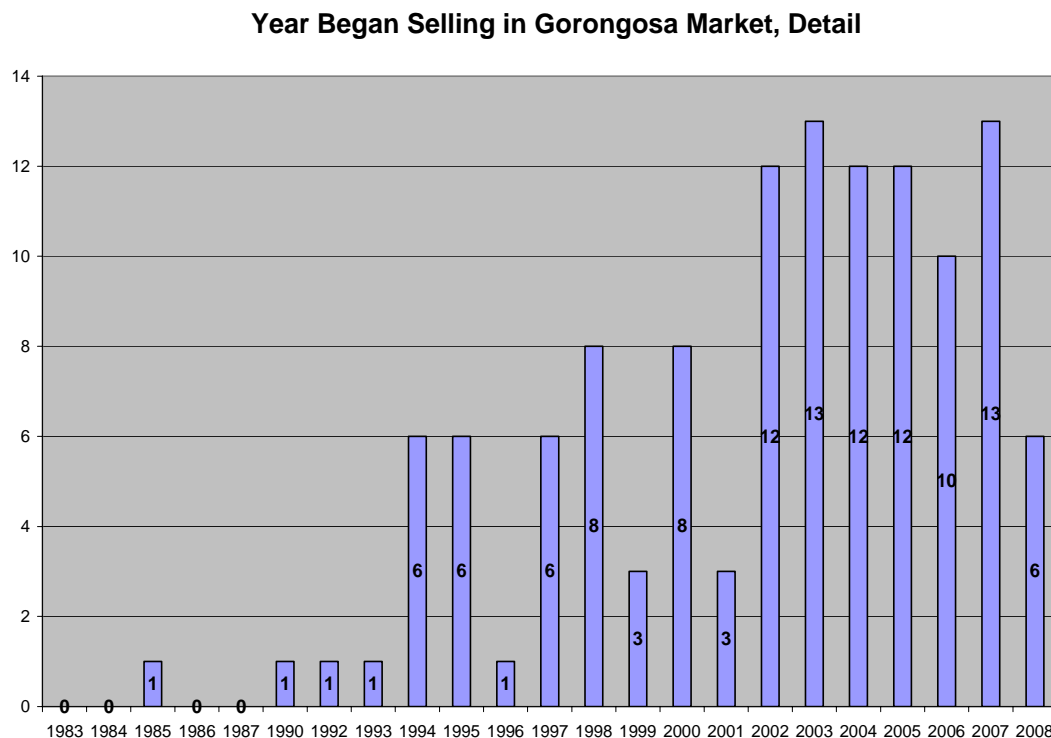
Figure 3.3 illustrates the dramatic growth in Gorongosa's central market.<sup>6</sup> The period from 1993-2000 is significant, because it marks the market expansion that immediately followed the end of the civil war in 1992 and the new capabilities of free movement from town to city that allowed for trade as goods became more available in the country. The period from 2001-2008 contains the greatest expansion in Gorongosa's market, corresponding to infrastructural developments in town.

<sup>6</sup> These figures do not represent absolute numbers of market sellers at any given time. Our data do not capture vendors who no longer sell in this location. Despite the unavailability of data about market vendors in previous years, the results of our survey illustrate the contours of recent changes.

Rehabilitation of EN1, the country's main national highway connecting the north and south of the country and its extension through the center of Gorongosa's capital began in 1999, attracting many new residents who came searching for new jobs that the long-term project created. After the road was completed at the end of 2002, the market underwent a more enduring boom as traders were drawn to the district capital because of its good transport connections to nearby provincial capitals.

Up until 2001, the road was heavily potholed and sometimes impassable, and only two daily public buses ran the route to the nearest crossroads 75 kilometers away. The road was in such bad condition that buses travelled a dirt track adjacent to the deteriorating asphalt of the former highway. The rough conditions led to frequent breakdowns that would leave the route without transport for days at a time. Now EN1 is a smooth highway, enabling swift travel that has attracted countless private *chapa* (minibus) drivers to operate the route to nearby population centers. Whereas previously, the journey to Sofala's provincial capital, Beira, took seven hours on a good day, travel time has been cut to four hours, and minivan transport is now easy to access at any hour of the day. Figure 3.4 illustrates how the great majority of current sellers in Gorongosa's market started their businesses there since the completion of the road in 2002:



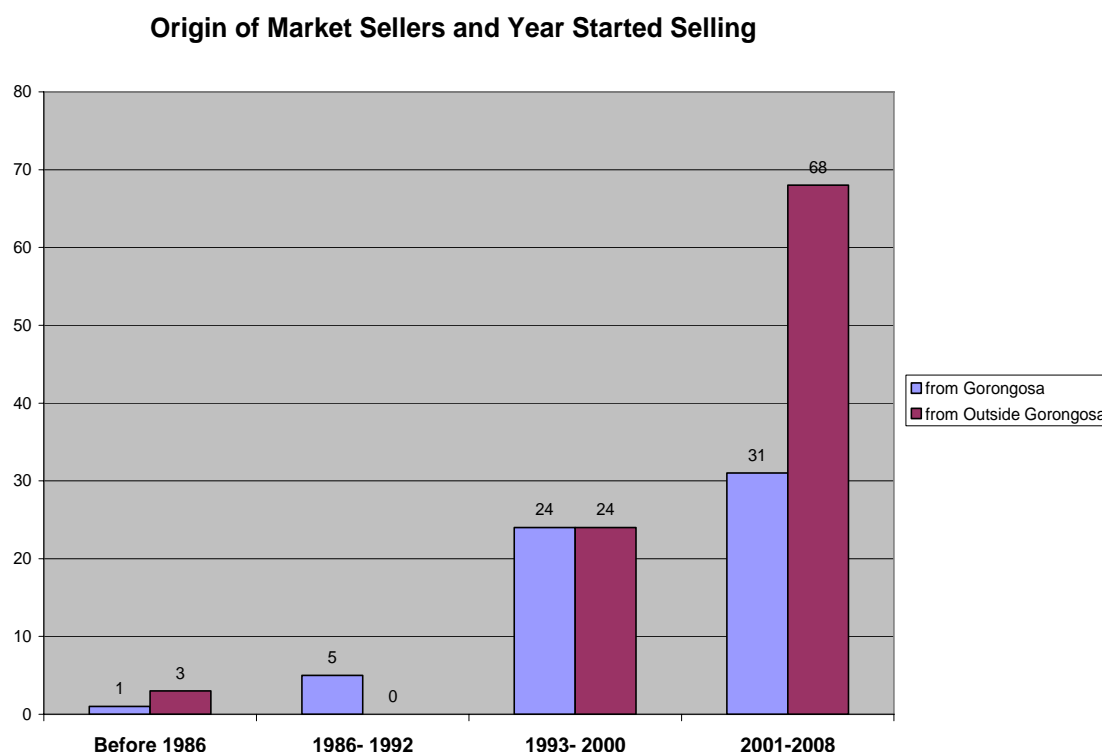


**Figure 3.4: Detail of year market vendors began selling in Gorongosa central market**

Development and aid agencies view this type of growth in a singularly positive light. This type of market expansion is precisely the kind of growth and development that large-scale infrastructural construction projects aim to promote. Such agencies also tout the steady increase in the GDP of the country as an unmistakable mark of “progress.” But, the social reality of such rapid growth is complex and upon closer examination, not always positive or progressive. An example of such a simplistic view of growth can be seen in a recent report from the World Bank claiming that, based on macro-economic indicators, such as GDP, poverty is decreasing in Mozambique. Such claims do not fit with other

evidence such as increasing rates of malnutrition across the country and increasing financial insecurity for a large portion of the population.<sup>7</sup>

To counter simplified positive claims about market growth, it is important to examine the social impacts of such dramatic economic changes. A closer look at the data from the market survey points to some striking aspects of the growth of Gorongosa's central marketplace, revealing how this growth hasn't significantly enhanced long-term residents' access to business and economic opportunity. Figure 3.5 shows the same data organized by the origin of the market vendors:



**Fig 3.5: Origin of traders at Gorongosa's central market and initial year of trade**

<sup>7</sup> See the original report (World Bank Publications, 2008), and an insightful critique of this report (Hanlon, 2007).

Here, light blue represents sellers at the market who were born inside the district and dark purple represents those originating outside the district and migrating into the area to engage in trade. This chart illustrates how those benefiting from the rapid growth in business in Gorongosa, for the most part, are not long-term residents of the area, but people from outside. Nearly seventy percent of the people who began selling at Gorongosa's central market since the end of the civil war in 1992 were born outside the district. This does not represent people with family roots in Gorongosa who are returning following war-related migration. Rather, the new vendors are arriving to reside in the area for the first time, motivated by the opportunities presented by a rapidly growing market. Meanwhile, most long term residents of Gorongosa are not earning profits in the new market but are the source of income for outsiders. Long-term residents benefit from local availability of a wider array of merchandise, but, as will be seen below most new products remain objects of desire, out of reach for most agriculturalists to buy.

Most of the current market vendors are young men who are internal migrants of Mozambique—itinerant traders who move around in search of a place where they can find a profitable niche. In larger, more prosperous towns and cities, it is harder to gain and retain a foothold in large markets sites and living costs are much higher. With Gorongosa's low cost of living (due to low prices for food and cooking fuels such as wood or charcoal), ease of transport, and infrastructural improvements (electricity for refrigeration and cell phone use, etc.). Gorongosa continues to be an attractive location for many young men to set up their trading businesses.

But, why aren't Gorongosa residents taking part in the growth of the market? There are two inter-related reasons. This type of marketplace growth, with expensive merchandise

making up a large part of the market's recent expansion, is easy for traders with experience, connections, and knowledge of the trade of such specialized goods to gain a foothold. Most residents of Gorongosa do not have the same types of social capital to draw from and therefore meet with greater obstacles to enter the new market. Further, sale of these expensive goods requires a significant amount of startup capital. New vendors must finance construction of a market stall, pay for transport to and from the city, and meet fees for hauling goods long distances. Once they set up their business, they must pay storage costs for the goods at the end of each market day. A new trader must be able to pay for all of this at once, in addition to the cost of purchasing the goods themselves. Most residents of Gorongosa are agriculturalists who do not have the access to the large amounts of funds needed for entry into market trading. The liberalization of the financial sector has made access to credit in rural areas particularly difficult. For these reasons, Gorongosa residents who do engage in trade in the market typically sell lower cost staple items that are easier to acquire initially and carry less risk as well as lower profits.

### **Electrifying desire: The arrival of public electricity to Gorongosa**

Following completion of the national highway through Gorongosa in 2002, USAID funded the construction of 70 kilometers of electric lines linking Gorongosa, for the first time, into the main grid of electric power generated at the Cahora Basa dam in Tete Province. Since the project's completion at the end of 2005, changes in the market and around town have accelerated.

In September of 2006, the newest addition to the marketplace was a small shop built from cement blocks with a zinc roof, nestled between two stands of shoe sellers. Inside the store, all four walls were lined with shelves from ceiling to floor and upon entry through the low door, a counter faced the shopper. Three televisions were lined up on the main counter, all tuned to the one and only television channel that has a signal broadcast in town. All of the shelving on the walls and most of the empty space on the floor was stacked with household consumer goods: diapers, baby bottles, baby food and formula, toilets and toilet bowl cleaners, household cleansing products, cell phones and cell phone accessories, electric fans, DVD players, VCRs, radios, flashlights, televisions, portable music devices, refrigerators, and freezers. The shop was crammed so full of colorful goods (mostly from China) that not an inch of space was wasted; not even space overhead. From a cord strung above the main counter dangled cell phone lanyards, superglue, cell phone covers and cases, packs of batteries, and memorabilia printed with the Mozambican flag. This conglomeration of hanging items added to the sense of busy disarray in the shop—a kind of shopper's chaos that dazzles the eye and produces in the consumer a desire for objects previously unimagined.



**Fig. 3.6:** This new shop has made all manner of expensive consumer goods available to residents of Gorongosa

This new store made all manner of expensive consumer goods available to residents of Gorongosa, who no longer needed to make the long journey to the provincial capital four hours away by public transport to find specialty items characteristic of an emergent middle class consumer (see Figure 3.6).

The shop placed items on display through the door and window for all to see. The shop itself was an object of desire—more costly in its design and construction than the homes of the majority of area residents. It was even designed like a house with a covered porch in front of the entry way to shelter customers from the rain or hot sun, encouraging them to stay awhile and gaze through the door or the wide, barred window at the objects inside. This porch housed a large Coca-Cola refrigerator with clear glass doors displaying chilled soft drinks. In effect this made the outside of the shop a place where people of

means displayed their access to disposable wealth: leaning on the wall, sipping from a sweating bottle of soda on a hot day. Inside, the televisions provided images of wealthy individuals in far away locations, playing a constant stream of national broadcasting, action films, music videos, and Brazilian *telenovelas*.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, most Gorongosa residents don't have access to participate in the new economy of consumer goods that this shop represented. The exclusion of most Gorongosans from participation in the growing market of consumer goods was inscribed onto the physical space of this shop. The shop owner, a middle-aged man from the provincial capital of Beira, and his workers strictly enforce a rule that makes the porch off-limits to children and other onlookers who did not have the means to buy things. This exclusion made the porch a buffer zone separating onlookers from the consumer objects that interested them, intensifying desire, and visibly marking them as observers rather than participants in the new economy. Throughout my research period in Gorongosa, whenever I passed through the market, I found crowds of children gathered outside the shop straining to catch a glimpse of the programs being shown on the TV and peering in curiously at all of the colorful, shiny items for sale. Even two and a half years after the shop's opening in early 2006, the novelty of the place had not worn off.

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<sup>8</sup> Brazilian *telenovelas* are television series similar in style to American soap operas that display the inner drama of the relationships between members of an imagined wealthy, high-society class of people. These shows are growing in popularity in Mozambique, and are aired during the day and each evening on the national television stations following the regular news programming.



**Fig. 3.7:** Most long-term residents of Gorongosa are only able to gaze at the arrival of new consumer goods without the means to participate in the new market

The arrival of electricity in Gorongosa has not only changed the face of the marketplace, but also the face of the town, the visibility of members of different social classes, and the nature of many social interactions. In addition to the new store, an array of new informal stands at the central market cater to new consumers of electronics. Prominent among these are stands devoted to selling DVDs and VCDs, targeting a small portion of the population, while enhancing the desire for such goods for all who pass by:





specialists, hospital technicians, and district's administration staff. In short, access to electricity is tied very closely to a steady flow of cash income, and has become a visible marker of a new class of consumers in Gorongosa—most of whom are recent arrivals to the district.

During the period of my research, I was surprised to see how rapidly households with electricity accumulated electronics. Once one item was acquired, the next item on a prioritized list (usually the same across many households) was targeted for savings. This priority list of household electronics usually took the following form: light bulbs, TV, VCR or DVD player, freezer, electric fan, electric kettle, and so on through less-essential household items. Indeed, the definitive results of the 2007 census for Sofala Province confirm these observations. According to these results, between the 1997 and 2007, the number of households with electricity doubled (from 6.3 to 12.6 percent), and by 2007 twelve percent owned a television. This implies that as soon as a home is connected to the electricity grid, the family purchases a television (INE 2009).

This hierarchy of consumer electronics has become a new gauge for a social hierarchy where possessing more goods corresponds roughly with a higher social position. This has resulted in a kind of unspoken competition between heads of households, generating a desire to obtain as many items in the hierarchy in as short a time as possible. Ostentatious items of display such as televisions take precedence over household items that reduce women's labor such as electric stoves or kettles (items I rarely saw in use). This demonstrates how the public display of wealth is an important aspect of new patterns of consumption. Those having none of these goods and no electricity at all do not even figure into this race for relative social positioning. They remain invisible. The vast majority of

Gorongosa residents, just as the vast majority of the population of Sofala Province, do not have the means to access electricity. The 2007 Census records that 86 percent of households do not have electricity (INE 2009). While the majority of Gorongosa residents continue to struggle to meet the food and schooling requirements of the household, members of the local elite are working to acquire a complete list of valuable luxury electronics.

In this way, the arrival of electricity to Gorongosa has increased the visible socio-economic divisions between residents based on their access to disposable cash income. It has had the impact of intensifying tensions and jealousies between neighbors in the increasingly crowded neighborhoods of the district capital. While few residents have the means to participate in this new market for electronic goods, everyone is exposed to these new patterns of consumption. Homes connected to the electric grid are visible to all: the electric company paints large customer numbers just outside the front doors of customer homes, electric meters hang on the exterior wall and electric lines link them physically to the grid. Residents unable to afford electricity suddenly find their houses lacking—unmarked, unattached, and cut off.

### **New sites of social encounter and the intensification of desire**

*Criança assim, começa abusar. Grande—abusar grande! Disse, 'Conheço Karate,' enquanto está se-estragar ... Eh! Agora—esses miudos assim, devem esforçar ir nas igrejas. Se não, vão ficar TODOS bandidos! Bandidos, oh! Até diz que é desenvolvimento. Desenvolvimento?! oh!*

Even a child like this begins to disrespect [their elders]. Disrespect grown people—important people! He will say, 'I know Karate!,' when he's just destroying himself ... Eh! Nowadays—these young boys like this, should be

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Regulo Eugénio of K'handa; July 10, 2007

strong and go to the churches. If they don't, they'll ALL turn into bandits. Bandits- oh! ... They even say that this is development. Development?! Oh!

While making the above statement, Eugénio Almeida, K'handá's *nyakwawa*, sucked his teeth with disdain after he spoke the word “*desenvolvimento*,” or “development.” He has watched in despair the rapid changes taking place in the district. Like others of his generation who had lived through the colonial period and shared the hope that swelled at independence, K'handá's *nyakwawa* associated development not with improvement or increasing order, but with its opposite: social decay. The infrastructural improvements in the district not only bring striking visible changes, but they also intensify the speed of social shifts and further fuel the loss of respect among youth for the ways of the past. Like the *nyakwawa* of K'handá, many people in the district turn to religious practices in an attempt to bring order into a world increasingly out of balance.

One of the greatest impacts of infrastructural “development” in Gorongosa has come through widespread access to globally circulating flows of popular media. Unlike other luxuries that remain confined to specific household use, exposure to new digital media on CDs, VCDs, and DVDs is not dependent on one's access to electricity in the home. The growth of informal cinemas in the district has been rapid since the completion of the electric lines in 2005. In 2004, prior to the arrival of public electricity there was only one informal movie theater in town, run on a town generator. The spread of movie theaters in the area is also linked to the desire for cash, as households connected to the electric grid search for ways to create a steady income for their household. By 2006, informal movie theaters had opened in all corners of the district capital, appearing anywhere electricity reached. These theaters have quickly become a favorite pass-time, especially for youth.

All of these new theaters share the same basic structure. A TV and DVD player are housed in a rectangular structure of mud walls (*pau a pique*)<sup>10</sup> with a low roof made of a bamboo frame and thatch. Seating in Gorongosa “single-plexes” consists of two rows of simple benches made from rough-hewn logs laid across two y-shaped uprights set into the ground. At one end of the theater is a raised section of mud floor—a raised platform on which, like an altar, a table holds a TV and DVD player. Interestingly, this generic architectural style for informal movie theaters is nearly identical, structurally, to new church buildings that are simultaneously spreading throughout the district. The only difference is that, instead of a pulpit and cross placed on the elevated platform at the front, in theaters, a TV and DVD are set up on the raised “altar.” And, rather than dancing in worship, attendees gather to dance to new music videos of rap and hip-hop artists from Mozambique, South Africa, Angola, and the US that are played between films. This coincidence of form is significant. It highlights the growing practices of social gathering and “worship” of certain forms of globally circulating discourses, images, and philosophies. In fact, many Pentecostal church leaders, just like many elders and traditional leaders, imagine themselves to be in battle with the kinds of morality and style circulating in global popular culture that youth visitors to theaters have come to “worship.” Thus, youth’s embrace of popular culture materially signifies the generation gap.

The new theater sanctuaries begin showing films early in the morning and play a lineup of films throughout the day and late into the night. The day’s lineup of films is

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<sup>10</sup> *Pau a pique* is the term for a common type of inexpensive, quick building construction that does not require the purchase of any commercial building supplies. This construction type consists of a frame of bamboo built around wooden posts which holds together a conglomeration of rocks or pieces of broken concrete or brick. This basic frame is then covered by thick, unrefined mud which is smoothed down and topped with a thin layer of fine mud plaster.

advertised on the outside of the theaters by lining up the DVD cases for each film in order of their appearance. As can be seen in Figure 3.9, the lineup of films is almost entirely comprised of *kung fu* movies from China or B-movie action films from the United States. Though almost always in a foreign language (usually English or Chinese) without Portuguese subtitles, these action films draw crowds of children and young boys. They fill the theaters and spill over to the outside, where young children gather around holes in the informal mud-structures to get a free peek at the film. Even when they can't catch a glimpse of the glowing screen inside, standing near the theater is exciting for young children, who play-act to the sounds of the film emerging from inside. Action films are particularly popular, because it is easy to follow the story and get caught up in the excitement without understanding the dialogue.



**Fig 3.9:** Informal theaters advertise the day's lineup by displaying the DVD boxes of the films in order of appearance. Films on display here include Rambo, Kung-Fu Mission, Fist of the North Star, Fist of Fury, Special Forces, and Blade.



Unlike access to private ownership of consumer electronics, these film showings are affordable to most residents, since admission costs merely 1 MTN (about 5 cents). In between film screenings, music videos play with the speakers blaring loudly, announcing to neighbors and passersby that the next film is soon to start. Adults often give children coins for admission to one or two movies and send them on their way. The accessibility of these theaters has made going to the movies a popular leisure activity for school-aged children, youth, and even adults. These theaters have become one of the new sites of consumption available to all from widely varying social classes.



**Figure 3.10** A *valimba* player in Gorongosa's district capital. This photo, taken in 2001, was the last time I saw or heard of a *valimba* providing the entertainment at a celebration in the district.

Going to theaters to watch the latest videos has rapidly replaced other sites of social activity external to the home. Just nine years ago, I would occasionally come across a

*valimba* player near the market or playing, as paid entertainment, at a *magasto*.<sup>11</sup> Now, one rarely sees a *valimba* player and entertainment for *magasto* events center around popular music from Zimbabwe broadcast on loudspeakers. In an interview with Adélia, a well-known spirit-medium, and her husband Armando, conversation turned to these recent changes and how, “things from long ago ... are being lost – no one plays *valimba* anymore ... *tiri kutoera chizungu*”<sup>12</sup>—meaning, “we are following the things of whites.”

Many others pointed to the impact of video viewing on youth’s attitudes. One older man attributed youth’s lack of respect for elders and women to these video salons:

Times are changing ... things are getting worse now. A long time ago, there was no video, there were no discos, there was just the *valimba*.<sup>13</sup> People would go there to dance and then they would go home.<sup>14</sup>

He explained that the things young people see at video salons are affecting their mentality, making them disrespectful, frustrated, and angry:

They are seeing many things there. After watching videos, youth begin to see themselves differently. They start to think: “I am losing out ... that is what the good life looks like!” With thoughts like that, now they don’t live well.<sup>15</sup>

Highlighting the divide separating youth from adults he concluded by saying, “Children of today—they aren’t like us.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> From the Portuguese “gastar” or “to spend,” “*magasto*” is the chi-Gorongosi word for an event where the population at large can come to drink traditional beer someone has brewed. The event is given the name “*magasto*” when the host or hostess has brewed the beer to make money, and so sells it by the cupful. With the exception of the practices of spirit-mediums, *magasto* events have nearly replaced other ceremonial uses for brewing beer that were common in the not-so-distant past: when beer was brewed to distribute freely to neighbors at work parties or, similarly, as an offering of thanks to spirits for their work in protecting the family and bringing wellbeing.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, Adélia and Armando; Oct 1, 2007

<sup>13</sup> *Valimba* is a traditional instrument consisting of wooden boards set over gourds that serve as resonators. In the past, the *valimba* was played at periodic festivals where entire communities would gather for singing, dancing and celebration.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Pai Shuka; June 3, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*



Ironically, the low cost of entry to the theater leads to a kind of deceptive inclusion in the new economy. As films become more and more the center of social life, the images on the TV screens held up on the “media altars” inside informal theaters lead youth to “worship” popular culture from distant places. Young Gorongosans come to desire new commodities and ways of being. Children’s play has changed, and now frequently consists of karate moves or action-movie stunts and gun chases. Older youth prefer to dress and speak in ways that emanate the “gangsta” style and fashion, and they dream of taking part in the lifestyle of excess and conspicuous consumption that is idealized in music videos. The language of young adults has changed as well. New slang, catchphrases like “time is money,” and curse words from English pepper their language.

Like the visions of salvation and paradise offered in the numerous Pentecostal churches in the district, the film screenings offer youth of Gorongosa a vision of a world without material troubles, hard field labor, or hunger. Youth have come to view foreign places as a kind of paradise. Frequently, Mozambican youth asked me for advice about immigrating to the US, exclaiming that if they could just get out of this world of misery, they could live a good life. Having only been exposed to the life and people of the United States through idealized images flowing out of Hollywood, youth I spoke to took much convincing when I tried to explain that not everyone in the US is wealthy, not everyone lives in the city, and many people live in poverty.

Adélia and Armando, like countless other Gorongosa residents, observe these connections between video images and the rapid changes in behavior and attitudes of youth in town: “People see things in films that they want to imitate ... they become more aware of their own poverty ... and they want to live well ... so they imitate the lives of others in

order to be like them.” Finally, they noted that Gorongosa youth have acquired shame about their place of origin. When outside the district, Adélia and Armando agreed, residents of Gorongosa “will hide the fact that they are from here in Gorongosa” and “deny their parents.”<sup>17</sup> Seeing their own poverty in a new way, Gorongosa youth have become ashamed of their own families. Pretending to be from elsewhere, they hope to fool others into thinking that they are people born with the means to actively participate in the global consumer economy.

### **Increasing social divisions: The market and changing demographics in town**

These feelings of shame highlight another important aspect of the recent economic and social transformations in the district. Infrastructural improvements in Gorongosa have not only changed the central market and the geography of social interactions, but they have also shifted town demographics. Just as the availability of city comforts has attracted traders and business people to Gorongosa, it has also attracted NGOs, development organizations, and foreign missionaries to establish short and long-term projects in the district.

Gorongosa residents who have enough income to acquire consumer goods tend to come from outside the district and most are recent arrivals. The majority of these people (school teachers, nurses, medical technicians, agricultural extension agents, district administration staff, police, and NGO employees) are temporary residents who consider their home base to be in neighboring districts or urban centers. This has led new class divisions in Gorongosa to be associated with origin of birth, leading many natives of

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<sup>17</sup> Interview, Adélia and Armando; Oct 1, 2007

Gorongosa to share a sense that they are inferior to those from other places. This sense of inferiority is complemented by a similar feeling of superiority and entitlement shared by members of the emerging elite. I participated in many conversations with such professionals or business people who referred to Gorongosa residents with the adjective “*bruto*,” a Portuguese term meaning “backwards” or “uneducated.” It is a term that Portuguese colonists often used to refer to their colonial subjects.

This kind of internal colonial attitude is not new, but is intensifying with the socio-economic changes in Gorongosa that are exacerbating social divisions. The idea that natives of Gorongosa district are exotic and backwards is widely shared by Mozambican public servants who reside in the district. This dynamic fuels residents’ dissatisfaction with the current governing party and kindles a hidden rage at imposition of outside authority that has roots in the colonial period. Though the actors have changed, the attitudes and sentiments of government functionaries remain the same.

An example of the neocolonial mentality of government officials surfaced in an interview I conducted with Doctora Celia, a woman from Maputo who was the district’s only medical doctor for a two year term. Dra. Celia did not want to live in Gorongosa, but served as the general physician for the district out of obligation to her medical school contract that required recent graduates to serve two years in a “hardship” position. During our interview, Dra. Celia expressed her excitement at the fast-approaching end of her service in Gorongosa, a time she considered to be a full of difficulty and suffering because of the scale of health problems, the paucity of health care provisions, and the social

alienation she felt being surrounded by *maGorongosianos*.<sup>18</sup> She felt socially superior to the residents of the district and complained about the frustrations of working as a doctor in the district where her patients often arrived at the hospital long after illnesses became too severe for her staff to treat effectively. To describe her frustrations working with Gorongosa residents, she compared them to her image of Europeans, implying at one and the same time the backwardness of Gorongosa residents and her allegiance with an imagined European class: “In Europe,” she explained, “people put their trust in the right place ... They first trust their Catholic priest, then they put their trust in their doctor. Here in Gorongosa,” Dra. Celia continued, “people trust the ‘*curandeiro*’<sup>19</sup> first and only, even in cases of malaria.”<sup>20</sup> She complained that this backward state of affairs was responsible for anemia becoming a major health problem in the district; something she claimed was due not just to the prevalence of malaria, but a condition worsened by traditional treatments.

Like many other health workers at the hospital, Dra. Celia blamed widespread health problems in the district on Gorongosa residents’ own backwardness.<sup>21</sup> She saw herself as a member of an educated and superior class, as socially distant from Gorongosa peasants as the colonial officers who preceded her. These sentiments of social superiority are not unique to Dra. Celia, but are shared by members of the growing elite. Members of this class have a sense of entitlement to their extremely visible, almost palpable relative wealth. This sense of entitlement is coupled with an attitude that Gorongosans’ poverty and illness is of their own making because of their cultural practices.

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<sup>18</sup> *MaGorongosiano* is the Portuguese-inflected term in the local language chi-Gorongosi used to refer to native residents of Gorongosa.

<sup>19</sup> A generic Portuguese term roughly equivalent to the English “witch-doctor” or the more politically correct term, “traditional healer.”

<sup>20</sup> Interview, Doctora. Celia, March 22, 2007

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 5

Access to electricity has exacerbated and calcified these sentiments. Visible social divisions invoke the mindset of Portuguese colonizers towards “*indígenas*” prior to independence. The ability of the new class of educated professionals to acquire consumer goods serves as a marker of their social position, intellectual superiority and cultural distance from the people and things of the “*mato*” or the “bush.” These visible signs and socially enacted practices create tensions between native Gorongosa residents and the new semi-permanent residential elite. This dynamic creates a strong sense of exclusion for many long-term residents of Gorongosa, fueling a potent desire for cash to gain not only more comforts in life but also symbolic membership in a more respected social group.<sup>22</sup>

I became intensely aware of such social divisions and neocolonial attitudes when I took up residence with an elite family for a period of time early in my fieldwork. For part of my two-year stay in Gorongosa, I resided at the home of a friend of mine, Chica; a young woman my age from Beira who had been living in Gorongosa since I first met her in 1998 when I was a Peace Corps volunteer. At that time, she was working as a paid staff member of the Christian NGO, Food for the Hungry International (FHI) which was carrying out agricultural extension programs. Despite her Muslim upbringing, her high level of educational achievement in private schools allowed her to attain this well-paid professional position of a Christian organization. Though she didn’t like the rural lifestyle and had a hard time establishing friendships in the district, jobs were hard to come by in her hometown. As a way to cope, Chica continued working in Gorongosa but made the 6 hour journey home each weekend. Like many other Mozambicans who come to work in

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<sup>22</sup> See Section 3.5 for a more detailed discussion of the impacts of this sort of feeling of desperation for cash.

Gorongosa, during the week she spent her free time with others from the city. These friends shared in her social world and could afford the same social activities. Indeed, for Chica and her friends, consumption was always the chosen leisure activity: whether expensive nights out at one of two local restaurant/bars or afternoons spent “*paseando*<sup>23</sup>” in the clothing market, hunting for new styles offered by one of the many used clothing traders.

When Chica heard that I was searching unsuccessfully for a secure residence with electricity to serve as my home base and office, she suggested that I stay at her house with her and her husband Manny. Chica had met Manuel, a Mozambican of Portuguese origin, in 2000, when he came to the district as a mechanical engineer working on the road construction project. They met, fell in love, and entered an informal marriage union, combining their income to buy the ruins of a colonial era Portuguese store in the former “commercial district” of the town. They rehabilitated the ruined building and opened the district’s second restaurant. After great success in the business, Chica and Manny began reconstructing a bombed out building behind their restaurant, and over time transformed it into a solid home with seven rooms and running water from a tank they installed up a hill.

Chica invited me in and showed me a nice room with two big windows. Without other options, I happily accepted her offer to let me make my office and home base with their family. When I had notes or interviews to type, reading to do or reports to write, I spent time in my room at Chica and Manny’s place. I used their electricity to charge my computer, batteries, and research equipment. The restaurant/house compound of Chica and Manny’s was guarded at all hours of the day and night by a Gorongosa native who

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<sup>23</sup> *Pasear* is a Portuguese word popularly used to mean, “to take a stroll”.

stood by the driveway, keeping watch over their home's valuables, the well-stocked restaurant and Manny's black Mitsubishi Pajero.

Over the years of living in Gorongosa, I had gradually become aware of class differences between residents of the district. But living with Manny and Chica dramatically highlighted these social divisions. I spent most of my days and nights outside Manny and Chica's place going about my research activities, such as conducting interviews or spending days at a time in endless healing sessions in the mud-walled, grass-roofed huts of spirit-mediums. Each time I returned from these activities, I was jarred by culture shock. Their home was palatial; my bed enormous and disconcertingly soft. With cement floors, patio, and walkways, my feet stayed clean, and I could wear my white shirt for a full day without it turning brown around the edges. A constant stream of popular music emanated from Manny's bar. Chica's son played with colorful plastic toys and sometimes sat at the large sturdy hardwood table to scribble on clean sheets of A4 paper with markers and crayons. Looking out from my window on days I stayed inside to do paper work, I felt I was gazing through the looking glass to another dimension. Just yards from my window, lay a different world.

It was not just the material differences of life at Manny and Chica's that made for this strong experience of disjuncture. It was the social world they inhabited. Their customers at the restaurant were also their personal friends. Most were from the port city Beira. They were nurses, medical technicians, Frelimo party officials; school teachers; judges; police officers and even the district administrator himself. Others were South African and Zimbabwean road construction engineers. Manny and Chica greeted their patrons as guests, and often sat together with them for full evenings of revelry. Living in

the compound afforded me many opportunities to join in conversation with these Gorongosa elite. Much conversation was from a socially superior perspective. These professionals and government functionaries often shared vignettes that cast long-term Gorongosa residents in a degrading light. Before I lived with Manny and Chica, I wasn't fully aware of the depth of the social divide I straddled.

Living at Manny and Chica's for a period of time made social divisions explicit and impossible to ignore. Soon after I moved into their house, the constant stream of visitors I had enjoyed at previous residences around the district slowed and then came to a complete stop. My closest friends continued to visit me there but only for a short time. When they did visit, they were visibly uncomfortable and tense when they stood inside the compound. Our conversations always seemed stiff and uneasy, and my guests always refused my invitations to join me inside Manny's house. They didn't even feel comfortable taking up a chair with me in the yard. After several hostile and suspicious encounters with Manny and the guard, even my closest friends stopped visiting, and would call me to come to their homes instead.

Social divides in Gorongosa are so powerful that geographical boundaries come to govern social interactions. Like the children excluded from entry to the new shop at the market, my friends knew that they were not members of a class that was welcome at Manny and Chica's place. In this social context, it is easy to identify a person's class membership by "reading" a complex combination of subtle physical cues: posture, mannerisms, language use, clothing, shoes, hair style, jewelry, height, skin color, and even the very form and shape of the body. Even before they asked to see me, my visitors were identified as unwelcome outsiders. Manny and Chica's restaurant was the home and social center of



Gorongosa's elite: even with my explicit invitations, nothing could make my friends, research assistants and former students feel at ease there. As the economy changes and the district becomes home to more wealthy individuals, the material and social chasm dividing rich and poor becomes ever deeper.

### **Alcohol consumption, economics, and social geographies**

The formal bars in town like Manny and Chica's place sell commercial beer and soft drinks that are too expensive for most long-term Gorongosa residents. In direct distinction to such bars, parallel spaces of socializing and alcohol consumption have been appearing around the district. As part of an economic strategy, many women are making and selling *nipa* and *kabanga* from their homes with such regularity that they have taken on the feeling of informal establishments, only without all the trappings of the new kiosks and bars in the center of town.<sup>24</sup>

Women's home-based alcohol production is creating a parallel social economy of liquor consumption, complete with its own style. Instead of showcasing new music videos from southern Africa and the United States, these home-brew bars cater to local tastes. Most "home bar" owners hire a local "DJ" to play music on the day that beer is sold. This DJ brings his own equipment which usually consists of a megaphone-style loudspeaker raised to the top of a large bamboo pole and connected to a fully charged car battery for power. From high atop its bamboo pole, the megaphone blasts popular music from

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<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 7 for further discussion of women's production of alcohol.

Zimbabwe, usually the *chimurenga* style—including such popular artists as Thomas Mapfumo and John Chibadura.



**Figure 3.11:** Two men on Gorongosa Mountain dance at a *magasto*—an event where a woman sells food, homemade *kabanga* and sometimes also *nipa* from her home

The music of these home-based bars reveals a layer of symbolic meaning associated with alcohol consumption. Whereas patrons of a bar/restaurant like Chica and Manny's place are of an elite class who align themselves with the ruling party, Frelimo, those who drink at home-bars tend to align themselves with the opposition party, Renamo. The *chimurenga* music that plays at these parallel sites of alcohol consumption contains political

messages of opposition to Mugabe's government, carefully cloaked in proverbial language. These anti-government undertones resonate with the politics of Mozambique and especially with the political stance of the peasant farmers in Gorongosa. These long-term residents of Gorongosa liken their struggle to elect Renamo leaders to Zimbabwean's struggle to depose Mugabe, a long-time ally of Mozambique's ruling party, Frelimo.

Though home-based bars are an attraction to many in the district, to others, they are a source of irritation. They are a nuisance to neighbors living in close proximity who feel annoyed and invaded by the noise and rowdy behavior. Church-going residents are especially perturbed by the proliferation of these sites because they are places where "sinful" behavior flourishes. Many women also decry the impact of alcohol consumption on their families. Alcoholism is becoming a much more pervasive problem in the district, and is frequently tied to domestic conflict and the loss of precious financial resources that could be better spent for domestic support. The sale of alcoholic beverages has almost completely replaced ceremonial consumption of alcohol in the district capital. Spirit-mediums work to restore the ritual importance of alcohol in their annual feasts to honor their spirits. Thus, while on the one hand, informal bars are places where the frustrations of the current political-economic context are expressed, they also become enmeshed in moral battles over how to best manage the hardships of life.

### **Economic exclusion: the search for cash on the margins**

In a group interview, I sat with six women in the district capital to discuss recent changes in Gorongosa. They were all part of a close network of new spirit-mediums who

had been initiated within the past five years. They conversed about the most troubling recent social changes: youth getting married too early; youth disrespecting member of older generations; and the current rash of attacks from spirits leading to divorce, illness, and death. One topic that arose repeatedly when discussion turned to the source of current troubles was “money.” They punctuated the conversation with the phrase: *dinyero yapinda maningi*<sup>25</sup> Literally, this means, “Money has entered a lot.” The Portuguese term for “money,” “*dinhero*” has entered the dialect of chi-Gorongosi, emphasizing how deeply social changes associated with the growing influence of money has impacted people’s lives.

Here, the “money” that is penetrating the district is much more than bills and coins. The term takes on far-reaching symbolic meaning, encompassing changes in social life that have accompanied recent economic changes. In saying “*dinyero yapinda maningi*,” these women were referring to a whole new social complex tied to the centrality of the market economy in the district, the increasing importance of possession of commodities as an aspect of social life and the creation of new social personae who respect youth and wealth over age and wisdom. For peasant families in Gorongosa, the changing social dynamics and heightened sense of exclusion that accompanies recent economic changes leads to preoccupation with a search for cash that sometimes borders on desperation.

### *Agriculture*

The search for cash has a profound impact on agricultural practices in the region. Selling maize has become like a “bank” for peasants in Gorongosa. Farmers sell portions of grain when a pressing need or desire for cash arises. With the improvement in the roads in

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<sup>25</sup> Group interview at Sereniya Vasco Suliani’s home; October 25, 2007

Gorongosa, the number of buyers of maize in the district has been increasing rapidly.

Some buyers working for large city-based traders camp out in Gorongosa at crossroads and areas of activity throughout the harvest season. Others travel to centers of maize production to pick up the produce and transport it to urban centers. Still others are private traders, including Gorongosa residents with access to initial startup capital. All buyers measure maize by the quart or the gallon in metal cans and pay the producer in cash or, more profitably, in trade for piles of dried fish bought in bulk at the coast.



**Fig. 3.12: Maize buyers from Quelimane camp out at a crossroads on the slopes of Mt. Gorongosa to buy maize at low cost from nearby residents**

In 2007, a maize flour factory opened in the nearby city of Chimoio, and focused much of its sourcing on the district of Gorongosa, known regionally as the “bread basket” of Sofala province. This company uses tractor trailer trucks to pick up huge loads of maize



to process into mealie-meal, the raw material for the main staple food in Mozambique, and much of southern Africa. These maize traders appeared in abundance due to the improvement in Gorongosa's roads and the great profits to be had. When the cost of agricultural products in the cities soars, it remains low in rural areas.



**Fig. 3.13:** Sacks of maize purchased from peasant farmers in Gorongosa are awaiting shipment to nearby urban centers. This profitable venture is growing in scale and intensity in the district especially since 2007 and the inauguration of a maize flour plant in the nearby city of Chimoio [the tractor trailer in the background is picking up maize for the Chimoio mealie-meal plant].

With increased demand for maize, combined with a greater desire for cash to buy available consumer goods, many farmers in Gorongosa have been planting more numerous and larger fields of maize, hoping to increase their income. In this context, maize has surpassed sorghum as the cereal with the largest production in the district (Mamudo 2003: 21). Because of its high resale value in relation to sorghum, maize production in Gorongosa

is normally destined for commercialization, whereas sorghum is reserved for household consumption.

This situation has led to gendered shifts in agricultural production. Whereas, on Gorongosa Mountain where maize flourishes on the fertile slopes, maize production is not gendered, in settlements surrounding the district capital, maize has become a cash crop that is the preserve of men. This is because the fields surrounding the district capital are quickly losing productivity because with concentrated settlement, crop rotation is not viable. With increasing pressure to create higher yields, fields close to settlements are kept active year after year. Around the district capital, women and children tend most of the tired fields close to home, growing drought and disease resistant sorghum for household consumption. Motivated by the growing desire for cash, many male farmers from town walk for hours to open fields in the forests to the west of town, where soil is fertile and maize grows abundantly for the first few years after planting. Opening forest land for cultivation is grueling labor, and, combined with the travel to and from the fields and the labor of carrying the produce from fields at harvest time, such efforts to “grow cash” are exhausting and hard to sustain.

On top of this physical burden, peasant farmers’ access to cash is continually limited by the nature of the global economy. From year to year, the average price of maize has been increasing steadily, but these prices do not keep pace with rapid inflation in the prices of other consumer goods on the national and international level. Despite increasingly laborious efforts, small scale farmers are continually losing access to the local market for consumer goods. For families dependent on agriculture, gaining a foothold in the cash economy is nearly impossible.

The current situation for small scale farmers in Gorongosa is not unlike what peasants faced in colonial times, but in this context, forced labor is not imposed with coercion and hut taxes, but is created by the economic climate which not only contributes to pressures to obtain cash but also limits peasants' access to crucial inputs needed increase or at least maintain production.

Following independence in 1975 and into the early 1980s, the socialist government provided peasant farmers with credit in terms of money and species to support agriculture (Mamudo 2003: 4). Beginning in the mid-80's, neoliberal economic reforms in Mozambique put a definitive end to government programs to support small scale rural farmers. This made it difficult for peasant farmers to regain a foothold in agricultural production in the postwar period. The 16 year civil war proved disastrous to agricultural production as refugees fled or were forcibly removed to cities or Frelimo village protectorates. The nature of the civil conflict in rural areas led to the wholesale slaughter of huge quantities of livestock and to destruction of fields and harvests leaving no food for seed or for consumption.

A decade after the war, peasants' access to inputs had not improved. A study of peasant farming in Gorongosa conducted from 2000-2003, found that no respondents use pesticides on their fields and only 5.5 percent used fertilizer (Mamudo 2003: 40). Other inputs such as manure, plows, cattle or tractors for farmers in Gorongosa are also largely non-existent (Mamudo 2003: 41-43). The liberalization of the financial sector has resulted in access to credit becoming difficult, especially for peasant farmers in rural areas who have no access to collateral, since land is not counted. The changes that come with financial liberalization under the Structural Adjustment Program have resulted in small-scale peasant



farmers' inability to accumulate financial resources to improve their agricultural production. In this situation, peasant farmers cannot modernize traditional agriculture, and in Gorongosa, "output per hectare of arable land, is decreasing year by year" (Mamudo 2003: 46).

Where economic liberalization hampers peasants' ability to make a viable living through farming, private companies have come to stand in the position of colonial administrators in order to find labor for production of cash crops. A mere 24.8 percent of peasant farmers in Gorongosa have ever received credit for their activities and 75 percent of credit received was from agri-business companies such as V&M for sesame, Dimon Tobacco for tobacco farming, CAN for cotton, and Sunsmile for pepper (Mamudo 2003: 43). These projects support small-scale production of cash crops for export, take place on a short term basis, and have been met with widespread dissatisfaction. Members of every farming household I came in contact with that had participated in one of these targeted cash cropping schemes were very dissatisfied at the high cost of seeds, tools, and inputs the company provided that had to be repaid after the first harvest. With a high start-up cost and unfair price-setting for the produce, most farmers found themselves in debt and unsatisfied at the end of the first season. For this reason, peasant participation in these kinds of credit schemes in Gorongosa is limited and continuation into and beyond the second season is quite rare.

With no substantial access to inputs to increase production of existing fields, peasant farmers in Gorongosa find themselves in a cash-producing quicksand. Market prices for cereals do not keep pace with inflation in prices for imported consumer goods. Increasing pressure on available land use, especially in more densely populated areas,

prevents the traditional practice of crop rotation. With no fertilizer, the only options peasants have to meet their growing need and desire for cash is to open larger fields, to expand into more fertile forest land or to alter the type and ratio of crops grown.

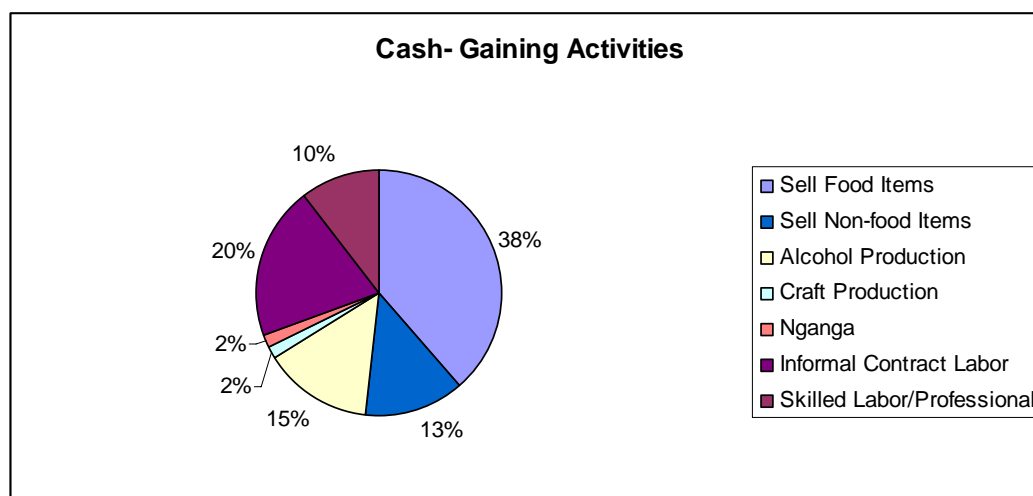
As was the case since colonial times, Gorongosa continues to be a district that produces raw material primarily for exportation—whether for the international or the national market. Though the actors have changed, the relations remain much the same: great profits are made from trade in agriculture, but they remain in the hands of outsiders. In this context, Gorongosa peasants quickly adapt, searching for new places and new crops to cultivate in order to manage the increasing demands of the cash economy.

#### *Other economic pursuits*

In a context where making a living or simply getting by, is increasingly difficult through agricultural work, men and women have been pursuing additional avenues to gain cash. As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 7, the possibilities for earning cash are largely shaped by prevalent gendered divisions in economic activity. To summarize, men are expected to undertake an outward and ranging search for the material and financial resources necessary to support their families while women are expected to pursue activities that are tied in some way to the domestic sphere. While there are many exceptions to these general social norms, particularly when high levels of education or material wealth open far-reaching avenues for women's economic participation, these gendered divisions of labor are particularly prevalent among peasants of Gorongosa.

The informal economy provides a wide range of opportunities for people to search for cash when employment is scarce and agricultural success is limited. In the survey of

over 300 households I conducted in 2006,<sup>26</sup> I was able to gather a general picture of the wide-ranging and innovative activities that people in Gorongosa undertake to manage difficult times.



**Figure 3.14: Pie chart revealing the percentage of households where one or more members is engaged in a cash-gaining activity other than agricultural production.**

The pie chart in Figure 3.14 reveals the range and variety of activities people pursue to earn additional cash income to support their families. By far the most prevalent is to sell food items, an extension of agricultural production. The next most prevalent form of cash-gaining activities is informal contract labor. Known in Gorongosa as *muterikita*, informal contract labor encompasses a wide range of activities performed by one person for another in need of assistance. *Muterikita* is based on informal verbal agreements about the amount of work to be performed for a predetermined price. Women often perform tasks such as preparing fields for planting, weeding, harvesting or pounding grain. Men are hired to assist with agricultural activities or to build structures, dig latrines, harvest and carry bamboo or

<sup>26</sup> See Introduction for a description of the survey and methods.

other construction materials long distances. Men also travel long distances to search out people in other areas who are looking to hire a short-term laborer.

Interestingly, these informal contracts have come to almost replace work parties known as *ndomba*. To organize *ndomba*, a person in need of assistance with a laborious task prepares food and beer and invites neighbors and family to come on a predetermined day. In return for a day of labor, work party participants are rewarded with food, drink, and socializing and the knowledge that, in their time of need, they can also receive similar assistance.

*Ndomba* work parties are still taking place outside the district capital. On Gorongosa Mountain, I participated in one woman's *ndomba* to assist with her harvest. With eight to ten people continuously carrying sacks of corn from her field to her granary, we completed what would have been days of labor for one person in a single morning. A few days later, a pastor of a nearby Pentecostal church organized another work party, providing *maben*—a non-alcoholic version of the brew typically offered to work party participants. However, in the district capital, where the need for cash is more acute, people are less willing to work without pay. As these changes illustrate, the changing economic context is having significant impacts on social relationships.

In addition to *muterekita*, men engage in a wide range of activities to earn cash. In addition to trading at the market or setting up a stand of goods outside the town center, some men cover large areas on foot selling items of clothing or other goods to people directly in their homes. Other men make and transport charcoal, fire bricks, or set up bakeries. Others fish in the river, or hunt in the bush. Some weave baskets and mats, or

build doors or chairs. Still others rent out their equipment, like solar panels to charge batteries or megaphones and radio systems to DJ at beer parties.

Finally, many men engage in periodic or long term labor migration. When economic possibilities in Gorongosa are too limited to earn a viable living, many men seek work in other places for periods of time. They wander large distances, following contacts to engage in trade, moving goods from one place to sell them at a profit in another place. In Chapter 6, I discuss men's mobility in the search for income and the impacts this has had on marriage.

## **Conclusion**

The scale of changes in Gorongosa's local economy has led to dramatic social shifts in recent years. Gorongosa natives feel a sense of exclusion as they watch growing numbers of outsiders enjoy the benefits of the new consumer economy. Disposable income to attain luxury items has become the primary barrier to membership in the local elite. By extension, poverty and material deprivation are seen as a sign of social inferiority and cultural backwardness. Thus, the new sense of urgency and drive to earn cash has become not only a matter of survival in tough economic times, but also a matter of pride as people seek to raise their social standing.

The growing need and desire for cash combined with the increasing difficulty of attaining it leads to a potent sense of insecurity. While life in colonial times was not easy, most people who remember those days recall them favorably in relation to the diffused oppression of the current economic climate. They generally remember the late colonial period as a time when, through hard work, it was possible for everyone to make a

comfortable living. Now, many people feel that past difficulties of economic constraint have turned to impossibilities. This contributes to a sense that the world is dangerous and unstable. This widely shared sense of insecurity drives increasing numbers of people to search for stability, protection, and resolution of their difficulties.

Chapter 4 expands on this chapter's description of the pressures people face in the current economic context. This chapter explores the ways in which changing economic pressures are impacting the practices of spirit-mediums and Pentecostal church groups. The chapter describes how the new economy fosters a kind of selfish individualism, as some people are crossing moral boundaries in a desire to gain a foothold among the local elite. The new forms of spirit-mediumship are tied explicitly to economic interests. At the same time, church groups attempt to redefine material accumulation in morally sanctioned ways.

## Chapter 4

### The Economy of Spirits and the Moral Politics of Money

#### Introduction

As the cash economy has come to dominate economic organization in postcolonial Mozambique, defining both the possibilities and the limits to making a living, money has become a central source of anxieties and widely circulating moral discourses. Economic insecurity has contributed to a potent sense of fear. There is constant worry over how to find enough cash to buy food, clothing, soap, oil, salt—about how to acquire enough cash to meet a bride’s family’s demands for *lobolo* (bride wealth). People worry about how to pay for school fees and school clothes, pens, and notebooks. As around southern Africa, the increasing social differentiation and economic strain that has characterized recent changes in Gorongosa has been accompanied by growing speculations that some people use occult forces to gain success.

In a context of intense social suffering like those most Gorongosans face, relationships of trust become increasingly rare and uncertain. People still rely on family members, neighbors, and others in their social networks for support, but there is a sense that these relationships must be navigated with great caution. Misfortune can come at any moment, from any side, and it is often accompanied by suspicions and accusations of ill will on the part of others. In this context of great uncertainty, what many scholars have termed “witchcraft” or “sorcery” is widely considered to be on the rise. Anxiety about “witchcraft” and “sorcery” give expression to the instability of life, what Ashforth has described as “spiritual insecurity” (2005).

In this chapter, I discuss spiritual insecurity from the perspective of changing human-spirit relationships. In Gorongosa, much of what scholars would categorize as “witchcraft” involves *mpfukwa* and *gamba* spirits as agents. Some who are suffering with these particular spirits send them purposively to neighbors or family members to free themselves of their influence. On other occasions, people discover they are suffering inadvertently from spirits that have been cast out by other family members. In other cases, women are accused of being “carriers” of malignant spirits that bring disruption to their husband’s house. Those known as *feiticeiras* or “witches” have internal, inherent qualities that enable them to manipulate such invisible forces intentionally, to satisfy their own desires. In general, an increase in suffering leads people to feel that their problems are out of control. Church participation offers a refuge of protection and a “spiritual army” of fellow members to intervene. Spirit-mediumship offers a solution through which malignant forces are captured and turned into power and protection.

In this chapter, I describe how the constellation of economic and social pressures that characterize life in Gorongosa has become entangled with religious and spiritual healing practices. These practices have become a subject of popular scrutiny. The civil war has ended, but a new type of war is being waged. The spiritual forces that many people turned to for protection from the dangers of the civil war period are being used for new purposes. People are seeking the assistance of spirits to help them gain and maintain a kind of success that seems impossible by ordinary means. Others seek God’s intervention to bring stability and balance. Pentecostalists work to gain success and wealth in divinely ordained ways. Through these processes, moral battles are being waged, questioning the means people are willing to use to attain success. In these battles, the success of a few is tied directly to the



deprivation of many. The search for personal gain and success beyond ordinary human capacity is tied to dark and dangerous dealings that lead a person to place material concerns over the value of human life.

### **Human-Spirit Relationships and Changing Livelihoods**

It is important to understand how human-spirit relationships have long been a prominent means through which economic action is organized. Beyond simple oversight or the provision of generalized good fortune or prosperity, spirits play active and specific roles in people's lives. Like people, spirits have trades and dedicate themselves to specialized activities. They confer talents on humans. As the economic context in Gorongosa changes, altering the limits and possibilities for livelihoods, people's relationships with spirits also change in direct correspondence. The following story will serve to illustrate:

#### *Opening*

One September day in 2007, I travelled with Adélia to Inchope, a settlement along the east-west corridor connecting Beira to the border with Zimbabwe. She had been called there to officiate *kusosera*—the process of singing to invoke a spirit to possess a person and speak its demands. The events that took place transferred a spirit from Sr. Madola, a man aged about 60, to his grown daughter, Maria. It was an *n'pfukwa* spirit of a man who had been killed by Sr. Madola's grandfather and had been incorporated into their family many years ago. The link to the spirit had first been established with Sr. Madola as its human host. At that time, the spirit chose to provide for his family through hunting.

Through the spirit's influence, Sr. Madola came to be renowned in Gorongosa as a powerful hunter. The spirit accompanied him on hunts, leading him to encounter game and guiding the bullets from his rifle to make easy kills. In return, Sr. Madola made offerings of gratitude to the spirit from each of the animals he killed and made annual showings of respect and thanksgiving. As long as Sr. Madola maintained an active hunting career and regularly showed due respect, the spirit remained content and showered his family with good things: protection and prosperity.

In recent years, however, the spirit had become discontented. In 2005, an American philanthropist arrived to start a \$30 million project to rehabilitate Gorongosa National Park. With the sudden influx of funds, park management hired a large corps of new rangers. The buffer zone surrounding the park was expanded and heavily patrolled. Areas where nearby residents had previously hunted were suddenly off-limits. On two occasions in 2006, Sr. Madola had been apprehended by park rangers, detained, and fined—his rifles confiscated. He had tried hunting outside of the patrolled areas, but there was no game to be found. In the end he was forced to abandon hunting.

Meanwhile, suffering had been accumulating in Sr. Madola's lineage. He had recently lost his wife to illness and his brother had lost four of ten children—all of whom died suddenly as adults already married with children. Sr. Madola's eldest son had suffered years of financial disappointments. Despite active trading, he had never been able to accumulate money significant enough to change his basic condition of poverty. Like his son, Sr. Madola had also been struggling to make ends meet—a difficult task in the arid lands surrounding his homestead. He had tried making money by firing bricks or making charcoal in a home-made furnace—both extremely arduous tasks that never provided much

income. Besides, he was growing older and could no longer sustain such grueling labor.

María had lost an infant to illness which led to conflicts with her husband and his family.

These troubles were just a sampling of the suffering of members of Sr. Madola's family.

Noting the unusual nature of their collected misfortunes, Sr. Madola surmised that his hunting spirit, dissatisfied without productive work, might be at fault: "The spirit is now angry that I have stopped hunting ... he has been killing people in the family instead of killing animals."<sup>1</sup> The situation called for action. Sr. Madola called all of his children—dispersed around the central region of Mozambique—to return to his home in Inchope so they could manage the situation with the spirit together. It was vital that they all be present since the spirit could have a grievance with or ask for something from any one of them. Sr. Madola saved for months to bring Adélia to oversee and guide the *kusosera* process and to accommodate all the family members who would stay with them for several days.

Finally the day arrived. Everyone was present and things were going as planned. In the all-night *kusosera* session, they managed to pull out the spirit to speak to them, and learned that he wanted to be transferred to María. Since the spirit was no longer able to support the family through hunting activities, he had grown steadily dissatisfied over the years. In his anger he had caused Maria's marital problems to indicate his desire that she become the spirit's wife. Residing with Maria presented a fresh opportunity for the spirit to satisfy his desire to work to support Sr. Madola's family. Through Maria, he could earn money through healing activities. As Marcelino, one of Sr. Madola's sons explained: they would give María to the spirit as a wife, so that it could still support the family by providing

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Sr. Madola, Inchope; September 14, 2007.

domestic meat: “... chicken, goats ... this kind of meat ... since now there is no wild game to be found.”<sup>2</sup>

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Sr. Madola’s *mpfukwa* spirit who brought him regional fame and prosperity as an extraordinary hunter provides an example of how spiritual connections can bring people abilities that supersede normal human capacities. This case also reveals how relationships with spirits shape livelihoods. Like Sr. Madola’s family, many people in Gorongosa are managing or creating relationships with spirits to accommodate the changing economic landscape. Just as many living men and women, spirits are feeling frustration at their inability to work in productive ways to provide for their families. This discontent may lead them to lash out—bringing death and misfortune to the family they once served.

### **Spirits and Livelihoods: *Shave* and the conferring of talents**

Historically deep practices have allowed for the creation of important ties to spirits across changing contexts. For instance, one elder in Gorongosa explained that in the past, Muslim traders (*muenhe*) in the region sought beeswax, which they traded for cloth—a highly valued good. In those times, beekeeping was a lucrative economic activity. Commenting on this period, he told me, “whoever knew how to produce honey was rich. *Shave* spirits guided them in their beekeeping activities.”<sup>3</sup> These guiding spirits helped people succeed by leading them to place beehives in productive places—helping them find the best trees and providing talents for harvesting. In hunting, beekeeping, shepherding, and other pursuits,

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Marcelino, Inchope; September 15, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Celestino Sacaune Canda; October 25, 2007.

spirits provided their human counterparts with enhanced skills and abilities for their particular trade—intuition, superior strength, endurance, etc.

As seen in the comment above, Gorongosans often refer to such spirits as “*shave*.” *Shave* provide talents and skills in a particular trade. Like *npfukwa*,<sup>4</sup> *shave* are alien spirits that seek connections to a host. Commenting on *shave* in Shona society in eastern Zimbabwe, Bourdillon noted that “the first sign that someone is to become a host to [*shave*] spirits is some adversity followed by divination that the spirit wants the patient as its host” (1987: 243). Like *npfukwa*, *shave* communicate their desires through affliction. However, unlike *npfukwa*, *shave* do not seek payment for a debt, but they desire to work and to convey skills and abilities to their host. In Gorongosa, *shave* do not emerge through possession to heal others.<sup>5</sup> Rather, they work at a specific trade through their hosts. As Sr. Madola’s case reveals, spirits of various “types” can assist with economic activities according to their preferences.

Human-spirit relationships are closely tied to economic activity. Therefore, changes in these relationships are rooted in changes in the context in which people seek to make a living. Whatever type of economic activity is viable at any given time, human-spirit relationships are ordered in such a way as to assist with success and prosperity. Current changes in human-spirit relationships in Gorongosa have followed this pattern.

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 2 for further discussion of *npfukwa* spirits.

<sup>5</sup> The phenomenon of *shave* as described in the literature on Shona society (e.g. Bourdillon 1987, Gelfand 1977) incorporates a range of spirits with specific personalities that emerge through possession. His description is most aligned to the phenomenon of *madzvoka* spirits in Gorongosa (see Chapter 2). In Gorongosa, a distinction is made between *madzvoka*, which possess their host to assist with healing and related activities, and *shave* which confer talents, but do not regularly emerge through possession.

Since the end of the civil war, *gamba* spirits that served civilians and soldiers by protecting them from the dangers of war<sup>6</sup> have taken up other types of work to help people navigate the new dangers that characterize life in postwar Mozambique. Like Sr. Madola's hunting spirit, when their primary task no longer holds purpose, most spirits do not relinquish their ties to their human hosts or simply step to the side foregoing any productive involvement in their hosts' lives. Rather, they search for new ways to provide assistance. Like ties of blood kinship, humans' connections to *gamba* spirits are enduring. Through these logics of permanence, *gamba* spirits, recognized as a "new" phenomenon during the war, have retained a prominent position in Gorongosa. At the same time, many more people are establishing ties to *gamba* spirits for the first time to assist with the challenges of the new economic climate.

### **Spiritual marketplace: *gamba* spirits and desire**

Recently, *gamba* spirits have become the centerpiece in a new spiritual marketplace. In Gorongosa, people have begun creating ties to these spirits to assist with the pursuit of material wealth. *Gamba* spirits can be used to draw customers and to bring success in trade and informal businesses. They may work to oversee the smooth operation of grinding mills—preventing frequent breakdowns in the machinery. While *gamba* resemble *shave* in that they serve their hosts by assisting with economic activities, the way in which relationships with *gamba* are created and maintained is markedly different from *shave*. Remarking on the growing prevalence of *gamba* spirits in Gorongosa, one man told me: "*Shave* spirits were not bought the way spirits are today."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Celestino Sacaune Canda; October 25, 2007.

*Gamba* acquisition has come to be explicitly associated with economic pursuits in times of extreme constraint. For instance, the president of AMETIM<sup>8</sup> told me:

There are many *gamba* now because there is no employment at all ... you know how it is; there is nothing to do here to earn money. So, people are going to seek *gamba* to have a job and to have some money.<sup>9</sup>

Here, the connection between *gamba* spirit acquisition and the search for a viable livelihood is clear. However, popular commentary associates *gamba* acquisition not with a desire to make an honest living but to a search for material wealth. People are not acquiring *gamba* simply to make ends meet but to ascend to the ranks of the local elite—something that seems impossible without special assistance.

One young man's comments reveal this aspect of *gamba* acquisition: "Now there are many more [*gamba* spirits] because people *kuda kupfumi* (want to become wealthy)." He added that "people seek *gamba* to *ter vida*."<sup>10</sup> The phrase "ter vida" literally means "to have life." In local usage, this means to have a materially rich life. "Ter vida" is frequently used to refer to the lives of members of the elite who enjoy many luxuries—cars, TVs, houses, rich foods—without having to perform hard labor to acquire them. This commentary demonstrates that the growing phenomenon of *gamba* spirit acquisition has come to be closely associated to the selfish pursuit of material gain.

The relationships people create to *gamba* spirits are of a sinister nature—distinctively different than the relationships people create with talent-bringing *shave*. Buying (rather than receiving) the assistance of spirits is considered to be a nefarious and dangerous activity. This understanding associates the search for personal gain and success beyond ordinary

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<sup>8</sup> AMETIM is the newest traditional healers' association in Mozambique, established in 2006 by a spirit-medium from Dondo, in Sofala Province.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Sr. Bola; April 25, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Felizardo; April 7, 2008.

human capacity to dark and dangerous dealings that in the end classify a seeker of such spirits as anti-social—someone who places personal material concerns over the value of human life. In this way, the new economy of buying *gamba* spirits highlights the growing pressures of the current economic context. The strong desire for material wealth which seems out of reach pushes some people to forego a sense of caution when dealing with dangerous forces.

### **Creating ties to *gamba* spirits**

*Gamba* acquisition is highly gendered. While men and women both are able to establish relationships with *gamba* spirits, as described in Chapter 2, it is primarily men who “buy” *gamba* spirits to assist in their pursuits. Yet it is women who receive them. Typically, women inherit *gamba* spirits from male relations in response to the spirit’s desire. The primary difference between men’s and women’s modes of acquisition is one of agency which also results in different moral evaluations of the practice. When men seek a spirit’s work, they establish a relationship of continual indebtedness to the spirit, for which they must pay—usually by offering sacrifices of young children, usually their own kin. When women receive spirits who seek them as hosts, no debt is incurred and the spirit can be a positive force in her family’s life. As will be seen below, this gendered difference of *gamba* acquisition is significant on a number of levels.

First, it is important to understand the nature of the bonds that are established through men’s pursuit of *gamba*. Men can create either temporary or permanent bonds to *gamba*. These relationships are established and sustained through their performance of explicitly anti-social activities. When seeking permanent bonds, men can use their influence



for help with a business pursuit, or they can work as *n'gangas*, mediating for the spirit so as to assist others.

### **Spiritual enslavement: establishing permanent ties to *gamba* spirits**

While it is theoretically possible to seek ties with any sort of spirit, it is commonly understood that men buy *gamba* spirits since they are known for their superior strength and power.<sup>11</sup> *Gamba* spirits are said to be more effective and efficient in the tasks they are assigned. Choosing to create a permanent bond with a *gamba* spirit is an enduring arrangement.<sup>12</sup> Similar to “selling your soul to the devil” in the Western cultural imagination, creating ties to *gamba* spirits establishes a binding “contract” that promises success in a given pursuit, but at a very high price. Under this agreement, the spirit performs work for its host in exchange for annual payments. Most people agree that, as payment, *gamba* cause the death of one member of the host’s lineage group each year, usually an infant.

I talked at length to three male mediums for *gamba* spirits who described how they create ties between humans and *gamba* spirits. These male *n'gangas* have each gained a reputation for performing treatments for clients who, as they characterized it, have enough *coragem* (courage) to go through the process.<sup>13</sup> Each of their accounts was quite similar and matched popular understandings of the process of *gamba* acquisition.<sup>14</sup> One *gamba* spirit-medium explained the process he follows when someone comes to him seeking to buy a

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Sr. Bola, President of AMETIM; August 15, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> “*Depende do coragem de cada um.*” “It depends on each person’s courage.” This statement indicates how *gamba* spirit acquisition is, from the outset, understood to be a dangerous and risky enterprise. Though such practices will afford a person great material success, this is understood to come at a great price. Interview with Mario, Secretary of AMETRAMO; June 2, 2007. (Because of the hidden nature of *gamba* spirit treatments, a pseudonym protects his identity).

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 2.

*gamba* spirit. He accompanies the client to a cemetery: “we go there at night, find a grave ... then we will dig and find a coffin, and then open it to take out a person’s bones.”<sup>15</sup>

He then described the process whereby the exhumed bones can lead to spirit possession:

If I take the bones of this person ... grate them and put them [in porridge], after eating, then do *kusosera* [sing to induce spirit possession] this person [the person whose bone powder has been consumed] will come out in his [the patient’s] body.<sup>16</sup>

As this comment reveals, what has changed since the civil war period is that *gamba* possession has been generalized. During the civil war, it is said that *n’ganga*s harvested the bones of fallen Zimbabwean soldiers to offer such treatments. Now, according to this and other practitioners’ descriptions, the bones of any person, of any sex or origin can be used to create these human/spirit ties.

Another aspect of these treatments that this *gamba* medium highlighted is that the spirit of a deceased person can only be attached to a single human medium. Thus, for instance, he explained:

This way, if another person comes along and takes a bone from the same person [to follow the process] nothing will happen. This means that this person is simply a *feiticera* [witch] because they ate another person. But the spirit already works with another person. This [second person] only became a witch. She/he will become crazy.<sup>17</sup>

The act of consuming another person’s bones creates the tangible link between a spirit and its host. To begin, a patient who undergoes this kind of treatment must pay a high sum to the *n’ganga* who oversaw the process. After this, the patient incurs debt to the spirit year after year. Not only are the means of acquiring *gamba* risky, but once acquired, a person becomes enslaved to the appetites of these spirits who thrive on continual payments of

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Mario; June 2, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

human life in order to retain their vitality. The inherent dangers and the nefarious nature of *gamba* spirit acquisition serve as a reminder to people that gaining material wealth in this way comes at great personal and social risk. The phenomenon of *gamba* spirit acquisition vividly captures how the global economy has created new forms of male enslavement.

### **Buying and selling spirits: male mediums for *gamba***

One type of relationship that can result from buying *gamba* spirits is for the host to work as a medium for the spirit to assist others. In this relationship, the host establishes a type of healing practice that brings significant financial returns. As a general rule, the work of spirit-mediums reflects the conditions under which they were called to the role of healer. For instance, a woman who becomes a medium as a form of therapy for an *npfukwa* (or *gamba*) spirit that is plaguing her family, will then specialize in helping patient groups who are suffering from similar kinds of spiritual afflictions. By extension, male *gamba* mediums who have bought their spirits in a search for economic prosperity specialize in helping clients with problems associated with the search for financial and material wealth. They perform treatments that provide permanent or temporary assistance to clients' specific economic pursuits: whether initiation to *gamba* mediumship, assistance with a particular trade or business, or help to find and punish a thief.

Significantly, *gamba* mediums often serve clients who are relatively wealthy individuals who have the means to establish significant business ventures and the means to afford the services of a *gamba* medium. The treatments they prepare are frequently directed to help someone manage the risks associated with a significant business venture—providing

protection from malevolent forces generated by envy that may lead to the venture's failure, while also working to bring success (such as attracting customers). Such treatments are in high demand in urban centers where the need for cash is even greater than in areas like Gorongosa. Therefore, *gamba* mediums in Gorongosa frequently assist clients who arrive from urban areas. They also often travel to cities for extended stays, advertising their presence and ability to perform treatments.

### ***Kakamba* and the risks of desire: creating temporary ties to *gamba***

In addition to helping clients establish enduring ties to *gamba* spirits, most frequently, male *gamba* mediums help clients establish temporary ties. These treatments are known in chi-Gorongosi as *kakamba* and referred to in Portuguese as *drogas* or “drugs.” *Kakamba* that *gamba* mediums prepare for clients are the tangible aspect of a therapeutic process that affords a patient the services of the *gamba* medium's spirit. *Kakamba* are analogous to the treatments other mediums prepare for their clients such as *miti* (roots) or treatments known as *mak'homa* which are material treatments for “luck”—general good fortune or for success with a particular pursuit such as attracting a specific lover.<sup>18</sup> In all of their variations, material substances serve to place the patient under the temporary care, protection and/or guidance of the mediums' spirits. These substances form the centerpiece of treatment—being placed in amulets, burned as incense to treat the patients' homes or reduced to ash and rubbed into minute cuts in the skin (*nyora*) to “close off” and protect the body from threats.

In accordance with the understandings of the dangers and human costs inherent in seeking occult powers to accumulate material wealth, *kakamba* or “*drogas*” are generally

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Adélia and Baptista; September 24, 2007.

understood to be dangerous and morally objectionable treatments. It is widely understood that in order to activate the *kakamba*, a patient must perform an anti-social act. Just as creating a permanent tie to a *gamba* spirit requires the recipient to eat the bones of a deceased person and to offer annual sacrifices, creating temporary ties requires a payment that satisfies the spirit's thirsts. The payment for *kakamba* is always a horrific act—usually some kind of prohibited sexual act with a close relative. Crossing the moral boundaries in this way is pleasing to the *gamba* who is able to derive life force from such prohibited sexual acts.<sup>19</sup>

One older man clearly connected this temporary use of *gamba* spirits to the ambivalence of changing livelihoods in the cash economy. It is mostly young people, he told me, who seek to “buy” *gamba* spirits for short-term assistance. They want to harness their power for help with trading and business pursuits in the informal economy:

And so, people now, everyone wants money! And they will die [from this desire]. For example, these people that are going to take these *drogas* [“drugs” to acquire *gamba* spirits], we say, when they are only 16 years old they will die ... These youth who are not afraid won't move forward! All of this that you're seeing here—the movement of cars, stands [at the market], all of this—ahh! All of this will end. And they are going crazy.<sup>20</sup>

As his statement reveals, seeking *drogas* is widely considered to result in a person's eventual demise. If a patient fails to comply with the specifications for activating their connection to a *gamba* spirit, it is said that they will go insane.

While there is an aspect of rumor and exaggeration in popular discourses about *gamba* spirit acquisition, to some degree, these rumors are based on actual practices. When making moral commentary about *gamba*, people often pointed to concrete instances of

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<sup>19</sup>Such acts of incest are widely considered to result in sterility for women. This is because, through this act, the *gamba* spirit claims the life force of the woman's womb, robbing her of the ability to conceive.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Celestino Sacaune Canda; May 8, 2007.

someone who had failed to fulfill the requirements of their treatment. For instance, one young man in Nyamissongora sought treatment to obtain a medium's *gamba* spirits' assistance with his new stand at the market. In accordance with the spirit-medium's instructions, this assistance required that he have sexual relations with his mother. His failure to complete this requirement left him mad. He changed visibly and was unable to speak sensibly. He performed bizarre acts such as exchanging an item from one person's yard with a similar object at another house.

To manage this young man's troubles, his family members returned to the spirit-medium who had performed the treatment for him, asking that it be undone. But the spirit-medium told the family that since he had entered a verbal contract with the young man, the outcome was irreversible. Cases such as this are collectively experienced, and they ground understandings of *gamba* acquisition in actual events. They become evidence of the real dangers of seeking material wealth—lessons that people share and use to educate young people to control their desire to attain wealth and success in business—a type of desire that has become almost irresistible.

### **“*Gamba* don’t want men”: women mediums for *gamba***

As mentioned above, most male spirit mediums who work with *gamba* spirits have purchased them. This is in sharp contrast to women, who typically come into relationship with *gamba* as a response to the *gamba*'s desire. As one practitioner explained:

When you see a man who is a *n'ganga* these days, it is *kakamba*—the man went to buy a *gamba* spirit. Spirits don't want a man because they don't know how to cook, clean, smooth the mud walls over a house ...<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Merecina; October 17, 2007.

Also, the kind of work that male mediums for *gamba* spirits perform is markedly different. Because women are *chosen* by *gamba* spirits, the spirit's desire to work through them is expressed through chronic misfortunes afflicting a woman's wider family. A female spirit-medium for *gamba* frequently helps other families manage dangerous spirits through treatments that are analogous to actions she and her family took to resolve their troubles.

The differences between men's and women's modes of creating links with spirits are widely noted. However, when referring to women's spirit possession, there is a degree of linguistic confusion in people's labeling of different types of spirits. Most people associate *gamba* solely with spirits whose first ties to humans are through purchase, differentiated sharply from *npfukwa* who return to seek vengeance among the descendents of the person responsible for their death. However, some people have begun to use the terms "*gamba*" and "*npfukwa*" interchangeably. Even when categorical labels for *gamba* and *npfukwa* are linguistically blurred, the distinction between modes of acquisition remains essential. Thus one woman explained that there are two types of *gamba* spirit mediums: those who work for *gamba ya kutengera* (*gamba* that are bought) and those who work for *gamba ya dzvoka* (*gamba* who follow lines of descent to choose their host).<sup>22</sup> While there are some exceptions, the gendered divisions between men who buy *gamba* and women who inherit *gamba*/*npfukwa* are stark.

These differences both mirror and replicate the gendered nature of economic activities. For instance, men buy *gamba* to assist with economic activities that in Gorongosa are primarily understood to be the preserve of men.<sup>23</sup> Through these actions, they incur debt to the spirits that becomes a source of suffering for others in their family. Women, on

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Jacinta Baptista; October 19, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 7 for a discussion of gender relations and marriage.

the other hand, typically receive *gamba* spirits from men who have been unable to satisfy their debts to the spirit, causing it to lash out and cause a great deal of destruction in the family. In this way, women's "marriage" to *gamba* serves to repay the debt that their male relations accumulated. Just as with *npfukwa*, women's marriage to *gamba* spirits has the potential to transform a destructive force in a family into a positive force.

### **Conclusion- Spirit marriages and the reaffirmation of life**

A crucial aspect of the gendered differences of *gamba* possession is the moral discourses that surround them. While women's mode of establishing relations with *gamba* spirits is generally seen as a legitimate response to being chosen and as a means to transform suffering into wellbeing, men's pursuit of ties to *gamba* spirits is a morally charged endeavor. As discussed in Chapter 2, during the civil war, people who sought *gamba* spirits took advantage of the violence and death that were created in war-time to attain personal protection. Through this act, the anger and violence of these spirits is not transformed, but selfishly exploited for one's benefit. Thus, acquiring *gamba* spirits is a morally suspect act not only because it requires nefarious deeds to establish and maintain the relationship, but especially because it perpetuates the forces of violence and destruction in human lives.

Men whose desires place material prosperity over the wellbeing of the family help carry angered and violent spirits into the present. As more people seek the assistance of *gamba*, the stability and wellbeing of all is placed in jeopardy. Establishing ties with women has become one of the only ways these spirits can be integrated into society as a positive social force. In this way, women who accept to be mediums for *gamba* spirits reaffirm the



value of life over what, for some, has become an overpowering desire for material wealth—a desire that can bring metaphorical and literal death through enslavement to money.

### **Churches, *N'ganga*s and the Moral Politics of Money**

The practices of spirit-mediums and the Pentecostal church groups in Gorongosa articulate in various ways with the heavily charged moral economy of money. As revealed in the description of *gamba* spirit acquisition, what is most morally suspect is intentionality in accumulating wealth and power at the expense of others. One of the central moral lessons in critique of *gamba* spirit acquisition is that acting overzealously on one's desires for money or power brings harm to others and eventually, to one's self. It is not the possession of differentiated power, influence and/or wealth that is questioned, but the modes of acquisition and their uses that is morally suspect.

But, it is not just those who seek to buy *gamba* spirits that are the subject of critique. The pressures of the economic context and the ability of only a few to obtain success make everyone the subject of scrutiny. This section examines how moral critiques shape the work of spirit-mediums and patterns of church conversion and participation. It examines how spirit-mediums and church leaders both struggle in different ways to position themselves as moral actors. Both spirit-mediums and church leaders—people of great spiritual power and influence—are placed under intense public scrutiny. Conscious of this scrutiny, spirit-mediums and church leaders manage their own actions and attitudes in ways that shape their practices as healers and leaders.

### Commodification of the work of spirit-mediums

*Gamba* spirit acquisition illustrates that there have been subtle shifts leading people to understand spirit-mediumship as a business pursuit—building on the sufferer-turned-healer motif to incorporate economic and material suffering as a central therapeutic idiom. Male spirit-mediums for *gamba ya kutengera* or *gamba* that have been bought are an exaggerated instance of the changes that are evident in nearly all spirit-mediums' practices. *N'ganga*s working for all varieties of spirits are also changing their practices in the context of the cash-dominated economy.



Fig. 4.1: This sign, placed along a major highway on the outskirts of Beira, the provincial capital of Sofala Province, advertizes the work of a spirit-medium. The sign reads: “Announcement: The general public is advised that a traditional doctor from Gorongosa named Julieta Fernando has arrived. She cures all types of illnesses. Thank you.” Arrows on the sign point down a path into the neighborhood where Julieta can be found.

The work of spirit-mediums attracts patients from across the socio-economic spectrum whose particular concerns can be met by the ever-changing array of treatments spirit-mediums offer. In urban environments where regional renown and reputation is

harder to establish, spirit-mediums have begun advertising their services with roadside signs. These signs, like the one shown in Figure 5.1, have become a common sight along major highways of Mozambique. While the sign in Figure 5.1 is makeshift and temporary, some *n'gangas* have created permanent, painted, sometimes professionally manufactured signs to advertise their services, providing directions and/or cell phone numbers to help clients locate the practitioners.

### DOCTOR SOFRIMENTO NINGORE

ESPECIALISTA EM MEDICINA TRADICIONAL  
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- || Sífilis
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- || Asma
- || Dores de útero
- || Período prolongado
- || Diabetes
- || Hemorróides
- || Comichão
- || Dores de coração
- || Aumento o sexo e aumento a potência
- || Ser apertado por espíritos à noite

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- || Recuperação de amor perdido

As crianças com menos de cinco anos recebem tratamento gratuito. Dirija-se ao consultório do médico Ningore, no Bairro da Malhangalene, Rua do Alba nº 56, perto da Delta Segurança

Consultas: das 08:00 às 12:00 horas e das 14:00 às 18:00, contacto: 82-8050930

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**Médica tradicional vinda de Zanzibar**



Trata doenças tais como: Impotência sexual, asma, tensão, paralisia, esterilidade, malária cerebral, recupera amor perdido, dá sorte no trabalho, faz subir de cargo, segurança no lar e mais.....

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**Av. 24 de Julho nº 3298, 3º andar, flat-5**  
**Em frente ao Quartel-General**  
**Cell: 82-5386597**

Figure 4.2: Classified ads for “traditional doctors” in the Maputo weekly paper *Magazine Independente*; Thursday April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007, page 18. For translations of the ads, see Appendix II.

Other spirit-mediums advertise their services in the classified section of city newspapers. These advertisements are tailored to the audience most likely to buy and read newspapers: members of an urban elite with paid employment. For instance, both classified

ads in Figure 5.2 claim that these “traditional doctors” can “give you luck in your job.”

The ad at the bottom also claims to provide treatments “to help you get promoted.” As these classified advertisements reveal, the practice of some spirit-mediums is aligning with notions of capitalist business ventures where patients can be seen as “customers” of the medium who offers “services” at pre-determined rates.

Many people lament these changing aspects of spirit-mediums’ work. The high prices *n’gangas* charge is a frequent subject of popular critique. When making these criticisms, people often draw comparisons to the very different logics guiding payments to *n’gangas* in the not-so-distant past. People describe how *n’gangas* used to receive “payment” from patients who returned with gifts (in cash or in material goods) after the treatment proved effective. In this sense, “payments” to *n’gangas*, even when guided by well known expectations, were conceived of as offerings of gratitude in the logic of obligation and reciprocity, where the offerings presented reflected the patient’s valuation of the treatment.

In recent years however, this kind of flexible payment of gratitude, though still widespread, is becoming less common. In fact, *n’gangas* almost always require at least some payment upfront for their services. Such changes have been actively fostered by official associations of “traditional healers” in Gorongosa and on a national level. For instance, the two “traditional healers” associations in Gorongosa District, AMETRAMO<sup>24</sup> and AMETIM, have printed official price lists for various treatments and services. These price lists are elaborated by each association’s leaders at the provincial level and then sent to the district level for distribution.

Leaders of these associations in Gorongosa explained that they distribute these price lists to members for two reasons. The first is for the purpose of legal protections. It is not

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<sup>24</sup>See Chapter 2.

uncommon for their members to conduct treatments for patients who promise to pay in the future. Some of these unpaid debts lead to heated disputes that end up in various courts (traditional or state-sponsored) for resolution. In these instances, the official price list allows members to make strong claims and receive full payment for their treatments.

The second reason for distributing official price lists centers on the attempt to attain greater legitimacy in the eyes of the public and local leaders. Leaders of AMETRAMO and AMETIM told me that it is in the best interest of spirit-mediums to charge uniform amounts for their different treatments so that patients know what to expect and can't "shop around" elsewhere for different prices. Thus, if all agree to the same price, everyone can benefit from charging more. Additionally, with these price lists, patients, state government officials, and traditional leaders cannot accuse spirit-mediums of inventing unfair prices for their services.

Appendix III shows the actual price list distributed to members of AMETIM in Gorongosa beginning in late 2007. The original price list itemizes 86 separate treatments, providing the name of the treatment or service in chi-Gorongosi and Portuguese next to the price in *meticaïs*. The list reveals the wide array of services and treatments that spirit-mediums provide. Not every spirit-medium's performs all of these services, illustrating that this is a general list to cover many different *n'gangas'* specializations.

Significantly, the most expensive items on the list, up to as much as 1 to 3 million *meticaïs*<sup>25</sup> are treatments for material success or protection. These include item number 50 "treatment to protect against theft"; item number 74 "treatment to prevent road accident";

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<sup>25</sup> In 2006, Mozambique modified the national currency, cutting off the final three zeros. Thus, the "new metical" (MTN), 1 million Mozambican meticaïs (MZM) is equal to 1,000 MTN. 1-3 million *meticaïs* is equivalent to approximately \$40- \$120 at the exchange rates of 2007. This is a tremendous amount of money in Gorongosa. During the time of my research primary school teachers, relatively wealthy professionals, received a monthly salary of between 1 and 2 million *meticaïs*.

item number 78 “there are no problems” [a powerful treatment for good fortune in many pursuits] and, the most expensive of all (3 million *meticals*) item number 86 “treatment to avoid capture after stealing.” What distinguishes these treatments from most of the others on the list is that they are protective or preventative treatments, rather than treatments for an existing malady—a kind of insurance for dangerous times.

As discussed above, while any *n'ganga* could theoretically prepare any one of these expensive treatments, male *gamba ya kutengera* mediums specialize in them. The outward-seeking nature of these therapies reflects the outward-seeking acquisition of the spirit that characterizes the medium's “call” to the role of healer. Thus, as is the case of gendered divisions of labor in the economy, where male-gendered items of trade at the market are more lucrative,<sup>26</sup> male-gendered treatments are those that generate the largest income.

Another interesting aspect to note is that attempts to regularize and commodify the practices of *n'ganga*s have thus far been largely unsuccessful. In fact, the *n'ganga*s I shadowed charged only a fraction of the listed prices. Many receive partial payment asking the patient to return to complete payment only if the treatment brought resolution of his or her problem. Also, many accept material goods such as *capulanas* or other articles of clothing as payment when patients lack cash. One *n'ganga* I worked with frequently charged patients who were relatives or respected neighbors a reduced rate, or waived the fees altogether. Otherwise, spirit-mediums are more likely to display this price list to strangers, particularly wealthy patients from neighboring cities. In those cases, prices go up in accordance with their visibly displayed means.

This flexibility in payment is an attempt by *n'ganga*s to be seen as moral actors. It is, at least in part, a response to widely circulating critical discourses that accuse *n'ganga*s of

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<sup>26</sup> See Chapter 7 for detailed discussion.

fooling people to pay for worthless treatments in a selfish pursuit of money, as will be discussed below. When directed specifically at one practitioner, such critique can lead to a *n'ganga's* complete loss of legitimacy and respect. Thus, *n'ganga*s in Gorongosa tread carefully when deciding what kinds of payments to demand.

Though spirit-mediums have flexible ways of charging for their services, the basic fee-for-treatment model characterizes their work. Despite accommodations for Gorongosans such as reductions of official prices, acceptance of payment delays, or payment in kind, seeking treatments from spirit-mediums has become a costly endeavor. The costs associated with *n'ganga*s' therapies, combined with experiences of previously failed treatments have contributed significantly to people's conversion to Pentecostal churches, which offer an alternative and "free" form of therapy.

### **Economic bases of Pentecostal church conversion**

I'm going to church now because *n'ganga*s are so expensive. Long ago, it was not this way. Nowadays *nem ziviva weneyi ndi mwanzathu* (you don't even recognize that that person [the *n'ganga*] is your companion [a person like you]). They only charge high prices!<sup>27</sup>

Rosita's comments, above, were echoed frequently by other recent converts to Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa. Many people undergo conversion in direct response to the increasing commodification of spirit-mediums' practices and their rising prices. Despite the flexibility that many *n'ganga*s still retain, in general, the fees they charge have been increasing while people's ability to earn cash has been decreasing. Rosita's sentiments illustrate how, for many, an important motive for conversion to Pentecostal churches is a sense of anger. Charging unreasonable fees to impoverished people in crisis is seen as exploitative behavior

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Mãe Rosita; March 21, 2008.



and evidence of *n'gangas'* lack of compassion. For people like Rosita, conversion can be seen as a form of protest against the commodification of therapeutic practice.

Like Rosita, many people convert to Pentecostal churches during a period of crisis as they search for resolution to problems plaguing their families. For example, when I asked Mãe Isabel, a member of Zimba's church, why she converted, she explained:

Because we were facing problems at home, you know? Big problems [with *npfukwa* spirits] ... we went to *n'gangas* [for treatment] to ask—perhaps it was a spirit. We gathered money, took it to the *n'ganga* and—nothing! Now, in the church it's free! Ahh! They will pray for you, the spirit will come out, and go away—[you don't] pay! Mmm! Not a thing!<sup>28</sup>

As Isabel's account reveals, Pentecostal church groups offer just one type of therapeutic resource in a field of options. When treatments in other contexts fail, people often try conversion as a strategy to resolve their crisis. Conversion narratives like Isabel's are common—creating a binary between expensive/ineffective treatments of *n'gangas* compared to free/efficacious treatments in church groups.

Others expressed their reasoning for conversion not in terms of anger or outrage, but as a cautionary practice. Many people see the cost-free healing services of churches as a sort of social insurance. For instance, Nene, another participant Zimba's church told me she stopped going to *n'gangas* for treatment because “they want money—when I get sick, where am I going to find money? I don't have money!”<sup>29</sup> Though at the time of conversion she wasn't in the midst of crisis, she felt that church participation offered her the security that when problems did arise, she would be able to receive support and therapies without having to pay fees.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Mãe Isabel; February 27, 2008. [*T'hangwe, tibve inango mhingapinga ku nyumba, tai? Makulu manhenga. Wanango wasair forte wanango ... taenda ku nganga kubvunza- pangano pana muzimu, kusaka dinyero, kwenda naye ku nganga, kusowa! ... Agora, ku gereja, ndi nyole! Ahh! Woda kanamatirhwa, wochida kubuda, wobuda, nkhabe pagar! Mmm! Nem chinhu!*]

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Mãe Nene; February 15, 2008.

As the practices of spirit-mediums change, becoming more commoditized and business-like, they are becoming morally suspect especially in the eyes of church participants who actively critique *n'ganga*s as a strategy of self-distinction. In Pentecostal churches, the absence of monetary payments for therapeutic treatments is part of a broader philosophical stance that is central to the work of churches to re-order society.

### **The Pentecostal ethic and the spirit of anti-capitalism?**

... *t'hangwe kuna mulungu haana dinyero*  
... because in God there is no money<sup>30</sup>

Cecilia Neva made this statement when I asked her the difference between people who participate in Pentecostal churches and those who do not. In her eyes, the difference lies primarily in the *absence* of money as a prerequisite for certain kinds of social assistance. As her statement indicates, Pentecostal church participants in Gorongosa define themselves as morally distinct from those who use money as a basis of exchange in social interactions.

The use of money as payment for spirit-mediums is just one area in which this moral positioning is explicitly made in opposition to the practices of spirit-mediums. Tiago, a young leader at Zimba's church put it this way:

*A curandeira [n'ganga]* is a person who wants money. They will say: "Yes ... it is your father. Your mother doesn't like to see your motorcycle." Just to destroy your family! God heals without asking for one metical! It is written in Isaiah 55:1—"come drink the water that has no price!"<sup>31</sup>

Tiago's statement includes a moral condemnation of spirit-mediums for charging money, but also adds another layer of critique as well. From the perspective of Pentecostal church

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Cecilia Neva; March 11, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Tiago Ernesto; February 6, 2008.

philosophy where individual relations to God are the legitimate source of wellbeing and prosperity, the treatments and insights that *n'ganga*s provide their patients are reframed as lies of a charlatan who seeks only to make money. Tiago's statement also refers to the tendency of spirit-mediums to incite accusations of witchcraft that threaten the relations of family members. His example here is a significant one, where a *n'ganga*'s treatments lead a patient to blame his troubles on his mother who is made out to be the cause. The *n'ganga* leads the patient to believe that, envious of his accumulation of material wealth (here, a motorcycle), his mother punishes him via witchcraft.

Church members make conscious self-distinctions based on this ethical stance in relation to money. They pride themselves on removing monetary payments of gratitude in many arenas of social life. For instance, as I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 8, Zimba's church leaders provide counseling for couples prior to marriage without asking for payment. Likewise, they counsel married couples in dispute without charging fees or penalties that government and "traditional" legal bodies require.

This ethic derives from the philosophy stated at the start of this section, that "in God, there is no money." On the surface, this stance appears to be in opposition to Weber's well-known and provocative theory that economic conduct characteristic of capitalism was shaped significantly by the religious ethic cultivated by Calvinism (Weber 1930). However, the ethic against monetary payments for healing and other forms of social mediation does not result in an ethic against money or the cash economy in general. In fact, there is an element of Pentecostal church teachings that pushes participants to accumulate material wealth and let go of fear of social condemnation. If "witchcraft" and the powers of the invisible realm serve in some ways as a deterrent to social differentiation, church

members' emphasis on the individual relationship to God as a source of wellbeing can liberate them from fears of accumulation. The bible verse to which Tiago referred in the statement quoted above, Isaiah 55:1 reads as follows:

Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness.<sup>32</sup>

In this verse, the good things of God are free and God's people are invited to "delight [themselves] in fatness"—enjoying the good things they come across as blessings from God. Pentecostal church philosophy places God as the source of misfortune and wellbeing. In this perspective, material wealth can be seen not as the outcome of nefarious dealings but as a blessing from God.

In fact, people often noted that church participation brought them an increased degree of material prosperity. First and foremost, they connected this increased material stability directly to the prohibition of alcohol, tobacco and seeking treatments from *n'gangas*. One day, when I was walking with a female church participant through a particularly poor area of the district, she told me that problems with hunger in the area were not due to fertility of the land or lower agricultural production, but because residents of that area do not go to church:

They spend LOTS of money on *n'gangas* ... they accuse others of witchcraft (*uroyi*) even when it is not true and this costs lots of money. People also spend lots on tobacco and alcohol. This is why they are much poorer—they oversell their corn to gain cash [to buy alcohol or pay for '*n'gangas*'], and then run out of food. Their money all goes to waste.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Translation of Isaiah 55: 1- 2 taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1971 [1946], William Collins Publishers, Inc.).

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Mãe Gina; March 24, 2008.

Church participation cuts off a lot of possibilities for spending and “waste.” Aligning themselves with holiness and God in this way does bring notable changes to people’s financial wellbeing.

However, other women lamented that by joining churches, their economic activities were limited. For instance, they were then unable to brew beer or distill liquor for sale (see Chapter 7). On the other hand, church participation brings people increased visibility, legitimacy and access to jobs from certain NGOs operating in the district. Many NGOs in Gorongosa, as in Mozambique, are Christian-based,<sup>34</sup> and whether it is an official policy or not, such groups tend to hire staff and volunteers whose religious affiliation blends with their founding philosophies. Though this economic effect of church participation is limited in Gorongosa where very few jobs and employment opportunities exist, this aspect of Pentecostal participation has been noted to be particularly powerful in other contexts (e.g. Martin 1990).

Additionally, church participants draw, to some degree, on the philosophy of the “prosperity gospel”: that faithfulness and prayer will lead God to provide you with material success. The prosperity gospel is central to Pentecostal church teachings in urban areas. When I attended Mana Church in Mozambique’s capital, Maputo, the main message that day encouraged church participants to ask God “for [their] own personal financial miracle.”<sup>35</sup> In Gorongosa, the “prosperity gospel” is not emphasized as explicitly as in urban Pentecostal churches, because people’s main preoccupations lie with agriculture and protection and liberation from illness and other kinds of misfortune. However, this

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<sup>34</sup> Food for the Hungry International and World Vision, two NGOs operating projects in Gorongosa, are evangelical Christian organizations and take employees’ religious affiliation into account when hiring staff or volunteers. Also, missionary organizations run temporary projects in the district, and explicitly hire only church participants.

<sup>35</sup> Sunday worship service; Igreja Mana, Maputo, Mozambique; July 22, 2007.

underlying ethic is present. In a world of *gamba* spirits and *kakamba* and other morally dubious means to material success, the Pentecostal philosophy of God's blessings to the faithful provides a different framework for interpreting the accumulation of material wealth.

This framework is powerful, with significant social effects. Later in the same conversation with Tiago, he clearly articulated this sentiment. He spoke about the hatred and jealousy that people outside the church have for church participants:

“Who is this man who is doing many marvelous things that we are not able to do? This man is the son of who? He wants to be better than all of us?” And so, these people gather together to plan: “How can we grab this man?” and they go and arrange *feitica* (witchcraft) to bring the person back down to their level. But people who are in church do not fear *feitica*, and so they are moving forward in their lives ... they are not afraid to buy a car, not afraid to buy a motorcycle and to be seen riding it ... Others who aren't in churches are afraid ... they have money, but they hide the fact that they have money ... they do not go around wearing nice clothing, displaying the wealth that they are accumulating, but hide it, afraid of the consequences of others' envy.<sup>36</sup>

As Tiago's example reveals, church participation provides people with a sense of security that frees them from fear of others' envy. It provides a different way to conceptualize the acquisition of material goods and enables them to display their economic success without concern for others' envy. With God as the source of wellbeing and prosperity, church participants are able to acquire material wealth in a way that they morally sanction, distinguishing themselves from those who accumulate wealth using nefarious powers. In this sense, though the mechanisms and philosophies are different, Weber's basic thesis about a religious ethic governing economic action in ways with significant social effects seems to hold true. However, this is not a clear affirmation of Weber's thesis. Understandings about the operations of dangerous invisible forces continue to shape

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<sup>36</sup>Interview with Tiago Ernesto; February 6, 2008.

church participants' economic activities, leading them to avoid certain types of pursuits deemed to be morally suspect.

### **Economic choices as moral choices**

Despite churches' ability to liberate people from the fear of "witchcraft" or social sanction for the accumulation of material wealth, church participants' economic actions are still framed as moral choices. In a context where access to certain kinds of wealth can be attained through the use of occult forces, church participants try to distance themselves from such ventures. The following story will serve to illustrate how moral discourses about *gamba* spirit acquisition shape people's decision-making when trying to negotiate difficult financial times. Dina, a woman who had been a Pentecostal church participant since the 1950s, spoke to me at length about decisions she had made in her life—decisions where she rejected opportunities for material wealth because of morally dubious undertones.

In mid 2004, Dina refused to receive a grinding mill from the Catholic mission in Gorongosa. Her husband had worked for many years as a carpenter at the mission, and when he died suddenly from AIDS-related causes, the priests offered her the mill as a way to compensate for his loss. When presented with the gift, her children and I tried to convince her to accept it, pointing out the benefits of steady income the mill could bring.

She was resolute in her decision. Grinding mills, because they require substantial investment to buy, are typically owned by successful businessmen from outside Gorongosa who establish them to earn significant income. The operation of these mills has become associated with nefarious ties to *gamba* spirits who oversee the proper functioning of the

equipment. It is said that mill owners without *gamba* spirits face frequent mechanical failures that lead their business ventures to fail.

Dina refused the mill for this reason, recalling previous times in her life when she had rejected material security on moral grounds:

Before I married Fernando [her husband who died], I refused to marry another man who promised me we would be wealthy, but asked me to agree that some of our children would be eaten by his *gamba* spirit.<sup>37</sup>

She pointed out that, unlike most of her companions in the district, she had raised all ten of her children past infancy, never having lost a single one—something truly remarkable. She attributed her good fortune to the moral decision she made not to marry her first suitor, who was involved with *gamba* spirits. Though she had lived a life of material constraint, she was rewarded with the health of her children. She never regretted her decision to avoid material comforts that would have come to her at significant human cost.

It was this personal history that provided the context for her rejection of the grinding mill. Like the marriage prospect she turned down, unless she were to seek a *gamba* spirit, she told me, the grinding mill also would be a failed enterprise. Dina chose instead to risk the economic hardship she faced without sacrificing the wellbeing of her children—her true fortune.

Dina's story reveals how the possibilities of *gamba* acquisition and *kakamba* treatments place people in moral predicaments. Decisions about participation in the market economy are taken seriously. In this context, scarcity for many is seen as a direct result of the anti-social posture of a few. This powerful social critique is pervasive and shapes people's actions in difficult times. The search for occult forces to change one's life

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Ricardina; July 21, 2004.



circumstances has its prevalent opposite: the majority of people who, despite difficult circumstances, choose *not* to resort to such risky measures.

### **Pastors and accumulation for distribution**

In taking on the leadership of Pentecostal churches, pastors also make significant economic and moral choices. Most church pastors in Gorongosa ideally seek to position themselves and their church families in a morally sanctioned way that positions them as moral actors who distribute their power and wealth for the wellbeing of others. As Bayart has noted in describing the “politics of the belly,” it is not the accumulation of wealth alone that is morally questionable, but the failure of wealthy people to redistribute their spoils to others (1993).

Pastors in Gorongosa can be likened to patrons who are able to establish a following of people who provide them with a powerful social network (c.f Barnes 1986). In order to establish this kind of following, a pastor must have social and financial resources that surpass members of his congregation. In Gorongosa, most church pastors have access to financial income that they then devote almost entirely to the operations of the church and church members in crisis.<sup>38</sup> Pastor Zimba, of the Free Assembly Church of Mozambique, for example, split off from another church to form his own church group. He worked for many years as a driver for GTZ.<sup>39</sup> With the social and economic stability this job offered him, he was able to consolidate and maintain his following. When GTZ

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<sup>38</sup> Whereas in urban areas and in other countries pastors are able to accumulate significant wealth relative to their church members, in Gorongosa, nearly all pastors are only marginally more wealthy, if at all. Most contribute more financial wealth to their churches than they get back. What they get in return does not come in cash contributions.

<sup>39</sup> GTZ is a development organization of the German government that began operating in Gorongosa shortly after the end of the civil war.

pared back their operations in the district in 2005, Zimba lost his job, but his reputation as a trustworthy and reliable worker quickly earned him a job as a driver for the district administration. Despite years of income, Zimba's house and material wealth were little different from those of his neighbors and parishioners because he continuously poured his money into the life of his church.

Other pastors in Gorongosa fall in this same mold. They are, variously, school teachers, neighborhood secretaries, guards for government and NGO operations, and so on. Others ascend to leadership through long-term church participation, gaining a following within one church and breaking out to lead one on their own. But, even in these instances, a person's ability to attract a following relies more on their resources and ability to serve as "patron" than on their "charisma." Outside the district capital where employment is scarce, church pastors are particularly successful cash croppers, brick makers, and the like. They are typically more advanced in age (mid 40's to 50's) and at the time of establishing a congregation have made a transition in their own lives from youthful dependence to the patron status of adults.<sup>40</sup>

Significantly, Pastor Zimba considered all of his material goods to be not his personal possessions, but gifts from God to help further the mission of evangelization. One visible sign of Pastor Zimba's access to financial resources was his jalopy of a truck—since any vehicle is something rarely attainable by his peers. In church he often negated ownership of the car, claiming that it was for "God's work." Indeed he often used the car to bring truckloads of church participants to visit the nineteen daughter congregations he had brought into his church network throughout the district. When he used the truck as a

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<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 6 for a more in-depth discussion of "wealth in people" and the continual changes in status as one ages and is able to attain seniority and acquire a following of dependents.

*chapa* (collective taxi) on local routes, he claimed the money he earned was also for God's work. In fact, he sometimes made public announcements during worship to notify church members how much of his own money he had used to purchase fuel for church visits or to contribute to construction of the new church building. He also purchased a generator and supplied the costly diesel to power his son's electric keyboard and sound system for Sunday worship. He used the generator to power his TV and DVD player, but chose not to charge money to screen movies as so many people in the district began to do. Rather, on moral grounds, he used the equipment only for church functions: to screen the "Jesus film."<sup>41</sup> He often preached about visits to daughter congregations in remote areas of the district where screenings of the "Jesus film" drew huge crowds of people who were not already church members (see Figure 4.3).



<sup>41</sup> In Portuguese, this popular movie is referred to as the *filme de Jesus*. It is an old film made in the United States that depicts the story of the passion.

**Figure 4.3: Pastor Zimba's video equipment was the centerpiece in celebrations at the inauguration of a new daughter congregation in Pungue, an area 35 kilometers away.**

In return for significant input of financial resources and time, pastors receive many benefits from their position. While the pastoral role does not bring the benefit of salaried income, pastors receive many non-monetary rewards. Supreme among these is the great level of influence, respect, and notoriety that comes with church leadership. Pastor Zimba shared stories with me of chance encounters with people in town who offered him money as a spontaneous show of respect. Others provided him small



**Figure 4.4: Women's group of Free Assembly Church weeding Pastor Zimba's field**

loans on the spot when he was in particular need, knowing that he was trustworthy enough to repay them. He told me that once when his truck ran out of gas, a group of young men materialized to push his car up the hill to the kiosk that sells diesel. The owner of the shop

offered him the fuel, commending him for his “good works” and asked only that he repay half the value.<sup>42</sup>

Additionally, church members often organized to relieve their pastors from some of their ordinary work responsibilities. For instance, participants of Zimba’s church and daughter congregations organized rotating work crews to tend his fields, thereby relieving him almost entirely of the need to perform agricultural labor (see Figure 4.4). At his home, members of the women’s group organized themselves to prepare food, bath water, and other necessities for visitors. As these instances illustrate, church pastors benefit from a position of elevated respect that their thick networks of church participants provides that that they can call upon for assistance.

These networks attract people to membership. In times of need, pastors mobilize them to provide assistance to members of their “church family.” They provide assistance with the costs of medicines and hospital stays, or funeral arrangements. For instance, church participants helped with obtaining a coffin (a difficult and costly task) digging graves, and Pastor Zimba used his truck to carry bodies to the cemetery for burial. Many people came to view church participation as an important form of social insurance in a time of increasing illnesses and deaths.

Pastor Zimba’s church-based relationships illustrate one of the ways in which Pentecostal church groups seek to re-order society in opposition to economic changes that push people to seek individual wealth. In direct contrast to accumulation of wealth for personal gain, as illustrated by *gamba* acquisition, church pastors make claims that their wealth is intended for distribution to a wider group. Accumulation of material and social resources for the purposes of “God’s work” de-personalizes the pursuit of wealth and

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Ernesto Zimba; February 3, 2008.

material goods. In addition to Pentecostal organization in Gorongosa, church leaders and members spread explicit teachings against the sorts of accumulation and social differentiation that is taking place in their midst. The church ethic against monetary payments for the social services it provides is one of these teachings. This is not a Christian ethic that floats independently above society, but it is directly employed by church members in response to their assessment of the particular situation in Gorongosa. Moral sanction of the use of money is a primary means through which church groups in Gorongosa are working to re-order society.

As with any leader with power and authority, church pastors are subject to a great deal of popular scrutiny. The benefits that church leadership provides to pastors are also the arenas where they are most vulnerable to critique.

### **Critical discourses of *n'gansas* and church leaders**

Because of the similarity of the roles *n'gansas* and church leaders play in social and physical healing, critical discourses about these two types of leaders fall along similar lines. While critiques emerging from Pentecostal churches condemn many traditional practices, the work of *n'gansas* is the primary focus. *N'gansas'* role in the dissolution of the family and community, in the abuse of power, and their deceitful search for monetary gain are all scorned. Criticisms in church contexts are ostentatious. They are shouted in sermons, sung in song lyrics, and expressed as personal testimonies (*testemunhas*). These messages are also spread purposively by individual evangelists. Outside the context of worship services, these critiques frequently emerge in casual conversation as parallel critical discourse that has a similar degree of potency. Though it is not preached in an organized setting, critique of

Pentecostal churches is nevertheless strong and widespread in Gorongosa. Critiques focus on the practices and behavior of church leaders, particularly pastors. Like *n'gangas*, church leaders are criticized for their role in the dissolution of family and community, in the abuse of power, and in the search for monetary gain.

These parallel critiques circulate through many channels. Criticisms of pastors do not circulate only among non-Christians, because church participants also actively scrutinize their own leaders and leaders of other churches. Similarly, while critical discourses about *n'gangas* emanate from church contexts, these critiques also circulate among the general population. Spirit-mediums, themselves, critique the work of other *n'gangas* as false and exploitative.

As was apparent in Tiago's comment, above, church participants frequently criticize spirit-mediums for creating divisions and spawning hatred among neighbors and family. Church leaders and lay members condemn *n'gangas* for making diagnoses that single out individuals as the origin of illness. They denounce healing practices that remove malignant spirits from one person and send them to another. Along the same lines, churches are seen as causing community and family dissolution. Under this lens, churches are critiqued for dividing families by drawing individuals to conversion, in isolation from other family members. Since church membership leads participants to imagine themselves as distinct from non-Christians,<sup>43</sup> this can lead to interpersonal conflicts. Such division of the social imaginary is seen to contribute to an erosion of observance of "traditional" regulations (*mikho*) related to death, birth, marriage which must take place at a familial level. The abandonment of "the ways of the *wakulu*," (ancestors), hastened by the work of pastors, is widely seen as a source of social disorder. When church participants refuse to take part in

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<sup>43</sup> See also Chapter 1.

therapies for *nɔfukwa* and *gamba* spirits, it is more difficult to manage these malevolent forces. Spirits that are treated by only some family members can seek refuge in others, re-emerging later to threaten the wellbeing of all.

The selfish pursuit of monetary gain is also a common line of criticism. As seen above, in church contexts, *n'gangas* are criticized for requiring families to allocate large sums of money to meet the demands of offended spirits. More broadly, church participants critique *n'gangas* for deceiving their patients and for manipulating “the blind” in order to gain personal wealth. As seen above, the tendency of spirit-mediums to allow for flexible payment or to charge only when treatments are effective is partially a response to such critique.

Pastors fall under similar scrutiny in their handling of money. They are often criticized for their visible access to pools of wealth. Those who exhibit visible signs of wealth such as the construction of cement houses with zinc roofs or the purchase of new clothing are viewed with suspicion. In interviews, various *evangelistas* (evangelists) I spoke with discussed a resistance to their efforts to convert people to Christianity. They told me that they are often insulted when they make their rounds in the neighborhood, encountering many people who say that pastors are *bandidos* (bandits) who deceive and steal money. In fact, some pastors do abuse their position, coercing monetary offerings from church participants and using them for personal ends. Whether done in good faith or not, demanding monthly tithes, weekly offerings, and special offerings for church operations can lead to a pastor's loss of legitimacy in the eyes of his congregation.

Like spirit-mediums, many pastors are aware of these criticisms and alter their practices accordingly. They must strike a difficult balance between the ethic against



monetary payments for God's blessings and the need to receive financial contributions to continue church operations. Pastors are especially careful in the collection of contributions, choosing special leaders to handle money. They institute careful accounting practices, keeping records, and making spending reports during worship.

Abuse of power is another common line of critique leveled against *n'gangas* and church leaders. Some pastors are singled out as not having a true divine calling and for being motivated by what is referred to in Gorongosa as "ambição." This term translates directly as "ambition" but, unlike the sense of the word in English, carries negative connotations of overheated desires for money or power. In fact, it is said that some pastors use *gamba* spirits to help attract a following and gain personal notoriety. Power struggles often divide church groups. Church schisms are relatively frequent and often center on contestations over power. Members of church leadership vie for control, and leaders leave to found their own church groups out of a desire to have their own following. Many churches have dissolved entirely due to sexual relations between pastors and female followers or scandals involving the misuse of money.

Widely circulating folk tales illustrate an ambivalent attitude towards pastoral leadership. One such tale involves a congregation of mice led by a cat pastor. Each Sunday, the pastor directs the mice to close their eyes in prayer, at which time he roves around the church and chooses a particularly tasty mouse to gulp down before prayers have ended. It is only after several weeks that the mice begin to notice that their numbers are dwindling. This continues until, one Sunday a suspicious mouse keeps its eyes open during prayer and discovers what has been happening.

Another tale tells the story of a pastor who claims to his congregants that he speaks directly to God who showers him with food and other good things. To increase his legitimacy among his followers, the pastor makes an effort to prove this direct connection to God. He asks his son climb up on the roof of his house with several sacks of grain, but to remain hidden. As he prays aloud before a gathering of church members, asking God to provide them with food, his son throws sacks of grain off the roof, while the pastor gives thanks to God for his blessings. Such stories reveal how the view of spirit-mediums as charlatans who fool vulnerable people for their own selfish gain is a criticism that is also leveled against pastors.

Similarly, the special position and powers which spirit-mediums possess can be called into question. Knowledge which affords spirit-mediums the power to heal also has the potential to harm. *N'gangas* are criticized for using their powers to help patients achieve destructive ends, and to carry out revenge against enemies. Church youth write and perform skits in Sunday worship about the dangerous potential of spirit-mediums' occult forces. A common motif in these skits is a caricature of a patient who visits a spirit-medium seeking material wealth, such as a car. After a series of mishaps, the patient fails to obtain his goal and is also left to confront personal tragedy, such as the loss of a close relative or a descent into insanity.

These critical discourses form a field upon which a constellation of troubling aspects of current life are examined and discussed. Seeking greater social cohesion and unity, members of Pentecostal churches and those who are not members construct each other as the source of these problems.

## Conclusion

The social dynamics described in this chapter illustrate the turbulence associated with recent economic changes in the district and how the invisible realm of spirits and other forces are mediating these changes. The morally charged realm of money and power is a complex world for people to navigate. The invisible realm both incites anxieties and provides security in uncertain times. The complexities of the invisible realm allow people to take contradictory positions and to harness or evade the dangerous forces associated with a rapidly changing economic context.

In this climate, spirit-mediums and their patients and church leaders and their participants position themselves differently in a common search for stability, protection and success. In this context, people are transforming the practices and possibilities associated with both Pentecostal church participation and spirit-mediumship. As church participants struggle to disconnect themselves from the operations of the invisible realm and to limit themselves to God as a single source of power and protection, others seek out the forces of the invisible realm to help them overcome difficult times or to find wealth and success in a time of scarcity and constraint.

While the practice of churches and spirit-mediums are both directed at relieving the misfortunes which plague individuals and groups within this context, they take contrasting approaches. Economic inequality, marital difficulties, infertility, illness, and social dissolution are all troubling aspects of the current times. People sense that these troubles are growing out of control. The following chapter provides additional description of this context, examining how increasing illnesses and deaths exacerbate the difficulties of poverty contributing to the prevalent sense of the precariousness of life.

## Chapter 5:

### A Precarious World: Increasing Illness and Insecurity

#### Introduction:

As seen in Chapter 1, physical illness is a primary drive that leads to the search for healing—drawing people to church participation or initiation into spirit-mediumship. This chapter provides a context for understanding the intensification of crises of illness underlying this search. The intensification of physical illness has overburdened an already weak national health care system that has never adequately met the needs of Mozambicans, making the assistance of church groups and spirit-mediums' assistance in managing illness ever more vital.

Physical illness both derives from and intensifies poverty. Some “official views” have not taken this into account. Early in 2008, the World Bank released a study entitled “Beating the Odds: Sustaining Inclusion in Mozambique's Growing Economy.” This study claimed that the reduction in rural poverty in Mozambique “is one of the greatest success stories anywhere in the world” (World Bank, 2007). In a summary of the study, released in late 2007, the World Bank provided annual reports and analysis of the Mozambican economy, intended, in part, to attract international investors. These reports touted the increased GDP of the country among other statistics as a means of indexing the increased wealth and welfare of all citizens. But these macro economic indicators of success have little bearing on the experiences of most Mozambican citizens.

The economic climate that leaves the vast majority of Mozambicans to search for cash to meet daily needs leaves many families vulnerable in times of crisis. For any family,

even one with significant assets, care of a patient with a chronic illness can bring financial ruin. The increasing incidence of severe and chronic illnesses in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic has made each family group extraordinarily vulnerable to health crises, making poverty more prevalent and harder to escape.

In a response to the World Bank's 2007 report, Joseph Hanlon took a closer look at available socio-economic data. His findings reveal a quite different reality (2007). He analyzed data from rural household income surveys (*Trabalho de Inquérito Agrícola TIA*) from 2002 and 2005 to show that there is a high degree of income insecurity during that period. Using these data he pointed out that only 41 percent of the households found to be "better off" in 2002 had retained that status in 2005, while 43 percent of these households had fallen below the poverty line during those three years (Hanlon 2007: 4). More strikingly, 23 percent of people who were above the poverty line in 2002, slid into a category of "extreme poverty" in 2005, meaning that they had "less than one-third the income they had had in 2002" (Hanlon 2007: 4). He postulates that family illnesses and deaths are the most central factor in creating the substantial insecurity facing Mozambicans.

Each year, most families in Mozambique are hit by shocks such as illness and death. Impoverished Mozambicans are especially vulnerable to physical illness and do not have the means to soften the shock. Western medicine and health services can be extremely costly, especially in the case of chronic illnesses that require treatment over long periods of time. The financial and social costs of caring for the ill and burying the dead keep families teetering on the edge of financial disaster.

Take, for instance, the case of a peasant woman, diagnosed to be HIV+ and advised by a health worker not to breast feed her children, or a TB patient who is encouraged to

drink milk as a therapy central to treatment. But, milk, whether powdered or liquid, is one of the most expensive consumer food items available in the local market. A small can of Nido powdered milk, equivalent to ten glasses of milk when mixed with water, costs approximately 90 MTN<sup>1</sup>—or the equivalent of a day’s work of informal paid field labor (*muterekita*). Even for a one-time purchase, this sum is beyond the reach of most rural families’ finances. As a long-term treatment for chronic illness, such a prescription can quickly stretch a single family and its extended support networks beyond limits. As this example shows, the illness of one person can quickly send a family into financial ruin. The cost of treatment is just one facet of the financial strain that chronic illness brings to caregivers. The loss of this person’s labor in the home, in the field, or in their given trade is also a major burden when each person’s contribution to household finances is vital to sustaining the family in difficult times. Even while caring for the sick at home is costly using Western medical solutions, alternative forms of healing have also become quite expensive.<sup>2</sup>

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In Gorongosa District, one of the poorest and most marginalized regions of an economically marginalized nation, residents struggle to manage the growing strain in their lives as the impact of the AIDS epidemic increases their pressing need for cash in an economy shaped by neoliberal policies. The burden of illness and death of one family member is shared among a wide group of people. Thus, the search for healing and the burden of that search is both social and financial. Poverty creates the conditions for the spread of physical illness, which in turn intensifies poverty, creating a terrible cycle that is

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<sup>1</sup> 90 MTN was equivalent to about \$3.60 in 2007.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 4 for further discussion.

difficult to break. It is not just individual families' financial means, but the national government's globally marginal position that keeps this cycle entrenched. As Paul Farmer has noted, "social inequalities often determine both the distribution of modern plagues and clinical outcomes among the afflicted" (1999: 16). AIDS provides just one dramatic and tragic example of global inequalities in the distribution of disease, revealing how "biological" processes leading to ill-health are socially created.

In this chapter, I examine how crises of physical health and death have become a daily preoccupation for many Gorongosans. After examining the increasing burden of illness from different angles, this chapter explores the options of biomedical care available in the district. Challenges facing Mozambique's Ministry of Health have been exacerbated by neoliberal economic reforms and external control of budgetary spending, leading to weak provision of health care services to most of the population. Experiences of public health care shape people's search for healing, revealing how the therapeutic interventions of spirit-mediums and Pentecostal church groups provide a vital supplement to failing biomedical health services.

### *Opening*

When I returned to Gorongosa in 2006, things had changed dramatically. From my first arrival to town, I received news of former students, friends and acquaintances who had passed away during the two short years I had been gone. I was shocked. Aside from a few older individuals, the terrible news was mostly about young people. Some had been my eighth and ninth grade English students in 1999 and 2000. And each week that went by, I received more news of people I knew, directly or indirectly, who were seriously ill.

Whenever I travelled around the region, I encountered funerals. In Gorongosa, funeral processions are easily spotted: long streams of people walking on the side of the road behind a single vehicle carrying a coffin on the way to the town cemetery. If it was a person of higher social status, several motorcycles and small passenger vehicles join the procession. In the city, since the cemetery lies far outside town limits, mourners fill large, open lorries—standing room only—and sing songs on the way to the burial.

Death was everywhere in Mozambique. Radio programs carried regular funeral announcements, as they have for many years. But the lists of names were noticeably longer. The obituary section of Beira's city newspaper, *Diário de Moçambique*, was also noticeably larger, and those announcements including photos mostly showed people who had died in the prime of life. By the time I left Mozambique in 2008, I had lost count of the funerals I attended. It seemed that hardly a week passed when I wasn't carrying another mourner, too weak from sadness to walk to the burial, on the back of my motorcycle.

### **Illness as everyday suffering**

When managing crises of illness and death, a broad group of people are called upon to assist in the effort to mitigate the effects of ill-health and to restore health. Physical illness most deeply affects those who live together in the same household. Extended kin are called upon to offer crucial assistance. Neighbors, friends, work colleagues, fellow churchgoers or fellow spirit-mediums offer social, financial, spiritual and material support. In this way, crises of physical health have become a part of most people's everyday experience.



### **A view from the survey**

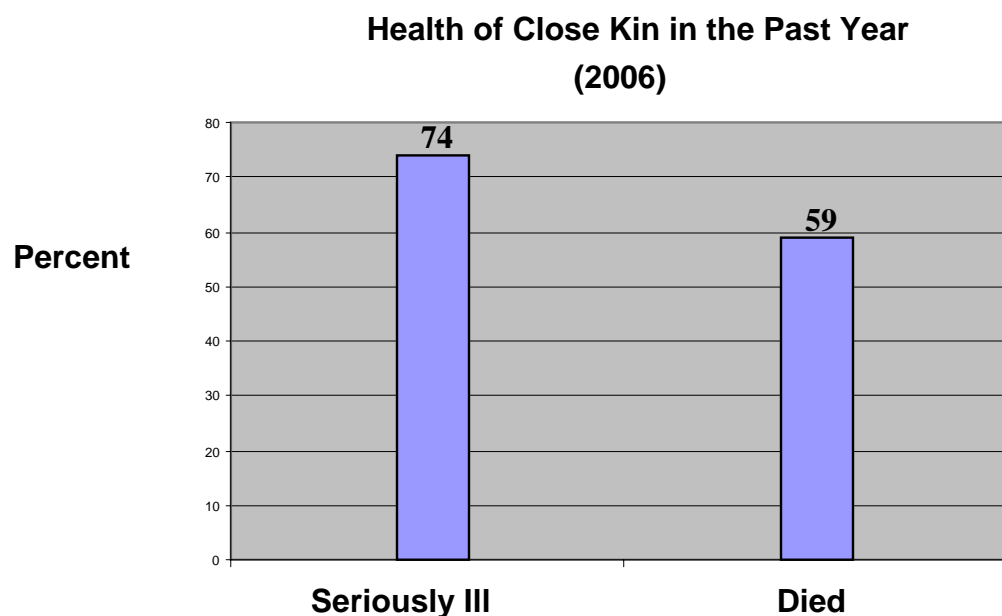
Results from the survey<sup>3</sup> I conducted in late 2006 provide a view into the magnitude of the impact of health crises in Gorongosa. In the survey, my intention was not to gather data that would represent absolute numbers or causes of illnesses or deaths, but to gauge how widespread crises of health were among more than 300 households. For this portion of the survey, we asked respondents if someone in their family had suffered a serious illness in the past year.<sup>4</sup> To this question, 74 percent of respondents answered “yes.” From follow-up questions, we learned that the average age of victims of severe illness was 28. In a related question we asked: “Has there been a death in your family in the past year?”<sup>5</sup> To this, 59 percent of respondents answered “yes,” and we learned that the average age of the victim was 30 years of age. The results, seen in Figure 5.1, are consistent with my personal experiences during two years of field work, revealing the contours of what many people regard as an unprecedented crisis:

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<sup>3</sup> For a description of the survey methodology, see the introduction.

<sup>4</sup> In our questioning, we made sure to be clear that we were asking about severe illnesses: whether acute or dangerous or prolonged. Had we asked about people’s experience with illness in general, the results, most certainly would have been close to 100%.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that for questions about deaths, we asked about the “family.” When responding about experiences with deaths in the previous year, people referenced losses they had experienced both among members of the immediate household and among extended family.



**Figure 5.1: Survey results showing the number of households impacted by severe illness or death in 2006**

These results, not intended for highly specific or defined statistical analysis, are useful to illustrate just how pervasive death and illness have become for Gorongosans of all backgrounds and social levels.

Respondent's descriptions of family members' illnesses or deaths provide similar insights, revealing the diversity of physical manifestations of ill-health. Below is a sample, selected at random, of notes taken on respondents' descriptions of household members' serious illnesses in the previous year:

**Household members' experiencing serious illness in the past year:**

- 2 people: 33 years old, fainted suddenly in the field; 28 years old, problem with ribs
- 2 people: 23 years old, headache; 26 years old, back pain
- 1 year old: diarrhea, cough
- 19 years old, stomach ache and malaria
- 21 years old, headache
- 25 years old, asthma
- child, cholera

- 16 years old, dizziness, stomach pains
- 21 years old, anemia
- 2 people: 14 years old, measles; 26 years old, malaria
- 6 months old; malaria (4+ stage), anemia, dehydration. Blood transfusion led to infection forcing amputation of both legs
- 50 years old, asthma
- 12 years old, malaria
- 28 years old, cancer
- 2 people: 4 years old, malaria; 6 years old, malaria
- 2 people: 12 years old, vomiting; 24 years old, "*doença prolongada*"<sup>6</sup>
- 25 years old, TB, coughing up blood
- most people in the household, all ages: headache, stomachache, diarrhea.

A brief list of responses about the number and/or causes of deaths in the family reveals a similar diversity of causes. Again, this list is not selected for in any way:

**Family members who died in the past year<sup>7</sup>:**

- 2 people: 47 years old, sores on body; 30 years old, headache, backache
- 3 infants: hemorrhage shortly after birth; aborted by the mother; diarrhea
- 6 months old, diarrhea
- 2 people: 30 and 25 years old
- 35 years old, asthma
- 48 years old, stomach was swelling
- 30 years old, died in childbirth
- 12 years old, malaria
- 30 years old, traffic accident
- 3 people: 53 years old, body swelling; 49 years old, headache; 29 years old, beaten by thieves in Quelimane<sup>8</sup>
- 80 years old, TB
- 52 years old, couldn't eat
- 2 people: 14 years old, diarrhea; 15 years old, diarrhea and stomach pains
- 28 years old, a very strong illness
- 35 years old, malaria and headache
- 35 years old, died suddenly outside the door of the house one night
- 26 years old, "illness he goes and gets himself,"<sup>9</sup> slept with many people
- 2 people: 3 years old, malaria; 9 years old, cholera

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<sup>6</sup> "*Doença prolongada*" is a Portuguese phrase that literally means "prolonged illness." It is also a common euphemism for AIDS.

<sup>7</sup> See Footnote number 3.

<sup>8</sup> Quelimane is the capital of Zambézia Province, to the north of Gorongosa along the Indian Ocean

<sup>9</sup> "Illness he goes and gets himself" is a euphemism for AIDS

These raw data provide a glimpse into the realities of living in Gorongosa where managing illness and death has become a part of daily life. In just one year's time, most families suffered the severe illness and/or death of more than one of their household members. The lists not only offer some insight into the many ways in which illness manifests in people's lives, but also that many illnesses are preventable or easily treated. Many, however, are perplexing and shocking. While the results from the survey are useful to illustrate some of the contours of a much wider phenomenon, they provide only a crude level of detail, to which ethnographic detail can provide a useful remedy.

### **The experience of increasing illness**

Death is on all sides<sup>10</sup>

I am crying before God ... what did I do? I am sick at all times?! After this illness, another arrives, after this illness, another arrives ...<sup>11</sup>

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Living in Gorongosa from 2006-2008, I was constantly involved in peoples' concerns about physical illness. Whether suffering illness personally, caring for a sick family member or neighbor, or worrying about how to prevent and protect from physical disease, sickness figured prominently in people's minds on a daily basis. The growing pervasiveness of illness and death was something people noted as being entirely unlike their past experiences, whether the recent or the distant past.

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<sup>10</sup> Phrase in a woman's public testimonial; Sunday worship service at Free Assembly of Mozambique church; May 11, 2008. *"Estou a chorar perante Deus ... o que eu fiz?! Todo momento fico doente?! Depois, desse doença vem mais outro, depois desse doença vem mais outro ..."*

<sup>11</sup> Excerpt from another woman's testimonial; Women's worship service at Free Assembly of Mozambique; April 10, 2008.

People I talked with during long open-ended interviews took these times to express exasperation with the current state of affairs regarding physical health. Whether residents of the district capital or the slopes of Gorongosa Mountain, whether peasant farmers or members of the elite, the qualitatively different experience with physical disease was a focal point of their concerns. People often told me the stories of ill neighbors or relatives, usually adding commentary on the perplexing increase in the type, severity, and frequency of illnesses.

Describing this situation, people repeatedly observed that the illnesses striking people now are different: more severe and less treatable than in the past. One aspect frequently noted was the increasing ineffectiveness of traditional forms of medical treatment. Discussing the civil war period with one older man, he commented:

Long ago we could cure illnesses [with roots] ... Now there are so many more illnesses and so much worse, and no treatments are effective. We don't know what the causes are ...<sup>12</sup>

As this comment illustrates, the changes in the severity and frequency of illness lead people to speculate as to the causes. When I asked another woman why so many people are dying these days she responded:

I don't know what's happening to bring all these illnesses here. In the time of our mothers, before my era, it wasn't like this! ... Sometimes months would pass, sometimes years without anyone encountering death. Now, I don't know—if it's because of the war, or because of what that death is appearing so frequently, I don't know.<sup>13</sup>

A woman named Rosita made a similar observation, emphasizing the unending battles with subsequent illnesses:

Long ago, there were not many illnesses like there are now. Then, if you got sick, it would go away quickly. Now, illnesses come one after another, after

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Sr. Bento; March 21, 2008

<sup>13</sup> Interview, Mãe Terezinha; March 3, 2008

another ... and then they don't end: [*nbenda nkhabe chapera*.] If you go to a *n'ganga*, you still don't get well: *kufambira*—[to walk from one *n'ganga* to another, to another ...]—*nkhabe kuoma, basi*. [you just don't get well]<sup>14</sup>

Later, she elaborated on her children's experiences with sickness. She said, "My son, Gídio is suffering." To explain, she went on to describe all the ailments his wife had suffered in previous years. She "is sick all the time," Rosita told me, adding a laundry list of her daughter-in-law's ailments from the past year: "*nyoka* [stomach pain], *mapeko* [coughing, chest problems], diarrhea, *dzino* [tooth pain] ... all kinds of problems ... constantly, for one year now."<sup>15</sup> Rosita's commentary points to the social nature of suffering in Gorongosa. Rosita emphasized that her daughter-in-law's illnesses are the suffering of her son, Gídio. As this commentary reveals, one person's physical suffering brings suffering to all those to whom they are closely connected. Illness and death in Gorongosa are so widespread that there is hardly a person who is not affected.

### Official Statistics from the Gorongosa District Health Services

Official statistics released annually about the health status of the district's population contrast sharply with widely-shared impressions of the changing nature of physical illness. Annual reports for Gorongosa prepared by the Directorate of Health compile data from all district health centers and health posts. Detached from personal experiences and the webs of social networks that link suffering people to each other, the statistics and charts that make up these documents don't convey the experience of Gorongosans. But this is not the only disconnect. The annual reports of Gorongosa's District Hospital show overall rates of most communicable diseases to be decreasing in the past four years.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview, Rosita Jiliassi; March 19, 2008

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

The annual report from 2006 (covering years from 2003-006) shows that measles have been eradicated. An outbreak in 2003 was wiped out, with no cases reported from 2004-2006 (DPS Sofala 2007: 8). In our survey, however, several people claimed that members of the household had suffered from measles. Other commonly reported illnesses are shown to be dropping dramatically since 2006. Diarrhea, for instance, spiked in 2005 with 8,475 reported cases, dropping to 5,980 in 2006 and further, to 3,770 cases in 2007—a 37 percent decrease between 2006 and 2007 (DPS Sofala 2007: 8). Similarly, cases of dysentery are shown to be in steep decline, from 1,741 in 2005, to 1,098 in 2007. A similar picture is shown for reported cases of malaria. Malaria, with an average of 36,509 cases reported each year between 2003 and 2006 is, by far, the most reported type of illness at the district's health centers. However, in the report released at the end of 2007, the number of cases dropped by 21 percent to a total of 29,981 cases reported (DPS Sofala 2008: 8).

The sharp decreases in reported cases of communicable diseases from the district health reports are striking. Taken in combination with the widely-held perception that illnesses are increasing, these official data from the national health system are even more puzzling. In the reports, these decreases are accounted for by improvements in the district health authorities' monitoring and reporting. In the 2007 annual report, for instance, the introduction of rapid tests to diagnose malaria is the stated reason for the steep decline in malaria cases (DPS Sofala 2008: 8). Similarly, for diarrhea, "training of health technicians in epidemiological vigilance" is the stated reason for the drop in numbers (DPS Sofala 2008: 8.). With overall drops in disease incidence attributed to improvements in reporting rather than real decreases, it might be inferred that the number of patients visiting district health clinics did not decline over the same period of time. Another possible explanation is that

fewer patients presented themselves at district health centers when facing illness.

Unfortunately, since data of the total number of patient consultations is not included in these reports, it is difficult to interpret these results.

These annual reports do capture rising rates of other “endemic illnesses.” The annual report of 2007 shows cases of TB almost doubling between 2006 and 2007, from 67 to 100 (DPS Sofala 2008: 9). Efforts to eradicate leprosy have also been thwarted in recent years, with three new cases reported in 2004, and two in 2005 rising sharply to 11 in 2006 and 14 in 2007. By far, the most striking increase of reported illness has been in HIV. The number of reported cases in Gorongosa has nearly doubled each year since 2004. In 2005, the number rose from 195 to 390, and again to 453 in 2006. By 2007, the number of recorded cases of HIV climbed to 808—more than quadrupling in the space of three years. Similarly, reported cases of AIDS in the district have increased rapidly over the same period, more than doubling between 2004 and 2006 (DPS Sofala 2008: 9).

Errors in reporting are also an issue addressed in the reports. For instance, the report notes that the low number of cases of leprosy in 2004 and 2005 is due to “the failure to follow the process ...” and “the removal of personnel of peripheral health units,” leaving many cases to go unreported (DPS Sofala 2008: 9). Along these lines, the report states that reduced cases of TB reported in 2005 and 2006 do not represent a reduction in prevalence, but is “due to the lack of qualified personnel in the periphery” (DPS Sofala 2008: 9). The data also do not reveal an accurate portrait of the rate of HIV prevalence in the district, since the increasing number of reported cases is due to the opening of a voluntary testing center behind the district hospital in 2004. Finally, the report notes that shistosomiasis, intestinal parasites, and “other illnesses” are treated clinically, but without laboratory



capabilities to confirm diagnosis, observation, and reporting of these cases do not take place.

The data from the district's reports reveal the uncertainty, mystery and guesswork that surround diagnosing and reporting illnesses, even in the context of health centers. These data cannot be relied on as estimates of the state of health in the district. More than this, the annual reports from Gorongosa's district health system reveal the weakness and under-resourced nature of clinical health services in the district. As will be seen later in this chapter, the nature of government health service provision shapes Gorongosa residents' decisions when searching for therapy, contributing strongly to the search for alternative means of support for physical disease.

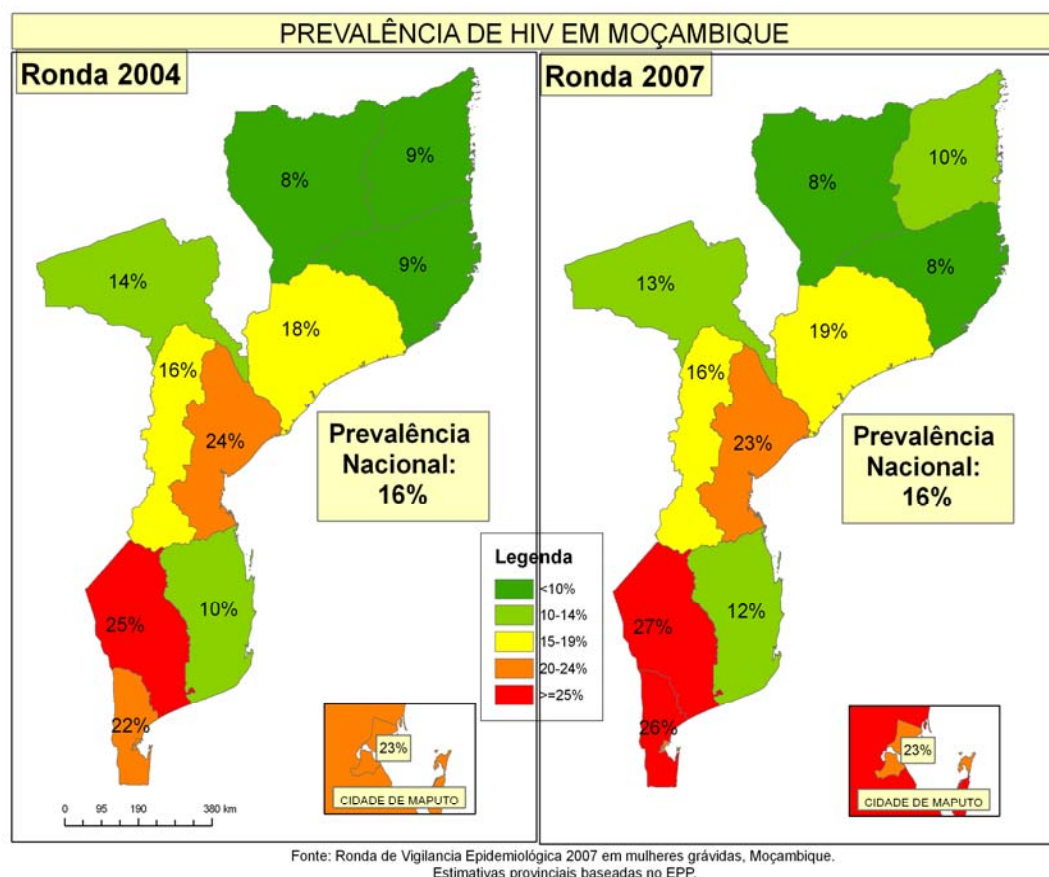
### **Contours of the AIDS Crisis in Mozambique**

The dramatic increase in the incidences of illness and death can, in large part, be explained by due to the growing prevalence of sero-positive people in the population. Many of these people have carried HIV long enough to become vulnerable to opportunistic infections. The high prevalence of HIV has led to a public health crisis beyond HIV/AIDS. People with weakened immune systems provide fertile ground for a large range of infectious diseases, reducing the overall health status of the population at large and increasing the number and range of associated illnesses. It is widely known that TB is a sister epidemic with HIV/AIDS (cf. WHO 2009). Other diseases are similarly kept more active in the population.

*The AIDS pandemic at a national level*

While HIV and AIDS is considered to be a global pandemic, the worldwide distribution of AIDS is anything but even. Sub-Saharan Africa has only 10 percent of the world's population, but 75 percent of the world's population estimated to be living with HIV (25 million), and 70 percent of the two million deaths due to AIDS in the world have occurred in Africa (UNDP 2007: iii). From the beginning, the demographic contours of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Mozambique looked significantly different from that in the Americas, spreading among the population at large, with higher prevalence rates among women.

Like the annual reports of Gorongosa District health services, early statistics of the shape of the pandemic in Mozambique are highly unrepresentative of the situation at the time. The first clinically confirmed case of AIDS in Mozambique was found in 1987 in a Haitian doctor practicing general medicine to show his solidarity with the emergent socialist nation during the intense period of the civil war (Matsinhe 2006: 36). The epidemic began



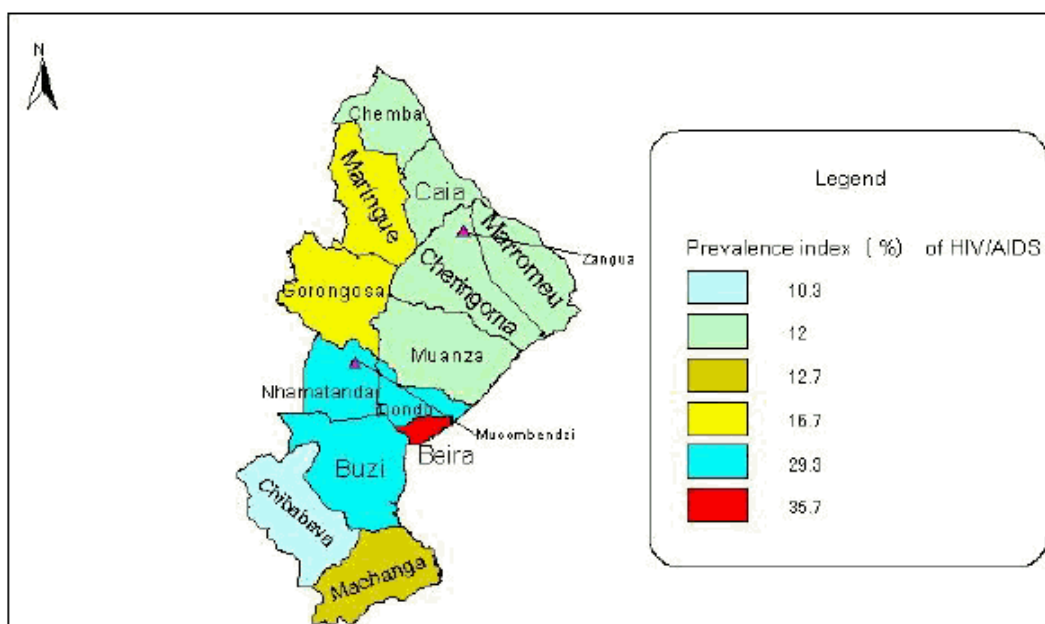
**Figure 5.2: HIV Prevalence rates in Mozambique comparing results of 2004 and 2007 sentinel survey. Source: (MISAU 2007a)**

to unfold during the civil war when access to and use of healthcare services in the country was minimal and there were no testing capabilities in the country until 1992 (Matsinhe 2006: 38).

In 2004, the estimated national HIV prevalence rate for people between the ages of 15 and 49 rose from estimates of 13.3 percent in 2002 to 16.3 percent. The most recent data available emerge from a sentinel study of 36 prenatal clinics scattered around the country, indicating a significant increase in prevalence rates in the south of the country but

an overall estimate of the rates in the country remaining stable at about 16 percent (MISAU 2007a, see Figure 5.2).

Prevalence rates of HIV and AIDS in Mozambique have consistently been higher in the center of the country. The three central provinces, Sofala, Manica and Tete have far higher HIV prevalence rates, estimated at 20.4 percent compared to 9.3 percent in the northern provinces and 18.1 percent in southern provinces (UNDP 2007: iii). As the epidemic reached its height from 2006-2008, the prevalence rate in Sofala Province<sup>16</sup> for the population aged 14-49 reached 26.5 percent—the highest in the country (UNDP 2007: 22).



**Figure 5.3: HIV Prevalence Rates in Sofala Province.** Gorongosa is shown having a prevalence rate of 12.7 percent with the rate in Beira city at 35.7 percent (FAO 2004) (map is elaborated using statistics reported in CNCS 2003)

In Beira, the provincial capital of Sofala Province, prevalence rates have surpassed 35 percent (see Figure 5.3). Because these estimates derive from surveillance data from 2004

<sup>16</sup> Gorongosa District is located in Sofala Province.

(the most recent set of complete data available), it is possible that rates have climbed even higher.

HIV prevalence rates in Sofala are so high, they stand alone in illustrating how strong an impact the spread of HIV and AIDS and the escalation in the numbers of patients suffering from impaired immune systems has been in the region. It is no coincidence that Sofala, one of the regions of Mozambique hardest hit by HIV, is also the region of the country characterized by the most severe poverty. The significance of poverty is central, impacting not only marriage and family relationships significantly,<sup>17</sup> but also affecting the availability, quality and affordability of health care in formal medical establishments.

### **HIV, regional mobility, and the situation in Gorongosa**

Despite the scaling-up of treatment programs and awareness campaigns in recent years, the transmission of HIV shows no sign of slowing. In 2007, half of all new HIV infections identified in Sofala Province—a total of 11, 242 cases—were reported in Beira—a city where many Gorongosa residents maintain strong social and financial ties. These ties between Gorongosa and Beira have deep historical roots.

During the colonial period, many laborers from Gorongosa worked for many years in Beira in industrial and service jobs. Men brought their families with them or started second families in Beira. The civil war also stirred up significant mobility. Many Gorongosans fled to the relative safety of this urban center. In most cases, the long duration of residence in Beira, if only temporary, created strong relationships that continue to connect people in both locations. Further, the phenomenon of (principally male) migration to Beira whether for higher education, wage labor jobs, itinerant trading, or to set

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<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 7.

up semi-permanent commerce activities remains a prominent and growing trend. A direct bus route links Gorongosa to Beira, facilitating this mobility.

Just as in Beira, the cases of HIV infection in Gorongosa are continuing to rise sharply. With the recent addition of HIV screening capabilities in Gorongosa, it has become much easier to monitor the recent dynamics of HIV transmission in the district. In 2007, 238 pregnant women in Gorongosa tested positive for HIV.<sup>18</sup> Other indicators have been more striking. In late June 2008, the Head Physician of Gorongosa District Hospital told me that from June 2- June 19 the hospital laboratory tested 93 patients for HIV. They found that 49 of these patients tested positive—a rate of 52.7 percent.<sup>19</sup> While this sort of information is not representative of the prevalence rate in the wider population, it does give a sense of the scale of the crisis in the district, the heavy burden on biomedical health services, and the increasing intensity of the epidemic's manifestations.

AIDS is only one part of a whole complex of diseases that creates the current situation of health and illness in Mozambique. The unique physical manifestations of opportunistic infections associated with AIDS combined with increasing prevalence of other chronic diseases, including TB and malaria, have contributed to the widespread sense in Gorongosa that the only certainty about the future is increased vulnerability to suffering. The loss of stability in thinking about the present and future creates a kind of existential vulnerability with wide-ranging impact. Poverty fuels illness, which in turn intensifies poverty in a terrible cycle. Health care provision should be one area to intervene to break this cycle. But, Mozambique's poverty is shared on a national level, resulting in poor health care for the majority of the population.

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Dr. Albertino, Gorongosa District Hospital; January 23, 2008

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Dr. Albertino, Gorongosa District Hospital; June 25, 2008

### **Challenges and Constraints for Mozambique's National Health Care System**

The overarching goal of Mozambique's Ministry of Health is "to make health care of acceptable quality available to increasing numbers of Mozambicans at little to no cost" (MISAU 2007b). The goal of equity as the central guiding principal of MISAU [Ministério de Saúde] is far from realization. Stark disparities in access to health care in Mozambique have deep historical roots. At independence, the Frelimo government inherited the system of health services set in place during Portuguese colonial rule, where "health services were poor, limited to urban areas and a few mission hospitals" (Hanlon 1991:9). During the 16-year civil war, Frelimo's efforts to improve health care provision were severely curtailed as Renamo targeted both health posts and health workers in attacks.

On top of the challenge of building the basic health care system, the Mozambican government face two tremendous obstacles to improve the current state of the national health care system and meet its overarching goal of equity. The health system has been overburdened by the effects of the HIV/AIDS crisis, making health care of acceptable quality available to smaller and smaller portions of the population. At the same time, the national government's ability to finance improvements has been greatly constrained by the nature of foreign aid. While non-governmental organizations, private foundations and bilateral donors have provided Mozambique with significant aid intended to improve the health care services, the Ministry of Health has had limited control of how most of the aid is spent.

**“Medicines without Doctors”**

A severe shortage of health care personnel presents the Ministry of Health with one of the most significant challenges to providing equitable health care to all Mozambicans. Official statistics from the World Health Organization show that in 2004 there were 514 active physicians, 3,954 nurses, and 2,229 midwives in the country (WHO 2006). This translates to 0.39 health workers per 1,000 people (Ooms, et.al. 2007). In the context of the HIV/AIDS crisis, the health care worker shortage makes it difficult to provide patients with crucial access to anti-retroviral therapy (ART). For instance, in Africa, 12 countries with an estimated HIV prevalence rate above five percent and less than two nurses per 1,000 people, Mozambique has the lowest health worker-to-population ratio. Thus, “in terms of expanding access to ART, no country faces a bigger health worker crisis than Mozambique” (Ooms, et.al. 2007).

While Mozambique’s national population-to-health care worker ratio is striking, this figure reveals only a small part of the picture. If these data were to be organized regionally or according to urban/rural areas, Mozambique’s health worker shortage would look much more severe. The latest publicly available data from Mozambique’s Ministry of Health show that in 2005, there were 652 medical doctors working in the country, 225 of whom were foreign doctors working on short term contracts (MISAU 2009). Of the 427 Mozambican doctors working in the public health system in 2005, 74 worked in the northern region, 110 in the central provinces, and 335 in the south (MISAU 2009). Thus, in addition to rural areas, the central and northern regions of the country are significantly more underserved than the southern region. Data for nurses and other health workers reveals similar regional disparities.



Fiscal austerity measures imposed by the IMF and the World Bank have limited the Ministry of Health's ability to improve the health worker shortage. As one report has pointed out, "IMF policies constrain both significant increases in health spending and employment of vital staff" (Wemos 2006: ii). For example, a recent report from the World Bank states that it is "not prudent for countries to commit permanent expenditures for such items as salaries for nurses and doctors on the basis of uncertain financing flows from development assistance funds" (Wagstaff and Claeson 2004:152). In line with this cautionary view on the uses of aid, the IMF has imposed "budget ceilings," which have forced the national government to cap total spending on employees (Wemos 2006). This has created a "vicious circle" where "bilateral donors cannot support salaries of doctors and nurses, even if they want to" (Ooms, et.al. 2007: e128).

In this situation, most bilateral aid earmarked for health care services has been flowing into prevention programs, pharmaceutical purchases and capital-intensive projects such as the construction or maintenance of health facilities. Focusing on diseases and infrastructure to improve healthcare is creating "medicine without doctors" (Ooms, et. al. 2007). Further, with constraints on expenditures for health workers' wages, MISAU is unable to offer significant incentives to encourage health workers to move to underserved areas, making it difficult to reduce the sharp regional disparities in distribution of trained staff. As will be seen, the shortage of health workers, nearly all of whom feel they are underpaid and overworked, is a primary factor in the failure of the government health sector to meet the needs of Gorongosa residents.

## Gorongosa's Health Care System: An Overview

In 2007, the government health care infrastructure in Gorongosa District consisted of 19 healthcare facilities. These facilities included one “health center” (the Centro de Saúde de Gorongosa—widely known as the district “hospital,”<sup>20</sup> see Figure 5.4); ten “health centers of type III (small health centers in more remote population centers that offer basic health services and maternity facilities, see Figure 5.5); and eight “health posts” (offering only minimal health services on an outpatient basis) (DPS 2008: 32). The ten small health centers and eight rural health posts have extremely limited supplies and services. In practice, these health centers serve mostly as centers for triage. Patients with complicated conditions that cannot be addressed in these rural outposts are transferred to the health center in the district capital. Unfortunately, most of these rural health centers do not have vehicles, so patients and their families must either finance their transport (where available) or walk long distances to receive care.

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<sup>20</sup>According to classifications in the health system set up by the Ministry of Health, Gorongosa's health center does not qualify as a “hospital,” but nearly all residents of the district, including health workers, referred to the facility as a “hospital.” Future reference to the “district hospital” in this writing refers to Gorongosa's “Centro de Saúde.” It is important to note that, during the period of my research, a new building was being constructed to expand the Centro de Saúde, increasing the services provided to district residents in order to raise the facility to the level of “District Hospital.” In all my references to “district hospital” below, I do not liken this facility to a health center meeting the official standards of “district hospital” according to the criteria of the Ministry of Health.



**Figure 5.4: The front entrance to Gorongosa District's main health center**

The basic resources available at Gorongosa's nineteen health centers are limited. By far, the health center in the district capital has the lion's share of resources, making it the treatment center for all of the district's residents. There are 100 beds available in the district as a whole—58 in the district hospital, numbers ranging from three to five in the ten health centers, and none in the health posts (DPS 2008: 32). The district's central health center has 17 refrigerators, whereas only eight of ten health centers have one or two and, again, the health posts have none (DPS 2008: 32). There was only one ambulance for the entire district up until 2006 when the number of hospital vehicles was increased to three. Finally, Gorongosa's district health system has access to twelve motorcycles, up from nine in 2005 (DPS 2008: 32). Only five health centers have access to these vehicles, and health posts, have none.



**Figure 5.5: The Health Center of Canda-Nyamadzi, typical of the ten Type III health centers in the district that provide only basic health services**

The human resources of the health sector in Gorongosa are similarly meager. In 2007, there were 46 clinical health workers in Gorongosa District. Of these, there was one doctor of internal medicine and only four “técnicos” of general medicine—health workers with four years of specialized medical training. These more highly trained health workers were based at the central health facility in the district capital. Other clinical health workers in the district had only basic levels of training.

Gorongosa’s only medical doctor is responsible not only for the 19 health units in Gorongosa District, but also for seven health units in neighboring Maringué District. Given the reach of his or her responsibilities, the effective doctor-patient ratio is 1: 192,001.<sup>21</sup> The second doctor to take this post during the time of my field work, Dr.

<sup>21</sup> Gorongosa’s population: 116,912 plus Maringué’s population: 75,089; (INE 2009).

Albertino, found his duties to be overwhelming. In addition to his regular responsibilities at the hospital, twice each month, he made educational and clinical visits to different population centers far from the district capital.<sup>22</sup> For these trips he took a contingent from the central health facility along with him. They spent the entire day with residents in these areas leading educational programs, listening to complaints,<sup>23</sup> providing consultations and rapid tests for malaria and HIV, and giving transfers to the central health center to those who needed them. In addition to these rural health outreach programs, he was constantly being called away to meetings in Maputo, Chimoio, Beira, and other places.<sup>24</sup> Given the demands on his time, Dr. Albertino was frequently unavailable to see patients at the district hospital. When he was present, he was hard at work all day and, living directly adjacent to the hospital, he was effectively always on call.

### **Patient experiences of Gorongosa's healthcare services**

A shortage of health care workers, combined with the rise in patients needing treatment has created a crisis in the national health system. The cascade of effects from this situation makes visits to health centers an unpleasant and even dangerous experience. Gorongosans are often derided by health workers for avoiding or delaying treatment in health facilities. Assumptions are made that those who delay their visits to health posts do not understand the value of “scientific” medicine.<sup>25</sup> But visits to health posts are often not at the top of people's hierarchy of resort for a host of reasons unrelated to cultural beliefs

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Medico Chefe Albertino; January 23, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> He told me that most complaints come from pregnant women who claim they are insulted by the staff at the health centers.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Medico Chefe Albertino; January 23, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> See also Chapter 3.

about effective treatments. Treatment at health centers comes with a host of hidden costs. These costs, not all of which are monetary, prove to be a significant barrier when people make decisions about how to manage crises of physical health. The discussion below provides detailed insight into Gorongosa resident's experiences as clients of the district's health services and the reasons many people have come to treat the district's health facilities as a last resort.

**“If you pay only the required fee they will ‘despachar’”: Paying for attention**

According to official guidelines from the Ministry of Health, government health services provided at district health centers are meant to be affordable to all patients. A standard consultation fee of 6 MTN (approx 0.20 USD) sets a manageable hurdle that most rural residents can afford. In addition to this fee, basic pharmaceuticals are provided for another nominal fee of 6 MTN. More specialized medicines, however, must be purchased at subsidized prices. While official costs of biomedical health care are low, in actual practice, healthcare can become prohibitively expensive for many Gorongosa residents. Hidden “unofficial costs” paid to health workers prove to be a significant barrier to receiving effective treatment.

The quote that forms the heading of this section has become a common sentiment in Gorongosa regarding unofficial costs. *Despachar* is a Portuguese word that literally means to “dispatch” or “expedite.” In its common usage, people use *despachar* to refer to situations when an unconcerned person gives minimal attention to another. This word is most frequently used to describe instances when civil servants tend to clients out of obligation, but give no real assistance. To *despachar* in this way gives the impression that a client is

being attended, in order to get them quickly out of the way. In the context of clinical health services, people frequently complain they are being *despachar-ed*—offered only minimal attention or given token medicine, like aspirin, for a serious condition.

From past experience, many Gorongosans expect they will receive this kind of treatment unless they bring extra money or gifts to “pay” hospital staff to give them full consideration. For instance, talking about the rural health post in K’handu, one woman told me:

If you only pay the required 5<sup>26</sup> MTN fee, you won’t get good treatment, they will *despachar* ... you must come with at least 50 MTN or some other kind of offering like a chicken or potatoes in order to receive consideration and good medicines.<sup>27</sup>

This kind of report on experiences with health posts in Gorongosa was quite common:

Now, when you go for a consultation, you have to pay 6 MTN and you are often not given *maquinino ya shuwa*<sup>28</sup> [good/true medicines]. If they give you medicines, they are weak or not appropriate—they will just give you paracetamol and only give you a few—just two or three. To be given good medicines and of sufficient quantity, you must bring money or gifts for the nurse.<sup>29</sup>

Another woman summed this situation up nicely, telling me that nurses “want things. If you want to be cured,” she told me, “you must give them things.”

In a widely understood, yet unspoken system, hidden payments to health staff are required to receive appropriate attention. This contributes to the financial burden of illness. The situation is compounded if a serious problem requires transfer to another facility. Because Gorongosa’s hospital has limited facilities and services, transfer of patients to other

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<sup>26</sup> The Ministry of Health raised the standard consultation fee from 5 to 6 MTN during the period of my research.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Rosita Jiliasse; March 21, 2008.

<sup>28</sup> *Maquinino*- (pl, medicine) comes from “quinine.” The name for this once common treatment for malaria has been generalized to mean “medicine” in chiGorongosi. *Shuwa*- is a word from Shona, an adaptation of the English word “sure.” *Shuwa* in this context means, “true” or “effective”

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Sinista Venessi; March 22, 2008.

institutions is quite common. While some patients receive transport free of charge in hospital vehicles, these vehicles have limited space. To claim a spot, a “payment” may be needed, and caretakers often have to find and pay for their own transportation. Travel to and from nearby cities for treatment quickly becomes quite costly.

Worse, when a condition requires hospitalization, hidden payments can be a daily requirement. Different nurses visit the wards at specified hours—usually once in the morning, once in the afternoon and once at night. From what many patients have told me, each attending nurse needs a special payment each day in order to ensure proper treatment. The longer a hospital stay, the more the costs pile up.

Once, I accompanied a family to the Central Hospital in Beira when the head of their household became severely ill. His wife, who stayed with him at the hospital throughout his month-long hospitalization, told me she had to give 50 MTN<sup>30</sup> to each attending nurse each day so that they would come and change his IV drip and re-set the needle when necessary. But, she quickly ran out of money and could no longer provide nurses with monetary “incentives.” When her payments stopped, the care they received also suffered. Weeks later, when I returned to visit the patient, he was moaning in pain. The IV was improperly set and fluid was entering his flesh and causing painful swelling. Despite his wife’s calls for help, they waited hours before someone came to rectify the situation.

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<sup>30</sup> This is equivalent to approximately 2USD. At the time, this was enough money in Gorongosa to buy a chicken to feed the family.



## Two “hospitals”: differential treatment

Interestingly, unofficial payments are not required of all patients. Members of Gorongosa’s local elite who circulate in the same tight social networks as hospital staff are not required to make the same kind of informal payments to receive a high level of care. The contrast between the treatment and services provided to patients of different socio-economic standing in Gorongosa is so stark as to create the reality of “two different hospitals” in the district. When I visited people who had been hospitalized, I got an up close look at the kind of treatment they received. Most wards in Gorongosa’s central health facility are dark and dingy and oppressively stuffy during the hot season. In these wards, light comes in through small windows or lattice work in cement blocks at the far end. Metal cots with thin mattresses line both walls, leaving little space for the many caretakers who accompany patients. During some of these visits, I spent hours without seeing a single staff member tending patients in the ward.



Figure 5.6: A pediatric ward in Gorongosa’s main health center, typical of the crowded wards

However, a separate ward, unofficially reserved for elite patients made some people's hospital experience quite different. I visited one such woman in her 20's who had come down with what appeared to be TB. She was in a small, bright ward at the front of the hospital, where sunlight streamed in and air circulated through open windows extending the length of the room. Hers was one of three beds in the freshly-painted room. Beds were widely spaced and separated by privacy screens.

It was clear that she had been given this special bed in a separate, almost private, ward not because of monetary payment, but because of her father's social standing. Her father, a prominent figure in Gorongosa, had built a restaurant/disco/motel facility in the center of town. He was friendly with many of the hospital staff, who were frequent clients of his business. As a member of Gorongosa's higher society, hospital staff were eager to treat his daughter as they would treat another family member. Those I saw on duty during my visits showed a genuine concern for her and her family. Multiple staff members came by to monitor her condition, and when the family had questions or needs, they were heard and promptly attended.

Residents of Gorongosa with financial and social capital are able to draw on these resources to mitigate the costs of health care and access higher quality health services. Prominent figures are able to harness their social capital to receive a level of care and attention quite unlike what is typically available to those whose social position means little or nothing to hospital staff.

To be fair, most health facilities in Mozambique are understaffed and health care workers are unable to keep up with the patients load. "Informal payments" from patients help overworked staff organize their priorities. The common practice of unspoken fees for

poorer residents is, in a sense, a monetary gift that temporarily raises their status in order to receive greater consideration. Most patients at Gorongosa's health facilities do not have the means or willingness to use precious resources for these kinds of payments. Thus, they receive a very different kind of care.

### **Loss of Labor in the Home and Fields**

Another hidden cost of hospital stays is the loss of labor. In district hospitals in Mozambique, bedridden patients must rely on the help of family members or loved ones for daily care. Helping a patient to the bathroom, or using and cleaning bed pans, feeding, changing and washing the patient's clothes, among other tasks, are the duty of the patient and their support network. In most cases, a close family member will take primary responsibility for a patient's care, spending most of the day at the hospital and often camping out there, sleeping on the floor outside the ward or next to the patient's bed to ensure that their needs are met.

At Gorongosa's district hospital, meals are prepared in an outdoor kitchen, and when the time has come to serve the food, a long line quickly forms. Most patients are unable to stand in line, so their caretakers wait in their place. Bowls, cups, plates and utensils are not provided. Because of the unappetizing nature of this food and a fear that it is even potentially dangerous, many caretakers bring home-cooked meals to the hospital in plastic containers. Others, whose homes are too distant, prepare meals on site, set up small charcoal stoves in the court yard.

Because of these demands, a severe illness of one family member means the loss of labor of at least two household members. For agriculturalists, this can bring about a new

kind of crisis if the hospital stay coincides with an intensive period of field labor:

planting, weeding or harvesting. Significant delays in attending to fields can jeopardize an entire family's means of subsistence and of surplus produce sold for cash. When they have the means to do so, many families facing such crises hire a temporary contract laborer to perform time-sensitive labor in their fields, but many families cannot manage such added expense.

### **“They have naked medicines”: pharmaceuticals and the black market**

They have false medicines: *mitombo ya pezi*<sup>31</sup> ... *hapana chinbu* [the medicines they give patients are worthless, “naked”] ... People go around and sell them for cash instead of giving them to patients.<sup>32</sup>

The sentiment expressed above, that hospitals and clinics give patients weak or ineffective medicines because the “good” and potent medications are sold for profit to wandering traders is based at least partly in fact. Though the hospital pharmacy in Gorongosa stocks a wide array of medicines, many patients of low status are sent home with only aspirin or paracetamol for conditions calling for more specialized medications. Sometimes patients can't meet the (official or unofficial) fees for such medicines. Also, they are frequently told that what they require is out of stock. These shortages are created, at least in part, by pharmacists selling hospital medicines on the black market.

Ironically, the difficulty of obtaining medicines at the district health center fuels the business of black market traders based in the district capital. These male traders of pharmaceuticals are popularly known as *kandongas*. Since there is no formal pharmacy in the

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<sup>31</sup> “*Pezi*” is the chiGorongosi word for “naked.” Here, “*mitombo ya pezi*” means “ineffective/empty medicines.”

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Mãe Amélia; March 24, 2008.

district, their services are in high demand. *Kandongas* are familiar to town residents, but they run quiet operations, since they trade mostly illegally-sourced goods. They typically carry their medicines around in padded, soft-cooler shoulder bags. Their location is never set, but there are patterns to their movements, so people know where they might find them. Also, many people know where *kandongas* live and can go directly to their homes or reach them by cell phone since they usually give out their numbers to customers to facilitate future contact.



**Figure 5.7: *Kandongas* selling prescription medicines<sup>33</sup>**

*Kandongas* charge prices that are slightly higher than the cost of the same medicines at private pharmacies<sup>34</sup> in nearby urban centers. Their clientele are typically people of means who can afford to buy medicines at unsubsidized prices. However, many poorer residents of Gorongosa also make use of their services, gathering up enough money to make a purchase since it is too costly and time-consuming to travel to one of the nearby provincial capitals to buy medicines. *Kandongas* also give consultations and recommend

<sup>33</sup> Photo by André Catueira, (IRIN 2008).

<sup>34</sup> In urban centers in Mozambique there are both public and private pharmacies. The private operations have a wider selection of medications and assorted health and beauty items for sale and the shops are typically new and have attractive displays. Public pharmacies charge much lower prices, but do not carry as wide a selection.

treatments to their customers. Typically, if a client doesn't know which specific drug to ask for, they describe the symptoms of the patient and receive a recommended medication and treatment regimen. Thus, some people consult *kandongas* as an alternative to visiting a hospital or clinic.

The *kandonga* I knew did not confirm or deny that he got his medicines from the pharmacies of public institutions, and he told me that he bought some of his supplies from private pharmacies in Beira. He even took special orders from clients and occasionally made trips to source the items requested. But, his supplies alone revealed that some of the medicines he was selling came from the Ministry of Health's pipeline, as the packaging (in bulk, generic-looking containers) and labeling ("gift of the Swedish government," for instance) made it clear that at least some of his wares were intended for distribution through government health centers.

Later, I had the opportunity to ask a pharmacist working in a government clinic in Beira if these accusations were true. I was surprised to hear him confirm patients' complaints without reservation:

Yes. It's true. Very true. But I wouldn't call those people who work in the hospital thieves. They're trying to get by. They have children at home in school ... School is expensive! Very expensive!<sup>35</sup>

"The thieves," he was very clear to emphasize, "are the ones at the top. These at the bottom, they are just trying to get by and support their families at home." He explained that government nurses receive pay in the form of wages, not salary, and that the typical pay is 3,500 MTN (about \$120) per month. He added that someone with more experience can

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Arcan; February 18, 2008

receive up to 4,500 MTN a month, but even this, he told me: “This is not enough to live on!”<sup>36</sup>

The siphoning of pharmaceuticals from the government health system is not a problem isolated to individual health centers. The problem is systematic, taking place at many levels. For instance, in August 2007, 100 Mozambican health officials were placed under scrutiny for involvement in supplying organized leaders of the black market pharmaceuticals trade with drugs intended for distribution through the Ministry of Health. Pharmaceuticals have been stolen from airports, warehouses, dispensaries and other sites and resold on black markets (Mangwino 2006). Further down the line, pharmacy workers supply prescription medicines to individual traders to supplement their income. The Ministry of Health is very much aware of this situation and is working with the police to punish those involved (c.f. IRIN 2008).

The difficulty of access to prescription medications has very real and tragic results. One woman I interviewed had lost her 26 year old son in 2007 after a full year of chronic illness, vomiting, and fever. The treatment he received at the district hospital had not helped him. His mother was losing all faith in the district hospital, telling me that she had been at the hospital recently for malaria. They gave her an injection and sent her away without malaria medication, saying they had run out.<sup>37</sup> Barriers to obtaining effective medicines have contributed to the sentiment that, in many circumstances, visiting health clinics in Gorongosa is a waste of time and money.

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Mãe Fineja; February 21, 2008.

**“Why should I go to the hospital only to receive aspirin and be insulted?”<sup>38</sup>:  
Attitudes towards patients at Gorongosa’s health units**

Another “cost” for patients at Gorongosa’s health centers is the psychological burden of mistreatment and disrespect. Like most government functionaries, Gorongosa’s chief physician as well as the staff of nurses and health technicians, are mostly people from outside the district who see themselves as distinctly different from most Gorongosans. Many of these paid government employees maintain a different standard of living from the majority of Gorongosa’s peasant farmers. Occupying a different social position, internalized neocolonial attitudes justify their high social and economic standing on the basis of moral and cultural superiority.<sup>39</sup>

As the changing economic situation deepens the differences between people of different means, the tensions associated with this growing social divide are played out in the health care setting. Hoping to claim a firm position among the socially elite, nurses and hospital technicians whose financial position is more insecure often have the sharpest negative attitude towards patients whose poverty is visibly embodied. They enact attitudes and forms of personhood that differentiate themselves from those trapped in lower classes in an effort to widen the social gap. In their encounters with impoverished residents, many health workers treat patients with rudeness, disdain and disrespect. This makes visits to health centers unpleasant and stressful for most Gorongosa residents.

In conversation, many Gorongosans recounted their interactions with staff at the district hospital or one of the outlying health centers, expressing anger and frustration at the insults they suffered. Most often, they spoke about demeaning attitudes and degrading comments. Other times, people shared stories that illustrated more excessive mistreatment.

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<sup>38</sup> Field notes, conversation with Mãe Belita; March 1, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> See also Chapter 3.



One woman and her husband recounted the tale of their youngest child's birth. When she was going into labor late one night, they walked to the health center and when they asked the nurse inside to open the doors to attend to them, he refused. She ended up giving birth on the veranda.<sup>40</sup> Another woman told me of a time when, after a divorce she was so distraught she tried to poison herself. Her family rushed her to the hospital. At the hospital, the nurses taunted her, saying: "Why should we waste our time trying to save you if you wanted to kill yourself?"<sup>41</sup> They told her she should lie down in the road outside and wait for a semi-truck to run her over. They taunted her further: "You're upset because your husband divorced you?! Can't you go home, make a house for yourself there and live on your own?"<sup>42</sup> After this verbal abuse, she was admitted for treatment, but made to sleep on the floor during her three-day stay. Hospital staff refused to give her a bed, saying they wanted to reserve the beds for patients who had fallen ill against their own will.

Though these cases are extreme, they serve to illustrate how health care workers' attitudes can become abusive. This kind of disrespect underlies the most mundane interactions between Gorongosa residents and hospital staff. One aspect of this attitude is a sense of moral and cultural superiority that leads health staff to look on suffering patients with disdain, considering them to be responsible for their own condition. As seen in the discussion of Dra.'s Celia's comments about Gorongosans' health seeking behavior (see Chapter 3), there is a widespread attitude among health professionals that poor residents are to blame for their own suffering. Many health workers complain that Gorongosans delay their visits to hospitals for so long that they arrive with conditions too severe to be treated.

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Sereniya; October 25, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Field Notes; September 25, 2007.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

Health care staff attribute late arrivals to health posts to irrational fear of the treatments and services offered, or to residents' greater faith in *curandeiros*.<sup>43</sup>

But, Gorongosans' choices regarding treatment in government health centers are complex. In addition to the costs and ineffectiveness of treatment described above, their decisions are also significantly influenced by the reputations of the staff at these posts. People who lived near health posts staffed by people who had gained a reputation for being haughty and rude, were more likely to treat the health center as a last resort. Residents living near health posts staffed by personnel known for kindness and generosity tended to visit the posts more frequently. The district's chief physician during the second half of my fieldwork was one of these people. I heard widespread commentary about his kindness, attentiveness and general attitude of respect with patients. In an interview, and in observations of his work, I was similarly impressed. His attitude, energy and visible concern quickly eased timid patients who came expecting to be mistreated. There are other health workers who gained similar reputations. The prevailing attitude among health professionals in Gorongosa, however, is unfortunately not like that of the chief physician.

The sense of social separateness that leads hospital staff to see themselves as morally and socially superior to the majority of their patients creates a significant barrier to treatment. Health workers are partly correct in their observations that Gorongosans avoid or delay visits to health centers for social reasons. Social barriers to treatment, however, are of a different kind than they assume.

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<sup>43</sup> "Curandeiro" is a Portuguese word used to refer to a wide variety of traditional healers.

## Underpaid, overworked

In combination with a deep sense of superiority, the attitude of many health professionals in Mozambique is shaped by their work conditions. Personnel of health centers in Mozambique typically are overworked and underpaid and therefore disgruntled. Unfortunately, it is the patients who often bear the brunt of their professional frustrations and their efforts to supplement insufficient wages.

An interview with one health care worker provided insight to the far-reaching effects of the shortage of health workers and their low wages. He worked at a government health center as one of three staff members who filled more than 500 prescriptions a day. To supplement the meager income of this government job, he also took on two jobs in private pharmacies in the city. “Sometimes,” he explained, exasperated, “I work 24 hours in a day, without rest! I start at 7:30 a.m. one morning and leave at 7:30 a.m. the next day. Then I have to be at my job at the pharmacy from 8:30-12:30.”<sup>44</sup> His comments encapsulated the source of health workers’ callous attitude:

I lost the feeling of care I had for patients when I started ... that feeling that you want to do anything and everything possible to bring this person back to health. I no longer care anymore. You know, I lost—I have already lost that feeling inside. It is this government job that has killed that sentiment. Now, I feel nothing! I don’t know *how many* deaths I see each day! So many! But, ah! To hear that one died—I don’t feel anything! I no longer have that humane sentiment inside. It has been extinguished.

He told me that the feeling he has is widespread among his colleagues, including his wife who was a nursing resident in Gorongosa at the time:

They are all sad ... if they are working those [government health] jobs, this doesn’t mean that they want to work there ... it is just because they have nothing else to do! They are not “*animados*.”<sup>45</sup> They have no hope that things

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<sup>44</sup>Interview with Arcan; February 18, 2008.

<sup>45</sup> “*Animado*” is a Portuguese word, here meaning “motivated.” In this context, the speaker is referring to monetary incentives to work with gusto.

are going to change. They just keep on going each day only looking forward to die later. This is why you find nurses passing by sick people in the hospital—it's full of sick people there! If someone comes to the hospital sick, severely ill, they can sit there all day and never be attended—the nurse passes them by in the corridor without even looking at them ... as if they were a cockroach. Yes, people have lost the human feeling. They see people as just cockroaches that can just die like that.<sup>46</sup>

This powerful statement captures an apathetic attitude that is widespread among health workers. As the above statement implies, most staff of government health units find themselves in these jobs not out of vocation, but out of necessity to support their families. In Mozambique, the opportunities for higher education and training programs leading to stable jobs continue to be extremely limited. Most high school graduates find themselves having to choose between teacher training and health sector training courses. For many, this decision is not based on a personal motivation. Those who do enter the health sector with “the human feeling” as a guiding force, find it quickly supplanted by apathy, anger and frustration. Health workers' frustrations with their working conditions and meager salaries end up negatively impacting patients. Again, this health worker expressed this in articulate prose:

The problem is that this is a fight between health service professionals and the government ... but unfortunately, as happens with war, it's the grass that suffers.<sup>47</sup> The poor people have nothing to do with this, but in the end, they are the biggest victims.<sup>48</sup>

The attitudes of dissatisfied health workers severely affects their treatment of patients and this has real impacts on the health-seeking practices of Gorongosa residents.

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<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> “It's the grass that suffers” refers to a common proverb: “When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers,” see Chapter 2.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Arcan; February 18, 2008.

**“The hospital is where you go in with one disease and come out with three”**

Another pervasive idea about health centers in Gorongosa, particularly the district hospital, is that they are dangerous places. Over the course of my time in Gorongosa, I often heard people express their reticence to go to the hospital because of previous personal experiences. One woman I interviewed told me that, ever since her son died in the hospital, she has been afraid to go there herself or to take any of her other family members there for treatment.<sup>49</sup> Since her son’s death, she first seeks therapeutic intervention from her church pastor who will provide her with special personalized prayer. Only in severe circumstances will she risk a visit to the hospital. Another woman, a practicing spirit-medium, provided a similar account, in this case citing experiences she has had with her children acquiring bad infections from vaccinations administered at the district hospital. These experiences also led her to visit the hospital for treatment only as an option of last resort.<sup>50</sup>

The limited resources available at the district’s health posts pose real challenges to preventing the spread of infectious diseases. Though the degree to which health centers contribute to the spread of infections is difficult to quantify, what is certain is that this perception significantly impacts Gorongosan’s health care decisions. During periods of my research, the district health center had no piped water infrastructure. A tank supplied several water taps located on hospital grounds. Later, when piped water was connected inside the hospital, these facilities were unofficially reserved for the use of hospital staff and elite patients and their caregivers. Most patients remained without bathing facilities, and sanitation problems continued. Patients used outdoor latrines or the hospital grounds (in

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Maria-Zinha; March 20, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Racida António; October 11, 2007.

emergencies). They walked down a hill to the stream behind the hospital to bathe and wash clothing.

Further, the 58 beds at the district hospital were always in high demand. Tightly packed and poorly ventilated wards created high potential for the spread of contagions. When I visited one woman who was admitted for AIDS that manifested primarily as TB, I was shocked by the conditions in her ward. A large number of patients were crowded into a small space, exacerbated by the presence of each patient's caregiver and their belongings. Many patients were coughing up bodily fluids and expiating into open containers which were set on the floor beside or under the patient's bed, close to where the caregiver slept at night or rested during the day. Poorly ventilated, hot, and smelly the ward was also buzzing with flies.



**Figure 5.8:** Problems with sanitation are visible here in these hospital sheets drying on the line outside Gorongosa District's hospital.

One story clearly reveals why hospitals have gained a reputation as being places to catch illnesses rather than places of recovery. In early 2008, an outbreak of cholera hit Gorongosa District. It was so large that the hospital set up a temporary outdoor ward to isolate patients and contain its spread. During this period, stories began to circulate of patients who went in with a simple problem and ended up catching cholera while at the hospital. One man told me his brother-in-law had gone to the hospital for malaria, but developed severe diarrhea and vomiting while there for treatment. Not only did he not find resolution of his problem at the hospital, his stay led to his death.<sup>51</sup>

Other indications point to the hospital as the source of the wider outbreak of cholera in town. A member of Pastor Zimba's church who worked as a health volunteer in the district, joined with other members of their community sanitation team to bring the problem to the attention of the District Director of Health. She told me:

We presented this case to the District Director of Health. We told him: "This here is the hospital, but sicknesses are coming from here in the hospital! Because patients from the hospital here go and bathe in the Matucudur Stream, and that cholera is continually moving! People are taking baths down there, washing plates, and then this causes more—causes more cases of diarrhea! MORE people infected with diarrhea."<sup>52</sup>

At the time of our interview, there had only been two cases of cholera found in patients living on the western side of town. The majority of cholera patients were residents of the eastern side of town near the hospital, particularly in a neighborhood known as Matucudur, after the name of the stream that runs through that area. She told me that their group told the Gorongosa District Director of Health that the hospital should provide patients with bathing and washing facilities. "The director didn't know that patients went to bathe in the river!" When I asked how he didn't know this, she told me:

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<sup>51</sup> Field notes; January 8, 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Mãe Terezinha; March 3, 2008.

He didn't know because inside [the hospital] there is a bathroom for women who give birth. But, these bathrooms aren't being used by the women. These women go out to bathe in the Matucudur. The director didn't know anything about this because it is the midwives who are [saying] 'you can't, definitely not—you can't bathe here in these bathrooms because you will make them dirty!'<sup>53</sup>

Lack of sanitation in health centers is a problem throughout the country, especially in rural areas. In Mozambique, an estimated 57 percent of the rural population (about 9 million people) lacks access to safe drinking water (Ansah Ayisi 2007). Like the areas they serve, many rural health centers around the country rely on special staff and patients' caregivers to fetch water to keep water containers at the health centers stocked. Lack of bathing facilities also pose serious challenges to keeping health centers safe for both patients and the surrounding community, as the cholera outbreak in Gorongosa illustrates. Lack of electricity or unreliable sources of electricity pose other significant problems for health service delivery. Many rural health centers have propane or kerosene powered refrigerators to keep temperature-sensitive medicines. Over the long run, possible breakdowns in these coolers and frequent power outages put the safety of pharmaceuticals at risk.

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Though district health workers often explained the phenomenon of late arrivals of rural Gorongosa residents as an irrational fear of Western medicine, the reality is quite different. The widespread reticence to seek treatment in district health facilities is based on personal and collective experiences with the system's weaknesses, dangers, and failures. The Ministry of Health is working hard to overcome constraints and improve health care provision. During the period of my field work, a major expansion project was under way to upgrade Gorongosa's health center to the level of district hospital. This infrastructural

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*



improvement promises to improve the quality of the facilities, increasing space and adding to the number of services the health center provides. But, this project did not come to completion during the period I was there, and the potential benefits of these much-needed changes had not yet become available.

The many improvements to the district hospital in Gorongosa as well as ongoing efforts of the Ministry of Health to train new health care workers and physicians will, over time, surely lead to improvement in access to medical care. If health services improve significantly, residents of Gorongosa and other underserved rural areas in the country may respond by seeking treatment in health centers earlier and more often. But, given constraints such changes are uncertain and will certainly come slowly. Health care workers' attitudes are also more difficult to combat.

### **Discussion/Conclusion: The hospital as complementary medicine**

The healing work of spirit-mediums and church groups is filling in the many wide gaps in the national health care system. Seeking intervention of *n'gangas* or church leaders for treatment offers patients with comfortable, safe, flexible, and respectful environments. Even when the provision of health care in Gorongosa is poor, and even though the nature of treatment at district health centers is costly and unpleasant, many people still seek relief from physical illness in this realm. Biomedical treatments form one layer of a broader search for healing. But rarely is biomedical treatment sufficient when confronting major health crises. Health centers are usually a stop on a larger therapeutic odyssey. Biomedicine treats symptoms of disease, but not its underlying causes. It may resolve an individual

person's physical suffering, but it does not address the misfortune of that person's wider family.

As seen in Chapter 1, physical illness and other types of misfortune are seen as signs of underlying disorder. The material causes of physical illness—medical explanations of causation, such as the bite of a mosquito and the transmission of a plasmodium parasite that causes malaria provide only one layer of explanation—a thin layer of explanation. The deeper causes of misfortune, which explain *why* a particular person fell ill with malaria at a particular time, while their companions did not—must be addressed (Evans-Pritchard 1937). Further, physical illness is just one type of misfortune that signals a need for healing.

Gorongosa residents, whether they are peasant farmers or members of the elite, interpret physical illness in a larger context. Who is struck with illness, when, in what context are all considered. Misfortunes of one person are interpreted in relation to those of their larger family. Complexes of misfortune that strike various members of a family group with severe illness, financial hardship, death—the very kinds of problems that are growing more common in the region—often cannot be remedied in single isolated treatments. Such situations set patient groups on an odyssey of healing. Church-based therapies are combined with biomedical treatments. Patient groups circulate through consultations with various spirit mediums searching for a practitioner who connects well to their problem through divination, while at the same time treating members of the group suffering from illness with pharmaceuticals. Further, spirit-mediums also provide therapy that addresses both symptoms and underlying causes at the same time. Thus, for instance, ingestion of roots or leaves meant to restore a person's physical body to health follow treatment for the

underlying cause that left a person and his or her family vulnerable to illness in the first place.

Even some health professionals in Gorongosa enact this understanding of the causes of illness and disease in their clinical practice, turning away patients exhibiting symptoms characteristic of spiritually or supernaturally caused illnesses, referring them to spirit mediums or other practitioners specializing in techniques appropriate to address the underlying problem. Often, people work to resolve the wider underlying causes prior to seeking therapy for physical symptoms. As an example, one elite family I knew in Gorongosa which was managing a daughter's struggles with AIDS moved back and forth between the hospital and various spirit-mediums to find a resolution. The patient's uncle was a medical doctor in Beira and suggested that before initiating ARV therapy they seek the help of a spirit-medium to remove the causes, so that the drugs would be effective. They came seeking Adélia's assistance on several occasions.

The search for healing is temporal and spatial. Crises of health often lead patients to remove themselves from their homes to reside with healing practitioners. Church pastors frequently host such patients at their homes until they are able to regain strength. Spirit-mediums likewise host patients in crisis for long stays. The underlying idea is that physical distance from the cause of the misfortune (often considered to be concentrated in or around one's home) combined with proximity to the source of protection and healing make it more likely that treatments to alleviate physical symptoms will be effective. Health centers have a similar spatial healing power. Hospitalization similarly distances a patient from the dangers that may be at their home, promoting recovery. Many stories circulate of hospital stays that bring physical healing, but once the patient returns home, they return to

their original condition. For this reason, many people seek healing that will address these underlying causes prior to visiting health clinics, if not at the same time.

When misfortune manifests severely, with chronic illness or death striking multiple family members, the cause is frequently found to be a spirit or set of spirits. As seen in Chapter 1, such situations can press families to leave church membership temporarily or permanently. Others resist this pull. These spirits, which are becoming more prevalent, are often found to be responsible for widespread misfortune, bring great disruption to people's social relationships. Increasing illnesses, intensification of financial strain and all of their inter-connections and manifestations have contributed to conflict within families, manifesting, in particular, in marital instability. In order to restore stability and order to people's lives and to wider society, a primary emphasis of spiritual healing has become to strengthen and manage troubled marriage relationships. The following three chapters focus on the pressures that physical and financial illness place on marital relationships and how managing marriage becomes a central focus of spiritual healing practices.

## Section II:

### **The Search for Stability: Marriage Relationships in Turbulent Times**

In addition to increasing rates of physical disease, a major concern of Gorongosa residents is the spread of social “dis-ease” made apparent in the increasing number of broken marriages. While female headed households have been common in urban areas of Mozambique and in South Africa for decades (c.f. Muller 1999, Rosario 2008), in Gorongosa, such arrangements remain rare because for peasant farmers, it is nearly impossible for a woman to sustain a family on her own. Increasing marital strain has presented many women with new kinds of challenges—posing a threat to women’s ability to sustain their households and look after the welfare of their children. As seen in the cases of Anita and Merecina presented in Chapter 1, troubled marriage relationships are one of the primary factors leading women to seek support and stability by joining Pentecostal church groups or by initiation into spirit-mediumship. Marriage provides both men and women the possibility to become socially recognized and whole by becoming mothers and fathers who are rearing the next generation. Through marriage, men and women establish a “home” and a family. Marriage is the primary means for the creation of social stability and wellbeing. For this reason, marriage troubles are one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall a couple and their extended kin networks. Such problems lead people to seek resolution in order to restore stability and wellbeing.

Escalating pressures of financial and physical insecurity have placed enormous strain on social relationships at the most basic level. Marriage and gender relations have been

deeply affected. Extreme constraints on making a living when fields are tired and jobs are few, combined with increasing desire for consumer goods has led to a host of domestic troubles. Physical illness, death and misfortune can lead to the dissolution of marriage relationships. In this context, divorce is becoming troublingly common at the same time that novel forms of marriage and gender relationships are emerging.

The following three chapters are devoted to exploring the changing dynamics of marriage and gender relationships. These social shifts are examined in detail in the first two chapters. The final chapter examines the role church groups and spirit-mediums play to restore order to society through broad-based efforts of social and spiritual healing.

## Chapter 6

### **“Wealth in People” and “Wealth in Cash”: Marriage Relationships in Changing Times**

#### **Introduction**

As the basis for social production and reproduction, marriage is intimately entwined with wider socio-economic circumstances. Marriage creates a set of responsibilities and obligations among networks of people that extend beyond husbands and wives. These networks provide help and support that buffer economic difficulties. Just as relationships created through marriage serve an important socioeconomic role, the establishment of marriage bonds changes in accord with the dynamics of the social and economic context. This chapter provides an overview of how marriage relationships are created. The chapter's first half explores the “traditional” marriage process, its philosophical underpinnings, and how it establishes a relationship between two families. This description provides a baseline from which to understand changes and variations in the creation of marriage bonds, which form the subject of the chapter's second half.

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Tracing historical and cultural ties back to Karanga of eastern Zimbabwe, traditional marriage practices in Gorongosa closely resemble those of the Shona in Zimbabwe. The normative conjugal bonds are created by the transfer of brideservice and bridewealth from a man to his wife's family, virilocal residence, and patrilineal descent. While these are the

general social “rules” governing marriage, there has always been and continues to be variation in the actual practices that establish marital bonds, the location of residence of the couple and the ways in which descent of children is reckoned. Political and economic factors underlie people’s marital choices (Bledsoe 1980:47), making them subject to modification and change in any context.

Despite substantial variation, the pivotal transaction that establishes a traditional marriage bond centers on the transfer of wealth from the groom to the bride’s family (Bullock 1927, Gelfand 1967: 9-10). In Gorongosa, as around the region, the wealth involved in the marriage exchange is known as *lobolo* (or *lovolo* in the south) (Bagnol 2006). In a period of rapid change, *lobolo* remains a constant centerpiece to creating a bond that is valid and recognizable in the eyes of most people. Whether marriage takes place within a Christian church, in a Muslim ceremony, or in a civil marriage, transfer of *lobolo* is a pivotal transaction that establishes a long-term relationship between the husband and his wife’s family (Agadjanian 2001, Honwana, Welch, et.al. 1985, WLSA 2002). Because marriage is a continual relationship of obligation and reciprocity established between two family groups, the exchange of *lobolo* is just one aspect of the process of marriage that takes place over many years (Meekers 1992). This relationship begins long before and continues long after the central ceremony when a man presents *lobolo* to his wife’s relatives.

### **Marriage and “Wealth in People”**

The establishment of a marriage bond can be understood from the perspective of a basic underlying principle governing social relations across geographically separated societies in Africa; what historians and anthropologists of Africa have described as “wealth



in people.” The idea of wealth in people encapsulates the basis of social relationships in many African societies where affluence and power are mediated through relationships of affinity, consanguinity and dependence (Herskovits 1938, Miers and Kopytoff 1977, Bledsoe 1980, Guyer 1984, Berry 1993). In this sense, power and prestige come primarily through “wealth in people” rather than through the accumulation of material goods or land. As Sara Berry put it, a “person’s status and influence depend directly on his or her ability to mobilize a following” (1993:15). In other words, people gain power and prestige through social relationships “in which they acquire rights over the labor, loyalty, or legal status of others” (Johnson-Hanks 2006:30). Pastors and spirit-mediums also have contrasting ways of establishing “wealth in people.”

From this perspective, marriage is just one way people establish relations of obligation and reciprocity and accumulate a social following. Through the exchange of wealth from the groom’s lineage to the bride’s lineage the marriage bond is established and continually reinforced. Through marriage, a man and his family gain the rights to a woman’s labor and fertility and to the labor of any children that result. In return, a woman’s kin group gains rights to bridewealth or brideservice from the groom and his kin. Bridewealth, in turn, can be used by the bride’s kin to acquire a wife for one of her brothers or another male of the group, thereby compensating them for the loss of their daughter.

The “wealth in people” principle of social organization leads to a situation where patron-client relationships cross-cut all levels of society. Everyone is indebted to others to a greater or lesser extent. As Kopytoff and Miers have noted, no one in traditional African society is “free” in the sense of owing no obligation (1977). In this context, marriage is not simply a way for a man and his kin to gain rights in a woman, but also a means through

which a woman's kin gain ties of social obligation to families of strategic importance. In other words, marriage establishes an enduring relationship between two separate lineage groups. The groom and bride each slowly gain status as respected kin among each others' lineages. Thus, betrothal of a very young daughter or a daughter yet unborn remains a widespread practice in rural areas of Mozambique. Families wishing to gain a connection to a more powerful family may offer their daughter as a "gift" to establish a lasting social tie, or as payment for a debt that cannot be met through other means.

### Friendship as a type of "marriage"

Traditional marriage through the exchange of *lobolo* is just one way of establishing enduring relationships of reciprocity. In Gorongosa, people use the exchange of wealth or gifts to establish other sorts of enduring relationships of reciprocity. One relationship cemented this way can be established between friends of the same gender. Women and men can both follow a set of practices known as *kut'hanya* to create deep bonds of friendship that resemble kinship. One woman likened this process to marriage, telling me "*kut'hanya ndi sawasawa na kusemba*," "*kut'hanya* is the same as marriage (*kusemba*)."<sup>1</sup> *Kut'hanya*, like marriage, essentially creates a lasting bond between two people of different lineages. Men who have established such a relationship refer to each other as *shamwali*,<sup>2</sup> whereas women use the term *mwalive*.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Ana Ebeti; April 1, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Because "*shamwali*" is frequently used as a gloss for the Portuguese "*amigo*" or "friend" the use of this term has acquired a wider meaning, not restricted to this special bond. In certain contexts, *shamwali* retains a much deeper meaning for Gorongosans than the Portuguese or English gloss: as a term of address for one member of a formally established bond between two men. The feminine equivalent to *shamwali* is *mwalive*. While the association of the term *shamwali* with the Portuguese idea of "friend"

The process by which a woman transforms a simple friend or confidant into a *mwalive* follows the general progression of the marriage process. A woman interested in cementing a relationship with her confidant will first express her intentions directly to her friend. If her friend shares a desire to cement this bond into something more formal, they will make arrangements to establish a different sort of relationship. The woman who initiated the process will invite her friend to a special meal that she prepares at her house.

This ceremonial meal usually involves a whole chicken that is ceremonially served in a style known as *mapfundo*. Whereas, normally, guests are served only a portion of the family's meal, where sauce is ladled out of the cooking pot into a separate dish for each group of people to be served, in *pfundo*, the honored person is presented with the entire chicken with all of its parts in the pot in which it was cooked. This is considered a great honor, indicating that every bit of the chicken, including the sauce, is for the recipient, and no part of it has been kept by the giver or her family. In addition to this ceremonial meal, to establish a *mwalive* relationship, a woman presents her friend with a gift in the form of a material object that, when accepted, cements the new bond between the two.

Not long after eating this meal, the recipient also invites her *mwalive* to her home, providing her with a special meal and a valuable gift. This exchange marks the beginning of a life-long bond that cements the two parties into a relationship of reciprocity. Women who share the *mwalive* bond visit each other often, bringing food and gifts. They help each other in times of need, and can always be depended on for support, much like the idealized relationship with a sister. *Shamwali* relationships between men are less common but are

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has given the word *shamwali* a range of uses, *mwalive* retains its singular referent; as a rare and special kind of bond of friendship.

established through exchange in much the same way as *mwaliwe* relationships between women.

Seen in this light, marriage is only one type of social bond that is established through exchange, which create real bonds and ties of obligation between people (Mauss 1966[1925]). The bond created between a female medium and her “spirit-husband” is similarly centered on material exchange, incorporating a foreign spirit into a lineage group (see Chapter 1). Through this process, initiation to spirit-mediumship inserts women into networks of mutual obligation with other mediums. Pentecostal church participants also create strong bonds of trust and mutual obligation conceived of in kinship terms. These bonds supplement ties of kinship, deepening a person’s networks of support—something that is becoming increasingly important in the midst of insecurity.

### **The Normative Process of Traditional Marriage**

Among all the types of formalized social bonds, marriage is afforded particular importance. Through the marriage bond comes the promise of procreation and thus the future of a given lineage’s continuation. The importance of marriage in Gorongosa and in the region is expressed through a complex series of ritualized moments of exchange of material goods, money, and food because it is the primary means through which social and economic production take place. In Gorongosa, normative marriage is not an event, but rather a process of continual negotiation and relationship between two lineages beginning long before the conjugal union of a couple and continuing for the duration of the relationship. Though many variations exist, the normative process of marriage involves five

major stages: courtship, betrothal, transfer of *mabatiro* (*lobolo*), movement of the bride to the groom's dwelling, and payments to the bride's family for children.

What follows is a description of the normative process of traditional marriage as followed by many Gorongosa residents. The description is a compilation of processes that several different couples residing on Gorongosa Mountain followed. I was able to attend their weddings in 2007 and 2008 and to participate in various stages of the process. The description below also draws on numerous interviews with different actors involved in these marriages. Thus, these are contemporary processes modeled on what is referred to as *tradição* or "tradition." For this reason, I describe this as the "normative" process of marriage.

### **Formalizing Courtship: *Tsanzu***

Before choosing someone to marry, young people enter into courtship with each other or "fall in love," *enamorar* (Portuguese), *kubvunzira* (chi-Gorongosi). If a young man wants to formalize courtship and express his desire to enter into marriage with a young woman, he will find a trusted female (often a sister) to act as an intermediary, or *sankhulu*, to visit the girl he is interested in marrying. The *sankhulu* relays his desire and presents her with a token of his interest, usually a small amount of money or a small gift such as earrings or a bracelet. She indicates her interest or lack of interest by refusing or accepting this gift.

This small token is known as "*tsanzu*." *Tsanzu* is a word in chi-Gorongosi used to refer to a branch that is placed across a path to block the way. When on a long journey, a group of people may become separated along the way, as those walking slower fall behind. When encountering forks in the path, those in the front of the group snap off branches

with fresh leaves and lay them across the paths not taken to indicate to those coming behind which path to follow. Thus, *tsanzu* close off optional pathways. The token gift to formalize courtship is also known as *tsanzu* because, once accepted, this gift metaphorically blocks the way of other potential suitors. She is already “taken” and thus other men must pursue other “paths” to marriage.

In response to these advances, a girl has a great deal of freedom to accept or refuse a young man’s intentions to marry. This exchange usually takes place away from the home, in the absence of a girl’s relatives, so she is able to make a decision free from their coercion or desires for her. Girls frequently refuse a man’s first offer of *tsanzu*, even when they are interested in him. Many people told me that it is usual for girls to refuse a boy’s *tsanzu* several times in order to have time to find out more about the young man’s behavior and his family’s reputation and to deliberate her decision, seeking the input of trusted family and friends. Accepting a suitor’s first attempt to offer *tsanzu* is also considered to be distasteful. A young girl, it is said, should bide her time and in the process, she will find out if the suitor’s interest in marriage is strong enough to create a good marriage where she will be well respected. In this sense, multiple attempts from a suitor to present a girl with *tsanzu* are seen as a good sign of true feelings that promise an amicable relationship between the two in the future.

#### *Nguwo za mukadzi*

Associated with the *tsanzu* is *nguwo za mukadzi* or “the bride’s clothing.” Should a man’s *tsanzu* be received, as the stages of marriage unfold, a future groom will typically bring his bride-to-be material gifts of clothing. *Nguwo za mukadzi* are gifts (not only clothing) that

a man gives his lover over a long period of time as part of their courtship. There are no rules governing the types or the amounts of these gifts. He provides what he can when he can, visiting her personally to present the gifts or sending an intermediary to deliver them on his behalf. Like *tsanzu*, these gifts are tokens of his affection, and her acceptance of them furthers the “work” of the *tsanzu*, proving his serious intentions and further binding her in the relationship. These gifts also show her the good things she will receive from her future husband during the course of their life together. Because others will recognize that the number of new items a young woman has received are these gifts of betrothal, *nguvo za mukadzzi* also is an unspoken announcement, as one man put it, that this eligible woman “is now occupied,”<sup>3</sup> thus further “closing the way” for other suitors.

Providing *nguvo za mukadzzi* to a potential bride can amount to significant expense over time. For instance, one man listed all the things he had given his future bride during the years before she moved to his home: three skirts, two capulanas, two bars of beauty soap,<sup>4</sup> three shirts, one long bar of soap,<sup>5</sup> mirror, comb, one pair of sandals, one head scarf, a jar of moisturizing lotion, and a slip.<sup>6</sup> All of these items are considerable luxuries for women in the area where this young woman lived and thus carry significant sway in persuading her and her companions of the value of her future relationship. These goods also serve to cement the obligation of the girl to follow through with the marriage. Young men keep careful track of the gifts they bestow on a potential bride because, should the girl

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Nicolão João Baptista; March 12, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> This type of soap is considered to be a luxury, small, oval shaped, colored and fragrant, much like a standard bar of soap found in a US supermarket.

<sup>5</sup> These are bars of soap produced in Zambézia Province that are about 20 inches long, shaped like an iron rail.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Nicolão João Baptista; March 12, 2008.

have a change of heart, she and her kin will be obliged to return the suitor the value of all the goods she has accepted.

**Betrothal: *Mhete*<sup>7</sup> or *tsanzu ya wakulu***

Though a girl has considerable power to accept or reject a suitor, the ultimate decision about marriage does not lie in her hands. Because marriage is essentially a relationship between two families, rather than an agreement between two lovers, a girl's elders must also be open to her selection of a husband in order for the marriage proceedings to continue. A suitor's next major step in the marriage process is to present a small gift or *mbete*<sup>8</sup> or *tsanzu ya wakulu* (the *tsanzu* of the elders) to her parents or guardians. Their acceptance or rejection of this token (usually in monetary form) will indicate their openness to him as a potential son-in-law.

Whereas a suitor typically offers his *tsanzu* to a girl in person or through a female *sankhulu*, for interactions with his future in-laws, a man will find a male *sankhulu*. This trusted friend or relative acts on his behalf and makes a formal visit to his potential bride's family to sit with them and deliver his gift as a symbol of his intentions. Usually, in their deliberations, a girl's relatives will call her to ask if she knows of this man's intentions and ask her opinion on the matter. Depending on the family or the circumstances, they may or may not take her desires into consideration.

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<sup>7</sup> The use of the word *mhete* or "earring," corresponds to a time in the recent past when the suitor commonly offered a bracelet or anklet to his potential mother-in-law as a token of his intentions.

<sup>8</sup> In Portuguese, residents of Gorongosa, frequently refer to this as the *anele* or "ring," likening this stage of the marriage process to the presentation of a ring to a fiancée in European marriage



One women's song, often sung while pounding grain or performing other monotonous chores, illustrates the perspective of a bride-to-be who tries to influence her elders to accept the *tsanzu* by appealing to her mother's sympathies:

**Mãe tambirieni**

Mother, receive [the *tsanzu*]

**Ndamuda ine, ndamuda!**

I want [to marry him], I want to!

**Ndachimwana kulonga zvangu, ndiri kulira ine**

I am unable to speak, I'm crying

**Oh! Ndinalira lero, ndinalira!**

Oh! I'm crying today, I'm crying!

**Mãe ndinalira lero, ndinalira mãe!**

Mother, I'm crying today, I'm crying mother!

**Ndamuda mãe ndamuda ine**

I want [to marry him], I want to!

**Na mari handidi zvangu, handidi<sup>10</sup>**

I don't want money, I don't want it

**Mãe naenda ine, naenda<sup>11</sup>**

Mother, I'm going to leave, I'm going to leave

**Mari, tambirireni, tambirireni!**

Receive the money, receive it!

**Na mari handidi lero, handidi!**

I don't want money, I don't want it!

**Mwana ule ndinafa naye, ine, nafa naye!**

I will die with that boy, I will die with him!<sup>12</sup>

**Mãe! Ndinalira ine, tambirireni!**

Mother, I'm crying, accept [the *tsanzu*]

**Mãe! Ndamoda mwana ndamoda mwana!**

Mother! I want the boy, I want the boy!

**Mãe! Nalira ine, nalira ine!**

Mother! I'm crying, I'm crying!<sup>13</sup>

**R%<sup>9</sup> Tambire, tambire abale!**

Receive it, receive it, brothers!

**R% Ndamuda ine, ndamuda!**

I want [to marry him], I want to!

**R% Chimwana mãe, chimwana!**

I am unable, mother, unable!

**R% Ande, nalira mãe, nalira!**

Yes, I'm crying mother, crying!

**R% Ande, ndaneta mãe, ndaneta!**

Yes, I'm tired, mother, I'm tired!

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<sup>9</sup>“R%” indicates the response of another singer or group of singers in the call-and-response format of this song.

<sup>10</sup> “I don't want money” in this context most likely refers to a suitor's relative poverty or the small size of the monetary token he has brought.

<sup>11</sup> “Mother, I'm going to leave” in this context most likely refers to leaving to live with her suitor's family in marriage. The speaker is appealing to her mother not to delay her marriage out of a selfish desire to keep her at home, but to let her leave to live with her husband's kin. Looked at another way, this line could also be read as a veiled threat to elope with the man should the family refuse to allow the marriage.

<sup>12</sup> “I will die with that boy” meaning, live to old age until death with him.

<sup>13</sup> *Nyumbo ya nkhambo* (woman's song of discontent) sung by Celeste in Khanda, Nyaliroso; April 2, 2008.

This song clearly expresses a young girl's desire for her mother to intervene on her behalf and influence her elders to accept a man's *mbete* so that marriage proceedings can move forward. In the genre of *nyimbo ya nkhambo*, or women's songs of discontent, this song is one of many that express a woman's sentiments about aspects of life that she typically has no way to share directly. Most often, these songs are sung while women and girls are pounding grain in the family compound. While women of all ages draw from the same repertoire of songs, when a situation presents itself, a woman can strategically choose to sing a song that expresses her sentiments, thereby indirectly communicating to all in the family compound. This song not only illustrates a girl's position and perspective on *mbete*, but it can be deployed by particular actors to influence the outcome of the marriage proceedings.

In deciding whether or not to accept a suitor's request to marry a girl of their household, a girl's elders consider many things. They want to assure that the marriage will be favorable for the couple, but they also consider whether or not the relationship will be beneficial to them. They want their daughter to marry a man who has a reputation for hard work, who will be able to meet their demands for bridewealth and brideservice, and who will be able to provide well for their daughter. Another important consideration is the reputation of his family, since these people will be tied to them through this union, and their daughter will be living at their home. For these reasons, most families prefer that their daughters marry someone who lives in relative proximity to them. This will allow them to exercise control over the relationship, ensuring that their son-in-law's obligations to their daughter, and to their grandchildren, will be fully met.

### A New Relationship: Shows of Respect and Gifts for the Bride's Parents

Beginning with the moment the groom's *tsanzu* is accepted by the bride's family, a special relationship is created. The groom must show ultimate respect to his bride's family, especially to the bride's mother. Using the *sankbulu* for negotiations at every stage is one way to perform this ultimate respect and social distance. Talking directly to his bride's parents would be considered crass. Whenever a groom visits his bride's family compound he does not enter the central swept area unless explicitly requested to do so. Rather, he remains far to the edge "in the trash." In the presence of his bride's parents, he will kneel down, turn his face away, so as not to gaze directly at his mother-in-law and clap (*kuembera manja*) for a long period of time. The respect he shows his bride's mother is so great that he tries to avoid gazing at or interacting with her directly until long after the first children from the marriage are born.

Another way a groom demonstrates respect to his bride's parents before and after the *mabatiro* event is by presenting them with occasional gifts. These gifts are not obligatory, but come as a free offering from the groom. For instance, one man told me that each time he visited his bride's family's home prior to *mabatiro*, he would always arrive with a packet (*mapfukissi*) for his bride's parents, particularly for his bride's mother. He brought yams from his field, dried fish, oil, a capulana, or small amounts of money. He explained to me that a groom is not asked to bring these things, but "you will feel on your own what is appropriate. It is not good to arrive without gifts."<sup>14</sup> Also, whenever he had a chance encounter with the bride's close kin, passing on the path while going opposite directions,

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Nicol o Jo o Baptista; March 12, 2008.

for instance, he would give them anything he happened to be carrying, even if he had another use for it.

### **Negotiations and preparations for the transfer of a bride to her husband's home**

Once the groom's proposal has been accepted by the bride's family, the marriage process is focused on preparations to transfer the bride to live with the groom and his family. This transfer can take place many years after the bride's family accepts the *mbete* or *tsanzu ya wakulu*. First, the young girl must pass through puberty and be considered old enough to reside in the conjugal house. Second, the groom has many obligations to meet before he can bring a bride to his home. These obligations, set by the girl's family, can be overwhelming. One aspect of these obligations is bride service (known in Gorongosa as *kufewa*).<sup>15</sup> The bride service usually includes completing several laborious projects for the bride's mother at her request. Bride service may include tasks such as clearing a new field, building houses or granaries or refurbishing existing structures in her compound. Before the bride can be transferred to his residence, he must also build a house for her at his home.

In addition to performing work for his future in-laws, a groom must collect the money and all the goods and materials that the bride's family demands. The total of the groom's many material offerings to his bride's family are referred to colloquially as *lobolo*, and in chiGorongosi as *zvinhu zva mabatiro*. The material goods requested are usually a standard set of items for the bride's mother and father. Besides these objects, a groom must offer a substantial monetary sum (*dinyero ya mabatiro*) according to the bride's parents'

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<sup>15</sup> *Kufewa*, is the passive form of the verb, "*kufa*" or "to die" literally means, "to be made to die." This term points to the sometimes stringent demands of a bride's family on the prospective groom.

request. Finally, a groom must bring contributions such as a goat, flour and alcohol for the wedding feast. Below is a list of the goods one young man took to his wife's parents on the day of *mabatiro*, effectively meeting their demands:<sup>16</sup>

<b>Item</b>	<b>Value (MTN)</b>	<b>Value (US\$, approx)</b>
<b>for the bride's father:</b>		
pair of pants	100	3.60
shirt	100	3.60
belt	30	1.10
suit jacket	60	2.20
<b>for the bride's mother:</b>		
capulana	50	1.80
<i>mutcheka</i> <sup>17</sup>	20	0.70
blouse	100	3.60
skirt	100	3.60
headscarf	30	1.10
<b>household items:</b>		
a mat	30	1.10
a basket	60	2.20
a winnowing basket	30	1.10
a hoe	75	2.70
two plates	15 each (30)	1.10
a cup	30	1.10
two clay pots	10 each (20)	0.70
<b>for the <i>mabatiro</i> celebration</b>		
20 L <i>nipa</i>	300	10.90
two boxes of wine	90 each (180)	6.55
two chickens	120	4.40
a goat	200	7.20
a basket of flour	[not purchased]	
<b>cash for the bride's parents</b>		
<i>dinyero ya mabatiro</i>	1500	50.00
<b>Total value</b>	<b>3165 MTN</b>	<b>110.00</b>

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Nicolão João Baptista; March 12, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> A *mutcheka* is a long strip of cloth used to tie a baby to a woman's back.

Since meeting these demands can take years of preparation, in some cases, sexual relations between the couple precede cohabitation at the groom's house. In such cases, a groom will construct a house for himself at the bride's family compound and once she has sexually matured, they may sleep together there. This intermediate period ensures that the couple will "get along well" and prove that they are able successfully to have children that survive past infancy. The way the process proceeds depends largely on the negotiations between the bride's family and the groom's *sankbulu*.

#### *Kupangiza mphale*

After negotiations, the groom will present himself at his bride's family's home. This is known as *kupangiza mphale* or "to present the boy." The groom arranges a day to go together with his female *sankbulu* to visit the bride's family. He brings gifts like food, soap, salt, cloth, and lotion to present to the bride's family. In return, they welcome him and his intermediary with a special feast, usually *mapfundo* (see above). Depending on the family's means, this can be a large event where the bride's family invites neighbors and friends to a celebration in honor of the new couple. In this case, they provide food and drink to all the guests and the day is spent in dancing and singing.

#### *Kuenda ku chidz'a*

Since marriage is the institution that legitimates sexual relationships between a man and a woman and thus the birth of children, fertility is important to its success. A girl's purity and virginity at marriage is considered to increase her fertility. As Muller has noted, the control of the fertility of young girls and the maintenance of their virginity is considered

to secure socioeconomic and political well-being (1999: 21). Because of the importance of a girl's virginity at the time she is promised to a husband, families exercise great control over their daughters as they reach puberty, restricting their movements and accompanying them when they leave the domestic sphere. In rural areas of Gorongosa, where local schools only go up to 4<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade, many families prohibit their daughters from continuing school in town where they would have to live with relatives or reside at boarding schools. So far from home, they would be unable to monitor their daughter's sexual activity.

Establishing virginity prior to marriage is thus an important aspect of traditional marriages. A girl who is not a virgin at marriage is considered to be "spoiled" and in this case, her future husband will have more leverage in negotiating *lobolo*. The amount of the labor and material goods transferred to her family will be greatly reduced, and a groom may choose not to marry the girl at all. Thus, once a betrothed girl has reached puberty, her relatives consult with her suitor's *sankhulu* to determine a day for the girl's "revision."

On this day, elder women from the bride and groom's family go with the girl to a secluded field (known as *chidza*). There they place a mat on the ground. One of the elders takes out a small amount of money and give it to the girl so that she will lie down on the mat. Then the older women examine her to see if she "knows a man" or not. If they find that she is a virgin, there will be ululations and shouts of joy. They will sprinkle flour on her head as a sign of her purity. Her *sankhulu* will carry her to her home on her back, like an infant, to show that she is still a girl. If she is found not to be a virgin, the group will return to the girl's home in a somber mood, and the elders will present a leaf with a hole pierced in

the center to her parents. This will cause her parents anger and shame, and could jeopardize the groom's decision to marry their daughter.

### ***Mabatiro or muchato***

*Mabatiro* (also known as *muchato*, from Shona) is the pivotal celebration of the marriage process. Taken from the verb *kubatira*, meaning "to grab [for someone]" *mabatiro* is an event where the groom and his kin arrive at the bride's home to take the bride with them to their home. Once a groom has secured all the money and material goods for *mabatiro* and fulfilled his obligations of *kufewa*, he can begin final preparations for this event.

#### *Other fees*

In addition to the goods and money of *mabatiro*, a groom must procure additional money for the wedding event. On the day of *mabatiro*, a groom must come prepared with a substantial amount of money to pay a series of small fees demanded by the bride's family, some of which are expected, some which may not be foreseen. In a sort of playful exchange, the bride's family requires the groom to pay for any minute service or action that they perform throughout the day, thereby showing him the "value" of their future relations of mutual obligation. One such fee is known as *dinyero dos cunbados* or "money of the brothers and sisters-in-law." When he arrives, the bride's siblings will demand money from the groom (which can be anywhere from 5-15 MTN each).

The bride's *sankhulu* also demands monetary tokens in order to perform her *mabatiro* duties. One such duty is sweeping the compound in preparation for the guests. She will make small piles of refuse, or *mabii*, and then will go to the groom's *sankhulu* to request a fee



for removing the waste. The groom will have to pay his bride's *sankhulu* a fee for each of the *mabii* in order for her to remove them from the compound.



**Fig 6.1: The bride's *sankhulu* sweeping up *mabii*. This is one of many ordinary activities for which the groom must pay special fees in order to make them occur**

At certain times during *mabatiro*, a female relative of the bride makes ululations in celebration. This important task also comes with a fee.

Such fees characterize the entire marriage process, emphasizing the groom's subordinate position to the bride's family throughout. In the past, it was customary for the groom to pay his bride to enter his house, to speak to him, to sit down and at each step in their first sexual relations. All of these fees for simple tasks that are performed for free at other gatherings serve to mark the groom as an outsider to the bride's family. Once

incorporated fully into the bride's family he will enjoy these privileges without having to make special payments.

### *Final Preparations*

When everything is prepared for *mabatiro*, including a house built for the bride at the groom's home, final preparations for the union and the public celebration begin. About a week before *mabatiro*, the groom sends his male *sankhulu* to the home of his bride's parents to confirm the date for the celebration and perform final negotiations. He brings a symbolic payment from the groom in order for them to agree to sit and talk with him. In this discussion, the *sankhulu* confirms that the objects and money the groom has gathered match the bride's family's requests so that there will be no disagreements on the day of *mabatiro*.

After these arrangements have been finalized, the bride's family can begin their preparations for the feast: preparing flour for the many guests, acquiring a goat and chickens for the feast, and brewing beer. Preparing beer requires careful timing so it will be ready on the morning of the event. To make the beer requires purchasing large amounts of sugar, and acquiring grain which must be soaked, sprouted, pounded, sifted, boiled and finally fermented. The beer for this event (*harhwa hwa mukwambo*,<sup>18</sup> or *mammeso*) is an offering from the bride's family to honor the groom. The bride's family brews enough beer to fill several large clay jars (*nkhale*), and offers him all but one. They hide the final *nkhale* of

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<sup>18</sup> *Harhwa* is a special type of beer made from sprouted sorghum that is reserved for ceremonial occasions. Any time *harhwa* is prepared, it is made in honor of a particular person (or, in some cases, a spirit) who as the "owner" of the drink, is responsible for distributing it to guests.

*harbwa* until, once all the *harbwa* has been consumed by the guests, the groom will have to pay a fee to remove it to serve to guests.

As the “owner” of the *harbwa* and the goat, chicken, and other food for the feast offered by the bride’s family, a groom invites people to the *mabatiro* event to receive their portion of the celebratory drink. The bride’s family also invites guests to the *mabatiro*, as they are the “owners” of the *nipa*, wine, and other food the groom brings to the event.<sup>19</sup>

Garira mitemo (*Wait for instructions*): *The arrival of the groom*

In the afternoon before the *mabatiro* event, a groom will set out for his bride’s home with an entourage of people (including his male *sankhulu* and trusted relatives).



Fig. 6.2: A groom (carrying a 25 L container of *nipa*), his *sankhulu* (holding the goat) and another member of his entourage (carrying a battery for music for the *mabatiro* celebration) on their way to the bride’s family’s home the day before *mabatiro*. Women carrying other bundles of offerings for the bride’s family have gone ahead.

<sup>19</sup> Field notes, May 25, 2007.

Upon arrival, the entourage stops at a respectful distance from his bride's home while the *sankhulu* is sent ahead to announce the group's arrival. The groom and his group wait outside the bride's swept compound until the *sankhulu* returns with instructions from the bride's family.



**Fig. 6.3:** The groom with his entourage with their *mitolo* (baggage) containing all the offerings for *mabatiro*. They are waiting for a welcome and instructions (*garira mitemo*) from the bride's family

They must be invited into the compound and shown where to stay for the night. They are usually given an out-building, such as a granary, to sleep in and will be fed a hot meal before retiring for the night. Otherwise, there is little to no interaction between the family of the groom and the family of the bride.

#### *Kut'husira mitombo*<sup>20</sup>

On the morning of *mabatiro*, an important ceremony must be performed to ensure that the bride's new relationship with her husband will not bring sickness to her parents. This is a ritual meal that sanctions the new couple's sexual relations. Sexual relations must be managed and kept safe because they can be a source of illness causing pollution to close

<sup>20</sup> *Mitombo*- medicines; *kut'husa*- to throw; *kut'husira*- to throw on behalf of someone else. Thus, *kut'husira mitombo* means to throw medicines [into the pot] for someone else.

relatives.<sup>21</sup> Without this special sanction, when a girl has her first sexual relations she poses a threat to her parents who could be contaminated. This danger can be removed if the parents ingest a treatment of roots. In preparation for the couple's future union, on the day of *mabatiro*, a special meal is prepared with medicinal roots that protect a girl's family members from future contamination. If the couple initiates sexual relations before the day of *mabatiro*, this special meal follows their first relations. In that case, on the day of *mabatiro*, this meal still takes place but only in a ceremonial way, and the event is renamed: "*kutereka nkubuku ya mitombo*"<sup>22</sup> ("to put chicken with medicine on the fire to cook").

The general principle is that the items for the special meal must be gathered and prepared for the bride's parents by a young couple—the bride herself and a virgin boy. They must use only materials from the home of the groom's family. This young couple symbolizes the male and female joined in marriage.<sup>23</sup> On the morning of *mabatiro*, this meal is prepared using a chicken or chickens offered by the groom. The young boy and girl kill and prepare the chicken for cooking, light the fire using firewood from the groom's mother's home and prepare the sauce with the medicines and salt also brought from her home. In preparing the sauce, the virgin boy and girl cut the chicken together, jointly place the cooking pot on the fire and jointly add the *kundap'hwe* root and salt. Once the sauce and *nsima* are prepared, the bride serves each of her parents and the remainder is shared with the rest of the family and guests who have arrived early.

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<sup>21</sup> See discussion of *p'hiringanissu*, Chapter 1.

<sup>22</sup> Field notes, *Mabatiro* in Nyabirira; May 25, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*



*Presenting the mitolo<sup>24</sup> to the bride's parents*

Early in the morning, before the bride's parents have eaten the specially prepared chicken, the bride transfers the groom's goods from his sleeping place to her mother's cooking house. After her parents have eaten the ceremonial meal, the bride spreads the mat the groom has offered on the ground outside the bride's mother's cooking house. She then brings out all of the groom's offerings to lay them on the mat. Once everything is in place, the groom must send his *sankhulu* to call the bride's parents. The groom sometimes pays another fee to entice them to come and sit on the mat.<sup>25</sup>



Fig. 6.4: The bride dresses her parents in the clothing the groom has brought<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Mitolo* means “baggage.” This is the collection of goods the groom has carried from his house to the bride's home to present to her parents.

<sup>25</sup> Interview, Sr. Americo; May 22, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> *Mabatiro*, at the home of Sr. Baptista, Nyazoe; August 26, 2007.

There, as onlookers watch, a young virgin boy removes each of the items of clothing from the bundle of offerings and passes them, one by one, to the bride. The bride presents each of these items to her parents by dressing them in the new items of clothing. Her parents remain passive and immobile, as if they were children, as their daughter dresses them. In this important reversal, the bride is transitioning to living apart from their care. Together, the bride and the virgin boy symbolize the male and female union of the marriage. The young boy stands in for the groom, allowing him to remain at a distance as is necessary to maintain a respectful posture.



Fig. 6.5: At the *mabatiro* for a different couple, the bride dresses her mother in the clothing brought by the groom, tying the hoe onto her back as if an infant to symbolize the mother's work in raising her daughter. Because the bride's father died during the war that followed independence, he is not present for the ceremony, but his contribution to raising her is not forgotten. The clothing for the bride's deceased father (shirt, trousers, belt, and suit jacket) has been presented and laid out in the pile on the right.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Mabatiro* of Anguista, Nyabirira; May 10, 2008.

Each of the items presented to the bride's parents commemorates the labors they underwent to raise her to adulthood. The shirt, suit coat, belt and pants for the bride's father symbolically repay him since, while working to support his daughter, he used these items of clothing, and wore them out. Thus it is for the clothing presented to the bride's mother. Similarly, the household items such as the baskets, pots, plates, cups and hoe give recognition to the labor and expenses involved in producing, cooking and serving food to rear a young child. The *mutcheka* has especially high symbolic value. It is a long strip of cloth (white on either end joined by a strip of dark cloth at the center) that women used to tie a baby their back in the past. The bride's mother has no use for such a cloth. However, the *mutcheka* is an item of exchange in the marriage process that cannot be omitted. Though they are no longer used by mothers, the *mutcheka* has retained its strong symbolic value as a token of gratitude for a woman's labors in rearing her child. The bride uses the *mutcheka* that is offered to tie the head of the hoe, that the groom has offered, to her mother's back (see Figure 6.5), symbolizing the overlapping labors involved in reproduction and agricultural production that are central to a woman's role in marriage.





**Fig 6.6: (Left) The bride's *sankhulu* dusts the bride's mother with flour after the groom's offerings have been accepted as complete; a sign of celebration. (Right) the groom and his *sankhulu*, like other onlookers, are doused with flour.<sup>28</sup>**

When the groom's offerings have each been presented and accepted by the bride's family, the bride's *sankhulu* gives off ululations of joy. She takes white flour from both the groom's offering and from the bride's mother's home and showers the bride's parents and onlookers with it while ululating and singing:

<b>Seke!</b>	<b>R% Tasekera!</b>
Laugh! [Celebrate]	We celebrate this!

The white flour sprinkled over each observer represents celebration, peace and purity marking the completion of this socially altering milestone. Also, the flour is deliberately taken from both offerings of the groom and the bride's families, thereby enacting mutual acceptance and celebration of the relationship in both houses.

#### *A joint feast*

With the groom's gifts accepted, preparations for the feast begin. Like the flour taken from both the groom's and the bride's families to shower the guests, the wedding feast symbolically joins the resources of the two households for the first time. The bride's

<sup>28</sup> *Mabatiro* of Anguista, Nyabirira; May 10, 2008.

family offers and prepares the bulk of the food and the groom also contributes a significant portion of the meat.



**Fig 6.7: Preparing *nsima* for the many guests.<sup>29</sup>**

As guests arrive at the bride's family compound, they wait to be served in groups divided by gender. The bride's family prepares a special portion of the meal in honor of the groom, presenting it to him and his entourage in the place where he resided the previous night. The groom then distributes this meal to his entourage as he sees fit.

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<sup>29</sup> *Mabatiro* of Sr. Baptista, Nyazoe; August 26, 2007.



Fig. 6.8: Guests awaiting the feast<sup>30</sup>

*Celebrating the new couple: offerings to the bride and groom*

After the food has been served, beer is distributed and the new married couple is made to sit on a mat in a central space in the yard. Two plates are placed before the bride and the groom and the guests dance around them, singing celebratory and educational songs. The couple must retain a solemn composure the entire day of *mabatiro*, keeping their posture and facial expressions in line with the gravity of the day's events. It is said that if a bride or groom smiles or laughs on their wedding day, it is bad luck and they will not be smiling and laughing in their years together as a couple. So, despite all the antics of those dancing jovially around them, they cannot join in the celebrations.

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<sup>30</sup> *Mabatiro* of Sr. Baptista, Nyazoe; August 26, 2007.





**Fig 6.9: The bride and groom sit humbly under a *capulana* as their guests dance around them singing songs and placing offerings in their individual plates.<sup>31</sup>**

The new couple remains seated in a humble posture under a *capulana*, listening to their guests' songs as they are showered with flour in celebration. As the dancers move around the couple, they drop offerings of money (usually coins) into the plates in front of them. After the ceremony, the money in each plate is counted and announced publicly. The money in the plates is for their own individual use.

#### *Educational songs*

The songs sung at *mabatiro* are specific to these events and meant to provide counsel for the new couple. As one elderly woman put it: “*unalangwa na nyimbo*” or “you will be

<sup>31</sup> *Mabatiro* of Anguista, Nyabirira; May 10, 2008.

instructed by the songs.”<sup>32</sup> Depending on who initiates and leads these call-and-response songs, the lyrics express the perspective of either the bride’s or the groom’s families.

Songs sung by the bride’s family

The songs led by members of the bride’s family instruct the groom to treat his wife well or advise the bride how to behave in her husband’s family’s presence. They may also express their lament at losing her to her husband’s kin or express their best wishes for her in her new life. One song often sung by the bride’s relatives contains the following lyrics:

<b>Ukasvika kweneko ...</b>	<b>R%</b>	<b>Woenda Yaya!</b>
When you arrive there		Sister is leaving!
<b>kialimeyo ...</b>	<b>R%</b>	<b>Woenda Yaya!</b>
to work in the fields there		Sister is leaving!
<b>kiasinzeyo</b>		....
to pound grain there		....
<b>uaite zvinofadza</b>		....
do pleasing things		....
<b>uaite zvadiretu</b>		....
do good things		....
<b>madzvala hatukwi</b>		....
mother-in-law is not to be insulted		....
<b>tedzvala hashorhwi</b>		....
father-in-law is not to be disrespected		....
<b>mwamuna hatukwi</b>		....
husband is not to be insulted <sup>33</sup>		....

While expressing their sadness in losing her, through these lyrics, the bride’s family instructs her on how to behave in order to make the relationship work smoothly.

One song with a single repeated verse more clearly laments the bride’s family’s loss:

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Maria Zinha; March 20, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Field notes, Anguista’s *mabatiro*; March 25, 2008.

**Yaya woenda! Nasala naniwo pano? Nasala nchirira!**<sup>34</sup>

Sister is leaving! Who am I left behind with here? I stay behind crying for her!

Another song often sung by the bride's family has a single repeated verse and gives instructions to the groom:

**Kamutora Celeste, usadzaite ninga bola!**

[You've] come to take Celeste, don't treat her like a ball!

In this song, the bride's family warns the groom to treat their sister well when he takes her to his family's home. "Do not treat her like a ball" is used both figuratively and literally, entreating the groom to respect her and also warning him not to treat her with violence or abuse, "kicking" her around like a ball. Indeed, while men are given some license to exercise some authority over their wives at home, physical violence is frowned upon.

#### Songs sung by the groom's family

Though all wedding songs are upbeat in terms of rhythm and style, the lyrics of the songs sung by the groom's family have a more markedly celebratory content. Most of these lyrics are even boastful in nature, declaring the family's happiness at having gained a new member. One song repeats:

**Tisekere!**

Let's celebrate!

**R% Sekere mbale ayua!**<sup>35</sup>

Celebrate! A sister has arrived!

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<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Field notes, Sr. Baptista's *mabatiro*, Nyazoe; August 27, 2007.

In another song the groom's family boasts:

**Tauya dzamutora murora!**<sup>36</sup>

We have come to take our daughter-in-law!



**Fig. 6.10:** This couple assumed sexual relations five years before *mabatiro* and already has a toddler by the time the groom was able to gather all the offerings for his bride's parents.<sup>37</sup>

#### Songs of general celebration

**Nem deretu tenepa?**

Isn't this [done the] right way!?

**R% Deretu!**

[It's done] The right way!

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Mabatiro* of Sr. Batchi, Nyabirira; May 22, 2007.

Final song

Once the final amounts of money offered to the bride and groom have been tallied and publicly announced, a woman will start the final song, signaling the end of the offering period:

**Wanadenderedzana. Wali wairi!**  
They walk together. They are two!

**R% Wanadenderedzana!**  
They walk together!

To the refrain of this song, the bride and groom stand up and walk together to the edge of the compound where they shake the flour off themselves and the cloth that has been covering them.

Following the end of the songs, general festivities continue. There is dancing and singing late into the afternoon and sometimes into the night—usually until the *barbwa* and other animating drinks have run out. The groom will spend one more night at his bride's family's home. The next morning, before returning home, he will share the reserved *barbwa* with his bride's family.

*Moving to the groom's home*

The groom typically returns home the day after *mabatiro* and the bride stays behind with her relatives for a few more days. During this period, they make preparations for her transfer. Among other things, the bride's kin address their ancestral spirits (*mizimu*), notifying them of all that has occurred and asking them to continue watching over and protecting her, even when she is away from their home. Once everything is prepared, the bride's *sankhulu* accompanies her to the groom's family's home. By that time, the groom



has built a house for her in their family's compound, so she has a place to sleep. He has also built a granary and cooking shelter for her use—the focal point of their new “home.”

A central symbol of the bride's transfer to the groom's home is *makutchá pfiya* or, transfer of the cooking stones.<sup>38</sup> In rural areas of Gorongosa, a cooking fire is created in the center of a triad of cooking stones or *pfiya* together at the center of a cooking house. In food preparation, cooking pots are balanced on the three stones above the fire.

One interviewee explained the process thus: “You are taking the house ... before she was with her mother, cooking, now; she is on her own. It is like you took the *pfiya* from there and transferred them.”<sup>39</sup>

Emphasizing the hearth as the center of the new relationship between the bride and the groom, *makutchá pfiya* involves a monetary payment from the groom to the bride's mother (about 50-100 MTN) that symbolizes moving cooking stones from her family's home to her new home among her husband's kin. Though, normally, the bride's family does not actually carry cooking stones from their home to the groom's home, this transaction symbolizes the transfer of the bride's domestic labor to the groom's home, effectively creating a new “home” for them.

### **Gratitude to the *sankhulu***

A man remains indebted to the two *sankhulus* who helped him negotiate the long and complicated process of marriage. To be chosen as a *sankhulu* is a great honor, and though it involves a long commitment and lots of work, it brings many benefits. Choosing

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Nina; May 17, 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Nicolão João Baptista; March 12, 2008.

a *sankbulu* is not taken lightly because only through the *sankbulu* is a marriage possible.

A young man chooses his two *sankbulus* on the basis of their reputation for reliability and hard work as well as for their intimate relationship of trust.<sup>40</sup>

*Sankbulus* receive a great deal of respect from a young man and his family. They are received as honored guests among the future groom's kin, presented with *pfundo* when visiting the groom's kin, and enjoy continual gifts and offerings far into the future. One man explained to me that he must always give gifts to his *sankbulus*. When he passes them on the path, he offers them anything that he is carrying, or stops at a stand nearby to buy something for them. He told me, since he has two wives and thus four *sankbulus*, these obligations are overwhelming: "My head is turned from one side to another."<sup>41</sup>

Though most of these offerings are spontaneous shows of respect, two formal obligations are required to express gratitude to *sankbulu*. After the *mabatiro* event, the groom presents both his male and female *sankbulu* with a substantial gift, such as a chicken, flour and a bar of soap, to repay them for their labors.<sup>42</sup> After many years of marriage, once the husband and wife have had several children together, the groom prepares a feast at his home in honor of each of his *sankbulus*. In this celebration, the *sankbulu* are the owners of the *barbwa* and celebration feast is significant, usually including a goat, chicken and *nsima* prepared by the groom's kin.

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<sup>40</sup> Group interview, *mabatiro* of Sr. Batchi; May 22, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Nicolão João Baptista; March 12, 2008.

### Gratitude for children: *Kurora*

The formal requirements of a man to his wife's parents do not end with the *mabatiro* ceremony. After the birth of each child, he must bring gifts and a set payment to his wife's parents in a practice known as *kurora*. *Kurora* can take place when a child is an infant, but usually occurs when it is several years old. This practice resembles the negotiations and gift requirements of a marriage. However, whereas in *keusemba* (to marry) a man gains rights to his wife, through *kurora*, a man gains rights to his children. Any child born to a couple that has not been formally recognized through *kurora* remains a member of its mother's lineage and will remain with its mother in the event of divorce or separation. After a man has satisfactorily met the demands of *kurora*, however, the children become part of his lineage.

The event of childbirth and actions of *kurora* illustrate how the relationship between a man and his wife's kin changes over time. Prior to *mabatiro*, the groom's need to maintain a respectful distance from his wife's parents required him to work through a *sankbulu* to carry out all the negotiations and exchanges. Though he must continue to maintain distance, especially towards his wife's mother, after *mabatiro* has taken place, he is freer to interact with his bride's elders. For *kurora*, the groom, now a father, can negotiate the terms of the payment directly with his bride's family. In a typical request, a husband/father is required to bring a basket of flour, a chicken, 10 liters of *nipa*, 600-800 MTN and a white cloth symbolizing the good that the child will bring. On the day when the exchange takes place, the wife's parents accept the gifts and, together with their son-in-law, they perform *kut'hapula*—a ceremony invoking ancestral spirits. In this ceremony, the spirits will be asked to watch over and protect the young child.

*“Son of the house”*

After raising several children and paying *kurora* for each one, a man’s relationship to his wife’s kin changes considerably. He comes to be considered “a son of the house.”<sup>43</sup> As time passes, if he proves himself to be a responsible and respectable son-in-law, he can gain status and move from the position of outsider to respected member of the lineage. He does this by providing for his wife, successfully raising and supporting children, making gifts to his wife’s family and responding to their requests for assistance. When he gains this level of respect, he can ask them for help and support in the way a son of the household would.

In some cases, a man’s in-laws may gain so much respect for him that they offer him another child in marriage; perhaps one of his wife’s sisters. In this way, his wife’s family will gain a greater degree of leverage placing their son-in-law back into a position of indebtedness. Another benefit to such an arrangement is assurance that another one of their daughters will find a good and respectable husband who will respond to their requests. Should a man accept such a gift, he will not have to present his wife’s parents with the offerings associated with *mabatiro* again. As a man gets older, he can accumulate “wealth in people” fairly quickly through this kind of arrangement.

*“Mother of the lineage”*

Just as a man may gain increasing respect among his wife’s kin, a woman’s status among her husbands’ kin continually improves over time. When she first arrives, she is treated as a junior by most of her husband’s family. Her position changes slowly through hard work and displays of respect. As time passes, she gains seniority over others in the

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Marcelino; May 25, 2007.

family, especially over newly-arrived wives who enter at the lowest status position. With the birth of each of her children, she gains greater esteem. As her children grow to adulthood, she is respected even more, as a mother of children of her husband's lineage. By the end of her life she will have been incorporated fully into her husband's family moving from the position of outsider to lineage head. At death, such a woman will join the ancestral spirits guarding her husband's descendants. This potential for marriage to bring a woman increasing degrees of seniority over time is one of the primary reasons that managing marriage difficulties has become one of the most important foci of emergent networks of spiritual healing.

### **The normative marriage process: Conclusion**

Traditional marriage in Gorongosa is a process that continues over many years. Entering into marriage inserts a man firmly into overlapping networks of debt and obligation. It takes many years for a man to "take" his bride home to live with him, but even once he has met the formalized obligations required for this to happen, he remains mired in "debt" to many people. As time progresses and he fulfills more and more of his formal obligations, he can shift the balance, finding himself with more people in his debt than he is indebted to.

### **"Wealth in Cash": The Pragmatics of Marriage in Gorongosa**

As seen above, traditional marriage relationships are tied closely to a principle of social organization based on the notion of "wealth in people." In the changing economic context, the system of "wealth in people," is still in play, but has been supplemented by

what could be called “wealth in cash.” That is, those with access to cash may gain easy influence over others and quickly earn their loyalty, regardless of their age. Cash is a short-cut to attaining wealth in people: whereas “wealth in people” typically requires many years to establish a level of social standing where many people are clients or desiring to be clients, “wealth in cash” can be acquired more quickly.

Cash allows some men to subvert the “wealth in people” system upon which traditional marriage is based. This situation has led to an erosion of traditional patterns of social organization where older generations gained a position of respect and authority through the accumulation of “wealth in people.” Cash payments for goods and services allow them to sever economic ties of obligation to kin groups and leaders, making traditional social ties more fragile (c.f. Bledsoe 1988). Youth who have gone through years of education have a greater chance of success in the market economy and can subvert the channels previous generations had no choice but to follow. One man told me that youth are getting married at younger ages because they no longer respect their elders. “They have the attitude: ‘That old man is backwards,’” he explained, “and so they have stopped listening to their parents.”<sup>44</sup> The story below serves to introduce how “wealth in cash” has come to impact marriage arrangements.

### **Opening: “We will save for the wedding after I buy the DVD player”**

Upon my return to Mozambique, I visited my former student, Celio. He was outfitting his recently-built home with electricity. In just a few hours, an electrician had tacked the wiring to the exposed rafters of his zinc roof and outlets and switches were

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Ernesto Zimba; June 14, 2008.

installed on the cement block walls in each of the three rooms. When the electrician announced that the installation was complete, Celio ran over to plug in his cell phone—no longer would he need to pay neighbors to charge his phone.



**Figure 6.11: Celio in front of his home just after the electricity was connected.**

As we caught up on news, I was eager to hear about Celio's wife, Zelinha, and their daughter Cristina, my namesake, now nearly 4 years old. Celio, like so many other young professionals, had long been in a committed relationship with Zelinha, but was not yet saving money for *lobolo* and all the expenses connected with a formal marriage ceremony.

Celio is the pride of his family—a young man with impressive achievements. When I was his high school English teacher, he walked from his residence at his uncle's house for two hours, each direction, to attend school. His parents are peasant farmers who moved into the forests outside of the district capital ten years ago in order to open fields on fresh,

fertile ground to grow enough food to feed the family and still have some to sell for cash. After he finished 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Celio attended a teacher's training institute in a neighboring district with financial support from Peace Corps volunteers who had taught him in high school. In his professional studies, Celio managed to impress his teachers at the ADPP school with the same tenacity and eagerness to learn that won the hearts of his Peace Corps teachers. Upon graduation, Celio took a job teaching 6<sup>th</sup> grade English far from home. He told me he was tired of Gorongosa, and wanted to live somewhere new.

Despite his parents' disapproval of his girlfriend, Celio entered into a domestic partnership, or informal marriage, with his high school sweetheart, Zelinha. A native resident of Gorongosa, she was also from an extremely modest peasant family. When Zelinha became pregnant with Cristina, she dropped out of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Once Celio started his teaching job and set up his own home, she went to live with him in Nhamatanda, three hours from Gorongosa. Four years later, Celio had purchased a small plot of land directly on EN6: the main highway stretching from Zimbabwe to the port city of Beira. He built a small cement block house, an enviable construction relative to the homes of his other family members. On this day of my visit, he had finally managed to pay an electrician to connect his house to the grid.

Once Celio's phone was plugged into the universal charger, I asked him when he and Zelinha planned to formalize their marriage. Celio told me that it would be another year or more before he could save up enough for the marriage ceremonies. Right now he had more pressing concerns: "We will save for the wedding after I buy the DVD player," he told me, in a matter-of-fact tone. Indeed, when I visited Celio and Zelinha a year and a half later, after the initial greetings, he eagerly asked me to sit at his sturdy hard wood dining



table, and ordered his younger brother to go to market to buy some coca colas, while he turned on his new TV. He sifted through a pile of DVDs and loaded one into the shiny grey player. For the rest of the afternoon, the DVD player was the centerpiece of our conversations, and even as we ate lunch, he left the latest music videos playing. He had not yet begun saving for their wedding. Like so many other young men attempting to attain highly prized consumer goods, marriage for Celio was taking a back seat.

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Celio's ability to establish a domestic partnership with Zelinha with little more than a promise to her kin to complete the payment of *mabatiro* in the future illustrates how "wealth in cash" operates as a form of social power in parallel to "wealth in people."

In the past, and currently, in some places, a young man's main preoccupation was to attain *lobolo* to formalize the marriage bond. Completing marriage was accorded such importance that it was a necessary hurdle to attaining status as a respected adult. In order to become a full social being and an adult member of society, a young man had to enter into negotiations with the family of his bride-to-be. Then began the long process of meeting their demands before the marriage could be established. Now, it is increasingly common to find couples with children living together in long-standing domestic partnerships that have not been formalized in this way.

As Celio's story illustrates, different economic demands often cause men to realign their priorities. In Celio's case, working as a teacher far from his home district forced him to invest a significant sum of money to buy the plot of land for his house. Building his cement block home and purchasing construction materials required more than two years of his saved earnings. Once his house was built, electricity was needed. Then came the need

for a DVD player, and the list of material needs and desires only continued from there. Inserted fully in the social life of fellow teachers, Celio's primary goal to become a full member of society required that he attain a lifestyle common to other working professionals. In this context, meeting his wife's family's needs for completion of the marriage process was secondary at best.

Sweeping social and economic changes in Gorongosa have made the completion of traditional marriage less common, especially in the district capital where social transformations associated with the market economy are more widespread. Celio's story illustrates how social standing and access to money allow some men to subvert social requirements for traditional marriage. Because Celio's job as a teacher afforded him steady income and greater social respect, Zelinha's mother allowed him to take her to live with him for years on end, accepting a significant delay in completion of the marriage process.

### **Economics and varieties of marriage relationships**

In Gorongosa, where the economic climate is shifting dramatically, the ways marriages are created and the interests involved in their continuation are becoming more varied. Economic hardship is making traditional marriage unions more difficult to establish and maintain. In this context, new strategies for entering marriage are emerging and new values are being assigned to these relationships. Reasons for marriage and the nature of the relationships that result vary significantly from couple to couple depending largely on their livelihoods and life circumstances. As individuals and groups work to construct favorable social networks to increase their social advantages, many use marriage as a tool to access greater social capital.

Couples are structuring marriage relationships to meet their needs and life situations, revealing the creativity and agency involved in the establishment and performance of marriage. A series of vignettes will serve to illustrate the variety of ways that marital arrangements are used as a socioeconomic strategy. Each of type of relationship is based in some way on the normative process of marriage. In some of the examples below, only certain aspects of the marriage process are followed, in others, the full process is maintained. In each instance, the nature of the relationship varies according to the needs and desires of the couple.

### **Domestic Partnerships: Marriage as prolonged courtship**

While Celio worked to gain the approval of Zelinha's family, other men do not show the same kind of respect. Men with access to cash can quickly establish domestic partnerships, avoiding the completion of the traditional marriage process altogether or postponing it for many years. Domestic partnerships that subvert the control of extended kin networks and delay a man's obligations to his wife's kin for many years have become the dominant form of marriage in Mozambique (Rosário 2008).

Like traditional unions, "marital unions" or domestic partnerships are typically established through exchange. A man shows his interest in a woman by presenting her with gifts such as clothing, lotion, soap, shoes, or other luxury items. To a young woman, such gifts carry the promise of material wealth and security, and through them, a young man can quickly gain her loyalty.

These are not "free" gifts, rather they are offerings that come with significant strings attached. Like *tsanzu* and *nguvo za mukadzzi* of the traditional marriage process, a girl's

acceptance of these gifts implies her acceptance of the young man's advances. With time, as a young woman accepts more and more gifts, her obligations to the giver grow, thereby bringing her under his control. Before long, the relationship can lead a young woman to "elope" with him. In these cases, a couple lives together as if they were married. They refer to each other as "husband" and "wife" and to their relationship as a marriage. In this sense, the relationship follows the traditional marriage process through the courtship phase (*tsanzu* and *ngunwo za ukadzɪ*). It decenters the traditional marriage process where the bride's family directs the proceedings. Instead, such domestic partnerships center on the couple. The relationship of mutual obligation is directly between the man and the woman.

One young woman's story illustrates the binding nature of these gifts. She was a secondary school student at the time she accepted many gifts from a man significantly older than she was. His regular presentations of blouses, shoes, skirts, and other luxury items lured her into the relationship. Before long, she moved away from her family and friends to live with this man who worked in Chimoio, a small city in Manica Province. After a while, she found his attempts to control her behavior unbearable. Despite her desire to complete high school, he demanded that she stay home. The tension over her schooling led him to become physically and verbally abusive, so she returned home to her family. He pursued her there, threatening her and her father with violence. In his mind, the young girl was obliged to follow his orders. After all, she had accepted many gifts and he had supported her while they lived together. In the end, she and her father took their case to the district court where a government judge ruled that in order to remain with her father and continue

her schooling; they must repay the young man the value of the goods that she had accepted.<sup>45</sup>

A young man and woman may live together for many years in the “courtship” phase, and most men assume that, even without completing the marriage process, they have attained rights over their “spouse,” and can make demands and order her behavior. In some cases, men eventually complete the steps of the traditional marriage process, meeting her family’s demands for *lobolo* and organizing a formal ceremony. However, many marriages in Gorongosa remain indefinitely at the stage of domestic partnership. This type of marriage relationship is not as secure as other types. Some women prefer to enter into such relationships because they offer more freedom. Without the *lobolo* having been paid, separation is easier, since there is not a significant amount of monetary and material wealth that must be returned.

### **Couple-centric unions**

Domestic partnerships reveal part of a wider tendency to couple-centric unions. Traditional marriage establishes a bond not only between two people but also between two families. The process is focused on negotiations and relationship between a man and his bride’s family. Though the bride’s consent to the arrangement is typically the first step towards marriage, in the remainder of the traditional marriage process, a groom’s responsibilities are to his bride’s family. It is becoming more common in Gorongosa for couples to begin courtship and to transition to long-term domestic partnerships outside the control of their extended families. This decenters the traditional marriage arrangement

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<sup>45</sup> Field notes, Mikilina Vasco Mangwa; January 4, 2008.

from a union of two families to a union primarily between the couple. In the district capital, this type of relationship is becoming more dominant because the social spaces of town place young people outside the supervision of kin for longer periods of time.

Related to couple-centric marriages, nuclear family settlements are becoming more common in the district capital, mirroring the phenomenon common in urban areas of Mozambique where migration and jobs in the city have led to the geographic dispersal of lineage groups. When men establish their homes far from their extended kin, this erodes traditional forms of social control that regulate relationships between husbands and wives. As the nuclear family has grown in importance, the meaning of *lobolo* has shifted from an agreement between two lineages—we see once again—to a transaction between a man and woman (Agadjanian 2001).

### **In search of security**

Most women hope to enter into a formal marriage, since a “marital union” will not be as secure. Marriage, as has been widely noted in the literature, is an important means for women to gain security and to increase their social standing (Obbo 1980, Rosário 2008). While marriage allows women access to material and economic benefits through their husbands’ provision of household resources, the greatest value of marriage for women is not necessarily from access to economic capital, but because of access to social capital. In marriage, women gain socially adult status, opening to them a path of increasing autonomy. Motherhood provides women with seniority status that brings enhanced negotiation ability. Typically, as a woman advances in age in relation to those around her, she gains greater status, and thus more authority and power in her household and among her kin. Also, as

she raises children and as her children grow older, she gains greater respect from her husband and his kin as the mother of descendants of the lineage (Oyewumi 2002).

Although the benefits of marriage may accrue to a woman who is not “officially” married according to traditional practices, the social recognition of a marriage increases the stability of the relationship and her access to protective rights (Rosário 2008: 101). Whether formalized through a traditional process, a religious ceremony or a civil union registered with the government, when socially recognized, marriage unions establish relationships of mutual obligation. If a man is not fulfilling his obligations to the relationship as understood by a wider community, a woman can use her position to leverage support of others to help change the situation. In a time when more men are unable to meet the economic barriers of establishing formal unions, men with the means and the disposition to be proper husbands have become highly sought after.

### **Serial marriages**

Women facing difficulties in their first marriage who consider returning home (separation or divorce), are usually encouraged to weather the tough times, because a divorce may start an unending cycle of trouble for them in future relationships, bringing even more hardship. Indeed, many women in Gorongosa are cycling through multiple troubled marriages. When a woman’s first marriage fails, she is more vulnerable because it is unlikely that she will enter into another relationship with a man as his first wife. Instead, she is more likely to marry a man as his second wife.

In Gorongosa, because of the importance of a woman’s virginity in traditional marriage, previously married women are not accorded high social value. Men interested in

establishing their first domestic relationship with a woman typically avoid women who have been previously married. However, such women are attractive to men wishing to establish additional marital unions because such unions require much less monetary and social investment. The family of a divorced or widowed woman will require little or no *lobolo*. Such unions are often quiet affairs without elaborate public ceremonies. With less investment in the process, men are less dedicated to the maintenance of such relationships in the event of problems.

Further, these kinds of unions are more conflict-prone. The first wife, having been incorporated into the man's kin group earlier, has gained more status and security in her position, and thus can make demands of her co-wives. Jealousy is common among co-wives who vie for the attention and respect of the same man. A resentful first wife is in a position to make a subordinate co-wife's situation miserable. If problems arise and become unmanageable, a junior wife is more likely to be released from the relationship.

### **The search for cash and for home: Labor migration and marriage**

Because jobs in Gorongosa are extremely scarce, especially for men with little education, most men continue to rely on agricultural production. But, agriculture, even for subsistence, is becoming ever more precarious.<sup>46</sup> As securing cash becomes increasingly difficult, more men are leaving Gorongosa for long periods of time to seek jobs, to engage in trading or to find informal labor contracts known as *muterekita*.<sup>47</sup> Finding jobs, even in the city, remains extremely difficult, and so most men search for cash by pursuing leads in

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<sup>46</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>47</sup> In other regions, informal contract labor is referred to as “*ganho ganho*.” See Chapter 3.



the informal economy. The informal economy is vast, fluid, and mysterious. Men follow networks of contacts that lead to temporary work projects, trading deals or new places to set up profitable businesses.

When a man's trade leads him to stay in another area for long periods of time, he will be inclined to establish a domestic partnership there, as this is his only means to establish a home base. It is considered shameful for adult men to cook and clean for themselves, so men residing away from their primary residence often establish a "home" for themselves through informal marriage or domestic partnerships. Even men who reside with extended relatives while away from their primary homes often establish new domestic partnerships. For instance, one man I knew whose wife left him due to his alcoholism and domestic violence, went to live with his sister. However, he explained that because he was a grown man it would be shameful to burden her: "I thought, to give work to my sister isn't possible."<sup>48</sup> After moving in with her, he told me, he "went out to arrange" another wife.<sup>49</sup>

While marrying or setting up domestic partnerships far from the primary family affords men more options to access income, this strategy constrains their ability to meet the material and monetary needs of all their wives and children. With multiple partners expecting that he fulfill his obligations, the demands are often beyond his capacity, and the family he left behind is often neglected and sometimes abandoned outright.

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with Ernesto Zimba; February 3, 2008.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

**Women “looking for salt”**

Itinerant men’s search for temporary relationships in distant places has its flipside. Just as men need women’s labor to establish a home, entering marriage is also an economic necessity for many women. Most women who lose a husband through labor migration, divorce or death quickly seek to re-establish their position as “wife” and benefit from their “husband’s” obligations to the relationship. A woman with children and no husband quickly finds herself in a dire situation. How will she support herself and her children? Though many women work creatively to overcome constraints to their participation in the marketplace, most women rely on marriage for their economic survival.

The influx of male traders to Gorongosa from neighboring areas<sup>50</sup> has opened new opportunities for temporary marriage partnerships. Itinerant traders set up semi-permanent residences in Gorongosa to take advantage of the profits associated with the market expansion. As seen above, to establish such temporary homes, they often establish semi-permanent relationships with women who typically are long-term residents of the area.

Unless they last for a long period of time, such temporary arrangements are seen to be distinct from “domestic partnerships.” The men and women involved in these relationships, as well as outside observers, do not consider such arrangements to be marriages. However, the individuals involved refer to each other as “husband” and “wife” and they each assume the roles associated with these titles. As Rosário points out, people distinguish “getting a wife” from “getting married” through completion of a formally recognized marriage (2008).

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 3.

Women's motivation to enter these relationships is typically economic.

Widespread poverty and desire for consumer goods make these kinds of partnerships attractive. In other areas of Mozambique, this strategy is referred to colloquially as “looking for salt” (see, e.g. Marlin 2001). Often, women who choose to enter such relationships have been divorced or widowed and are not concerned about establishing a marriage. They already have a house and children of their own and are struggling to meet material needs in an economic context that favors male success.<sup>51</sup> Other women who are married, but struggling financially due to their husbands' financial abandonment, find such arrangements beneficial.

Informal domestic partnerships, though mutually beneficial, can become a source of conflict and strife. With multiple relationships, the man's finances may become insufficient to support them, and the early euphoric period when a woman receives affection and material benefits, typically erodes in a short period, as the lavish gifts begin to disappear. Since a trader is often on the road, she will have to endure periods of physical and financial abandonment when her “husband” is away. Finally, with multiple relationships, a man can be a mobile vector of STDs including HIV, endangering the health of women and their children.

### **Economic strain, orphans, and early marriage**

With increasing economic insecurity and growing numbers of children orphaned of one or both parents, marriage is often used as a technique to re-establish order in broken situations. When a household is under severe economic strain, parents may seek to marry a

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<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 7.

young daughter to a man who can meet the monetary and material requirements of marriage right away as a strategy for household survival. They may approach a man who has financial means and make the arrangements, thereby cutting courtship out of the process. Such arrangements may be made before a girl has reached marriageable age, in which case the transfer of *lobolo* takes place well in advance of co-habitation. Crises such as illness or death can precipitate the intense economic strain that leads to this kind of marriage. However, they are considered a last resort—an arrangement that is divergent from the ideal marriage process.

Several women I knew entered marriages of this sort. They accepted their suitors because they recognized the hardship their families faced. When I asked one young woman, Antónia, why she had married a man who was almost twice her age, she told me, “It was because of suffering at home.”<sup>52</sup> She explained that at the time marriage arrangements were made, she had no clothing or “good things.” Because her father had abandoned the family during the civil war, she and her mother were struggling. Her step-father was not providing material support for her since she was not of his lineage. His alcoholism worsened the situation. Antónia’s early marriage was welcomed by her mother who used the *lobolo* to weather tough times. Though Antónia’s husband was much older and not a man she had desired to marry, she saw the relationship as an escape from difficult circumstances: “When I agreed to marry Salvador,” she told me, “I was hoping for a better life.”<sup>53</sup> She found more material security living with her husband who attended to her needs, showed her the money he made, and provided her a portion of his income when he received it. Though they were

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Antonia and Salvador; February 22, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

not wealthy, he supplied her and her two young children with the basic support they needed. Compared to other husbands, Salvador treated her with respect and care.

As Antonia's situation reveals, women's children from previous marriages are often not treated well by subsequent husbands. Orphans often fare even worse. They are vulnerable to abuse because they may be resented for the burden they bring to their new caretakers. In the current situation, where the HIV-AIDS crisis is leaving many children orphaned, this type of hardship is increasing. Early marriage can be a strategy to establish support for orphaned girls. Cecilia, a pastor's wife living on Gorongosa Mountain, described how, as an orphaned child, she came to be married to an older man:

I was married to Elisha when my breasts were just emerging. Because my father died during the war, my mother was sent home and my *bambo m'kulu* (father's eldest brother) took care of me. His first wife was cruel and abusive—she beat me often and would withhold food ... She would send me out to fetch firewood when it was raining ... One day, she forced me into the *tsanz̃a* (grain storage loft) above the fire and placed green leaves (*masakani*) in the fire to make the smoke thick to make me suffer. On this day, a neighbor, Malasha, heard my cries and rescued me, took me home with him. When my *bambo m'kulu* heard this story, he rushed back from Domba. The next day, Elisha [her current husband] came and took me as his future wife. He raised me until I was menstruating, and after that I didn't return home. I have stayed with him until this day. God made this my destiny (*Mulungu alemba daloku*).<sup>54</sup>

Seeing that his wife was endangering the welfare of his orphaned niece, Cecilia's uncle quickly made a marriage arrangement with a trusted friend so that he could send her to live with someone who would treat her well.

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Cecilia Neva; March 11, 2008.

### ***Lobolo* inflation**

When the need for cash comes at a time of economic strain, the cash amounts set for *lobolo* tend to increase. This creates an even greater hurdle for men seeking to enter a formal marriage relationship. Many Gorongosans comment on the sharp inflation of *lobolo*. This is not new, however. Rapid inflation in the cash payments associated with *lobolo* was also noted soon after independence, more than doubling in southern Mozambique between 1975 and 1982 (Urdang 1989: 216).

In Gorongosa, *lobolo* inflation has led some men to seek brides in areas where families request lower cash payments as part of the marriage process. This often means traveling to distant areas. For a young woman, marrying far away from her family can be a hardship because the distance is a barrier to her to visits home. Periodic home visits are common when women live within walking distance from their kin and women widely comment that they provide much-needed respite from domestic tasks. Marrying at a distance gives men more power in the relationship, removing or reducing the bride's family's oversight. Finally, when a woman's kin are so far that she must finance transportation, she is less able to return home to seek support when she faces troubles in her new home.

### **Feeding the family: Wives as field laborers**

For most residents of Sofala Province and indeed Mozambique itself—agriculture remains the primary means for sustaining a family. A government study conducted in 2005 in both urban and rural areas of Sofala Province revealed that more than 55 percent of the households in the province depend primarily on agriculture to make a living (MPD 2005:

14). Other households were slotted in a category labeled “professional” because members of the family claimed to be engaged in different income-generating activities. However, in addition to the 55 percent of households classified as primarily dependent on agriculture for income, most other families also rely on domestic agricultural production in some way, if only partially. In Sofala Province, for example, the same study revealed that 92.5 percent of the households surveyed possessed fields for agricultural production (MPD 2005: 15).

Even in urban areas, most families rely on private agricultural production for part of their subsistence. Thus, one primary reason men marry is to find a partner who will provide agricultural labor. Because of the high cost of food, even men with a steady income from salaried jobs rely on agriculture to sustain the family’s basic needs. Thus, while a vital part of marriage unions is reproduction, in seeking to marry, men also to seek out the means to produce basic food stuffs for domestic consumption (see also Bledsoe 1980: 119).

### **Wives as employees**

After a long discussion about marriage, I asked one young man: “Marriage here is not really about love, is it?” He replied, “No Ticha! It’s more of a contract—it’s like contracting a worker!”<sup>55</sup> The metaphorical language he used to liken marriage to a business contract is indicative of some recent changes in marriage relationships, both subtle and overt. While some youth, especially cosmopolitan youth with considerable education, are embracing the notion of romantic love as portrayed in popular Brazilian soap operas, more

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<sup>55</sup> Interview with Nicolão João Baptista; April 20, 2007.

frequently, marriages around the region are taking on a business-like quality. The story below illustrates this more clearly:

In a neighboring district I met Manuel, a trader, who travelled frequently and had several home bases in far-flung areas of the country. At each of them, he established relationships with women he considered as wives and who bore him children. As he spoke of his entrepreneurial ventures, he asked if I knew of a well-educated young woman in Gorongosa that would make a good wife. Manuel explained that he was hoping to open a bar and *barraca* (a small shop selling basic goods and snacks) in Inchope, along the main highway linking Beira and Zimbabwe. He hoped such a venture would provide a steady source of income for his aging father. Before he could set up this new business, he told me, he needed to marry a well-educated woman who could tend the shop.

I asked why he couldn't have his current wife run the shop—after all, she lived very close to the future site of the *barraca*. “No!” he explained, “she tends our fields there near home!”<sup>56</sup> Half jokingly, I asked: “Are you looking for an employee or a wife?” To which he explained that it is much better to marry a woman than to hire an employee. If it is your wife tending the business for you, she can be trusted in handling the accounts and the money, but anyone else cannot be trusted without direct supervision.<sup>57</sup> Manuel's comments exposed another layer of the motivations for marriage in the current economic climate. This notion of marriage as useful for business and trade activities is by no means unique in the region.

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Manuel; September 20, 2007: “*Nao! Ela tende a nossa machamba lá em casa!*”

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*



### Transforming “wealth in cash” into “wealth in people”

Similarly, growing cash crops can transform motivations for marriage. One elder explained that growing cotton led many men to enter into polygamous relationships. Before that time, he told me, polygamy in Gorongosa was quite rare. At that time, he explained, only *nyakwana* and other prominent figures acquired multiple wives.<sup>58</sup> In structuring the collection of “hut taxes,” colonial officials sought to discourage polygamy, and so only charged one tax to monogamous couples. Because additional wives had to pay a separate tax for their huts, this tax policy effectively curtailed polygamy because the financial burden was too great<sup>59</sup> (see also ISANI 1967). The cotton regime, however, altered this situation significantly.

Cotton became an important cash crop for Portugal during colonial times, leading to the imposition of structured cotton growing regimes in Mozambique after 1926 and especially under the rule of António Salazar (Isaacman 1996: 30). By 1943, a cotton gin had been established in Gorongosa District<sup>60</sup> owned by the Companhia Nacional Algodeira (National Cotton Company or CNA) (ISANI 1944: 190). Unlike other regions, forced cotton production was never instituted under Gorongosa’s colonial administration. However, the need to pay annual taxes and the desire to avoid conscripted labor were sufficient to attract many people to undertake the endeavor.

Cotton production is extremely labor intensive. It requires back-breaking work and between one-third to two-thirds more time than the cultivation of subsistence crops such as

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with Celestino Sacaune Canda; October 25, 2007.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> At this time, the area was known as the “Circunscrição de Gorongosa.”

maize, sorghum and peanuts (Isaacman 1996: 68). For cotton growers, having multiple wives was almost a necessity to meet labor needs.



**Fig 6.12: Three wives and the children of the pastor of a Zionist church in Canda prepare cotton for market. (A woman in the background packs cotton into a burlap sack, while those in the foreground process the cotton to remove the seeds).**

For a man engaged in cash-cropping, acquiring wives is a type of investment that transforms his “wealth in cash” into “wealth in people”—a valued form of wealth in households that are economically devoted to intensive agriculture. Today, though cotton production is no longer forced through labor requirements and hut taxes, large numbers of Gorongosans continue to cultivate cotton. As in colonial times, polygamy and cotton production still go hand in hand. Nearly all successful cotton producers in Gorongosa have multiple wives—both a necessity for and a result of earning significant returns from the production of this cash crop. Cotton is not the only cash crop that leads men to seek multiple wives. Sesame is also becoming a popular cash crop because it brings greater

returns. Although sesame is less labor intensive, many men find economic advantage in polygamy since multiple wives can multiply income.

### **Wives and wealth on display**

Whereas men engaged in cash-cropping typically seek multiple wives because of the value of their labor, other men seek multiple wives to display their prestige and their social and sexual power. One young man provides a vivid example of the use of multiple marriages as an ostentatious display of wealth. He was a *n'ganga* working with a *gamba* spirit.<sup>61</sup> Though his primary residence was in Gorongosa, most of his patients were residents of major cities, and so he was frequently away from home. His work centered on helping urban clients with financial matters and assisting victims of theft in recuperating stolen goods. Because of the nature of his work, he received large cash payments which he primarily invested in wives. Though he was a young man, about 32 years old, he already had four wives: one in Beira and three residing in separate houses on the same compound in Gorongosa.

It was clear that his motivation was not to attain field workers. In fact, none of his four wives performed any agricultural work. When traveling, he often took one of his wives with him to serve as an assistant to his work (*nyamaricumbi*). Each day when I passed his house, his wives sat in the yard, watching the children, cooking food, resting in the shade or braiding each others' hair. They were nicely dressed in new clothing, which is a visible

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<sup>61</sup> See discussion of *gamba* spirit-mediums, Chapter 4.

luxury item.<sup>62</sup> Other goods of value were always visibly prominent: jars of lotion, hair extensions, numerous types of shoes, etc. These aspects of his marriages signaled clearly to neighbors that his wives were a way for him to flaunt his power and sexual prowess.

While his ostentatious display was thought to be rather unsavory by his neighbors, it was easily read as a display of wealth. As a spirit-medium specializing in helping patients attain material success, this kind of social message was an important way to communicate personal success and assure his patients that he could bring the same kind of success to their life situations.

### **Wealth, social standing, and sexual power**

While formal polygamous marriage as a display of wealth is uncommon, some of its elements are evident in other ways. Some men in Gorongosa with substantial social influence, wealth, or both, frequently enter into regular sexual partnerships with multiple women. However, most of these people move in social circles that view polygamy in a negative light. Thus, multiple relationships with “wives” or regular sexual partners often take place outside of formal marriage in a semi-hidden fashion. These men typically occupy professional roles as teachers, leaders in the district administration, nurses, pastors, or church leaders. Their positions of power allow them to both attract and coerce sexual relationships with women. On occasion, such relationships are eventually formalized as marriage.

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<sup>62</sup> New clothing is significantly more expensive than imported used clothing that is sold at markets. Though the quality of new clothing (mostly from China) is quite inferior to used clothing imported from the US and Europe, many people prefer to buy new items as a sign of pride and wealth. Used clothing markets have gained the name “*calamidade*” (“calamity”), which was the name of a government body that provided relief during times of war/flood. With this association, buying used clothing is widely seen as a sign of poverty and dependence.

In an example of social power being transformed into sexual power, teachers have been known to withhold passing grades from female students in order to coerce them into providing sexual favors. Occasionally, teachers use such power to create long-term domestic partnerships. When I worked as a teacher at the district's high school, two of my neighbors were also new teachers who had recently arrived in the district. Soon after the school year started, they each established a domestic partnership with a female student, in order to create a home. These students took up residence with them and took care of all their domestic chores. Because the housing belonged to the Catholic mission, they tried to conceal these relationships. Indeed, when church authorities learned of the teachers' relationships with the students, they were evicted from the premises. However, both of these teachers ended up in long-term, formal marriages with these students. The girls benefitted from assistance that allowed them to complete high school easily and from a long-term attachment to men with steady incomes and upward social mobility. They now reside in the center of town in nicely-built homes with electricity and all the household electronics available. Such student-teacher relationships are common.

### **Opting out of marriage**

Though the reasons women enter into formal or informal marriage relationships are varied, some women choose to avoid marriage altogether. Typically, women choose this path only after they have children from previous relationships who have grown past the toddler stage. Usually, they have managed to establish a stable source of income, whether through paid employment or a successful business. Economic independence allows them the opportunity to refuse men's advances, preferring to avoid the complications of marriage.

Drawing from previous experience, women I knew who vowed never to marry again enjoyed the freedom of their single life—free from the demands and constraints imposed by a husband.

Another reason women choose not to remarry is to retain control over their children. For instance, an older woman I came to know explained how she and her husband divorced after illnesses and tragedies that struck their family led to conflicts and accusations. After having seven children together, her husband and his family sent her home, but because of the nature of their separation, she was able to keep control of her seven children and seven grandchildren.<sup>63</sup> She explained to me that she refuses to remarry. First, she told me she was worried about her reputation: “If I marry another man, my children may disrespect me and call me a ‘whore.’”<sup>64</sup> Her primary concern, however, was the wellbeing of her children following her death. Though she was just over forty and in good health, she was plagued by a feeling that death for her was not far off. “If I die while I have a second husband,” she explained, “my youngest children will fall into his hands and since they will not be of his lineage, he will not treat them well.”<sup>65</sup> Finally, she rounded off her musings about a second husband saying:

At this stage, after I already have so many children, marrying another man would only bring trouble. He would make demands of me, treat me poorly, get angry ... yell, insult ... I don’t want that now.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Anita was able to retain control of her children because her husband was determined (at a community court) to have been at fault for the circumstances leading to the divorce. Unless a husband’s behavior in marriage is particularly egregious, women do not retain control of their children after divorce. However, frequently, when young children are involved, they remain with their mother until they are grown, at which time they will go to live with their father.

<sup>64</sup> Interview, Mãe Anita; February 20, 2008.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

Wary of the dangers of men mistreating them, many young women to prefer establish domestic partnerships that are less binding. As Anita's comments reveal, if a woman is satisfied with the number of children she has and if she has the means to support herself, she may "opt-out" of marriage altogether.

## **Conclusion**

As these varieties of marital arrangements reveal, men have relative freedom of choice when entering a marriage relationship. Their strategies are varied and tied closely to their economic interests. Women's choices in marriage are less varied because their economic activities are more circumscribed. These examples also illustrate a central reason why marriages have become more vulnerable. In a context of intensifying poverty, women's security is undercut on two fronts. At the same time that women have come to rely more on the material support that marriage affords, formal marriage unions have become harder for men to establish. But, even formally established marriages have become unstable in this context.

The following chapter explores a constellation of forces that has contributed to the instability of marriage relationships. Gender relationships governing marriage and economic activities contribute to women's dependence on marriage as a strategy of survival. As cash becomes more necessary for basic necessities, women agriculturalists have become increasingly reliant on men to sustain the household. However, increasing physical disease and economic pressures has made it more difficult for both men and women to fulfill their obligations to their marriage relationships.

## Chapter 7

### Marital Instability in a Challenging Time

Throughout my research, most of the people I spent time with—men, women, church participants, spirit-mediums and their patients—had struggled through separation, divorce or multiple divorces. In fact, marital dissolution has become so commonplace, that stable marriages seem to be the exception. This chapter explores a constellation of factors contributing to marital instability in Gorongosa. It opens by presenting a variety of different perspectives on the sources of this kind of social dis-ease. The final sections of the chapter are devoted to exploring gender relations in marriage. Gender roles structure not only domestic relations but also economic pursuits. Physical illness and economic hardship has impacted marriage relationships, making it more difficult for men and women to fulfill their obligations to each other and their families in marriage. In this context, more people come to resort to their dissolution.

#### **Loss of Respect: Accounting for marriage changes in town**

While marital instability is becoming a problem all around Gorongosa, marriages tend to be more stable in rural areas where livelihoods and social organization follows traditional patterns. In Gorongosa's district capital, marriage instability is commonplace. To illustrate, I interviewed 31 female Pentecostal church participants who had entered into a total of 44 marriage unions. Eleven of these marriages ended in divorce, and nine people had lost spouses to death. The eighteen women I interviewed who were residents of Gorongosa's district capital were more likely to have a history of marital instability, in that



55 percent of them had a history of multiple marriage relationships. By contrast, in the rural area of Nyalirosa on Gorongosa Mountain, fifteen percent of women had multiple marriages.

The clear difference in marriage histories between mountain residents and residents in Gorongosa's capital is the result of a complex combination of historical and economic factors. These factors have led to significant social divergence between residents of the semi-urban area of Gorongosa's district capital and those who live further from the town center. Social changes have come more rapidly to Gorongosa's district capital. For peasants residing in this area, sustaining the material and the physical health of families is considerably more difficult. An increase in marital conflict, separation and divorce has been associated with these changes, which are so striking that they are often the subject of discussion. People attribute this phenomenon to a variety of causes. Together, their reflections create a composite picture of factors influencing rapid social change.

### **Civil War**

Many Gorongosans see the civil war as the origin of many negative social changes. They often point to the civil war as the time when disorder in marriage became widespread. During the war, Gorongosa's district capital was a Frelimo protectorate, serving as a center for the government army's operations in the area and drawing soldiers from around Mozambique as well as support troops from Zimbabwe. Because of the spatial divisions of the war, where settled areas became Frelimo protectorates and outlying areas remained under Renamo control, many married couples were geographically separated and became involved in new relationships.

Others divorced due to the war's sexual violence. Women captured for *gandira* and kept as "wives" of Renamo soldiers<sup>1</sup> were frequently divorced and socially ostracized when they returned home. One man, commenting on his brother, who divorced his wife after she returned from a week at a Renamo base, said: "A woman who has adulterated once will continue to enjoy walking with other men. She won't be satisfied with just one."<sup>2</sup>

Women who came of age or were divorced or separated during the war entered into new marriages. Such relationships were almost always informal arrangements, because carrying out the long process of traditional marriage was impossible and the social networks required for this process were dispersed. As one elderly man explained,

During the war many people from many places were living together. Your daughter could marry a *k'homeredi* (a soldier from Zimbabwe) ... or someone from Cabo Delgado, or Niassa ... These people didn't know and didn't follow the *respeito* (traditional rules of marriage) from here.<sup>3</sup>

In his explanation, war was the origin of ongoing disregard for the traditional marriage process. He pointed to growing marital discord as a legacy of the recent civil war. In the past, he told me, there was more agreement among husbands and wives. He described marital conflict as a broader category of illness: "*utenda wanhu waleka kubverana*," an "illness of people failing to get along."<sup>4</sup> War, he told me, is what brought this illness.

Another major source of trauma inflicted by the war was the forced removal of people from ancestral lands and the experiences of a refugee life, even while close to home.<sup>5</sup> Prior to the civil war, Gorongosa's district capital was sparsely populated and settlement

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<sup>1</sup> *Gandira* was the name given to porter-service. In Renamo-controlled areas, residents were often obliged to carry heavy loads great distances to Renamo bases. Young, attractive women taken for *gandira* were often "kept as wives"—subject to rape for prolonged periods. See Chapter 2 for further discussion.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Felizardo; April 7, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Sekulu Fazenda; February 28, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 2.

patterns reflected those of the rest of the district where extended family groups lived in widely spaced settlements surrounded by their fields (see Figure 7.1). After the war ended, many people remained in the district capital and other Frelimo protectorates in the district, fearful that war might reignite or unsure of where else to go. Others chose to avoid the labor and disruption of relocation. Even after the end of the civil war, the layout and style of residences in the district capital retained much of the nature and feeling of a refugee camp (see Figure 7.2), and the recent influx of new residents intensified the pressures associated with living there.

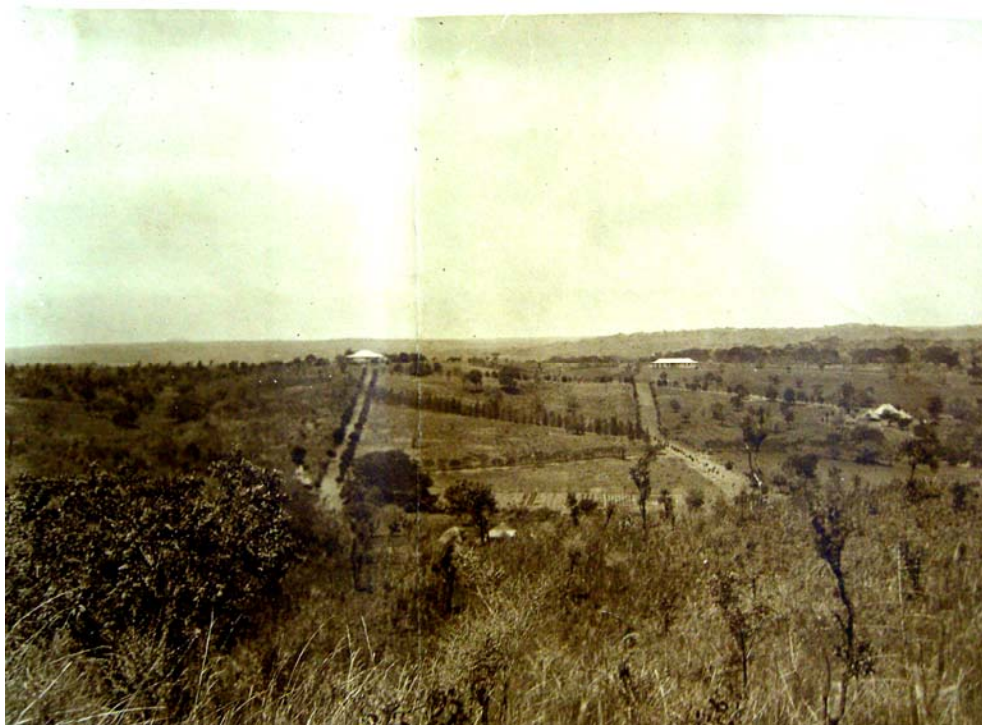


Figure 7.1: View of Gorongosa's district capital (then known as Vila Paiva de Andrada) in 1912, prior to Portuguese efforts in the late colonial period to create *aldeamentos* and Frelimo efforts post-independence to create communal villages which intensified mostly during the civil war period (Source: CM: 1912).



**Figure 7.2:** Taken from a similar vantage point in 2006, this photo reveals the concentrated settlement characteristic of the district capital.

Many people link the growing incidence of marital conflict to the concentrated living conditions of the district capital. One woman explained how this situation leads to spousal conflict:

Long ago, people lived far from each other. There weren't so many people like this. Then, a married woman, like me, didn't have this tendency to go and converse over there with another man ... But now, we are behaving this way, because we live so close to each other. Some men don't like their wives to converse with another man. Ahh. It's there—when he sees you conversing with another man, he starts thinking: “What are they doing? They're courting each other, they desire each other, and this has been going on for a while!” Later, when you return home, it's divorce. Other men beat [their wives] *a lot* and others insult [their wives] *a lot*. Some women don't put up with this—they leave.<sup>6</sup>

The shift to concentrated living settlements in Gorongosa eroded gendered spatial divisions that regulated the socializing of men and women. In the new space of towns, the nature of

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Terezinha; March 3, 2008.

social interaction presented people with a new potential for sexual freedom, leading to tensions, jealousies and suspicions that many people point to as a source of marital discord and instability.

### **Christian influence and the abandonment of traditional marriage**

Some people attribute the loss of respect for traditional social norms to the influence of mission activity of the Catholic Church. The first formal Catholic mission in Gorongosa's district capital was established on September 23, 1947 (Tomás 1999:26). At the start, the mission was headed by two priests of the Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa<sup>7</sup> Order (Tomás 1999: 75). Gorongosa's Catholic mission worked primarily in the areas of education and evangelism, establishing a boarding school on the outskirts of the district capital and many "school-chapels" in outlying areas. By 1975, the Catholic Church had established nineteen schools in the district and counted 1,268 converts and 580 catechumen (new converts undergoing instruction in catechism before baptism) out of a total estimated population of 58,000. The catholic mission provided many people with access to standard schooling while also incorporating Catholic education into the curriculum.

One elder of Gorongosa, who had been one of the first students at Gorongosa's Catholic mission, attributed marital instability in Gorongosa to the Catholic mission's activities. Even though he had served as a prominent catechist of the mission throughout his life—a role he continues to play—he saw widespread divorce in Gorongosa to be a direct outcome of the Catholic mission's activities and teachings. "Long ago," he told me, "children were educated by their parents before marriage. But, in the eyes of foreign

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<sup>7</sup> Also known as the White Fathers.

missionaries, *tudo que faz Africano é pecado* [everything Africans do is a sin].”<sup>8</sup> Catholic missionaries, he explained, prohibited traditional practices surrounding marriage. Because of this he told me, “youth were not educated by their families” and those who left home to study at the boarding school were “confused; things were different than their parents taught them.”

He added that Catholic priests “were false teachers,”— they led people to think of traditional practices as sinful and so, many people abandoned them out of shame. He recounted one of his conversations with priests at the mission where he told them “Didn’t you tell us that we are backwards? You brought a false bible to us!” The priests taught Gorongosa residents in such a way that implied that biblical teachings explicitly countered traditional practices. But, as he gained more knowledge of the bible he realized, “the bible didn’t arrive this way! [The priests] changed many things and then came here to tell us we must follow their way!”<sup>9</sup> He concluded by saying, “You can’t send someone off in a car without teaching them how to drive. This is what missionaries did here in Africa!”

### **The national government and changing social order**

In a group interview with eight women of the Free Assembly church I asked if husbands’ lack of respect existed long ago. I received an emphatic reply: “It’s different now! ... *Yasiyana kwené*” (meaning, it is *completely* different).<sup>10</sup> They elaborated, explaining that, “now men have girlfriends on the side,” and explained this change by noting: “our ancestors are gone ... no one knows or follows the things of the ancestors anymore.” One woman summarized the situation saying, “*agora, é ‘novo currículo,’*” (meaning, “Now, it’s a new

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Celestino Sacaune Canda; October 30, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Focus group interview, *madzimai* of Zimba’s church; June 12, 2008.

curriculum”), likening the changes in overarching rules governing social relations to the Ministry of Education’s recently implemented curriculum for primary and secondary education. This new curriculum is widely criticized in Gorongosa because it allows failing students to pass from one grade to the next. They note that young people now pass to the 4<sup>th</sup> or even the 5<sup>th</sup> grades without the ability to read or write and without acquiring basic math skills. Her metaphor thus contained a veiled critique of young people’s disregard for traditions governing marriage and their preference for marriage short-cuts. Later in the conversation, the women of the focus group connected current marriage problems with the negative impact of the government’s legal and educational efforts to liberate women for exacerbating these problems.

In a similar sentiment, a young man on Gorongosa Mountain said that “there is much more divorce now than before the civil war because “*mandamento ya kale na chinchino ndi asiana*.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, “the rules of long ago are different from those in play now.” He specified that new social rules are those of the Frelimo government and added that, as people accept a new language, Portuguese, they are also “taking other *mitemo* along with the language.”<sup>12</sup> “Long ago,” he continued, “people didn’t think of divorce ... they would stay together.” He commented about judges in state-sponsored courts of the Frelimo government who are quicker to dissolve marriages in conflict. “Long ago,” he explained, “at trials for marriage disputes, there would be encouragement for the couple to stay together, and words of reconciliation. People would not divorce each other easily.”<sup>13</sup> Another man added that, in the past, if a man’s first wife wasn’t able to bear children he

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with Felizardo; April 7, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* “*mitemo*” refers to the rules and regulations ordering society.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Felizardo; April 7, 2008.

wouldn't abandon her, but would simply marry another woman, usually his first wife's sister.<sup>14</sup>

### **Feminism, marriage and the postcolonial context**

These observations about the social rules of the Frelimo government point to government attempts to manage and shape marriage relations through legal policy. Many practices associated with marriage and social and economic re-production, including *lobolo*, polygyny and widow inheritance, have been critiqued by outsiders since colonial times (Sheldon 2002: 33). These practices are targeted for elimination in present governmental policy because they are considered to lead to women's subordination. In the period immediately prior to independence, the emancipation of women became part of Frelimo's broader socialist project intended to emancipate the people of Mozambique from colonialism, racism, and social and economic structures of oppression. In this ideology, Frelimo combined a fight for women's emancipation from traditional structures of domination with its larger project of social revolution. From this perspective, women needed to be emancipated from traditional practices considered to be oppressive including premature, forced, and hereditary marriage, *lobolo*, polygamy, and initiation rites.<sup>15</sup>

In 1973, two years prior to gaining independence, Frelimo created OMM, the Organização da Mulher Moçambicana (Mozambican Women's Organization). According to a statement made at the organizational meeting, OMM was created as "part of the global structure of Frelimo, appearing as an arm to reach a new sector, the feminine sector, whose

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Sekulu Fazenda; February 28, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Initiation rites have been considered to be demeaning to women. From this perspective, they are seen as primarily preparing women for subjugation to a husband and his kin in marriage.



complete and adequate participation has until now been neglected”<sup>16</sup> (Casimiro 2004: 183-84). As an arm of Frelimo, OMM’s founding objectives were to “1) ensure that all women become engaged in production (in the factory or in the agricultural cooperative), in the planning and organization of work and social life, in the creation of the new man (*sic*) and the new society; and 2) organize the struggle against the old ideas which constitute the obstacles to the full participation of women in public and social life as citizens, in economic life as free producers and in family life as true companions and revolutionary educators” (OMM 1979: 78 cited in Arnfred 1988: 11).

As OMM’s founding objectives reveal, women were expected to maintain their domestic activities as mothers while also becoming more active outside the domestic sphere. At the same time, “Frelimo insisted that men should not be forced to contribute to the domestic labor required for the maintenance of the family, even in cases of women who worked outside the household” (Marlin 2001: 195). While Frelimo sought to eradicate *lobolo* and polygamy and other traditional marriage practices that symbolized gender oppression, substituting the modernist ideal of the male-headed monogamous family unit “amounted to support of patriarchal power” (Marlin 2001: 196). Frelimo policy at independence failed to change the domestic sexual division of labor and the structural roots of women’s subordinate social position.

Focus on issues like *lobolo* and polygamy continues in contemporary manifestations of the women’s empowerment movement in Mozambique. As part of a larger project of securing women’s rights in the region, feminist activists have advocated to outlaw polygamy claiming that in current practice, “the historical symbolism of *lobolo* as a token of appreciation on the part of the groom’s family has shifted to take the form of a commercial

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<sup>16</sup> My translation from Portuguese.

transaction” (WLSA 2002: 8). In 2004, Mozambique passed the new Family Law (Law nr. 10/2004) which legalizes only monogamous marriages. The principal reason behind the outlawing of polygamy is that it is a practice considered to be humiliating to women (Rosário 2008: 25).

Many residents of Gorongosa connect national policies and educational campaigns relating to marriage and gender relations to social instability. They see the contemporary problems as the result of Frelimo policies that were meant to enlighten and liberate the population by eradicating religious and traditional practices. Disdain for such policies was so widespread, it contributed greatly to the sentiment leading to support for Renamo in the civil war.<sup>17</sup> Accepting the agenda of global feminist organizations and events (such as CEDAW<sup>18</sup> which stimulated the Mozambican government to finally pass the new Family Law), the national government finds opposition among many Gorongosans who view the state as meddling in their affairs, causing many present-day marital problems.

### **Youth outside the authority of elders**

A young man named Samuel added another perspective. He explained the instability of marriage as a consequence of youth moving out from under the authority of their kin. They choose their partners on a superficial basis rather than listening to the advice of their families about a lover’s reputation. “For example,” he told me, “I’m here in Gorongosa Town, now. I meet a girl, I don’t even know her parents. Now, if she just says, ‘I love you,’ and such, I begin to pursue her.”<sup>19</sup> He followed this example by explaining how such flippancy in establishing relationships quickly leads to jealousy and domestic

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<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>18</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Samuel João Baptista; Februaray 10, 2008.

violence: "... tomorrow, when I see her talking to another young man, I begin to destroy—not hit—but destroy the girl."<sup>20</sup> In using the word "destroy," he pointed to how jealousy can lead to violence when there is not a solid base of caring and mutual respect underlying a relationship.

Samuel's view is widely held. In a focus group interview with female spirit mediums, the group pointed to new trends among youth that result from, and contribute to, their position outside the authority of elders. To them, the tendency of youth in town to *passear* or wander about town, finding marriage partners outside domestic social control was one of the primary factors leading to changes in marriage: "Youth are out drinking, hanging out in town ... When men have lots of money, girls run to them." "Girls are being used for sex," they told me. Men with money have sexual power and enter into many relationships with different women. These "men stay with one woman only a short time, until she gets pregnant, and then they abandon her because they find more excitement from someone new."<sup>21</sup>

As seen in Chapter 3, video viewing and new sites of social encounter are widely seen as a cause of youth's changing attitudes, disrespect, and desire for a different life. The nature of social life in Gorongosa's district capital has intensified the instability of marriage. In town, youth are exposed to a flashier lifestyle seen among the social elite and displayed in video salons where they congregate. The desire for this lifestyle has impacted the nature of marriage in town more than in surrounding areas where youth remain more closely bound by their extended kin networks.

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Focus group interview at Sereniya's; October 25, 2007.

### **Economic strain and marital strain**

One of the most common refrains I heard in people's commentary about the factors leading to marriage problems in town was economic hardship. As seen in Chapter 3, intensifying economic pressures and their associated social changes have had a more acute impact in Gorongosa's district capital compared to rural areas. Residents of the district capital face many more challenges to making a living through agricultural production because land pressures in the surrounding areas are severe. As men seek additional means to provide for their families, they range over wider geographical areas. Further, the social milieu of town intensifies young people's desire to attain membership in higher social classes and to engage in the growing consumer economy. These factors have made it increasingly difficult for men to provide for their families. In some cases, men neglect their wives and children's needs to acquire expensive consumer goods.

One elderly man commented that divorce is becoming more common "because things with money are very difficult."<sup>22</sup> Men, he exclaimed, "*não estão a aguentar com despesas*." In other words, men are unable to meet their families' basic material needs. His commentary placed the blame not on male irresponsibility, but on the broader economic situation that has made it increasingly difficult to pay for goods that were once affordable.

### **Economic Dependence: Gender relations and constraints to women's search for cash**

If the broader economic situation makes it difficult for men to support their families, women are even more constrained. Limits to women's economic activities are

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

created by the gender roles and obligations defined in marriage, and also by wider social conventions. These limits create and reinforce women's dependence on men for financial support. As will be discussed in greater detail in the final section of this chapter, this is one of the major factors contributing to marriage instability in the current context. This section provides a description of normative gender roles governing marriage relationships and economic activities.

### **Normative gender roles**

In marriage, women and men are expected to fulfill particular roles and obligations as part of the relationship. The primary social responsibility of a husband is to provide the material necessities for his wife and children. According to one elder woman, prior to traditional marriage a young man will be counseled by his elders "to take part in the field work, to buy things for his wife, and not to abuse or beat his wife."<sup>23</sup> He will also be responsible for constructing and maintaining all the needed structures that constitute a home. Fees and material needs for children's schooling and health care also fall under a man's responsibility. Thus, men are meant to actively seek the money, goods and materials necessary to fulfill these obligations.

The primary role of a married woman is to provide children for her husband's lineage. In fact, a woman's worth in marriage hinges on reproductive success. This is not just a responsibility but also a valuable opportunity for a girl to move from childhood to adulthood and to gain the social esteem that comes with being a mother. In becoming a mother, a woman becomes a socially recognized and respected member of society. The prestige of motherhood gradually accrues until a woman is fully incorporated as a member

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Rosita Jiliasse; March 21, 2008. "*Mwamuna analangwa: kutengesa zvinhu na mukadzi watche ... não pode shupawo/ kuneranawo mukadzi watche*"

of her husband's group (Sibisi 1977: 168). Through this process, a woman slowly gains greater respect and authority among her husband's kin, eventually becoming a full member of the lineage as a genitor of lineage members, rather than as a child of the lineage (Sibisi 1977: 168).

The duties of a married woman, on the one hand, are numerous and relentless, and require dedication and tireless work. On the other hand, a marriage bond affords a woman with the material support required for establishing and maintaining a household and for raising children. Marriage affords a woman with access to land for agricultural production. Even when a marriage is strained, many women seek to shore up their position in order to hold on to the benefits the relationship affords. A woman's kin also supply her with advice to manage marriage. Prior to marriage, young girls are counseled on the importance of hard work and respect. Elders advise young women not to insult anyone at her husband's home, and always to work hard in the fields. If a woman is lazy in performing her duties, her husband will lodge complaints with her mother who will be criticized for raising a lazy child.<sup>24</sup> As a general principle, women are meant to remain in the domestic orbit, caring for and rearing the children, working in the fields, and performing domestic tasks such as processing grain, preparing food, washing clothes, and fetching water and firewood. If a man practices agriculture, he typically contributes only a portion of his produce to the family and the rest is sold. Produce of a woman's fields is typically the primary source of food for their household.

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

### **Marriage, authority and seniority**

Because marriage relations begin with the transfer of wealth from the groom to the bride and, in some cases, to the bride's family, this leads men to assume a position of leadership in the domestic realm. One male residing on Gorongosa Mountain described his role in his household relative to his wife and children: "Here at home, I am the king and this is my kingdom! The person in charge here is me!"<sup>25</sup> As this statement illustrates, the attitude that a man is in charge at home, directing all aspects of domestic life, making demands on his wife and children and expecting respect, is prevalent in most kinds of marriage arrangements.

It is important to note that kin relations are not necessarily gendered. Rather, kinship relations are organized in relational hierarchies based on seniority (Oyewumi 2002). For instance, in any gathering of people, the person with the most seniority, regardless of gender, will take on the role of authority, making decisions, and regulating the relations of those present. I often watched young children playing in groups, and observed the eldest child taking on the position of authority: making directives and scolding younger members of the group for their misdeeds. The same principle follows for relations among kin. Whenever a woman's husband is away from the home, as is often the case, she assumes authority over her children and their behavior.

In marriage, a woman's position among her husband's kin is continually changing as her seniority accrues over time with increasing age, and her status among her kin grows with the birth of each successive child. It is possible for a woman to assume the position of authority over other men of her husband's lineage. For example, in one family with whom I lived, the senior female was the supreme authority of the household. Because her husband

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<sup>25</sup> Field notes; April 12, 2007.

had died shortly after the civil war, she was the head of the household—the person accorded the greatest respect who made all the major decisions regarding the affairs of the household that included her three sons and each of their families residing with her in her compound.

In the presence of their husbands, women have relatively less authority over major decisions in the household such as economic activities, the use of money, sexual activities and spacing of children. In the areas of Gorongosa where traditional patterns of settlement and socioeconomic organization prevail, a man's authority in his home is regulated by traditional rules and by extended networks of nearby kin. The authority of a young husband in relation to his wife and children is kept in check by his elders, who monitor his behavior and ensure that he does not abuse his position. If a man is failing to provide for his wife and children, a woman can lodge a complaint with his elders who can then counsel the young man on correct behavior. Traditional rules regulating behavior also serve to govern sexual relationships. For instance, traditional regulations surrounding child birth (*madzvadé*) require a long period of abstinence on the part of a new mother following child birth, thereby ensuring the spacing of children.

As discussed in Chapter 6, socio-economic changes are leading many young men, especially in Gorongosa's district capital, to distance themselves from their extended kin networks, choosing instead to establish nuclear family settlements. While this arrangement affords a couple an attractive degree of freedom, it also reduces the social control that extended kin can have on the couple's behavior. Further, in Gorongosa's district capital, most families have dropped their observance of traditional rules that regulate sexual behavior—rules that protect against infidelity and closely-spaced births. Living away from



their elder kin, men become the highest authority of the household on a day-to-day basis. In this position, it is easier for them to abuse their authority, showing disrespect for their wives in ways that, in other contexts, would be unacceptable.

### **Handling cash: Gender relations governing household income**

In domestic relationships, the cash that each adult member of a household earns in their agricultural and economic activities is for them to use at their discretion. Time and again, women told me that the money they made from selling surplus grain and produce from their gardens (or other economic activities, see below) was theirs to use as they saw fit. However, most men expected their wives to show them the money they earned and to inform them how they acquired it.<sup>26</sup> Refusal to do so could arouse suspicion and lead to conflict. Many men reciprocate by informing their wives about the money they have earned, but the social obligation to do so is not as binding for them.

Though women's money earned is theirs to spend, the enormity of their domestic responsibilities leaves them without freedom or flexibility to engage in significant economic pursuits. Another limitation to women's economic activities is the control husbands can exercise over their daily activities. Many women complain that their husbands limit their economic activities to prevent them from earning significant income. One question that this raises is, why is it that men want to limit their wife's economic activity and control her income? Wouldn't an increase in income benefit the husband as a member of the household?

Sinista, a woman who resides on Gorongosa Mountain, explained the reasons clearly. A man, she said, will strut around, *nhuku*. He shows off, *anadungudza*, proud of his

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Eusebio Ernesto; March 13, 2008.

wealth, saying “*Napfumi*” (lit.: “I’m a rich man”).<sup>27</sup> She was pointing out how a man is happy in the position of financial superiority to his wife; a position that he seeks to protect by controlling his wife’s economic activities. Sinista explained, “men refuse to let their wives do things to earn money because she will then not respect him and *anashora* [she will disrespect him]. So he won’t allow her to cultivate potatoes or beans.”<sup>28</sup> To sum up the nature of the domestic relationship between men and their wives, she said, “*mukadzɪ anatongwa ninga mwana*,” literally, “A woman is ruled like a child.”<sup>29</sup>

In the current economic climate, access to money is access to social power. As discussed in Chapter 6, the social organization based on “wealth in people” has been supplemented by “wealth in cash,” because it brings social and sexual power and influence. In order to maintain and maximize their authority in the domestic realm, therefore, many men limit their wives’ entrepreneurial activities. This leads to a sentiment many women share that, as Sinista put it, they are being treated as children. As will be seen below, in addition to a husband’s control, women’s economic activities are further constrained by social conventions that limit the economic activities they can engage in outside the home.

### **Sellers of fruit and flour: Limits to women’s economic activities in Gorongosa central market**

Chapter 3 illustrated the rapid growth of Gorongosa’s central market, and revealed some of the social aspects of this recent development, including the geographic origin of

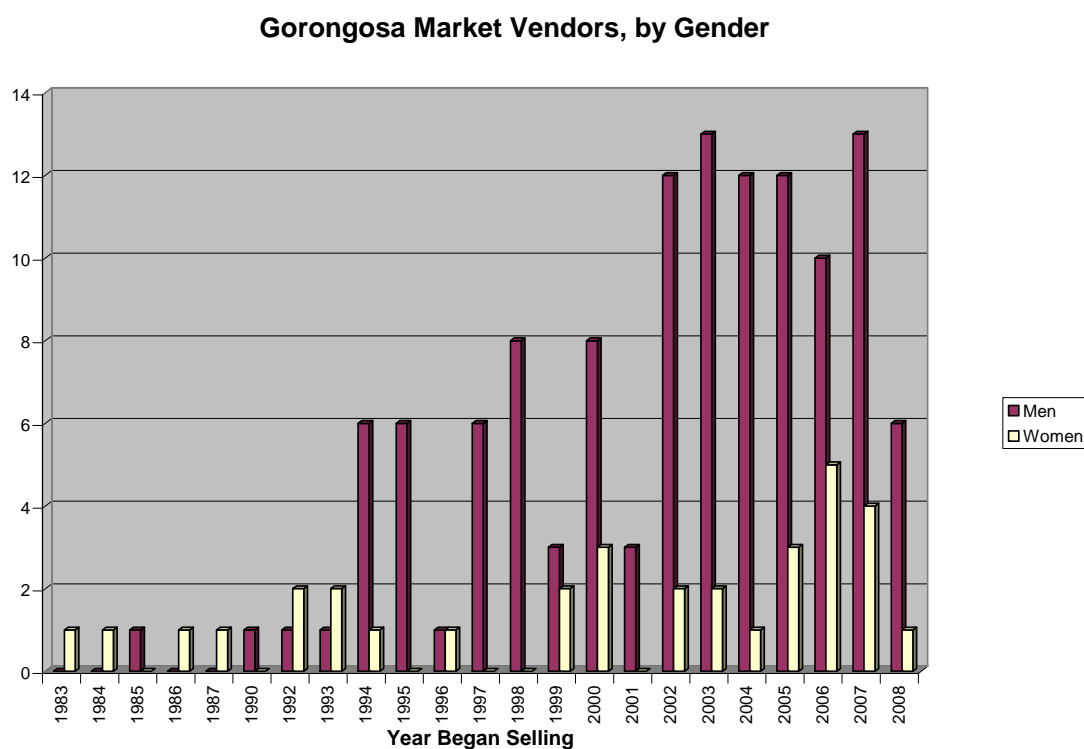
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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* Potatoes and beans are two valuable cash crops that grow well on Gorongosa Mountain. Their high market value has led cultivation of these crops to become a mostly male activity. Because of their desire to keep their wives financially dependent, many men limit women’s production of beans, which are used mostly for domestic consumption. Women with more extensive fields tended to be unmarried. Cultivation of potatoes is more strongly a male activity because it involves climbing to higher elevations to cultivate fields. The geographical distance from home keeps most women out of potato production.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

most of the new traders. Another social side to Gorongosa's marketplace is the gendered divisions among the sellers. Just as the expansion of Gorongosa's central market has led to only a marginal increase in long-term Gorongosa residents' business activities there, as Figure 7.3 illustrates, the market's expansion has not significantly increased the proportion of women participating in trade:

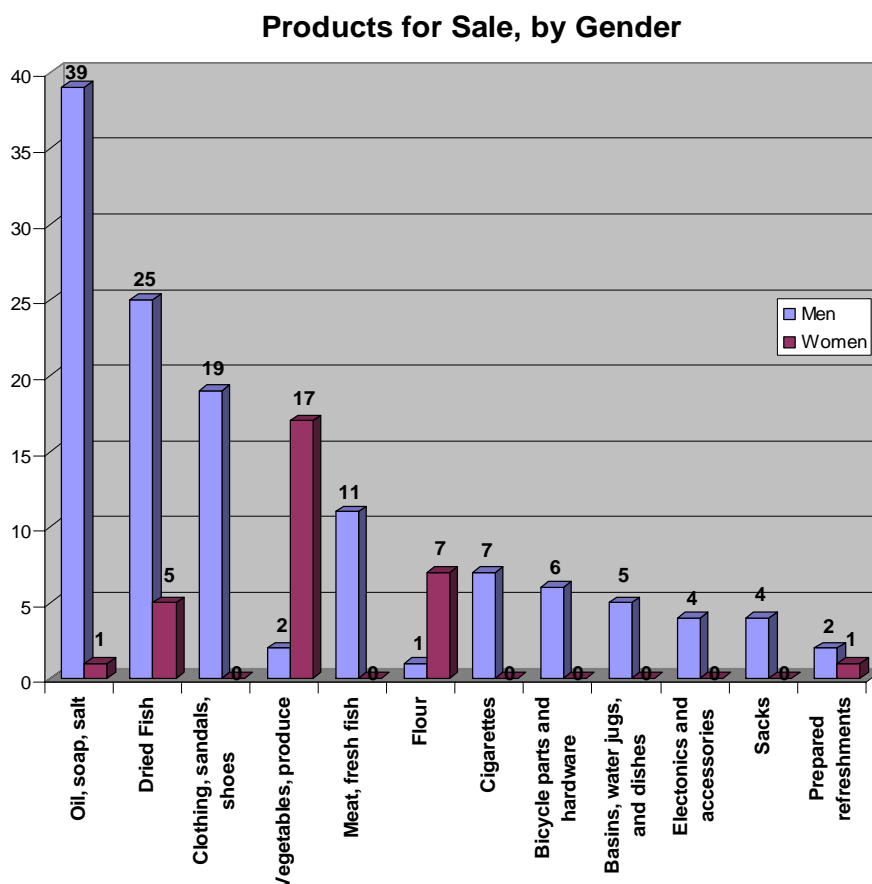


**Fig. 7.3: Vendors in Gorongosa's central market, by gender**

By far, most new vendors in Gorongosa's market are men. Of a total number of 163 vendors surveyed, only 31, or nineteen percent, were women, only four of whom were from Gorongosa district. Two percent of all the market vendors surveyed, then, were women from Gorongosa.

Another significant social aspect of Gorongosa's marketplace is the extremely gendered nature of the sale of products. Female traders tend to engage in business on an

occasional basis, selling surplus grain and produce from their gardens when it is in season. Women invariably sell goods that have the smallest profit margins; namely produce, and maize or sorghum flour. Figure 7.4 clearly reveals the gendered division of products for sale at the market:



**Figure 7.4:** The gendered nature of the sale of products at the marketplace

This gendered nature of trade in Gorongosa's market does not represent a lack of entrepreneurial spirit among women. In fact, as will be seen below, many women are ingenious entrepreneurs, making money in inventive ways. The overarching rule that leads to this patterning of trade at the market is that men's and women's economic activities must remain in line with their social responsibilities. Because social norms in Gorongosa dictate

that women's responsibilities lie in the domestic sphere, their entrepreneurial activities must fall within this domain as well. This is why women who engage in trade at the central market are largely limited to the sale of agricultural produce and its products, such as flour. Because women are tasked with agricultural production for family consumption, just as they are responsible for turning harvested grain into flour, trade in produce and flour is an extension of their domestic activities, keeping their departure from the home to sell in the market tied to the domestic realm.



**Figure 7.5: Women entrepreneurs sell flour at the market—an extension of their domestic responsibilities**

Further, the product of women's labor is assigned very low value at the marketplace. Our survey of market vendors revealed that flour was, by far, the item with the lowest profit margin, followed by produce. According to the self-reports of four women selling flour, their monthly profits range from 300- 500 MTN, the equivalent of about 12- 20 US

dollars.<sup>30</sup> Women selling produce, on average, estimated that they earned anywhere from 1500 – 2900 MTN (about 60-116 USD) each month. By contrast, male traders in dried fish reported earning an average of 10,000 – 16,000 MTN per month, the equivalent of approximately \$400- \$640. While all these figures are sketchy at best, deriving from traders' best estimates and self reports, they clearly illustrate the stark contrast between what male and female traders at Gorongosa market can hope to earn on a monthly basis.

Gorongosa's central market visibly reveals the social limits to women's participation in the informal economy. The vast majority of goods sold for profit are the preserve of men whose greatest profits come from oil, electronics, hardware, grocery items, and meat. Aside from the few women who manage to sell flour or produce from their gardens, women mostly earn cash by selling surplus maize or sorghum to itinerant traders who come to rural areas to buy grain for urban markets. These social limitations on women's trade are also limits to their economic self-sufficiency, promoting their dependence on a male partner for economic survival. Though women face great economic challenges, many have crafted ways to make their way in a world that increasingly requires cash for survival.

### **“Nipa is a better husband than a man”: women's entrepreneurial activities outside the market**

Women's responsibilities in the domestic sphere, though limiting, do not prevent them from developing innovative strategies to earn money in Gorongosa's changing economic climate. One of the primary forms of earning cash in Gorongosa is through informal contract labor (see Figure 7.7). In this work, known as *muterekita*, women perform labor for others such as preparing or weeding fields, harvesting grain, pounding grain for

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<sup>30</sup> US dollar equivalents, here are based on an assumed rate of 25 MTN to 1 US dollar, the average rate of exchange in c. 2006-2007.

the grinding mill, or carrying water.<sup>31</sup> These are usually short term contracts, often between neighbors who seek assistance for labor intensive tasks or when a member of the household falls ill. Women typically search for *muterikita* in a pinch, to meet an immediate need for cash. On an everyday basis, many women find other ways to create a steady stream of income. For instance, they may engage in “micro-trading” on the edge of town. Buying dried fish in large quantities at the central market and then selling it for profit from home is particularly popular.

Other women are “cooking up money” in interesting ways without leaving the domestic sphere. The town bus stop has become a new market for women’s trade, though the women themselves are usually hidden behind the scenes. Mothers send their young children to circulate at the crossroads with goods for sale. Children carry baskets of *bolos* (small, slightly sweetened, deep fried cakes), boiled eggs, or homemade *petiscos* (a Portuguese word for “snacks”). Women fortunate enough to have electricity and freezers can make even greater profits selling soft drinks, beer, and frozen meats from home. They can also send children to the center of town carrying coolers full of frozen popsicles and canned or bottled soda.

While most of this trade is informal, in certain cases, women initiate their own collectives to maximize their profits. One informal association of young women caters to the growing crowd of men and women who come out at night to drink at the local bars and kiosks. Working on a rotating schedule, they alternate nights to set up small charcoal grills at the bus stop, making grilled chicken *petiscos* on site for passersby. Because social norms in Gorongosa prevent married women from leaving the home after dark, these nighttime

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 3.

grillers tend to be outsiders; women who have come to Gorongosa from neighboring regions, especially Beira, Caia and Quelimane.



**Figure 7.6: Pottery production is a female-gendered activity**

In Gorongosa, women have a special niche in the production of pottery. They make pots of all sizes to sell for water containers or cooking pots, but this activity is losing profitability in the expanding market of available goods which includes a wide array of plastic containers for carrying and storing water and aluminum pots for cooking. Partly because the production and sale of pottery is not lucrative, and partly because this trade is looked down upon by many new residents coming to Gorongosa from more cosmopolitan areas, pottery production is on the wane.

However, other female-gendered economic activities are flourishing. The domestic production and sale of alcohol is one of the most profitable and popular economic activities for women. Because alcohol production takes place in the home and transforms agricultural products into alcohol through cooking, this activity is generally considered their



preserve. Women can make large sums of money by brewing *kabanga*<sup>32</sup> or by distilling *nipa*<sup>33</sup> and selling it from home.



**Figure 7.7:** A typical set up for distilling *nipa*

Women can count on a good income from *nipa* or *kabanga*. The production and sale of alcohol is, by far, the most profitable legal economic activity available to women in Gorongosa. For instance, one distiller explained to me that she made 1.5 liters of *nipa* in each batch, and has always sold every drop, earning 500 MTN (about \$30) each time.

Remarking on the profitability of this kind of domestic venture, one woman told me: “*Nipa* is a better husband than a man ... it gives me money.”<sup>34</sup> When I visited her home for the first time, Lúcia showed me around the small mud-walled building with cement floors, proudly pointing out that she had financed its construction herself:

<sup>32</sup> A type of non-ceremonial beer brewed from fermented maize or sorghum.

<sup>33</sup> Distilled liquor usually made from sugar cane or bananas.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Lúcia Baptista, June 2, 2008.

I did all of this—I bought the cement to make the floor, the corrugated metal sheets for the roof: EVERYTHING that’s here comes from the *nipa* money. It’s all from there!<sup>35</sup>

Following in the footsteps of her half-sister, Lúcia was in the final stages of a long process of becoming a spirit-medium. Though her acceptance to marry a spirit led her previous husband to become jealous and abusive, Lúcia’s financial independence allowed her the freedom, as she put it, to “send that husband away,” and she was not alone for long.

Lúcia’s wealth from alcohol production and the promise of even more financial power from her future healing practice as a spirit medium attracted a suitor from the southern part of Sofala Province. An itinerant field laborer, he travelled to Gorongosa for periods each year to work others’ fields. Lúcia told me that he approached her at home one day saying, “I want a wife like you—you are clever. I like that.”<sup>36</sup> She accepted his proposal, hoping the marriage would afford her children.

Because it is such a lucrative business, more women are drawn to domestic alcohol production. Results from the survey I conducted revealed that the domestic production and sale of alcohol has become the fourth most common form of income generation in Gorongosa.<sup>37</sup> In the past, fewer women produced and sold alcohol at home because it is an activity that is considered undesirable, and carries social risks, since sites of alcohol consumption attract unsavory behavior. Many men prohibit their wives from producing and selling alcohol at home because it can harm a household’s reputation. However, economic pressures have pushed more women to risk their reputation in return for more

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Lúcia Baptista, June 2, 2008. “*Eu fiz tudo isto—compra de cimento para fazer o chão, as chapas, TUDO que está aqui vem do dinheiro de bebida! É tudo dali!*”

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* “... *eu quero uma mulher como você—você tem ideia. Eu gosto disto*” The phrase “*ter ideia*” from Portuguese, literally means, “you are clever,” but this phrase is frequently used to indicate a disciplined and far-sighted economic savvy.

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 3, Figure 3.14

economic stability. Also, most alcohol production for sale takes place in female-headed households, or when physical disability or some other factor severely limits a man's capacity to work. Women involved in marriage relationships that are strained in some way are more likely to resort to alcohol production as a survival strategy. In recent years, more men have been open to their wives producing alcohol to support the family when other options are few.

Not only do gender, politics, and social standing govern women's economic activities, but religious identification also plays a key role. Women participants of Pentecostal churches are prohibited from both consumption and production of alcohol. In a group interview with members of the women's group of The Free Assembly of Mozambique in a neighborhood of the district capital, one woman exclaimed:

*Tinamadire ya Jesu ...* (we liken ourselves to Jesus) ... "this is difficult for us ... women outside of church can make a good living brewing *nipa* and *kabanga* ... we can't do that. We are praying so that when we die, our suffering will end."<sup>38</sup>

Placing their hopes for an end to suffering elsewhere, church groups' limitation on alcohol production has not slowed the overwhelming rates of conversion and active participation in Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa.

Though production and sale of *nipa* and *kabanga* affords some women economic independence and power in Gorongosa, this activity remains the preserve of a few. For the most part, domestic relationships and social conventions that limit the range of women's economic and social orbits to the home and field create a level of economic exclusion that feeds women's economic dependence on their husbands. This kind of dependence is intensifying in the current economic climate where pressures for cash are extreme.

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<sup>38</sup> June 12, 2008; Focus group interview with women's group of Free Assembly Church of Mozambique

### **Marriage Instability and the Failure to Fulfill Marital Obligations**

Marital instability arises especially when either men or women are unable to uphold their responsibilities to the relationship. The failure of a husband to provide for his family or the inability of a woman to produce descendents for her husband's lineage can lead to conflict, separation, or divorce. In a time when sufficient income is more difficult to acquire and when increasing rates of malnutrition, child mortality, and widespread STDs impair women's ability to conceive and raise children to adulthood, many marriages are failing. Either the man or woman in the relationship is unable to uphold their side of the "social contract." Further, when a man's lineage is struggling with illness, death, and other misfortunes, women, as outsiders living among their husband's kin, are often the focus of accusations that can end in dissolution of her ties to that family.

### **Failure to support the family: the search for cash and financial neglect**

The primary complaint women have about their husbands is their failure to meet material needs. Most women are largely dependent on their husbands to fulfill their obligations to the relationship—to provide the goods not produced at home. As seen in Chapter 3 and in the description of labor migration,<sup>39</sup> the nature of the market economy is such that it is increasingly difficult to earn sufficient money to meet basic needs. This situation is compounded by men's desires to attain a lifestyle that places them in a higher socio-economic level. In their search for social standing, many young men end up neglecting the basic needs of their wives and children.

Another factor contributing to men's failure to fulfill their financial obligations is their physical absence for long periods of time. The increasing mobility required for men to

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<sup>39</sup> See Chapter 6

earn sufficient income has had a strong impact on marriage—affecting both the way marriages are established and posing challenges to their stability. When a man travels, he typically leaves behind his wife and children to tend the fields. When he stays away for months or even years at a time, he has a duty to send money for *despezas* or basic household needs. However, many men fail to fulfill this obligation, sending money only on rare occasions or not at all, leaving their wives and children to confront severe hardship as they try to acquire the basic necessities.

Other men neglect their wives not out of financial difficulties, but out of a loss of affection. In Gorongosa's district capital, this kind of neglect is common due to decreasing social control over men who establish nuclear family settlements away from their natal kin. Loss of respect for elder authorities who might shame a man for such actions also contributes to neglect. Men with financial means do not have difficulty finding new wives, and may prefer to concentrate limited resources on young women who are more physically attractive and emotionally exciting.

### **The impact on women's kin**

As marriage problems increase, the impact is felt not only by the women in troubled relationships, but also by their kin who must intervene and assume responsibility for her and her children. One woman stated:

We suffer because our daughters marry ... they have three children and then their husband tires of them and divorces them ... Then another man will come to court her, promise to take care of her and support her and the children. They marry, but then he doesn't *fazer despezas*<sup>40</sup> ... like my daughter who now is at home.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "*Fazer despeza*" means to provide basic household necessities.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Fariana; June 12, 2008.

The social impact of unstable marriages extend to the couple's kin and their children. In an ideal marriage relationship, the benefits of the union are meant to accrue both to a young woman and to her family. For this reason, mothers particularly value female offspring not only for help with chores and for companionship, but also for the benefits they eventually receive from their marriage. Marriage instability is making female offspring seem more like a burden. When I asked one interviewee if women prefer to have male or female offspring, this sentiment was clear:

It's better to have a son, because he will make money and take care of you when he grows up. A daughter's *lobolo* doesn't last long, and then there are so many bad men these days, that she won't have any money to contribute to her mother. She will go and get married to a bad man, and he will give nothing to his mother-in-law.<sup>42</sup>

In severe cases, women who are unable to endure their husbands' financial neglect seek refuge among their natal families temporarily or permanently. When this happens, men's failure to provide for their wives and children transfers the burden of care to the woman's family. Another vignette illustrates this clearly.

One woman I came to know, Fostina, had married a teacher and had five children with him. When her youngest child was breast feeding, her husband married one of his students. Soon thereafter, he stopped providing for her and her children. Unable to manage on her own, Fostina returned home to her natal family. Her mother was outraged that her son-in-law was not supporting his family despite his significant income. On three separate occasions, she lodged a complaint with the police, hoping to force him to provide for his children. However, even with these interventions, his financial neglect continued. She saw her son-in-law's refusal to support his children as a personal insult. She recounted for me what she had told her son-in-law:

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Rosa Fole; February 23, 2008.

We worked to raise our daughter here—up until the time you married her. Now, you want us to continue raising *your* children? No! We already raised our daughter that you took. Now, it is your responsibility—you must take care of your children!<sup>43</sup>

Fostina's younger sister Shika also expressed despair at the burden of six additional people to her parents' household:

How are we going to manage? Even me, though I have a husband living with me at my home, I am sacrificing a great deal to give my children everything that is necessary. Now, this sister of mine—is she going to be able to manage to do this on her own?! She won't be able to! Shii! Not now—with the way all the things here in town are becoming so expensive. Who is going to help her?!<sup>44</sup>

Shika's exclamation at her sister's situation reveals the extreme hardship often associated with marriage instability, separation, and divorce.

It is because of such hardship that few women remain single for long. Because of their precarious economic situation and the burden they present to their families, divorced or separated women frequently enter new relationships soon after their return home. Unless a woman is employed in a salaried job or can secure another reliable source of income, her financial dependence on one man will quickly shift to another. Because of her limited resources, she often accepts the next man that comes along often leading, as discussed above, to a cycle of bad relationships.

### **Reproductive failure: Infertility and marriage insecurity**

**Christy:** How many times have you been sent to your father's home?

**Filomena:** Since the death of my child in Beira until today, three times. Because when the baby died in the Central Hospital in Beira, my husband returned me to my father's home and after a while, when another baby died

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Fostina Maria de Fatima Joni; June 20, 2008.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Shika Chongo; February 7, 2008.

after we had reconciled, I was sent home again, and this time is the third time that I'm here at my father's house.<sup>45</sup>

As Filomena's experiences reveal, when women are unable to provide children for their husband's lineage, this can lead to separation or eventually divorce. The loss of a child can ignite significant turmoil as families seek to find and remove the cause. Filomena was sent home after the loss of each child because her husband's family suspected that spirits from her natal family were to blame for their deaths. Each time, after her family had addressed the problem, she returned to live with her husband. At the time of our interview, it was uncertain whether they would reach a resolution again, but prospects were not good. In many cases, temporary separation after such tragic occurrences can end in reconciliation between the two families, and the marriage bond can be renewed, returning a woman to her husband's home. Many women, however, are not so fortunate.

Women's responsibility to produce children for their husband's lineage makes fertility central to their relationship. Fertility, broadly defined, includes conceiving, giving birth to and raising children that survive past the age of a toddler. As seen in Chapter 6, many couples live together prior to completing formal marriage as a test of their compatibility and their ability to reproduce successfully. While a couple's loss of children can throw the relationship into conflict or lead to temporary separation or divorce, the inability for a woman to conceive brings particular strife. When a woman is unable to conceive, she and her husband search to find the problem and who is at fault. This may be the result of spiritual influences that "tie" either of them, preventing conception, or men may simply be *ngomua*, or sterile. Or, as Gerrits noted, it may be that their blood is "incompatible," in which case a man is usually found to be at fault (1997: 44). In most

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Filomena; July 16, 2003.



cases, however, the fault of infertility problems is found to lie with the woman. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, both church participants and spirit-mediums provide treatments to help women resolve troubles with conception—vital assistance to help maintain the marriage. Women in Gorongosa have been facing particular challenges to maintaining their marriages in recent times partially because of high rates of sterility and infant mortality.

### *Sterility in Mozambique*

According to medical and demographic surveys of infertility rates in sub-Saharan Africa, Mozambique has one of the highest rates of both primary and secondary infertility (Larsen 2000). In sub-Saharan Africa, the single major cause of infertility is gonorrhea, which leads to tubal infection and occlusion (Frank 1983). Other complications from STIs<sup>46</sup> including gonorrhea, chlamydia, genital ulcer disease (GUD), *trichomonas vaginalis*, and syphilis can lead to complications such as pelvic inflammatory disease, which can cause sterility or complications in birth. Further, classical STIs facilitate the transmission of HIV infection and their widespread prevalence in Mozambique most likely has greatly facilitated the explosion of HIV rates in the country following the end of the civil war (Vuylsteke, et. al. 1993).

Data on infertility in Africa are scarce and unreliable (Frank 1983). Studies on STIs in Mozambique are more numerous, but tend to focus on urban areas (Vuylsteke, et. al. 1993). However, one study of STIs in rural Inhambane Province provides insight into high prevalence rates of STIs in rural areas of Mozambique. This study found evidence of one or more STIs in 59 percent of female patients and 65 percent of male patients. The study also found that prevalence rates for syphilis (15%) and gonorrhea (7%) were much higher

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<sup>46</sup> Sexually Transmitted Infections

than other countries in the region, as well as higher than previous findings for urban areas of Mozambique. Because this study was conducted in 1993, it is safe to assume that prevalence rates in rural areas of Mozambique remain as high if not higher nearly 15 years later. Rural health posts do not conduct routine gynecological exams and most do not have the means to conduct laboratory tests for STIs. High rates of STIs greatly increase women's vulnerability to sterility.

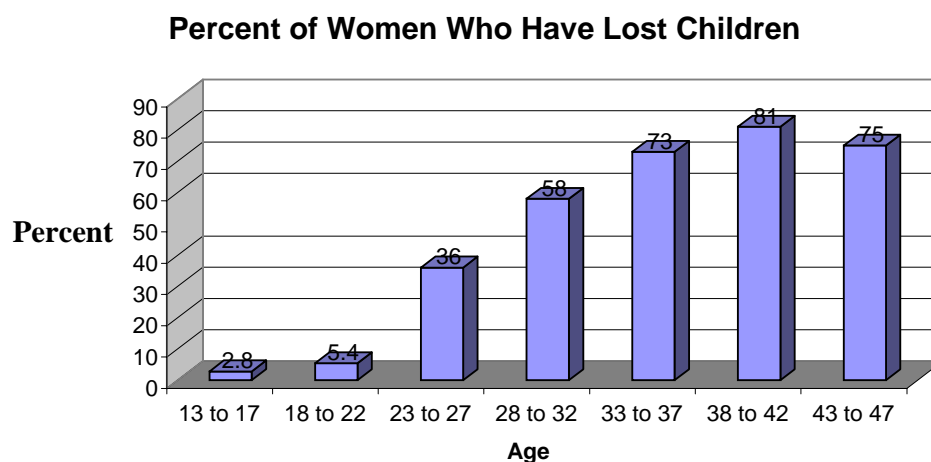
*Malnutrition, illness, and child mortality*

In addition to high rates of sterility, malnutrition has also become an increasing problem in Gorongosa, contributing to high infant mortality. Malnutrition, in particular, is clearly tied to marital instability. Not only can it lead to childhood death and disease and ignite marital conflict, but it is also more likely that women who have been divorced or are financially neglected by their husbands will be unable to feed their children properly. Growing rates of child mortality are connected directly to the intensification of material deprivation and poverty.

Child loss in Gorongosa is an all-too-common occurrence. Results from the survey I conducted reveal that, for women in Gorongosa, to be a mother, almost always means to also lose a child.<sup>47</sup> Figure 7.8 shows that, among women aged 38-42, 81 percent had lost at least one child. These figures do not account for the age of children at death, and thus include women who have lost adult children as well as those who have lost infants and young children. However, these results reveal how common it is for women to face bereavement at the loss of children.

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<sup>47</sup> See Introduction for a description of the survey and discussion of methodology.



**Figure 7.8: Percentage of women who have lost at least one child, by age groups**

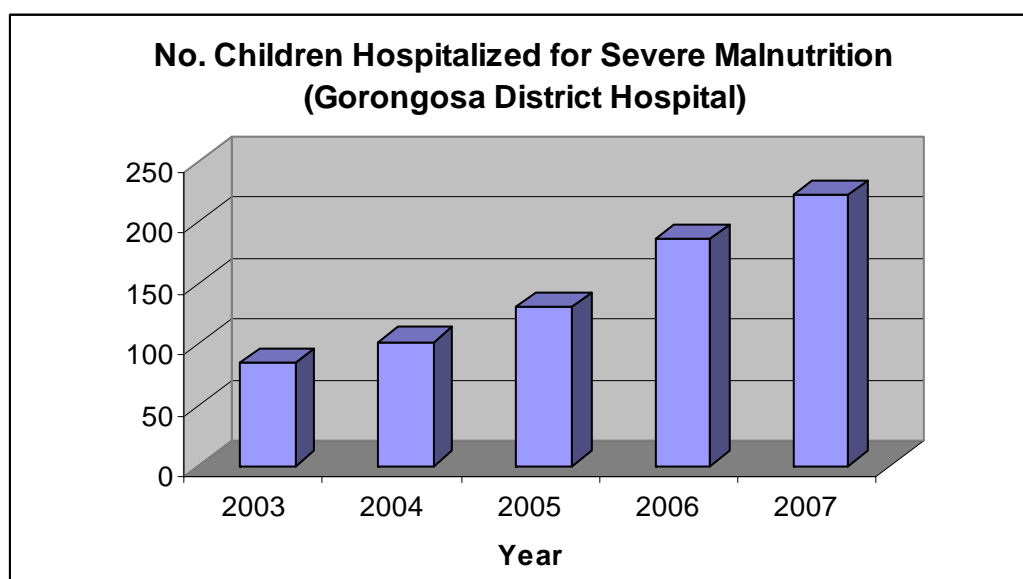
Most women lose children when they are still under the age of five. Official data reveal that Mozambique has the highest rate of infant mortality in the region. Defined as the number of deaths of children under 12 months of age per 1,000 live births, Mozambique's rate of infant mortality is 123.6 compared to 82.5 in Tanzania, 89.4 in Uganda and 93.9 in Zambia (Fox 2008: 155). In Sofala Province,<sup>48</sup> this figure is considerably higher, the second highest in the country, at 149 (Fox 2008: 156). The prevalence of diarrhea and malaria contributes significantly to the risk of child death. For instance, malaria infection during pregnancy results in severe maternal anemia and low birth weight, and thus can be an indirect cause of infant mortality (Gamble, et.al 2007).

Malnutrition contributes significantly to these high rates of child mortality. Poor nutrition is widely recognized as a cause of children's susceptibility to illness. A study conducted in 2003 revealed that nationwide, 41 percent of children under the age of 5 were short for their age or suffered chronic malnutrition (INE and MISAU 2005: 178). The same study revealed that in Sofala Province, 42 percent of children under the age of 5

<sup>48</sup> Sofala is the province where Gorongosa is located.

suffered from “chronic malnutrition” (INE and MISAU 2005: 181). Since this study, rates of malnutrition in the country have continued to increase (Fox 2008).

Annual reports from the District Directorate of Health (DDS) in Gorongosa also reveal a sharp increase in malnutrition rates in recent years. In 2006, the number of children admitted to the district’s central health post for severe malnutrition was more than double the number in 2003 (See Figure 7.9). In 2007, the total number of cases increased again, rising to 223—20 percent above the cases observed in 2006 (DPS 2008).



**Figure 7.9: Number of children admitted for severe malnourishment at the district’s central health post (DPS 2007).**

While these numbers illustrate the growth of malnutrition cases in the district, they do not provide an accurate portrait of its prevalence. Only serious cases lead to hospital stays and many sick people do not visit the health post in the first place.<sup>49</sup> Absolute numbers of malnutrition are likely considerably higher. Chronic malnutrition severely weakens a child’s immune system, leaving him or her vulnerable to other diseases, and thus these official data only show part of the story.

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 5.

While numbers are a window into the story, these data reveal just how dangerous infancy is in Gorongosa. Many practices surrounding birth, such as delayed naming of newborns, mark the dangers. Couples make strident efforts to protect their children, when in the womb and when they are newborns. One prominent way to protect newborns is to seek special assistance and protection that church groups and *n'gangas* provide.

*Malnutrition as a result of ignorance?*

The rapid increase in malnutrition rates in Gorongosa baffles health personnel and directors of NGOs operating in the district. Gorongosa is widely known for its high agricultural production relative to other parts of the country. Large quantities of grain are sold to supply urban consumers, earning it the reputation of being the “celeiro de Sofala” or the “granary of Sofala” Province.<sup>50</sup> Given Gorongosa’s agricultural production, the extremely high rates of chronic malnutrition that even surpass areas of lower agricultural productivity seems a troubling paradox. The World Bank’s recent report on poverty in Mozambique also characterizes high rates of malnutrition at the national level that persist despite positive macroeconomic gains as a “paradox” (Fox 2008: 157). “Despite the growth in real consumption across most of the country,” the report states, “chronic malnutrition did not improve accordingly; it even worsened in rural areas and in some provinces” [including Sofala] (Fox 2008: 157).

For over ten years, NGOs operating in Gorongosa District have organized campaigns to combat malnutrition. Nearly all of these interventions have relied on nutritional education, teaching women the basics of good nutrition and how to prepare

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 3.

nutrient rich meals from available produce. However, despite these interventions, malnutrition rates have continued to rise. These educational interventions make the assumption that the cause of malnutrition in the district is a lack of nutritional knowledge, particularly among women whose role is to prepare food for the family. However, the reality is much more complicated. Constraints to agricultural productivity as described in Chapter 3 are a primary factor. Gender relations and pressures for cash income also play a significant part.

While women's agricultural production provides for the needs of a given household, women have limited means to produce or to purchase foods rich in nutrients. Typically, women produce primarily cereal crops, providing the basic staple foods for household consumption. Garden crops such as collards, chard, and other greens; tomatoes; onions; peanuts; butter beans<sup>51</sup> and other nutrient-rich foods are a small portion of what women produce. These crops are more costly in terms of labor and inputs. To expand production often requires purchasing seeds at high cost. Horticultural production requires more attention through watering, irrigation and pest control. The financial and time investment needed for such crops makes them difficult for most women to produce on a large scale, since their time is limited by the enormity of their daily domestic responsibilities.

Because of the high cost and labor required, large-scale horticultural production in Gorongosa is a male-dominated activity. While a man may allocate a portion of these foods for home consumption, this decision is his to make. Many men sell their produce to maximize their cash income. Holding valuable food crops to wait for price increases on the

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<sup>51</sup> What is known as *feijão manteiga* in Portuguese (literally, "butter beans") is valuable as a cash crop and the majority of this nutrient-rich food is grown by men for sale. Women, however, are the primary cultivators of *feijão nhemba*, or pigeon peas, which are not highly valued for sale and so, when in season, they provide a major source of protein for a household.

market or as a kind of “bank” for emergency needs is a common strategy. On many occasions, I encountered families with visibly malnourished children whose fathers were storing sacks of beans or peanuts inside the family home.

When men set the priorities for the use of the products of their labor, food for household consumption is often not high on their list. Many men, seeking to improve their financial position, choose to reinvest income to expand their trade. For others, their first priority is to acquire expensive consumer goods such as cell phones, bicycles, or motorcycles which advance their business. Still others, as seen above, are overstretched because they have established multiple domestic partnerships and are unable to meet the needs of all. Finally, alcoholism is another problem that serves as a sink for household income. While some men drink to escape the harsh realities of life, their alcohol consumption can worsen those same realities for their dependents.

Financial stress and income scarcity is becoming more common. Increasingly frequent crises such as illness and deaths can quickly deplete a household’s material wealth. In these ways, the nature of contemporary economics and gender relations creates the conditions for increasing rates of malnutrition, infertility, and infant death.

### **Illness and accusation: Misfortune and women’s vulnerability in marriage**

When illness, death or other types of misfortune befall a household, this can lead to divorce or separation. A woman who lives among her husband’s kin is in a vulnerable position. If misfortune befalls his family while she resides with him, she may be seen as the cause—most frequently as a vehicle for malignant spirits from her lineage that travel with her to her husband’s household. As seen in Filomena’s case, when the presence of an ill-

tempered spirit is suspected, a man's family may send his wife back to reside with her kin for a period of time. Once she and her kin have identified and resolved the problems with the spirit, she may be able to return to live with her husband. In some cases, however, when the problems recur or cannot be resolved, illnesses and deaths can lead to the permanent dissolution of marriage. The story below illustrates how women find themselves on treacherous ground when living among their husband's kin. Increasing rates of illness and misfortune only serve to increase their vulnerability.

Maria Luís, a woman from Beira, came to live in Gorongosa when she married her husband Zé. The two had met in Beira where they both traded in fish. After awhile, Zé's elderly mother fell ill. Her condition took a turn for the worse when she suffered a fall that immobilized her, confining her to her house and making her dependent on her children. Zé's mother and her children suspected that Maria Luís had caused their mother's accident and began launching accusations against her. Zé's family surmised that Maria Luís had an *npfukwa*<sup>52</sup> spirit that didn't want her to marry, and was causing these problems so that she and Zé would divorce. Recounting this period, Maria Luís told me that Zé's mother once told her "Ever since you came here, I've been sick."<sup>53</sup> Within several months, Zé's mother died, worsening Maria Luís's relations with the family.

Not long after Zé's mother died, Maria Luís, who was pregnant at the time, traveled to Beira to stay with her parents for the remainder of the pregnancy so she could give birth in a better hospital. On her way out of town, she ran into Zé's niece, Albertina, at the bus stop. Albertina, who was also pregnant, approached to greet her. The day after Maria Luís departed, Albertina lost her baby in childbirth. Grief stricken, Albertina was convinced that

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<sup>52</sup> For a complete discussion of *npfukwa* spirits, see Chapter 2.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Maria Luís; October 19, 2007.



Maria had brought this misfortune upon her. When she returned from Beira, Maria Luís found everyone in Zé's family against her. The house she had resided in at the family compound had been destroyed. When Zé promised to build her another house, Maria Luís demanded that he build it further away— she refused to live in the same compound anymore.

When she told me this story, Maria Luís had been continuing to live with Zé's family for over a year. I asked her how she managed to live here when her husband's family is suspicious of her. She explained that she was considering returning home to Beira where she had a house of her own, but for the time being, she had decided to stay. "I have to put up with this because of the children,"<sup>54</sup> she explained. Zé had fulfilled all the steps of the marriage process, and he had attained rights to the children. Because she was considered to be at fault for the conflict, if she were to return home, she would have to leave her children behind.

## Conclusion

The pressures of life in Gorongosa that are making it difficult to sustain a livelihood, a family, and ensure the wellbeing of future generations are unprecedented. In direct response to these pressures, social networks of spiritual healing have taken on growing importance in many people's lives. The next chapter considers the ways in which Pentecostal churches and spirit-mediums work to re-order society by managing marriages—the basic foundation of social reproduction. Drawing on contrasting philosophical frameworks and sources of authority to bring about social healing, they offer people contrasting ways to confront the difficulties they face.

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Maria Luís; October 19, 2007.

## Chapter 8

### The Search for Stability:

#### The Work of Spirit-mediums and Church Groups to Manage Marriages

In Gorongosa, marriage unions are inherently dangerous affairs. While a marriage can be the source of wellbeing, stability, and a prosperous new generation, joining a man and woman and their respective families can just as easily bring conflict, discord, and misfortune. In Gorongosa, people make use of numerous strategies to manage marital relationships. Among these many resources, the practices of spirit-mediums and the guidance of Pentecostal churches figure prominently, playing important roles in making marriages a positive social force. Though they work toward similar ends, Pentecostal church groups and spirit-mediums draw on different sources of authority and play quite different roles in managing marital unions. Their differing positions and methods used in assisting people to create and maintain stability in social relationships will be explored in this chapter.

#### **Managing marital disputes**

Failures of men and women to fulfill their roles in marriage or domestic partnerships may lead to domestic conflicts. While some of these conflicts are limited to civil arguments, often, abusive language and behavior can result. As seen in the previous chapter, such conflicts can be provoked by illness or death in a man's family, by infertility, by repeated child loss, by infidelity, or by financial abandonment. Conflicts among co-wives of a polygamous man are also common. Alcohol abuse, a growing problem especially

among men, can exacerbate other tensions in the domestic realm. Any of these problems can lead to temporary separation or complete dissolution of the marriage relationship.

When problems occur in a marriage, women, men and their families typically strive to resolve the problems and preserve the relationship. However, when difficulties become unbearable or unacceptable for either partner, they or their kin can initiate a divorce. The most common reason for women to dissolve their marriage is financial neglect on the part of the husband. In fact, when a husband's financial abandonment of his children is due to simple neglect rather than real economic hardship, this is seen as the most unacceptable kind of transgression.

Physical abuse, on the other hand, is often not a reason for divorce. Certain forms of physical abuse are still widely accepted within the context of marriage. Marriages place husbands in a position of authority relative to their wives, so a husband's physical beating is often socially sanctioned as a form of corporal punishment. In one expansive national study, male and female respondents were presented with a variety of scenarios and asked whether it was acceptable for a man to beat his wife in each case. This study found that 57.5% of female residents of rural areas throughout Mozambique agreed that in at least one of the situations presented, it was appropriate for a man to beat his wife (INE and MISAU 2005: 48-51).<sup>1</sup> However, despite this widespread acceptance of corporal punishment, people distinguish acceptable and excessive forms of physical violence. When women are

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<sup>1</sup> By contrast, only 41.6% of male respondents agreed that it was acceptable for a husband to beat his wife in any of the given scenarios. This suggests that domestic violence is more acceptable to women than men in rural areas.

subjected to repeated physical violence without reason, many leave their husbands' home to return to the safety of their families, or report the incident to an outside authority.

When women feel disrespected as wives, they are quite often vocal and aggressive in making their grievances known. If they are unhappy with their husbands' behavior, they may seek resolution by presenting their complaints directly to their husbands. If direct confrontation is unsuccessful, they find indirect ways to apply pressure. If a wife has a listening ear among other members of the homestead, she will lodge her complaints directly with people who have authority over her husband. Another method women use to "educate" their husbands and shame them into reforming their behavior is to "innocently" sing songs while they are performing household chores. Among the repertoire of this genre of songs, known as *nyimbo ya nkhambo*, are some containing lyrics that express the complaints common to married women. By choosing songs that fit their situation and timing their singing so that the targeted person is within earshot, a woman can indirectly make her feelings known. For instance, the following song contains a threat of divorce to a husband who is not treating a woman well:

**Ndikaenda kumba munasala ndimwe, pano**  
If I leave for home you will be left here

**R% Ande eh, ya!**  
**Munasala ndimwe!**  
Yes, eh ya! You will be left!

**Muliwo munabika ndimwe pano**  
You will cook the sauce here

**R% Ande eh, ya!**  
**Munabika ndimwe!**  
Yes, eh ya! You will cook it!

**Nyumba yanguyi munagona ndimwe**  
You will sleep [alone] in my house

**R% Ande eh, ya!**  
**Munagona ndimwe!**  
Yes, eh, ya! You will sleep [alone].

**Kuzinya yangu, munabika ndimwe pano**  
You will cook here in my kitchen

**R% Ande eh, ya!**  
**Munbika ndimwe!**  
Yes, eh ya! You will cook!

**Ndikaenda kumba munapfara zvanu**  
If I go home you will be happy<sup>2</sup>

**R% Ande eh, ya!**  
**Munapfara ndimwe!**  
Yes, eh, ya! You will be  
happy!

**Iii, odo! Munanyara ndimwe pano!**  
Iii, odo! You will be ashamed here!

**R% Ande eh, ya!**  
**Munanyara ndimwe!**  
Yes, eh, ya! You will be  
ashamed<sup>3</sup>!

Such veiled threats can be more effective than direct confrontation which may escalate tensions. The intended “audience” for such songs is not just a woman’s husband. Other members of the household learn of her troubles when expressed in this manner. They can then intervene on her behalf in the interest of preserving the relationship.

In extreme cases, when a woman’s attempts to resolve problems directly or indirectly in her household have failed, she may make her complaints known to others outside the domestic sphere. She will seek help from her kin, often returning to reside with her parents to seek their assistance. In these cases, a young woman’s family will call her husband to a council where they ask him to respond to her complaints in person. For example, in the family council pictured in Figure 8.1, a woman’s extended family called her husband to meet with them after she complained about his frequent drinking and repeated physical violence. During the meeting, she expressed her complaints publicly, and after her husband apologized, recognized his offenses, and promised to reform his behavior, the two were reconciled. The woman’s family ended the meeting with threats that, should he continue his disrespect, they would reincorporate her and her children into the protection and care of their lineage.

<sup>2</sup> Here, of course, “you will be happy,” in the context of the other lyrics of the song, is said with heavy irony.

<sup>3</sup> April 2, 2008; *Nyumbo ya nkhambo* sung by Adestra.



**Figure 8.1:** The extended kin of a woman (seated on the ground behind her young son) hold a council with her husband (seated on the ground to the left) after she has made complaints about his repeated physical abuse.

If attempts to resolve the matter with kin are unsuccessful, a woman may make a complaint elsewhere. If she is a church member, she can seek the intervention of church leaders to council her husband (see below). Those who do not participate actively in churches more commonly take marriage disputes to local leaders such as sub-chiefs (*mfumus*) who refer particularly difficult cases to their superiors: *nyakwawa*.<sup>4</sup> The national government has also set up structures parallel to traditional government, including Secretários do Bairro (Neighborhood Secretaries) who also hold court sessions to hear disputes of all kinds, including marital conflicts. All of these authorities refer cases of violence to the police.

<sup>4</sup> Also known in Portuguese as “*regulos*,” *nyakwawa* are the supreme traditional authority in a given area. For more detailed discussion, see Chapter 2.

In severe cases of domestic violence or financial neglect, a woman or her family can lodge a complaint directly with the police. A special section of the district police force in Gorongosa has been set up specifically to attend to cases pertaining to women and children. Except in extreme circumstances, relatively few women make use of the police to resolve marital disputes. For this reason, the female officer in charge of this desk frequently travels to different parts of the district to hold seminars on domestic violence and raise awareness of women's protections under Mozambique's family law.<sup>5</sup>



**Fig. 8.2:** Reconciliation for couples in dispute is often the primary goal of conflict resolution proceedings. Here, the couple in dispute is made to kiss after the husband has made repeated promises to end his abusive behavior.

In all these realms where women seek counsel for marital disputes, a common goal is to bring about resolution between married couples in order to avert dissolution of the

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Dona Ivone; May 8, 2007

relationship. As one neighborhood secretary put it, “our objective is to secure the continuation of the household.”<sup>6</sup> Of course, sometimes, the situation cannot be resolved. When it is decided to dissolve the marriage, the couple and their families must come to an agreement as to who was “at fault” for the failure of the union. If they can not agree, they will take their case to trial at one of the traditional or national government authorities mentioned above. There, a conclusion must be reached. If a man is determined to be at fault, the woman will keep her children and her family will not have to return the *lobolo* and other material gifts they received to formalize the union. If fault lies with the woman, her children will remain as members of her patrilineage and her parents will have to return the *lobolo*. If a woman’s children are very young, they will often stay with her until they grow older, at which time they go to their father’s kin. If a woman’s family cannot repay the *lobolo*, her future husband will have to repay this debt before he can marry her.

### **Linking to history and tradition: the work of spirit mediums**

Spirit-mediums (*n’angas*) play an important role in managing marriage relationships and helping to restore order and continuity. *N’angas* assist women with infertility problems and help couples manage problems and anxieties surrounding infidelity. They work with both individuals and groups to help resolve conflicts among the living and between the living and the deceased. Because social conflict is often a sign of disorder in human-spirit relationships, by helping people establish links of communication with spirits, the work of *n’angas* can promote the restoration of order to troubled relationships. Through their

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Zé Carlos; February 12, 2008.



practices, spirit-mediums make links to the past.<sup>7</sup> In managing any kind of misfortune in the present, including marriage disputes, spirit-mediums help mediate a process whereby families make amends for past wrongs in order to restore order to lives that have come out of balance. As discussed in Chapter 1, the work of spirit-mediums draws on the authority of a traditional social order consisting of rules (*mitemo*) governing the creation and maintenance of proper social relationships. In this way, restoring order to past relationships to manage disorder in the present reinforces the authority of *mitemo* as a governing force for social relationships.

A key to understanding the work of spirit mediums is to understand the “wealth in people” principle (See Chapter 6). Marriages are a primary means through which social wealth is transferred and compensated through *lobolo*, thereby symbolically keeping things equal. Because women are a valuable form of social wealth, marriage represents both the possibility of incurring or repaying debt. When a debt of some kind is left unpaid for generations, spirits retaliate by staking a claim on what is owed them, impacting future generations who have forgotten or ignored their social obligations. As will become clear, marriage troubles are a type of misfortune taken as a sign of outstanding debts of one kin group to another just as failures to fulfill marriage obligations are a source of misfortune for future generations.

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapters 1 and 2.

### ***Madzvoka* spirit-mediums and violations of *mitemo***

Because of their spirits' deep ties to history, mediums for *madzvoka*<sup>8</sup> spirits manage misfortune rooted in the violation of *mitemo*. Many illnesses that result from violating these rules are associated with sexual relations. In this way, *madzvoka* mediums play an important role in managing marriage relationships. The traditional marriage process sanctions sexual relations between a bride and groom by providing protection for the bride's parents before the first sexual relations through the ingestion of specially prepared medicines.<sup>9</sup> Outside of this sanctioned relationship, if either party engages in sexual intercourse, he or she poses a danger to those around them.

Engaging in sexual relations outside of social sanctions brings danger of contamination to others. Such transgressions make a person a "vector" for illness-causing pollution, known as *p'hiringanissu*. If such a person comes in contact with close relatives while they are "hot," (a state of ritual impurity), they risk contaminating them, causing illness. Any member of a family can bring illness to others through carelessness. One *n'ganga* explained:

Parents must follow traditions (*mikebo*) to take care of their children ... also children that are growing must not misbehave [have sex prior to marital arrangements]. Violating these rules will bring illness to the family—parents bring sickness to their children and children becoming adults bring illnesses to their parents.<sup>10</sup>

Children are particularly vulnerable to illnesses caused by the pollution of extramarital affairs. For treatment of illnesses that result from marital infidelities to be effective, the perpetrator must admit to his or her transgressions. Through the healing process the couple

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapters 1 and 2 for detailed discussion of *madzvoka* spirits and the work of *n'ganga*s hosting such spirits.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 6 for detailed description of this process (*kut'husa mitombo*).

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Julieta Vijalona Canda; May 18, 2001.

comes together to reaffirm its bond for the sake of a loved one who is ill. In treating illnesses of sexual pollution, *madzvoka* mediums play an important role in managing marriage relationships.

### **Spirits and the dangers of marriage**

In Gorongosa, marriage unites not only a man and a woman, but also their two families. Going to live with a man's family, a woman can be both a source and target of spiritual attacks. She can bring spirits from her lineage with her that cause troubles among her husband's kin.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, as an outsider living among her husband's kin, she may be the target of others' jealousy or hatred, especially if she is one of several wives competing for a husband's resources or attention. Finally, if her husband's kin have problems with spirits, her offspring, new members of her husband's lineage, may become the target of disturbed spirits' acts of retribution. As discussed in Chapter 2, misfortune caused by spirits may result from some type of outstanding debt that has left a spirit unsettled and angry, as will be seen below. In other instances, disrespect for the rules of respect governing social relationships can stir the anger of spirits, causing them to punish the offender by bringing misfortune to their kin.

One day I engaged a young man in conversation at a spirit-medium's annual *barbwa* celebration. During our conversation he gestured to his wife, telling me that, though she is not yet a spirit-medium, she has an *npfukwa* spirit that is "coming out" which is what occurs in the preliminary stages of initiation to spirit-mediumship. He explained that this spirit

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<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 7.

began to emerge after he hit his wife one day.<sup>12</sup> Like this man's wife's spirits, *npfukwa* spirits may be latent and are stirred up when they take offense at the actions of those who harm their hosts.

### **Ancestral spirits and intergenerational debt**

In addition to managing problems that result from pollution and the transgression of *mitemo*, spirit-mediums also help manage problems originating with the spirits of direct descendents of the lineage<sup>13</sup> who are angered by disrespect or other transgressions. In some instances, ancestral spirits (*mizimu*) will show their disfavor with their descendant's conduct in marriage by withdrawing their protection from their descendents, leading them to suffer from illness, discord, or other misfortune. Through the intervention of *n'ganga*s, a family group will learn the source of the spirit's anger and then address the problem to restore the wellbeing of the group. In other instances, secondary *mizimu*—those who usually “stay to the side”<sup>14</sup>—cause harm among their descendents in an expression of outrage for things that occurred when they were living. In both of these cases, spirits' often complain about transgressions in the creation of marriage relationships—whether failure to complete *mabatiro* or failure to complete the obligation of *roora*—both of which leave the descent group of children in question.

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<sup>12</sup> Field notes, October 2, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that, though *madzvoka* spirits are passed down through many generations, they are not spirits of people originally of the lineage. Rather, they are alien spirits who, over generations of incorporation into the lineage, have become a force for protection and wellbeing of a kin group. Ancestral spirits or *mizimu* are the spirits of members of a family who have died and retained their close connection to their kin, albeit on a spiritual plane. A more detailed discussion *madzvoka* spirits and *mizimu* can be found in Chapter 2.

<sup>14</sup> In the spirit world, *mizimu* are organized in hierarchical relationships. In their relations to their living descendants *mizimu* who are in the highest position of authority are mostly the ones who interact with the living. Others “sit to the side” and are rather inactive.

*Dzinyambuya* is the name for one type of secondary *muzimu*<sup>15</sup> that comes forward to decry marital transgressions. *Dzinyambuya* is usually the spirit of a woman whose daughter married a man who never completed *mabatiro* payments (*lobolo*).<sup>16</sup> Because she did not receive the *lobolo* in compensation for the loss of her daughter, the children that result from the relationship remain members of her descent group.<sup>17</sup> If her son-in-law does not pay her before she dies, the debt is not erased. As a spirit, she will watch vigilantly to make sure it is paid. Thus, if one of her son-in-law's daughters is married and he receives *lobolo* but does not transfer it up a generation to compensate her she will become angry, feeling, "you are eating my money!"<sup>18</sup> Her anger will manifest in the son-in-law or the new married couple as illness and misfortune. When *madzvoka* mediums discern the source of misfortune as a *dzinyambuya* spirit, they facilitate a ceremonial process whereby those afflicted by her make a symbolic offering to compensate her, at last, for the *lobolo* she never received.

Another secondary *muzimu* spirit is known as *sankadzi*. *Sankadzi* is a term meaning "sister" (female sibling of the same womb). A *sankadzi* is the spirit of a deceased woman who is a direct ancestor to one of the sufferers in a family. *Sankadzi* spirits may have various grievances, but they invariably seek to be repaid a debt of some kind. Most frequently, *sankadzi* are spirits of women who died childless. Usually, her infertility resulted directly from actions of a male sibling. For instance, one form of "*kakamba*"<sup>19</sup> requires that a man have intercourse with a close female relative. If he chooses one of his sisters, it is

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<sup>15</sup> *Muzimu* is singular, *mizimu* plural.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 6 for a description of *mabatiro*.

<sup>17</sup> In this situation, *dzinyambuya* is a woman who has been incorporated into her husband's lineage as an ancestral spirit. If her son-in-law did not satisfy *lobolo*, he does not receive rights to his children, who remain members of their mother's natal lineage—therefore *dzinyambuya* can retain legitimate influence.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Aliança André; June 24, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> *Kakamba* is a treatment used to attain capacity for work, strength, or success that exceeds normal human ability (frequently sought for the purpose of attaining material prosperity). See Chapter 5 for further discussion.

widely known that this type of prohibited sexual relationship will lead to her sterility.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, this act of incest transfers the potential for offspring that she holds within her to her brother—thereby affording him super-human capacity—“reproduction” of material wealth.<sup>21</sup>

Such a bereaved woman—robbed of her ability to accumulate material and social wealth through motherhood—ages with the sentiment, “*ndikafa munandibalira*,” in other words, “when I die you will give birth on my behalf.”<sup>22</sup> After her death she will return to affect the children or grandchildren of her brother, causing illness and death until her debts are repaid and she has been given her rightful inheritance of social wealth and influence. Without her own offspring, she does not have family to provide a resting place for her as a spirit. By creating misfortune among her brother’s descendents, she can demand that they perform special ceremonies to incorporate her among the spirits of their home, allowing her to play an authoritative role, as a spiritual mother, to her brother’s descendents.

### ***Npfukwa* spirits and the dangers of marriage**

Long ago, there were problems between married couples ... but things are much worse now due to spirits ... now it is impossible to find a home that is not troubled by *npfukwa* spirits.<sup>23</sup>

During the months I spent shadowing Adélia’s spirit-mediumship practice in Nyamissongora, the overwhelming number of patients seeking her assistance were searching for resolution of a variety of marriage problems, both past and present. One day, in

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Sinista Alfabeti; March 21, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Racida; October 11, 2007.

conversation with the elder and leader of Adélia's two spirits, *Sekulu*, exclaimed, "this year all problems that come here are conflicts between husbands and wives!"<sup>24</sup> "Why?" I asked. He replied, "I don't know—*Npfukwa* are reacting, getting angry."

Increases in marriage problems and instability of other kinds in Gorongosa are often attributed to angered spirits, *npfukwa*.<sup>25</sup> *Npfukwa* spirits can overwhelm the protective abilities of *mizimu* (ancestral spirits), leaving families vulnerable to suffer the repercussions of severe interpersonal transgressions that took place in the past between members of different lineages. The presence of *npfukwa* spirits has become so widespread in recent years that few families have been free of their impact. The increased severity of misfortunes experienced by larger numbers of people has shifted the modes of managing such troubles. One woman, Merecina, explained the situation this way:

Long ago, if a child was sick, they would take the child to a *pangapanga* tree to talk to the [ancestral] spirits ... so that the spirit would be calm and let go of the child. There was no need to go to a *n'ganga*. Now, the spirits are really angry, [seeking] vengeance ... they cause much destruction [*estragar muito*] before they will finally tire and accept to sit down in a place and work.<sup>26</sup>

As the prevalence of *npfukwa* spirits has grown, the lengths to which families must go to restore order have increased. As her statement implies, *npfukwa* spirits enact harsher punishment and require more costly payment. Frequently, payment involves the dedication of a young female in the family to become the spirit's wife. In the above quote, this process was implied in the statement: "accept to sit down in a place"—which indicates

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<sup>24</sup> Field notes; October 2, Adélia's *harhwa*.

<sup>25</sup> *Npfukwa* are "alien" spirits who are outsiders to the lineage they affect. Like *dzinyambuya* and *sankadzi*, they seek payment of a debt. Unlike these debt-seeking *mizimu*, *n'pfukwa* come with more force and anger, because they do not have the care that an ancestral spirit has for their descendents. See Chapter 2 for further discussion.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Merecina; October 17, 2007.

incorporation into the lineage through marriage to a daughter—“and work”—through this “wife” to heal others, creating wealth for the household.

Later in the interview, Merecina articulated another widely shared sentiment—that the increasing presence of alien spirits is overwhelming the more reasonable approach of ancestral spirits and *madzvoka*, contributing to the increasing number of spirit-marriages among women. This phenomenon explains why the numbers of female spirit mediums are increasing exponentially:

The spirits of now are teaching the spirits of long ago<sup>27</sup> to ask for wives and work with *mpene*.<sup>28</sup> Spirits of long ago are angry with those from recent times that are going in front ... moving the older spirits behind—so they can go in front and make demands for a wife ...<sup>29</sup>

The style of punishment of all spirits, then, is being influenced by the growing prevalence of *npfukwa* spirits. This provides insight to the widely-used description of current social problems as an epidemic. Like a contagion spreading rapidly through society, *npfukwa* spirits and their influence over other spirits that prevailed in more stable times are responsible for the general feeling of increasing instability in the lives of Gorongosa residents.

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<sup>27</sup> By speaking of the “spirits of now” vs. the “spirits of long ago,” Merecina was referencing the qualitative distinction between *npfukwa* and *madzvoka* spirits—both of which are alien spirits to a lineage, with the *npfukwa* of a more recent social origin. They have a different set of preferences and a different style corresponding to the time period in which they lived. See Chapter 2 for further discussion of *madzvoka* and *npfukwa* spirits.

<sup>28</sup> *M’pene*, knife. The vast majority of recent female initiates to spirit-mediumship work with knives—a tool that has become a sign of *npfukwa* spirits. (See Chapter 1 for more discussion of the knife as the principle tool of mediums for *npfukwa* vs. the fly whisk preferred by *madzvoka* spirits.)

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Merecina; October 17, 2007.



### Managing *npfukwa* and *gamba*: the reconciliatory power of marriage

In Gorongosa, the phenomenon of *npfukwa* has become generalized,<sup>30</sup> referring to spirits of the deceased who lived in different periods of past turmoil that bring misfortune and destruction to the living as an expression of their rage. All such spirits are outsiders to a given family, which attaché themselves to a particular lineage to seek revenge for a grievance of some kind. As seen in previous chapters, violent spirits' rage can come as a result of having been murdered, or, in the case of *gamba*, because their host has not fulfilled a contract. Though *npfukwa* and *gamba* spirits typically target the direct descendents of the person who caused them harm, they may also attack the family of someone who stood by watching their demise without coming to their aid.<sup>31</sup> They also pose the potential of randomized danger since they may roam in areas where they were killed, attaching themselves to anyone they encounter.

Sometimes alien spirits seek recompense, other times they do not reveal their identities or their complaints, preferring only to cause destruction. When a family suspects a string of misfortunes are caused by an *npfukwa* or *gamba* spirit, they must first work with a spirit-medium to find out who the spirit is, where it is coming from, and whether or not its grievances are legitimate. If it is discovered that an *npfukwa* spirit has no legitimate claims on a given lineage, a family may send it away by "fooling" it with symbolic tokens that represent the wealth and goods it demands.

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<sup>30</sup> *Npfukwa* is a general category of spirits, of which there are many different sub-categories. The particular sub-category assigned to a given spirit references its identity, history, or its relationship to a given family. For instance, one name given to a particular type of *npfukwa* spirit is "*chikwambo*" which is a de-humanized form of the noun "*mukwambo*" or "son-in-law." *Npfukwa* spirits who have been given a bride among a lineage as a form of payment are referred to as *chikwambo*, since this name references their social relationship to him as a spiritual son-in-law. A woman who is the wife of such a spirit, however, will not refer to him as "*chikwambo*," since from her vantage point, he is a husband. She will refer to him by his first name, or by a respectful term of address, such as "*sekulu*" or "grandfather."

<sup>31</sup> Field notes; August 8, 2003.

When a spirit demands a wife from a group of people unrelated to the spirit's victimizer, they will present the spirit a clay doll with female characteristics, (*mbumba dongo*). If the spirit demands money, they will leave a single coin, if it demands a rifle they will leave a miniature rifle made from sorghum cane, and so forth. In the ceremony for the expulsion of alien spirits, known as *kutindha*, the symbolic offerings are placed at the base of a *mukonanbira* tree—a tree with red sap that symbolizes the blood shed at the time of the spirit's death, as well as its rage and malevolence. This tree is said to be the “home” of the spirit—a physical place where it can come to rest. When all demands have been symbolically met, the spirit can be exorcised. Even after it has been sent away there is still danger that the spirit will reattach itself. So each family member is “closed off” through the ingestion of a concoction of roots, and through application of the same concoction to tiny cuts (*nembo*) made with a razor at all the corners of the body (tops of the ankles, wrists, breastbone, and temples).

When an *npfukwa* spirit's grievances with a lineage group are legitimate, it cannot be successfully sent away until its demands have been met and its anger calmed. In some cases, *npfukwa* spirits demand payment in the form of money or material wealth. More often, they seek to settle among the lineage group of the person who caused them harm, establishing social bonds that convert the spirits' rage and destruction to care and protection. One older woman explained that this practice of offering a bride to a spirit replicates a social practice of reconciliation that was prevalent in the past. She pointed out that, in the time of her mother, a perpetrator of violence or his family could offer a young girl from their lineage to the family of the victim as compensation for its loss and as a means to convert social divides

into social ties—binding the two divided lineages into mutual relationship.<sup>32</sup> Thus, when spirits are given a girl or a woman as a bride to repay them for their loss of life, it is a way to turn suffering into wellbeing, hatred into kinship.

### **Managing marital problems—the manifestations of *npfukwa* in marriage**

Patterns of marriage troubles for a couple, or for a woman who cycles through multiple unsuccessful marriage relationships, are widely interpreted as a sign of the presence of an *npfukwa* or *gamba* spirit. A woman who experiences domestic conflict, repeated divorce, sterility, child loss, lack of sexual drive, or other misfortune may begin to suspect that her troubles are due to an *npfukwa* spirit's influence, indicating that he has chosen her for his bride. If so, these spirits may break up the marriage. They incite conflict between a woman and her husband or his kin. As was seen in Maria Luís's story in Chapter 7, these spirits may bring death and misfortune to the family of a woman's husband. In this way, the influence of *npfukwa* spirits can at once explain a host of problems that lead to marital instability: financial neglect, conflict, illness, and death. Such "social problems," (*problemas sociais*), will push a family to seek resolution through consulting a spirit-medium.

As more and more *npfukwa* spirits cause turmoil in the lives of the living, an increasing number of women are establishing ties with them. As seen in Chapter 1, these spiritual marriages are negotiations between the girl's kin and the spirits that follow the traditional marriage process, but the relationship is reversed. Rather than the groom presenting payments, gifts, and symbolic offerings to the bride's family, when incorporating an *npfukwa* spirit into a lineage, the "bride's" family makes payments to the spirit. Rather

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Aliança; April 7, 2008.

than the groom building a home for his new wife at his parents' residence, the "bride's" family builds a home for the spirit in its compound, essentially establishing a matrilineal pattern of marriage. As discussed in relation to Merecina's case in Chapter 1, these spirit marriages dramatically shift the relationships of authority of a household, incorporating the spirit directly into the affairs of a woman and her living husband as the ever-present, supreme authority.

These spiritual unions not only serve to reconcile a spirit to the descendants of his victimizer, but also effectively re-order social relationships among the living in ways that afford women greater marital stability. When a woman becomes the medium for the ultimate authority of a household, a new layer of socio-spiritual control is introduced into the relationship. Under the watch of a powerful spirit, a woman's husband is under greater pressure to fulfill his obligations to the marriage and continually to show her the respect she is due in the relationship.

### **Managing *Npfukwa*—making order from disorder**

Managing relationships with spirits provides indirect lessons for how to create and maintain social order in the future. While the individual histories of spirits are as diverse as people themselves, their grievances are patterned according to the social history of the region. For instance, many *npfukwa* spirits' histories connect violence and murder to greed for material goods.<sup>33</sup> Grievances often involve not only their untimely deaths, but also the loss of material goods that were stolen from them at the time of their murder. Managing

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 2.

relationships with angered spirits indirectly addresses the problems of greed for material goods in contemporary society.

Managing relationships with spirits who are the cause of present social disorder connects people tightly to social disorder in the past. Healing processes reveal how the effects of past violence are experienced and addressed collectively, just as other forms of illness and misfortune. From an outside perspective, the rapid proliferation of new female spirit-mediums who are initiated into the practice as the nexus of reconciliatory ties to *mpfukwa* spirits can be seen as an index of “the stresses and strains experienced by people as a group at a particular time” (Sibisi 1977: 174). From an inside perspective, in Gorongosa, this phenomenon is experienced as an “epidemic”—a sign of the dangers of widespread social dysfunction. Through spirit-marriages, spirit mediums work with family groups to re-order and strengthen social bonds between the living, helping them manage and maintain kin relationships that are threatened by pressures associated with living in the current context. Through righting the wrongs of the past, *n’gangas* assist families in the restoration of order in the present. The creation of a marriage bond is the most powerful way to repay spirits who have paid the ultimate price. Transforming such a spirit from an adversary to an ally creates the potential for strengthening the relationships among the living.

### **Finding the origin— managing spirits, separation, and divorce**

When patterns of marriage trouble emerge that are attributed to the influence of spirits, families seek to restore stability among close relations by attempting to understand their origin. Because, as described above, spirits seek to have debts repaid, they follow lines of descent to obtain payment from the direct kin of their debtor. It is essential to determine

the ancestral connections of the spirit so that the proper kin group can address its demands. If a couple is having troubles caused by a spirit from the woman's parents' lineage, her husband and his family cannot negotiate with the spirit. They can only perform *mbamba* or *kut'hapula* (ceremonies of communication and transfer of goods to ancestral spirits, respectively) or *kuteta* or *kutindha* (ceremonies of communication and transfer of goods addressed to spirits that are from outside the lineage<sup>34</sup>) for spirits connected to their lineage group.<sup>35</sup>

When seeking resolution for marriage-related troubles at the court-like assemblies of traditional leaders, the "trial" focuses on determining the origin of the afflicting spirits. Different parties involved will make arguments providing evidence for their perspective as to whether a spirit's origins are inside or outside a family group. If they are outsider spirits, it must be determined the lineage to which they are attached. If an *npfukwa*, causes problems in a woman's marriage seeking payment of a debt left by her grandfather, she will be found to be the cause of the problems. For this reason, traditional leaders such as *nyakwawa* or *mfumus* cultivate close ties with spirit-mediums. When they are unable to come to a decision as to the origin of spirits, they send the group in dispute to a spirit-medium who can use divination and other techniques to come to a conclusion. The result of these proceedings will be sent back to the presiding authority and his court of judges who will define a course of action based on the results. For this reason, many people prefer not to take disputes to state-sponsored contexts such as *secretários do bairro*, police, or state courts, since arguments about spiritual responsibility are often not considered. However, in a context where marital disputes and domestic violence appear at state-sponsored bodies,

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<sup>34</sup> See description of *kutindha*, above.

<sup>35</sup> Fieldnotes, July 3, 2004.

state officials have come to rely increasingly on the work of spirit-mediums to resolve cases that involve spirit-based accusations (Jacobs and Schuetze, n.d.).

When a spirit's origins are determined to be from a woman's ancestry, this information often leads to a couple's temporary separation, as it did in Filomena's case (in Chapter 7). The woman will have to return home to her family for a period of time so that she and her family members can resolve the troubles with the spirits. Thus, marriage separations, in the first instance, are usually temporary. If the troubles continue or turn out to be irresolvable, dissolution of the marriage is the most likely outcome. Knowing the origin of the offending spirit is again vital. When spirits from the husband's lines of ancestry are responsible, a woman's family will not have to return *lobolo* or other payments they have received from her husband. If, the spirits causing the marital dissolution have been determined to be tied to a woman's ancestry, the permanent separation of the couple leaves her kin indebted to her former husband until they find the means to return the wealth they received in compensation for the loss of their daughter.

### **Restoring reproductive capacity—*n'gangas* and the process of *kutsimika***

A variety of afflicting spirits may be the cause of a woman's infertility, as discussed above. Angered spirits may "tie off" her womb, preventing the process of conception or proper childbirth, or they may bring illness to newborns leading to their deaths. In either case, a woman is left childless. Aside from spirits, other factors may also lead to a woman's infertility—notably sorcery directed at her by a jealous co-wife or other relation who wants to see her suffer. *N'gangas* employ a variety of strategies to remove the influences blocking a woman from successful reproduction. One method is particularly widespread, and as will

be seen later, this form of therapy illustrates an interconnection between the healing practices of *n'gangas* and church groups.

In Gorongosa, each person has what is called *nyoka*, (literally, “snake”) inside of them that plays a central role in regulating bodily processes (see also Green 1999). Among other things, a woman’s *nyoka* is responsible for conception, pregnancy, and childbirth. It “captures” and “holds” the fetus as it forms inside a woman.<sup>36</sup> When a woman is sterile, or has been unable to conceive for long periods of time, it may be because her *nyoka* is turned upside down or is otherwise out of position, making it unable to capture and hold the fetus as it forms inside. The causes for a *nyoka*’s malplacement can be many, but regardless of whether this condition is brought on by accident, sorcery, or the action of spirits, *n'gangas* perform treatments known as *kutsimika*<sup>37</sup> to reposition the *nyoka* and hold it in place throughout gestation and birth.

Following the process of *kutsimika*, *n'gangas* perform a series of treatments that reposition a woman’s *nyoka* to allow for conception. *Kutsimika* begins with the preparation of special herbal treatments, using both the leaves (*mitombo ya masamba*) and the roots (*mitombo ya m'himbiri*) of three different plants. Ingestion of these plants serves to set the *nyoka* into the proper position. Each *n'ganga* has her own variation on the plants used in this initial concoction, but, invariably, the plants used are *nyamasamba matatu*—plants with leaf florets that come in threes. The three-leaf structure of these plants is crucial. Adélia explained it this way:

It is important that this plant grows in a configuration of three because a woman has *mapfiya mitatu* ... [the three cooking stones of a hearth] ... and

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Suraia Sande; October 31, 2007.

<sup>37</sup> *Kutsimika*, “to secure in place,” refers to the central act of holding the *nyoka* in place to allow for successful conception and gestation.



inside a woman, there are also three *mapfiya* that are *três bolas de sangue para formar/vir fazer pessoa* [three balls of blood to form/come together to create a person].<sup>38</sup>

*Mapfiya mitatu* “three stones,” refers simultaneously to the structure of a woman’s reproductive organs and to the three cooking stones that form the hearth upon which she cooks—the center of fertility in her physical body and the center of her domestic activities that support the life of the family. Thus, the configuration of three in the structure of the plants used symbolizes, and through sympathetic magic, helps to restore the core of a woman’s fertility. The *n’ganga* prepares both the roots and leaves of these plants for the



**Figure 8.3: The combination of roots and leaves of three-leaved plants for *kutsimika***

treatment. Leaves are pounded into a pulp and formed into a ball and the roots are cut into small pieces.

To reposition a woman’s *nyoka* for successful conception, she must strictly follow the instructions the *n’ganga* gives her. One patient was instructed in the following way: On

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Adélia António; October 10, 2007.

the first day, she was to take a portion of the ball of pounded leaves and squeeze the liquid into a cup with some water. After squeezing out the liquid, she was to take the pulp of the leaves and spread it over her belly, and then place the remainder of the pulp under one of the hearth stones where she prepared meals.<sup>39</sup> It was strongly emphasized that for three days, this stone must not be moved or shifted from its position. After this, she was told to take the water and liquid from the leaves and place it in a cooking pot to prepare porridge. During the next two days, she prepared porridge following the same process, but discarded the pulp so as not to disturb the hearth stone. On the fourth day, the fixation of the *nyoka* process was complete, so she could remove the pulp from under the stone.

At the same time, the *n'ganga* instructed her to leave the roots soaking in a basin of water that was carefully placed at the foot of her bed. Again, like the hearth stones, it was essential that she leave the basin in place for the entire period of treatment, avoiding picking it up or shifting it the slightest bit. The patient was to scoop water out of the basin to drink three times a day, until she became pregnant, simply adding more water to the basin when it ran out. Throughout this process, the patient was told to avoid foods in the category of *kuwawa*. *Kuwawa* does not translate directly to English, but includes foods that are bitter (coffee) or sour (lemon or beer) acidic (tomatoes) or spicy (hot peppers). Ingesting these foods could upset the *nyoka* and knock it out of position.

Ingesting the extracts of the three-leaved plants in different ways served to reorient and secure the *nyoka* into the proper position. Symbolic action (not disturbing the placement of the hearth stone or the basin of medicinal liquid) and ritual avoidance of foods

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<sup>39</sup> Because this particular patient lived a more urban lifestyle, she cooked using a charcoal grill, and so the *n'ganga* treating her instructed her to place the pulp under the bottom of the grill, but to ensure that neither she nor anyone else moved or shifted the grill—"Sweep the ashes out and leave the grill in place!"

ensured that this delicate placement would remain fixed, allowing for conception and gestation to occur.



Figure 8.4: A child born from the process of *kutsimika* eats a chicken leg from the celebratory meal. He is naked after being bathed in *harhwa* and herbal medicines that conclude the process, releasing him from the care of protective spirit to his parents.<sup>40</sup>

*Kutsimika* also places a child under the watchful protection of one of a *n'ganga's* spirits. The spirit stays with the woman throughout the treatment period, providing oversight to protect from any potential threats to the process. If a child is born as a result of the treatment *kutsimika*, he or she remains under the spirit's care into early childhood. As the child grows, it is essential that no one cut the hair that grows above the center of the forehead, as this is the place where the spirit resides. Cutting this portion of hair prior to completing the process of *kutsula* (see below) could disturb the spirit and, it is said, lead the child to become disobedient and wild in adolescence.

<sup>40</sup> From *kutsula* for Maria; October 2, 2007, Nyamissongora.

Once the child has reached the age of a toddler and begins contributing to the work in the household, one event must take place to conclude the treatment. This ceremony, known as *kutsula mwana*, concludes the process of *kutsimika*, transferring the child from the protective care of the *n'ganga's* healing spirit to its parents' kin group. Prior to *kutsula*, the child belongs to the spirit, even though it is raised by its own mother. Because *kutsula* effectively transfers the child to its parents' household, the ceremony is much like a wedding, only in reverse. Here, the child's parents offer *barbwa*, a chicken in *pfundo* style,<sup>41</sup> a small basket, two plates, two cups, a new sleeping mat, a capulana, and the head of a hoe to the *n'ganga* and her spirit who oversaw the process. These gifts are, in part, the materials needed for the *kutsula* ceremony and, in part, an offering of thanks to the *n'ganga's* spirit.

As in a wedding, the gifts presented offer symbolic compensation to the spirit and to the *n'ganga* for the work they performed to help bring about the child's conception and birth. The capulana compensates the *n'ganga* for the wear and tear her work required of her clothing and the hoe compensates her for the work of digging the roots necessary to secure the *nyoka* in place.<sup>42</sup> As will be seen below, the small basket is a key tool in the *kutsula* proceedings, and it would be inappropriate for the *n'ganga* to use her own objects. Cups and plates, likewise, are used in the ceremonial meal, and must be brought from the child's parents' home.

A final pivotal action must take place to release the child from the spirit's protection. Possessed by the spirit who oversaw the child's birth, the *n'ganga* mixes a portion of the *barbwa* with pulp of the three-leaved plants that opened the *kutsimika* process.

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<sup>41</sup> See Chapter 6 for the significance of *pfundo*.

<sup>42</sup> Fieldnotes, *kutsula mwana* at Miria's; May 20, 2007, Canda. Fieldnotes, *kutsula mwana* at Adélia's; October 2, 2007, Nyamissongora.

The *n'ganga* filters this mixture through the small basket that has been offered and pours it so that it falls on the child's forehead—the place where the protective spirits are dwelling. After being bathed in this mixture, the child and its mother each drink a small portion and the process of *kutsimika* is concluded. The connection is severed—the child is released to the protection of his lineage's spirits. If *kutsula* is left undone, the child remains under the power of the *n'ganga's* spirit—who can bring harm to the child out of anger at unpaid debt.

After the successful completion of *kutsula*, the spirit declares the process complete, pronounces his satisfaction and announces publicly that should the child fall ill, he will not be found to be the cause: “*Ana feruka, ndi feruka ene. Ine handina ndawa*” “[if the child] has a fever, it is a simple fever. I am not dissatisfied.”<sup>43</sup> As in marriage, white flour is sprinkled on the head of the child and his parents and other onlookers to the sound of ululations of joy. The spirit provides final blessings to the new child, handing the child back to the protective care of his or her ancestral spirits, and thereby ending the relationship.

## Conclusion

Through their work, *n'ganga*s play many important roles in helping to maintain troubled marriage relationships. Whether by helping families discover and manage sources of misfortune and discord in marriage, by restoring order where transgressions have brought pollution and illness, or by helping women regain their reproductive capacity, the work of *n'ganga*s can help families weather difficult times and provide paths to resolution. Based on knowledge and power of the spirits of the deceased, the work of *n'ganga*s draws consistently on the authority of “tradition,” revealing the interconnectedness of generations.

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<sup>43</sup> Fieldnotes; September 24, 2007.

Their work subtly but strongly emphasizes the corporal nature of kin relationships—defining and regulating relationships of descent and revealing that one’s actions have repercussions on others and on future generations.

### **Tradition by other means: Pentecostal church families and the re-ordering of society**

Pentecostal church participants work actively to re-order society in fundamental ways. Active church participation inserts one into networks of spiritual kin as part of a global church “family.” Fundamental to this process, church members create spiritual kinship ties with one another, and each church body serves as an individual family, taking over many social roles once reserved for extended kin. In formal teachings and in practice, Pentecostal church groups are re-imposing “tradition” by other means, to restore order where it has been lost. In a sense, church participants replace the authority of the mythic “ways of the elders” (*mitemo ya wakuluma*) with church-based tradition and authority (*mitemo ya gereja*) that is transmitted through biblical teachings and church hierarchy.

Pentecostal church groups play a principle role in marital matters that in many ways replicates the role of an extended family as described in Chapter 6. They supplement, and in some cases replace, the role of the parents and extended family of the bride and groom in the establishment and maintenance of marriage bonds. The process of marriage for most church members diverges little from the normative process of traditional marriage as described in Chapter 6. However, as will be seen, those who claim or aspire to membership among urban social elite arrange wedding ceremonies that draw heavily on Western Christian models. Even in these cases, the basic aspects of the normative marriage process

are prevalent. For most church participants, the primary difference in the marriage process is the re-orientation of the process to God, which leads to the reanalysis of certain rituals and ceremonies. For instance, prayers to God or Jesus substitute prayers (*mhamba*) to ancestral spirits that provide blessings to the couple. Through this process married couples are oriented first and foremost to God and to the church family. Following this logic, Pentecostal church membership also transforms the ways people manage marriages. Church teachings provide instructive lessons for married life, and leaders intervene to provide guidance for couples in dispute. Examining the social support church groups provide in marriage reveals an important reason many women are drawn to Pentecostal churches.

### **Church as family—the marriage process in Pentecostal contexts**

In regulating the marriage process, Pentecostal church participants draw heavily on the notion of the “church family” and the use of fictive kinship terms. This is much more than symbolic or metaphorical. Church participants act on their relationships to each other according to their position in the church hierarchy in much the same way that family members do. Acting on relationships as if the church group was a family is an important means by which church groups establish and activate the authority of church tradition.

#### *Staying in the family: Pentecostal churches and courtship*

At The Free Assembly Church of Mozambique, Saturday afternoons are set aside for youth worship services. At these services, in addition to teachings characteristic of any worship service, youth leaders preach about issues relevant to their lives. Respect for elders,

for instance, is a common theme. Another frequent message is the importance of choosing appropriate marriage partners. In these services, youth often preach on scripture related to themes of love and respect. They warn each other about the dangers of attraction to others who are irresponsible and counsel each other on how to choose partners who will create a harmonious union. Acting in a parental role, male and female church leaders also counsel youth on the important qualities to look for when choosing a partner. They warn youth not to be swayed by a person's expensive clothing or the allure of style or wealth. Rather, they urge them to pursue people whose behavior and families are familiar to them and to fellow church-goers, who can vouch for their responsibility.

It is widely understood that the most "harmonious" union for a church participant is a union with someone who is numbered among the faithful. People said it is "difficult" for a church participant to marry someone who has not converted: "If one person prays, and the other doesn't, there will be problems."<sup>44</sup> One pastor on Gorongosa Mountain explained that troubles emerge particularly surrounding treatment of illnesses:

If a man is in church, but his wife is not, this is a big problem, because she cares for the children when they are sick—she will take them to the *n'ganga*. A man is not in control and will also leave the church.<sup>45</sup>

This comment points to the social role of healing in Pentecostal contexts. As in the work of spirit-mediums, church-based healing is a fundamental aspect of Pentecostal church participation that establishes a distinct social order—a firm orientation for life and relationships that is ordered and re-ordered through the therapeutic process.

Thus, the concern he expressed is principally that a man and his children remain firmly based in the social orientation of the church. Since women are the foundation

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Samuel João Baptista; July 11, 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Elisha Dauci; March 11, 2008.



for physical and social reproduction of a family, it is especially important for a male church member to marry a fellow participant. Likewise, it is considered best to marry someone who is also a member of a Pentecostal church. Catholic and Zionist churches (the two other common types of Christian faith groups in Gorongosa) have significantly different teachings and rules for behavior, especially regarding the use of alcohol and healing practices.

It is important for young people to consider the religious identity of their potential partner's parents. When they are from different church backgrounds, families are often set into conflict even before the marriage takes place. In negotiations to establish the marriage union, the parties involved will follow different sets of traditions and regulations. Pentecostal church-goers tend to be particularly rigid in their refusal to follow rules connected to pollution that guide central ceremonies of the marriage process (e.g. *kut'husa mitombo*), and will refuse alcohol consumption at the nuptial events. Though it is possible to reach affable marriage agreements through negotiation, the potential for conflict is substantial. For these reasons, young Pentecostals follow both the explicit and implicit messages of their church identity, searching for a future spouse among other active Pentecostal participants.

While there are no requirements that a young person must marry within their church group, the strong social networks formed through church participation mean that young people often end up courting others within their congregation. This is seen as the safest type of union, because church elders, having witnessed the behavior of the couple over long periods of time, can easily advise for or against the union. When youth from different

churches enter into courtship, their respective church groups will perform the role of parents, vouching for their member's respectfulness and viability as marriage partners.

For instance, in 2004, during one Sunday worship service at the Free Assembly Church of Mozambique in Gorongosa's district capital, a young man from their church, Castro Manesho, returned after spending several months away. He had been staying in Mangara, a rural settlement of Gorongosa District to complete the process of marriage to his new wife Odete João. When the new couple returned to the district capital to reside with Castro's family, the leaders of Odete's church (New Alliance Church) sent a letter of introduction addressed to the members of Castro's church. This formal document, labeled a *guia*<sup>46</sup> or pass, was signed by the pastor and the head of the youth group of New Alliance Church. The note introduced the couple to Castro's congregation:

Brother Castro Manesho together with his wife Odete João. We received your young man [Castro] who is well behaved, and our young woman [Odete] is also very well behaved. This is to say that our young woman [Odete] prays and we want her to continue to pray [at your church]. For this reason, with the word of God, may this married couple be blessed. In this way, we transfer Odete to pray at your church.<sup>47</sup>

After reading the letter aloud to the congregation, the Secretary of the Free Assembly church announced that their brother Castro, "because he is a well-behaved youth, was accepted by the leaders of Odete's church and was allowed to proceed with marriage."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Labeling the document a *guia* made explicit connection between the church organization and the bureaucratic processes of state government. *Guias* were first introduced during the colonial period to control labor migration across national borders. Any one traveling within the colonial territory was required to carry a *guia* from their employer to show they were on official business—authorized to travel. Such documents are still required as part of official travel for teachers and other professionals, but they are not as tightly regulated. Issuing a *guia* in this way, emphasizes the way that church groups attempt to create a total society, parallel to and outside of the state government.

<sup>47</sup> Worship service, Igreja Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; July 11, 2004

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

This example illustrates the church's active role as gatekeeper in guiding courtship and sanctioning marriage. Pentecostal churches play an important role in providing approval of marriages and ensuring that the resulting relationships proceed according to mores of respect and good behavior. When marriages are between a man and woman from different churches, members of each "church family" act as close confidants to their respective member, helping them discern the qualities that will ensure a partner will be a good spouse. This gatekeeper relationship is referenced in the letter in the phrase "we received your young man who is well behaved."

Further, it is clear that the transfer of Odete to her husband's "church family" closely resembles the transfer of a bride to a groom's family. The document vouches for Odete's good behavior and transfers her into the hands of her husband's congregation. Indeed, it is most common for a woman who marries a man who attends a different church to follow her husband to join his church after marriage. This is true even when the couple's respective church groups are geographically close to each other.

Kuenda Kuchidza—*trust and church control of the virginity test*

In Gorongosa, tests to establish a girl's virginity before marriage are widely practiced.<sup>49</sup> Families that do not participate in churches will send a woman elder from the bride's family together with a woman elder from the groom's family to a hidden field, known as *chidza* to check a young woman's virginity. For members of Pentecostal churches, however, this process is slightly different. Two female elders from the church will be sent to conduct the test. Though the balance of honesty attained by sending a relative from both

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<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 6.

the families of the bride and groom is lost this way, one man explained that the test remains legitimate because, “as people of God, they cannot lie [about the results].”<sup>50</sup> Again, in this important stage of the marriage process, church elders substitute for the couple’s kin, representing the authority church leaders have in the relationship.

*Muchato: A union within the church family*

As seen in Chapter 6, the public celebration of marriage in Gorongosa is known as *mabatiro*. Pentecostal church participants re-name the *mabatiro* event *muchato*, the Shona equivalent of the chi-Gorongosi word *mabatiro*. This re-naming re-defines traditional marriage as a Pentecostal Christian event, because among Pentecostal church participants in Gorongosa, the Shona language from Zimbabwe has been enregistered as a ritual language of Pentecostal Christianity.<sup>51</sup>

When a bride and groom are both church-going, there are significant changes made to the normative process of traditional marriage.<sup>52</sup> Leaders from the bride’s church and from the groom’s church coordinate to organize and officiate in the wedding proceedings. There is no strict prescription for how *muchato* should proceed, and each event I attended was different. However, the following description will provide insight into the ways church participation influences the nature of the event and how church elders play an active role in creating the marriage bond and sanctioning the new marriage union before God. In *muchato*,

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Nicolão; April 7, 2008.

<sup>51</sup> The association of Shona language with church ritual and its adoption as a ritual language of Christianity is a result of Pentecostal church groups’ use of bibles printed in Zimbabwe in the Shona language. Thus, leaders in Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa say prayers and other ritualized responses in Shona, despite this being a foreign language (Schuetze 2008).

<sup>52</sup> See Chapter 6 for full description of the normative process of traditional marriage.

church members replace kin of the bride and groom in performing many significant roles of the process.

In church-based weddings, the groom is typically required to provide food to feed all the guests, whereas in *mabatiro* events, his offerings of pounded flour (*ufu ya sinzisa*) and a goat are a symbolic contribution to a joint meal, the bulk of which is provided by the bride's family.<sup>53</sup> Prior to the wedding songs, dancing, and the wedding feast, the bride and groom are taken into a house to be counseled by church elders (*kulanga na wakulu*). The counseling takes place on church grounds, usually inside the pastor's house, further emphasizing the parental role of church leaders in marriage affairs. In this session, church elders teach the bride and groom how to behave in marriage, how to demonstrate respect for one another and for each others' families. The basic content of these messages does not differ from what is taught to youth who are outside the church.<sup>54</sup> In marriages that take place outside, young men and women are ideally counseled by their male or female kin, respectively.

Through both the location and the animators of counseling, the center of the new couple's relationship is placed firmly within the church family. The ultimate authority to guide their relationship is a Christian, biblical authority, as taught by church leaders. By substituting the role of kin, church weddings carry the message that, as God's people, church participants will play an active role throughout the couple's lifetime in managing and overseeing their relationship. In the event of marriage troubles, it is understood that the couple will seek further counsel from these elders who are charged with overseeing the marriage process as *padrinho* or *madrinho* (godfather/godmother).

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Maria Zinha; March 20, 2008.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Belita; March 1, 2008.

After receiving counsel, the bride and groom are dressed in their wedding clothing by their church sponsors. When they are dressed and ready, they are told to come out of the house: “*Budikira tikuoni unafambira zvamudenga!*”—“Come out to allow us to see you walk towards the things of heaven!” Once emerging from the house, the couple walks together, very slowly, to church, while the gathered people sing jubilantly. The bride’s *capulana* is tied to fall at maximum length—nearly dragging on the ground—in a show of modesty. Just like in the *mabatiro* event, the bride and groom must remain somber and cannot smile or laugh.<sup>55</sup> The wedding ceremonies take place inside the church rather than at the bride’s family home, further grounding the center of their relationship in the church family. The bride and groom take their seats on chairs, rather than on the ground and are shaded under a white cloth which substitutes for the colorful *capulana* of *mabatiro* events. A church leader will be chosen to officiate. In a brief public worship service, he preaches on scripture and publicly sanctions the marriage before God, opening and closing with a prayer asking God’s protection for the new couple. In the midst of singing and dancing, offerings for the couple are made.

Because the bride’s family controls the nature of *mabatiro*/*muchato* it typically determines its content and overall style. Even if the groom is a Pentecostal church participant, if his bride’s parents are not church-going, the *muchato* event will closely resemble *mabatiro*, with only minor substitutions. Rather than offering their son-in-law sprouted sorghum beer or *harhwa hwa mukwambo* (the son-in-law’s beer) on the wedding day, out of respect for the groom’s religious practices, the bride’s parents will present him with *mabeu* the non-alcoholic version of this brew.

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<sup>55</sup> See Chapter 6.

If, on the other hand, the groom does not participate in a church, but his bride and her family do, the wedding ceremony will be transformed more significantly. The bride's parents will not request alcohol as a part of the *looblo*. They will refuse to follow the *ket'busa mitombo* ceremony<sup>56</sup> because it is deemed by church-participants to be among the aspects of *tradição* (tradition) that is not in accord with church practice. The bride's parents will invite church leaders to officiate the *muchato*, performing a small worship service prior to the singing of educational wedding songs.

### **Marriage, self-identification, and social networks of Pentecostal churches**

Public wedding ceremonies sanctioned by Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa Town and other urban areas of Mozambique, as mentioned, are often influenced by Western Christian weddings. Photos below show the central events of the *muchato* wedding event of one of Pastor Zimba's daughters. Because Pastor Zimba could draw on his ties to the provincial level of the Free Assembly Church, this event became "urbanized," closely resembling Christian weddings I attended in Mozambique's capital, Maputo. In fact, a truckload of youth and adults from the provincial church traveled to Gorongosa for this event to serve as "wedding support," something they routinely do for members of their network of "daughter churches." Their collaboration in the planning of the event and their presence for the actual *muchato* significantly influenced the style of the proceedings.

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<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 6.



**Figure 8.5:** The provincial leader of Pastor Zimba’s church traveled in caravan in his passenger vehicle and with a truckload of youth and women from his church to bring support for Zimba’s daughter’s *muchato*.

The groom, Frederico, his family, and the bride, Madalena, and her family were all active participants in Pentecostal churches. The groom followed the complete process of marriage as described in Chapter 6 sending a *sankbulu* to present the *mbete* to Madalena’s parents (Pastor Zimba and Mãe Pastora Belita) in 2001. He arrived with his family (*kubudikira*) to partake of a common meal prepared by Madalena’s family. Eight months later, Frederico took Madalena to live with him at his parents’ home. In 2002, they had their first child, in 2004, their second. Finally, in 2006, after Frederico secured a job working for World Vision, he decided to complete the marriage process. He told me: “When I was able to find work, I decided to make our marriage official. God inspired me.



I had been thinking I wouldn't be able to marry.”<sup>57</sup> Like many other young men in Gorongosa, it took Frederico many years to complete the full process of marriage. His church participation (and the inspiration from God to complete the marriage process with a formal ceremony), his salaried job, and the insistence of his bride's family, led Frederico to become one of a rare group of men to complete *muchato* and officially register the marriage with government authorities.



Fig 8.6: *Muchato* for Pastor Zimba's daughter, Nyamissongora, Feb. 10, 2007. Note the wrapped gifts for the bride and groom on the left hand side of the photo. All of these gifts were brought by members of the church at the provincial level. Presenting gifts to the new couple, as well as the bride and groom's dress, are innovations to the wedding event that are connected to Pastor Zimba's church-based social network.

When Frederico made arrangements for the wedding with Madalena's parents, they requested that he officially register the marriage with the district authorities—a process so

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Frederico; January 13, 2008.

involved that it is extremely rare.<sup>58</sup> To do this, Frederico coordinated with Gorongosa's District Director of the Department of Religious Affairs to set the date. This director, served as the official government witness—necessary for official registration. The wedding ceremony was officiated not only by church leaders who read scripture and preached about the marriage union, but also by this government official who read a legal statement sanctioning the marital union.

The presence of members of the provincial center of Zimba's church also influenced the style of the wedding. The "wedding support group" consisted of adults and two youth groups, male and female, who performed songs and dances to celebrate the union. Madalena requested a white wedding dress, a sign of her identification with modern Christian tradition. Members of the provincial church brought gifts for the newlyweds wrapped in shiny paper. Following the style of Western Christian weddings, this shifted the transfer of wealth to the new couple, rather than from groom to bride's family.

Despite this addition of gifts for the newlyweds, there was still a significant transfer of wealth from Frederico to Madalena's family. However, the nature of this wealth transfer was significantly different from the transfer of *lobolo* described in Chapter 6. To compensate Madalena's parents for the loss of their daughter, Frederico did not transfer cash and material goods. Rather, Madalena's parents requested that he finance and organize the elaborate wedding. He bought a new suit for the event and paid for Madalena's white

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<sup>57</sup>Mozambique's new Family Law recognizes three types of marital unions—"civil marriage," "religious marriage," and "traditional marriage" (Monteiro 2007:7). For any of these types of unions to be officially recognized by the Mozambican state and protected under the terms of the new Family Law, a couple must officially register their marriage with government authorities. Between 1997 and 2007, only 47 marriages were registered with the district administration. (See Appendix IV for the annual list). Because the process of marriage registration requires substantial time, cost, and coordination with government officials, and because few people see the necessity or value in going through this process, officially registered marriages in Gorongosa are uncommon.

wedding gown and the travel expenses to the city to procure it. He saw to the costly and time-consuming process of official registration of the marriage with district officials, and covered the significant expense of soft drinks and food for more than a hundred guests.<sup>59</sup>

Entirely absent, however, were the monetary tokens such as *dinyero dos cunhados* and payments to the *sankhulu* to perform small tasks such as sweeping up the trash piles (*mabii*) and ululations.<sup>60</sup> These omissions were intentional, but not based solely in church regulations. In fact church-based weddings often retain most of the elements of traditional *mabatiro*. Aspiring to a modern lifestyle, Frederico, Madalena and Madalena's parents chose to remove many aspects of the traditional wedding ceremony, changing the tenor of the event significantly. The couple and guests sat in chairs for the ceremony, and for the meal following the official ceremony, tables and chairs were set up to accommodate as many guests as possible. Guests were served Coca-Cola, Fanta and Sprite. Both rice and *nsima* were served as the staple.<sup>61</sup>

Frederico and Madalena's wedding provides insight into how, for some participants, Pentecostal participation can be a vehicle to a modern, cosmopolitan self-identification. Just as conversion to Pentecostal church groups requires a distinctive shift in identity, for many people, church participation can be a way of expressing social distance from "the

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<sup>59</sup> Rosário also discusses how in southern Mozambique, an elaborate wedding celebration has come to stand in for the transfer of *lobolo* (Rosário, 2008).

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 6 for further description.

<sup>61</sup> Rice is rare in Gorongosa, grown only in small lowland fields. Among most peasant farmers, the preferred staple food is *nsima* (a stiff porridge) made from corn. *Nsima* made from sorghum is not highly regarded, but eaten as the main daily food, since sorghum is more drought resistant (See Chapter 4). In urban areas in central Mozambique, and among the social elite of Gorongosa, rice is more frequently the preferred staple. By serving rice at the wedding, Frederico was both accommodating the tastes of his guests from Chimoio but also simultaneously positioning himself as a modern, upwardly mobile young man. The subtle symbolism in his choice of food can be inferred, partially, by comparison to many other events and celebrations that took place at Zimba's home and church at none of which was rice served.

ways of long ago,” *mitem ya kale*. In Frederico and Madalena’s wedding celebration, an elaborate and expensive wedding substituted for the transfer of *lobolo* wealth, because the event elevated the social esteem of the Madalena’s parents. For weeks prior to the event, Pastor Zimba and Mãe Pastora Belita enthusiastically invited guests from far and wide. The wedding ceremony was an opportunity to display their social standing and the reach of their social networks associated with their position as the district leaders of the Free Assembly church. Guests from Gorongosa were impressed to see two vehicles arrive from Chimoio with members of their “extended family” from the provincial church. This kind of social esteem carried more value for them in compensation for the loss of their daughter than the monetary portion of *lobolo*.

This identification with a cosmopolitan elite class is not a dominant aspect of Pentecostal church participation in Gorongosa. Most church weddings, as discussed above are “traditional” except for small substitutions. Church participants in Gorongosa do not uniformly self-identify as “modern” or “global.” In a way that could be likened to the majority of church weddings, where the form is retained with minor substitutions, the predominant emphasis of Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa is to re-orient and to strengthen “traditional” society in Christian logics. As Frederico and Madalena’s wedding reveals, considerable variation in the use and content of church participation can be found between individual members. In cities, Pentecostal churches can mean quite different things and serve different roles than in Gorongosa. Part of the power of Pentecostal religious expression is its ability to meet people where they are.

**“The groom has made a separation!” Educational songs for newlyweds at church weddings**

As seen in Chapter 6, the songs sung at *muchato* are specific to these events and are meant to be educational for the new couple. They are a form of popular counseling for newlyweds. In wedding ceremonies where at least the bride or the groom is an active church participant, some wedding guests sing traditional wedding songs, substituting church teachings in the lyrics. Church participants also sing church hymns at weddings, often altering the lyrics to educate the bride and groom. For instance, the following song, which is sung in a wide variety of Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa, reinforces the ideological separation of church members from those who do not participate in church groups:

**Madire!**

Separation (or division)

**Ukhada vida iwe, vunza Jesu, iye Jesu ndiye shasha**

If you want “life” [wealth/good life], ask Jesus, Jesus is powerful

**Ukhada mwamuna, vunza Mwari, iye Mwari ndiye shasha**

If you want a husband, ask God, God is powerful

**Ukhada mukadzi vunza Jesu, iye Jesu ndiye shasha**

If you want a wife, ask Jesus, Jesus is powerful

**Ukhada leka bibvu vunza Mwari, iye Mwari ndiye shasha**

If you want to leave jealousy behind, ask God, God is powerful

**Ukhada leka fodya, vunza Mwari, iye Mwari ndiye shasha**

If you want to leave tobacco behind, ask God, God is powerful

**Ukhada leka zonda, vunza Mwari, iye Mwari ndiye shasha**

If you want to leave hatred behind, ask God, God is powerful

**R% Waita madire**

They made a separation!

**R% Waita madire!**

They made a separation!

**R% Waita madire!**

They made a separation!

**R% Waita madire!**

They made a separation!

**R% Waita madire!**

They made a separation!

**R% Waita madire!**

They made a separation!

**R% Waita madire!**

They made a separation!

The repeated refrain: *Waita madire!* or “they made a separation,” points to the differences between “people of God” and those outside the church. The separation referred to here, is undivided faith in God as the one powerful source of good things. One woman explained the lyrics this way:

The song is saying that if you want these things, go to God. God has the power to give them to you, but you must “make a division” create a

separation—you can't mix [a search for things from God with other sources].  
You must be true, faithful to God and leave worldly, ungodly things behind.<sup>62</sup>

When you make this complete break, looking to God for help with any kind of need or desire, the power of God will help you attain what you seek. “*Shasha*,” here, implies both power and benevolence. Remaining faithful affords you access to the favor of God and thus to God’s intervention. Implied in this song, is the idea that the faithful separate themselves from those who turn to spirits, magic, witchcraft, and other means to seek help and pursue their desires. Such an orientation is deemed immoral by church participants, who seek help from God in all things.

This church song is often transformed into an educational sung to the newlyweds at weddings, thus:

**Madire!**

Separation!

**Madire ya mukoma**

Separation of a son-in-law

**Ukhada nguwo, munabvunza Nico, iye Nico ndiye shasha**

If you want clothing, ask Nico [name of groom], Nico is powerful

**Ukhada foya, munabvunza Nico, iye Nico ndiye shasha**

If you want a *capulana*, ask Nico, Nico is powerful

**Ukhada mafuta, munabvunza Nico, iye Nico ndiye shasha**

If you want cooking oil, ask Nico, Nico is powerful

**R% Eh, ya, eh!**

Eh, ya, eh!

**R% Aita madire!**

He made a separation!

**R% Aita madire**

He made a separation!

**R% Aita madire!**

He made a separation!

**R% Aita madire!**

He made a separation!

In this song, the usual plural refrain of “*waita madire*” is made in the singular, “*aita madire*,” referring to the groom’s “separation” through his respectful, responsible behavior. The song advises the bride to seek things like clothing and household necessities from her new husband. The song implicitly instructs the bride to rely on her husband for material needs (not seeking assistance from family members or other male suitors). At the same time, it indirectly exhorts the groom to make a separation—to stand out from neglectful husbands

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Shika Chongo; June 5, 2008.

and behave as he should and to adopt a benevolent, God-like attitude in response to his wife's needs. This song provides a window into the messages that men continually receive in Pentecostal church contexts as an ongoing aspect of their efforts to make marriages solid, positive forces.

### **The church family and presentation of newborns**

Following marriage, Pentecostal church groups actively take up the role of a family in managing and mediating the events and struggles that emerge throughout a married couple's lives. This includes ceremonies to celebrate the birth of a child. The traditional practice of presenting a newborn to its father has been adapted by Pentecostal church groups and transformed into a public revelation and announcement of the new child's name. This event is known as *chisasa* and takes place during Sunday worship. Outside of Pentecostal church contexts, the post-partum period of seclusion for mother and child is concluded with a presentation of the child to its father for the first time. This event, known as *venekera*, which means, "to illuminate" takes place at night, under moonlight or the light of a lantern. On this occasion, a mother presents the newborn child to her husband by removing cloth wrappings and handing it to him. The father gazes upon his child for the first time, holding it up to the light. He takes this opportunity to examine the patterns on the child's palms to ensure that the child is of his lineage (if so, the patterns will match those of his palms). Those present will sing celebratory songs marking the arrival of a new member of the lineage.

While Pentecostal church participants in Gorongosa typically follow the post-partum seclusion period,<sup>63</sup> the formal presentation of a newborn to its father takes place inside the church at the *chisasa* event. In this ceremony, the presentation of the child is reanalyzed as a formal presentation not to the father, but to God and the other members of the church family. Women who have given birth, called “church mothers” or *madzimai*, play a special role. They dress in white shirts and headscarves and carry gifts as they enter the church singing songs of thanksgiving and celebration. The “Mother Counselor” (*Mãe Conselheira*), the second person in the female hierarchy, leads the procession, carrying the newborn child.

Inside the church, the *madzimai* place offerings on the altar and light candles that reference the dim light a father uses to illuminate his child for the first time in *venekera*. In this context, where church teachings often refer to the light of life each person carries within him or her, the candles hold other layers of meaning. Carrying candles, the women encircle the couple and continue to dance and sing.

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<sup>63</sup> The mother and child remain inside their home or a specially built structure throughout this period until the umbilical cord falls off.





**Fig 8.7: “Church mothers,” (*madzimai*), dressed in white, assemble outside the church bearing gifts for the couple blessed with a new child. The women carry gifts, along with the newborn, into the sanctuary while singing songs of celebration. Once inside, they light candles and dance around the new parents.**

After the songs of celebration are completed, the supreme female elder of the church (usually, the pastor’s wife) offers prayers to bless the child and its mother and father, laying hands on each one as she speaks. The standard biblical reference during *chisasa* is Luke 2:21-23, which tells the story of Jesus’s naming and consecration before the Lord eight days after birth.<sup>64</sup> Through this scripture, the birth of the child is likened to the incarnation of the son of God, tying the child firmly into the Christian family.

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<sup>64</sup> Luke 2:21-23: “[21] And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. [22] And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. [23] (as it is written in the law of the Lord, ‘every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.’).”



**Figure 8.8:** In the central event of *chisasa*, *madzimai* encircle the young couple as the supreme female church elder (the pastor's wife) presents the newborn child to its father.

Finally, the female church elder takes the child from the Mother Counselor who is seated in a symbolically supportive position behind the baby's mother, blesses it, and presents it to the father. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the father passes the baby to its mother and addresses the congregation, publicly revealing the baby's name for the first time. Thus, during the *chisasa* event, the church women present the baby to the father who then presents the baby to the church community for the first time. In this ritual, elements of "traditional" practices are incorporated into the church setting. In *chisasa* the church family is solidified as church members are both the animators and the audience for the event.

### Pentecostal churches as a “*sogra*”—Church intervention in marriage disputes

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, when given the task of mediating marital conflicts, the primary goal taken by a wide range of authorities is to ensure the continuity of marriages. Whether extended kin, a special officer assigned to the “Desk of Women and Children” at the district police office, a spirit-medium, an *mfumu*, a *nyakwawa*, or a neighborhood secretary, whenever possible, the first goal is to bring reconciliation for the benefit of the couple and their children. In this regard, the intervention of church leaders in marriage disputes is no different.

As many see it, Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa serve the role of the “*sogra*,” husband’s mother, or “*sougro*,” husband’s father, in managing marital disputes. This metaphor again reveals the degree to which such churches act according to the church-as-family metaphor. Like the husband’s mother, church leaders typically intervene in minor marriage disputes. If no resolution is found, the grievance will be presented to another body to seek a solution.

Pai Shuka, an elder of the Free Assembly Church observed that, compared to civil authorities who resolve marriage disputes, church leaders’ interventions treat the couple and their family with understanding and respect

The church is now like a mother/father-in-law, they don’t do things like at the neighborhood secretary ... they enter calmly at a person’s home ... they speak calmly, in soft voices, respectfully, slowly to come to an understanding. The [neighborhood] secretary is like a journalist. They ask probing, rude questions ... they are not patient, they judge them and insult them: “Ah! You did this! Really? Is that the way you act? You are *bruto*,<sup>65</sup> aren’t you? You leave your wife this way? Are you an animal?”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The Portuguese word “*bruto*” or “brute” carries over from the colonial period as an expression describing cultural backwardness. Its implied opposite is “civilized” and the word was often used by Portuguese colonists as an insult to rural peasants.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Pai Shuka; June 3, 2008.

For peasant farmers, seeking assistance of a state-sponsored official to resolve marriage conflicts opens one to verbal humiliation.<sup>67</sup> Turning to church leaders for intervention, church members know they will be treated with respect.

Depending on the circumstances, male and/or female church elders intervene in the dispute. As Pai Shuka described, these leaders typically meet with the couple in their own home. They sit with them, listen to both sides, and offer counsel based on their situation. The counsel given is always based on specific teachings from the bible. In this way, biblical authority is used to gain leverage in influencing couples to reconcile with each other and change their behavior and attitudes in relation to each other.

### **God's power and protection—the search for fertility in Pentecostal contexts**

Pentecostal church participants, like *n'gansas*, use methods to help members resolve problems of infertility. Through prayer and the laying on of hands, church members draw on the healing power of the Holy Trinity to expel spirits that may be preventing a woman from conceiving or causing her children's deaths. Through proper behavior and faithfulness, a woman may also hope to gain favor with God, who then may be more likely to answer her prayers for children. Besides these tactics, some church members also resort to traditional therapies intended to aid conception.

Given churches' disdain for *n'gansas*, I was surprised when two women of the Free Assembly Church told me that they had helped their fellow church-goers resolve sterility problems through *kutsimika*. After discussion it became clear that these church women adapt *kutsimika* to align with Pentecostal theological perspectives. However, while they

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<sup>67</sup> See Chapter 3 for further discussion of the socio-economic dimensions of this attitude.

shared the details of their fertility treatments with me, they also emphasized that they do not announce themselves to be specialists performing this treatment. They fear that other church members may not look favorably on their actions. They take care not to be confused with *n'ganga*s, offering their specialized assistance out of compassion only to people they felt they could trust. Fariana, who had been a *n'ganga* for many years prior to conversion, explained that she normally performs *kutsimika* treatments “only if there is one woman, if there is one woman who is crying [to God]: ‘I am asking for a child!’ I will say, ‘Come!’”<sup>68</sup> Sineva told me that when she hears a woman’s lament in church testimonials, she will take pity on her, approach her personally, and offer assistance. Women generally do not think to seek her help.<sup>69</sup>

Despite some level of secrecy, these women showed no sense of shame when talking to me about their work. Rather, they expressed pride to be able to assist other women, telling me which children in the church were born as a result of their interventions. Sineva and Fariana both re-configured the process of *kutsimika* to fall squarely in line with Pentecostal philosophy. Since I understood the process to depend on a *n'ganga*’s spirit to watch over and protect the child, I asked Sineva about this. She responded:

That’s right. It’s the spirit of that *n'ganga* who is watching over ... it’s the spirit who is making the medicines work. Then, once you complete everything, and finish the treatment and the payment, then the spirit will leave the child to you.<sup>70</sup>

So, I then asked Sineva how her *kutsimika* could work without a healing spirit. She explained: “I—I pray [on the child’s behalf]—it is God [who oversees the process].” Sineva told me that it is not a spirit, but God, who is central in overseeing the process:

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Mãe Conselheira Fariana; February 1, 2008.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Mãe Sineva; February 7, 2008.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

[God] protects the child! Because you will pray, you will dig the medicine, who knows these things? God! You do all this in [the name of] God. It is Jehovah who sends down mercy to you. Because everyone: you can go to a *n'ganga*, but they don't attribute this to God! You can go to a *n'ganga* [who will tell you] I did this! It's a lie! It's God, God who says—people are made in this way! If God doesn't wish it—it is just death—someone will do *kutsimika* but they won't have children! The medicines [will not be effective]. Jehovah will not give you a child.

To clarify I asked, “If someone goes to a *n'ganga* to do *kutsimika* and has a child, then it is not the *n'ganga's* spirit but God who makes this happen?” Sineva was shocked by my question: “Iiii! Can a *n'ganga's* spirit create a person?!! Absolutely not!! It's God!” I agreed that a *n'ganga* would not claim that her spirit is involved in the creation of the child, but oversees the process, to protect against things that might derail the creation process. Sineva agreed, but emphasized that through her faithfulness, she has a special connection to God. When she prepares the *kutsimika* treatment, she can draw on that connection to ask God to watch over the process.

In Sineva's Christianized conception of the process of *kutsimika*, the role of a *n'ganga* as ritual expert with a special connection to a spirit is replaced with a faithful Christian with a special connection to God. According to this logic, God serves as both protector and creator, removing the *n'ganga's* spirit from the process, placing God into direct relationship with humans. Aside from this displacement of the spirit, the only major difference in Sineva and Fariana's church-version of *kutsimika* emerged at the conclusion of the process. Unlike in the *kutsula* ceremony, where medicines and *barbwa* are used to break the connection to the protective spirit, in Sineva's version, this ritual is omitted. Since God is the protector, breaking the connection is not necessary. The child remains under God's protection.

Also, since with God serving as protector, the patient does not incur debt to a *n'ganga's* spirit that needs repayment in order to return the child fully to its parents' care. Following Pentecostal philosophy, God's protection and healing is freely given to the faithful. Nor does a patient incur debt to Sineva for serving as a guide in the process. In keeping with the church notion of serving God in order to help heal others, Sineva was careful to be clear that she wanted no payment: "When a woman comes to me," she told me, "I first tell her 'I don't want money! I don't want money!' And then I will go dig the medicines so we can begin." Sineva explained, the patient will return to her when her child is a toddler. At that time, she cuts the patch of hair<sup>71</sup> that must remain for a child who is in the state of *kutsimikwa* and say a prayer of thanksgiving to God and blessing for the child to complete the process.<sup>72</sup>

As this example reveals, infertility treatments performed by church participants draw on the instrumental aspects of traditional therapies but reanalyze the process to place God at the center. This reanalysis takes place in other types of "traditional" therapies that rely on medicinal plants. From this perspective, it is God who creates the plants and endows them with healing powers. It is God who provides knowledge and insights to people through dreams and understandings. It is God who protects and oversees the therapeutic process and God, as creator, who forms human beings.

The Christian process of *kutsimika* provides insight into the way in which Pentecostal church members negotiate their everyday lives, reanalyzing and adapting everything they do in terms of church teachings. Church participants decide what aspects

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<sup>71</sup> As seen earlier in this chapter, children who are *kutsimikwa* (born under the special protection that *kutsimika* affords) keep a tuft of hair at the top, center of their forehead, since this is the physical site of the protective spirit's (or, in this case, God's) connection to the body. Cutting that patch of hair would amount to severing the protective connection that the process creates.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

of *tradição* or (tradition) to exclude and what to include in order to be considered securely among “the faithful.” Through this process of reanalysis, church participants forge new configurations of daily practices all of which relate back to their relationship with God. Through their work as *wanhu wakuchena*,<sup>73</sup> some aspects of “tradition” are taken up and followed, others are abandoned entirely, and others are re-configured to become practices that resonate with Pentecostal philosophy as taught in church. In some cases, this re-analysis is officially sanctioned by church leaders.<sup>74</sup> In others, individuals reanalyze and negotiate their actions independently based on their understandings of church teachings. In this way, they create a “new traditional order.”

### **Pentecostal conversion and women’s search for stability**

In a time of increasing marriage strain, for many women, participation in Pentecostal churches brings the hope of more respectful domestic relationships, as seen in Chapter 1. Pentecostal churches emphasize teachings that encourage marriage relationships built on mutual respect. The prohibition of alcohol and tobacco offers a form of social control that attracts many women whose husbands are caught up in these habits that siphon precious cash from household use. In many cases, women’s conversion to Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa is part of a direct strategy to manage a troubled marriage as well as a

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<sup>73</sup> *Wanhu wakuchena*—“holy people.” See Chapter 3 for more detailed discussion of this insider/outsider terminology.

<sup>74</sup> See also Chapter 1. For instance, a pastor of a Pentecostal church in Beira worked with two missionaries from the United States to write a booklet about the “culture of the Sena people.” The introduction states, “it is the desire of the author that through this work, the Sena people may valorize even more their own culture, and gain knowledge to distinguish things that are useful and compatible with their faith in Jesus Christ from things that are incompatible and that should be avoided” (my translation from Portuguese) (Meque 1999: 1). The cover of the booklet features the following phrase in Portuguese and in Sena: “If we don’t know where we came from, we will not know where we are going” (*ibid.*).



more general search for social support. This support can come from both human and divine sources.

The following song that was often sung during worship services at The Free Assembly Church of Mozambique expresses the nature of a woman's relationship to the larger church body:

<b>Ndasembwa</b>	<b>R%</b>	<b>Baba, Baba, Baba</b>
I've been married		Father, Father, Father [God]
<b>Ndarorwa</b> <sup>75</sup>	<b>R%</b>	<b>Jesu ndi mwamunanga</b> <sup>76</sup>
I've been married		Jesus is my husband

According to participants' explanations of these lyrics, likening church women to the wives of Jesus implies that a Christian woman must be a faithful servant and not allow herself to be drawn to serve other "lovers"—meaning other sources of authority, such as the government, or other pursuits outside God's path such as use of alcohol, tobacco, or the healing practices of spirit-mediums.<sup>77</sup> As a wife of Jesus, in the church family, a woman is accorded the respect due this position. This understanding of women's position in church implies that when a woman practices an active faith, Jesus, like a husband, will respond to her needs, supplying what she requires when she asks for it through prayer. A convert's deep relationship with Jesus offers the promise of support and stability. While this support can come from divine protection and blessings, in Pentecostal philosophy, the influence of the divine is also mediated through humans. As discussed in Chapter 1, church groups offer women real material and social support through the actions of other church members

<sup>75</sup> "*Kurora*" (to marry), is Shona. In chi-Gorongosi, "*kurora*" is used to describe making payments to a bride's mother for children born of a marriage. Because of the use of Shona language in church contexts, *ndarorwa*, is used in the sense of establishing a marriage bond between a man and woman.

<sup>76</sup> Notes, Sunday worship service; Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; June 1, 2008.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Shika Shongo; June 1, 2008.

who are meant to act as servants of God and Jesus. The power of the Holy Spirit operates through them, guiding and animating their actions.

Members of Pentecostal churches teach that the relationship between a husband and wife is sacred. As the educational wedding song presented above reveals, Pentecostal church participants take seriously their task of instructing men and women about proper behavior in marriage. This perspective is revealed in the following statement made by the Pastor of a Pentecostal church on Gorongosa Mountain: “The bible says a man must respect his wife because she is his body [*ndi manungo wako*].”<sup>78</sup> This statement shows that the story of Eve created from the rib of Adam is taken seriously and is used to emphasize the importance of a man’s respect. When introducing themselves to another church group, women often refer to themselves as “*mbabvu wa*[husband’s name]”—rib of [husband’s name]. This union in the flesh correlates to the church’s teaching that the body is sacred—a temple of God. It must be treated with great care and respect. This is the explanation often given in Pentecostal churches for the strong prohibition of alcohol and tobacco use.

Hoping their husbands will hear and abide by these powerful messages of responsibility and proper behavior in marriage, women whose husbands are not church members actively work to draw them to conversion. Church participation can provide a powerful indirect way for women to push irresponsible husbands to reform their behavior. As other have noticed, in Chimoio female converts whose husbands are not already church participants hope to draw them into the church as a strategy to manage difficult relationships (Pfeiffer, et. al. 2007).

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with Pastor Eusebio; March 13, 2008.

In women's worship services, leaders often present explicit messages urging women to convert their husbands. During the preaching portion of the worship service, Mãe Pastora Saquina provided the following:

If you have a husband who drinks [alcohol], try to persuade him to stop drinking and [invite him to church]: "Let's go along God's path, God's way is good!" One day, you will see him convert and then you will come together to church and you will introduce him to the church. [You will say]: "my husband was a seat of alcohol[ism], but today, look, I come with him to church. God had compassion for him!"

She implored the members of the women's group:

We must convert our husbands because they are dying in disgrace, they are dying from disgrace. You are on God's path—convert him! When you are together, tell him "Pai! Let's go to church! What you are doing is empty. You are doing nothing [of value]. When you have some money you go to drink *kabanga* and when you have some money, you go to the *n'ganga*. Let's go together on God's path. God's path is good!"

We must convert our husbands! Our husbands are dying in sin. It is good for you to be on the correct path, but [is it good to leave] your husband on the path of evil? You are of one flesh!<sup>79</sup>

Thus, being "of one flesh" it is considered to be a woman's responsibility to bring her husband onto God's path. This action may be in a woman's self-interest, but it is understood as part of a wider evangelistic duty. When pressing husbands to participate in church and transform themselves, women do so in a way that is safe—depersonalized and expressed as a concern for their wellbeing.

In these efforts, women are bolstered significantly by the active efforts of other church leaders who also try to bring "straying" husbands into the fold. This form of evangelism is widely known and actively pursued by church leaders. When I asked a group

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<sup>79</sup>Preaching, Mãe Pastora Saquina; Women's Worship Service, Free Assembly Church, Nyamissongora; February 28, 2008.

of women how the church assists women who are struggling in their marriages one participant replied:

The pastor will come to the home of the woman and try to convert her husband. He will pray for the man so that he will change and they can *gara bom* [live well] together.<sup>80</sup>

In this way, church leaders attempt to unite the couples in the church family, which, in effect, is a powerful strategy to maintain troubled marriages. With the intervention of church leaders, a woman's position is powerfully legitimized. Like the authority that senior kin may exercise over disrespectful men, church groups serve as a powerful resource of social control that can strengthen women's position in marriage.

Women struggling with their husbands gain additional hope from the testimonies of fellow church women. Many women share impressive stories of how their lives at home changed when their husbands submitted to the powerful social control enacted by Pentecostal church groups. Such testimonials can be powerful. Terezinha told me that her relationship with her husband changed dramatically after they both began participating at church:

[His behavior] changed, yes! Eh! [He] changed A LOT! [laughing] He changed! He changed completely. Because, my husband, he doesn't beat [me], and he never did. He just spoke [insults] A LOT! He would just throw out one word to you and that was enough! You wouldn't eat or anything until you became thin. But, when we began to pray, ah! All of this, he has now left behind. Even I! When he would provoke me this way, I would speak back, I would argue with him until sunrise ... But, since I heard the word of God with the counsel I'm being given there in the church, I don't do anything! Of course, at home, there are still arguments, but not as extreme. If we have a fight in the morning, we go to work and come back home and then it's just "good afternoon, good afternoon"—there is nothing else.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Focus group interview, Women's group, Free Assembly Church of Mozambique; June 12, 2008.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Terezinha; March 3, 2008.

Such narratives linking marital improvements to the influence of church participation are common. Pfeiffer also noted these narratives in peri-urban Chimoio neighborhoods, stating, “the telling of these stories often followed a common trajectory ending with the successful reconstitution of the household after both husband and wife had converted” (Pfeiffer, et.al. 2007: 696).

Women share these narratives as a form of evangelism to attract female colleagues who are struggling with their husbands. They tell such stories as a way to comfort fellow church-goers whose husbands’ disrespect continues over long periods of time, despite their own church participation. While these testimonials may be used for different purposes, they are based on the actual experiences of women whose husbands made major shifts in their behavior after conversion. The teachings and practices of Pentecostal church groups combine to create a powerful social regulatory force that can effectively help women manage and to maintain strained marriages.

### **“Thursdays are our days!” Women’s worship services and mutual support**

At the Free Assembly Church of Mozambique, the women’s group is a major force of church organization. Women who have given birth to at least one child are accorded the special status of *madzimai* or “church mothers,” and gain license to enter this important group. The special status accorded to *madzimai* replicates the status that women gain through childbirth in the wider society, illustrating again how church groups actively work to create a social organization that strengthens “traditional” social structures. The *madzimai* create their own leadership hierarchy based mostly on seniority and where wives of male church leaders are also accorded special status. Thus, the most respected members of the

group are Pastor Zimba's first wife, Saquina, who is given the title of Mãe Pastora, or "Mother Pastor" and the eldest member of the group, Mãe Fariana, who holds the position of supreme advisor known as "Mãe Conselheira" or "Mother Counselor." The organization of *madzimai* runs in parallel and is complementary to the male church hierarchy. Through gatherings and activities to serve the church, *madzimai* create a strong, unified and supportive group that provides the foundation and energy for most of the church's work.

Each Thursday morning, members of the women's group gather to hold their own worship service. The women's group is something that nearly all participants I interviewed talked about with enthusiasm. They often talked about Thursdays (*chinai*) as "our days," and looked forward to their gathering each week as a time to take a rest from their daily routines and to enjoy the company of other women in a safe environment. One woman told me:

I worry all the time about the death of my sister, of my son, of the chickens that were stolen, about this house that is crumbling, about my husband's immobility<sup>82</sup> ... When I sit at home with nothing to do, my head starts to hurt—full of all these thoughts. I always look forward to Thursdays. When I arrive at the church, I forget everything.<sup>83</sup>

*Madzimai* independently create and organize the content of their Thursday worship services. Services last up to three hours and include singing and dancing, preaching, witnessing, and a period of prayer and laying on of hands for those who are suffering. During each worship service, preaching on biblical texts is the focal event—a time when women share stories and elders of the group interpret biblical texts providing messages tailored to women's concerns. These weekly gatherings provide ongoing counsel for married women. Above all else, they create a forum for women to establish strong connections to each other—deep, trusting

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<sup>82</sup> Mãe Fineja's husband's mobility was severely impaired by an injury he suffered during the civil war. Because of his disability, he was unable to maintain their home in the proper condition—usually a husband's role in marriage.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Mãe Fineja; February 21, 2008.

friendships reinforced by the kinship-like bonds of church membership. Indeed, most church participants I interviewed identified their most trusted friend and confidant as another member of their women's group.

During the period of witnessing, women share concerns without the reserve they might have in Sunday worship services where men and youth are present. As on Sundays, they share concerns about loved ones who are sick. But, on Thursdays, women also feel comfortable to share marriage troubles openly with others in the group. During one Thursday women's service, the following testimonial was given:

I ask you to pray for me. My husband and I are not getting along well at home. He always promises to come to church, but then he will not appear. Instead, on Sundays he goes off to drink *kabanga*. Sometimes he comes home at night drunk. I get so angry that he is drunk, I go away to sleep somewhere else and refuse what he desires. I am asking you, before God, to pray for me, to pray that God gives me strength. I pray that God will change his heart and bring him to church.<sup>84</sup>

Through such testimonials, women present their troubles before God and his followers.

These events of public sharing are ways for a woman to indirectly ask for support.

Frequently, after hearing a woman's troubles, the other women in the group will respond with a show of support. In addition to prayer assistance, members of the group may visit a woman who is ill and help with her domestic chores.

### **Preaching as ongoing counsel in women's worship services**

During each Thursday worship service, two different women are selected at random to provide a reading of scripture and preach about it. All women must have knowledge of scripture and be prepared to perform exegesis, relating the biblical text to the immediate

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<sup>84</sup> Women's worship service, Igreja Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; April 10, 2008.

concerns of women's lives. This demonstrates the importance of an active, participatory faith that is common to Pentecostal churches. After each woman interprets biblical text, the two most senior members of the group follow up on the preaching of the junior women. Their interpretation and messages are accorded more weight and authority.

The primary purpose of the women's worship services is realized through these acts of preaching. Through their preaching, the women teach each other about their roles and responsibilities as married women and as mothers. This educational role is parallel to the role of female elders in traditional society. In an interview with Pastor Zimba's second wife, Belita, I asked about the teachings for women on Thursdays. She was very clear in pointing out that the content of teachings on Thursdays corresponds directly with what she was taught by her female elders as a young girl in preparation for marriage.

The way it used to be, when a girl was reaching puberty and soon to be married, her family would pay an elder woman to take her into a house alone and teach her how to live with her husband ... the teachings [of the women's group] are the same. The parents of the girl would give this woman [*sankbulu*<sup>85</sup>] money, flour, and a chicken to thank her for her help.<sup>86</sup>

She added that this kind of counsel was given to a young man by a male elder [*sankbulu*] and, translating into Portuguese, she called these male and female counselors *madrinha* and *padrinha*.<sup>87</sup> Mãe Pastora Belita connected the church's role in counseling men and women to the role that family groups once played:

These days, women aren't being taught these things at home. Our church is assuming this role to teach women on Thursdays. Now, their elders are members of the church who are elected to be *conselheiros* (counselors). Now, in

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<sup>85</sup> *Sankhulu* is also the title given to the intermediaries who perform the negotiations of marriage between the two family groups of the future bride and groom.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Belita; March 1, 2008.

<sup>87</sup> "*Madrinha*" and "*padrinha*," Portuguese for "little mother/father." In their more common usage due to the influence of Catholicism in Portuguese life, these terms translate as "God mother/father"—or the sponsors for a young person at important rites of the Catholic Church such as baptism and marriage.



the church, their counsel is free—no one has to pay and no one is paid money.<sup>88</sup>

As Belita's comment reveals, the role that churches play in managing marriage relationships is a conscious adoption of the part played by kin. In a time when more marriages are unstable, when more couples are establishing nuclear family settlements away from networks of extended kin, and when the authoritative "voice of tradition" is losing strength, especially among youth, Pentecostal churches in Gorongosa organize themselves in such a way as to substitute for the role extended kin networks played in ordering social relationships. As one participant put it, "Fariana (their "Mother Counselor") teaches us great things—she is like our mother, telling us what is the right behavior."<sup>89</sup>

### Teachings for women in Thursday women's worship services

**Mãe Conselheira Fariana:** Thursdays are never different, because Thursday is for instruction [about how to] clean the house in order to live well at home. Alleluia?

**Congregation:** Amen!

**Mãe Conselheira Fariana:** Thursdays are for ordering yourself: I am residing with my husband, but how will I live with him? How will I treat this husband?<sup>90</sup>

As this excerpt of preaching reveals, women's worship services carry the explicit purpose of transmitting messages to women about how to live appropriate lives as mothers and as wives. Here, the Mother Counselor likens a marriage relationship to a home. In this analogy, women's daily practices serve to keep the home clean and maintained so that a couple and their children may live well together. Thursday women's worship services are rich in messages for women that specify how they may "clean/order themselves" in order

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with Belita; March 1, 2008.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Mãe Nene; February 15, 2008.

<sup>90</sup> Preaching, Mãe Conselheira Fariana; Women's worship service, Igreja Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; February 28, 2008.

to “clean their homes.” These messages may take the form of song, personal testimonies, scripture readings, or preaching. Follow-up preaching by female elders takes a particularly instructive tone. Week after week, the female elders of the women’s group translate biblical scripture into messages specific to women’s life situations—educational teachings with detailed advice for their behavior. Female elders use metaphor, symbolism, and illustrative stories to strengthen their teachings.

The following excerpt from Mãe Conselheira’s preaching nicely encapsulates the teachings presented during women’s worship services:

A husband should not be insulted, a mother-in-law should not be insulted, a brother/sister-in-law should not be insulted, a father-in-law should not be insulted—respect them all. You should tie your husband to your back as if he were your own child; as if he were a child you gave birth to. In the name of Jesus, Amen.<sup>91</sup>

The metaphor of a husband as a woman’s child appeared frequently in teachings at the women’s services of the Free Assembly Church. Women were told to take care of their husband and attend his needs. In church contexts, women are told to respect their husbands as the head and the leader of a household since “there cannot be two roosters in one home ... it is important that you have one husband who imposes the rules and that you, as his wife, follow them”<sup>92</sup>—a metaphor that Mate also found in circulation among women’s groups of Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe (2002: 556). Mate comments that such images and related teachings for women of Pentecostal churches reveal how the church “romanticizes female subordination to men” (Mate 2002: 557). However, closer

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<sup>91</sup> Preaching, Mãe Conselheira Fariana; Women’s worship service, Igreja Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; January 2, 2008.

<sup>92</sup> Preaching, Mãe Pastora Anita [from Chimoio congregation]; Women’s worship service, Igreja Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; February 24, 2008.

examination reveals more subtle strategizing in women's church teachings and related practices.

For instance, likening a woman's role in marriage to the mother-child relationship implicitly puts women in a position of authority. As mothers, they are to show their care and attention, looking after their husband's needs just as their mothers had done. But, in Gorongosa, the image of mother is of a powerful figure who oversees her children with both authority to admonish and a caring heart. Many songs of lament in Gorongosa, for instance, include refrains of "Mãe!" and "Mãe, wei!": emphasizing this position of mother as a stable figure to whom someone in turmoil turns for support and comfort. Mothers are seen as the holders of a patient type of authority, a superior and wise type of power. Thus, in the teaching presented above, acting as a mother in marriage implies taking the high road, taking a position that allows for a husband's periodic bouts of disrespect—weathering mood swings, tantrums, and misbehavior with patience.

According to church messages, if you respect your husband, tend to his needs, provide meals soon after he returns home, heat water for his bath, wash and iron his clothes, he will appreciate you and reciprocate by providing for your needs. Thus, women's service teachings to and care for husbands are not an act of submission, but a strategy to get the most out of the relationship. As Mãe Pastora Saquina put it one day, "You must respect your husband ... when you respect your husband, when he goes out, one day he will bring you a *capulana*; he will bring you many things."<sup>93</sup> Saquina added that another benefit of caring for a husband is the social esteem that comes from a man's well-kept presence in public:

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<sup>93</sup> Preaching, Mãe Pastora Saquina; Women's worship service, Igreja Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; January 2, 2008.

You must wash the clothes of your husband. Prepare breakfast for him in the morning. Perhaps he is going to town, perhaps he is going to work: check to be sure his clothing is clean. Take the dirty clothes to wash and give him something clean to wear. Everywhere he goes, people will admire the way he dresses in such clean clothing. And they will say that it is thanks to his wife who washes for him.<sup>94</sup>

As will be discussed in the conclusion, below, women's behavior in marriage is taught explicitly as a strategy to shore up gender roles and rules governing traditional society in an effort to improve women's material conditions and the welfare of their children.

### **“Respect your husband's mother!”**

On Thursdays, another common teaching that women share is to treat their husband's mothers with respect. Again, these actions are meant to be taken in the interest of enhancing a woman's position in marriage. Mãe Conselheira Fariana put it this way:

We must do things for our husbands. We must do things for our mothers-in-law. Some daughters-in-law speak too much [gossip/criticize/complain] in their mother-in-law's house. If you speak as if you are crying, you are saddening your mother-in-law and this is a sin. You do these things, making your husband's mother cry, even though she was the one who gave birth to your husband and felt pains on that day. And you do this while showing off the *capulana* that her son bought for you.

Because if you are suffering in your homes where you have children, your mother-in-law is your mother because you have separated from your [biological] mother ... Your mother-in-law is your mother who cares for you, for, if you have a headache, she is the one who will take care to help you to the hospital, or if you are pregnant, she will help you to the maternity ward. She is the one who will give you the first aid because she is close.<sup>95</sup>

Here Fariana reminds the women that their mother-in-law should be treated with the utmost respect. The things a woman receives from her husband are, in effect, transferred to her only thanks to her mother-in-law's work in raising him. Following on Fariana's

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<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

preaching, Mã Pastora Saquina elaborated by providing examples of how women can show this respect: when you cook, share food with her; provide clean clothes to her children; if she is carrying a heavy load, go to assist her; if she asks for some grain, give her a portion of yours; help her fetch firewood or carry water; if she falls ill, take care of her, etc. All of these actions ensure that you will be in her favor in the event of serious troubles with your husband. If your mother-in-law values you, when your husband treats you badly, or considers taking another wife, his mother will defend you, using her authority to make things turn in your favor. On the other hand, if you treat your husband's kin poorly, they will not come to your aid:

When you do not do these things, you must remember that one day, if your husband beats you, no one will come to your defense and you will suffer greatly. If you don't treat the people near you well, you should know that they will not assist you if your husband decides to divorce you. It will be this way because no one will prohibit him ... But if you treat her well, if your husband beats you, she will tell her son, "Don't do this!" and when he sees his mother intervene, he will go away! Don't be greedy with your possessions around your mother-in-law! ... If you serve her food, you will hear her say "My son married a good wife!"<sup>96</sup>

This advice shows women how to navigate their low-status position in the early years of marriage. Women are taught that if they show respect for their husband's kin, they will gain favor with the very people who can exercise authority over their husbands. In this way, women are taught to use their position as guests among their husband's kin to their advantage, exercising a kind of quiet, yet powerful influence.

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<sup>96</sup> Preaching, Mã Pastora Saquina; Women's worship service, Igreja Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; January 2, 2008.

### **Sexual relationships—managing desire**

Teachings in Thursday women's worship celebrate female sexuality within marriage. Repeatedly, discussion of sex and sexuality in women's worship services is frank and often quite graphic. In part, this illustrates the degree of comfort that has been established in these Thursday meetings. Women are free to talk about anything with surprising candor. Further, this illustrates how Pentecostal church practices do not represent wholesale adoption of Western missionary dispositions. Discussions encourage women to eliminate modesty and shame in their sexual relations with their husbands. Most importantly, frank discussion of sex is one more tactic women are encouraged to employ to maintain the security of their marriage.

The following excerpt illustrates how women's sexual relationships are addressed on Thursdays. A female participant, Anita, opened by reading I Corinthians 7 1-5:

[1] Now, concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. [2] But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. [3] The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. [4] For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. [5] Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control.<sup>97</sup>

Interpreting this text for the women congregants, she advised them to give in to their husbands' sexual desires:

There are things that please men, things that make them happy carnally. You [as a wife] should not say "No, papa, it's too much. My whole body is tired because I was working in the field." It is God who gives you the strength to work in your fields. We women should kneel before our husbands because for us, they are our God. When the day turns to night, when a man goes to bed he

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<sup>97</sup> From Revised Standard Version of the Bible, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1971 [1946], William Collins Publishers, Inc.).

takes on the attitude of a child. When he speaks to us with this childlike attitude, we should pay attention because ... even though we have children, our first child is our husband.<sup>98</sup>

Here again, the lesson likens a husband to a child. But at the same time, a husband is compared to God. These two opposed images are both used frequently in church contexts to characterize women's relations to their husbands. Juxtaposed in this way, these images seem puzzling. But, as Anita continued speaking, the message became clearer. She advised women to give in to their husbands' sexual desires as a way of preventing his infidelity:

We must reserve a space in some place for him, so that at any time he enters the house he may quench his thirst. We shouldn't say, "No! This is done by whores!" Husbands like the things whores do—when he enters the room you can even take off your clothes as if you were crazy. Husbands like this very much ... [more graphic instructions] ... Don't ignore your husband when he returns home and say, "I'm tired because I was in the fields all day. This way, you will be giving him the occasion to mess around outside [infidelity] because he will think, "I took this wife to make me happy, but she doesn't seem like the wife God gave me."<sup>99</sup>

Anita's advice to women was to use sexual relations as part of an overall strategy to maintain the marriage relationship. In this way, the two images of husband as child and as God come together powerfully. Employing strategy to maintain marriage, a woman is like a mother—a superior authority using wisdom to control the direction of the relationship. *Within* this mothering/strategizing position, a woman can treat her husband like God, giving him the sense that he fulfills his desire to "rule" at home, thereby affirming that she is "the wife God gave [him]."

While women are taught to satisfy their husband's sexual desires, they are not expected to do so without taking some degree of control. Following Anita's message, Mãe

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<sup>98</sup> Preaching, Mãe Pastora Anita [from Chimoio congregation]; Women's worship service, Igreja Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; February 24, 2008.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

Pastora Saquina balanced this lesson with a warning about controlling the spacing of births. In Gorongosa, it is customary to wean a nursing child when one becomes pregnant since the breastmilk is considered to belong to the child in the womb. Saquina shared a personal story of her child who became ill due to close birth spacing. She was forced to wean the child early when she became pregnant again shortly after giving birth. The child fell sick and died. Opening with this story, she told women to take control of their sexual relations in order to protect the wellbeing of their children:

We must care for our children. If we see that a child is sitting, standing and walking, then we can be certain that we cared for the child well ... If we do as has been said here, become pregnant again when we still are nursing a small baby, the child will fall ill with diarrhea. Then you won't feel at ease, you will feel ashamed among other women ... Sometimes you must refuse your husband[']s sexual advances] to care for your child fully.<sup>100</sup>

Considering Mãe Saquina's cautionary lesson about controlling husband's sexual desires counterbalances Anita's message about pleasing a husband sexually. But these are not, at the core, contradictory messages. While a woman needs to work to maintain her marriage, her primary duty as mother is to look out for the wellbeing of her children. As can be seen in Mãe Pastora Saquina's statement, "... you won't feel at ease, you will feel ashamed among other women," children are a woman's wealth and her primary means to gaining greater social esteem. Taken together, then, these counter-posed messages reveal the central lesson of all the teachings women exchange on Thursdays: navigate the various challenges of marriage in such a way as to bring them the best possible outcome to ensure the wellbeing of your children.

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<sup>100</sup> Preaching, Mãe Pastora Saquina; Women's worship service, Igreja Assembleia Livre de Moçambique, Nyamissongora; January 2, 2008.



### **Conclusion: Bargaining with patriarchy**

In Gorongosa, women's strategies to shore up patriarchal logics have been shaped by socioeconomic transformations that have created considerable economic and social hardship. In times of considerable constraint, women seek to sustain and strengthen their position among their husbands' kin. Marriage provides not only the possibility for attaining seniority among one's kin, but it also positions women in the most fundamental and vital kind of social network. Thus, on Thursdays, away from the oversight of men, *madzimai* gather to share advice, experiences and stories in order to find the best way to manage marriage relationships and to endure difficult times. Similarly, *n'gangas* impose a kind of spiritual social control in their families that helps them to strengthen their position in marriage.

Most teachings in the Pentecostal women's service place the burden of a successful marriage on women whose actions will create and maintain the physical, spiritual and inter-relational order of the home. On the surface, many of the teachings appear antithetical to what Western feminists refer to as "women's empowerment." Women are explicitly told to submit to their husbands, to serve them, to fulfill their desires. Such teachings of subservience have been critiqued by feminist scholars as religious ideology that serves to "keep women under patriarchal control" (Balmer 1994: 48, Mate 2002: 565). Looked at from the perspective of women in Gorongosa, these are powerful lessons to be learned about the specific strategies for navigating the complexities of a context of considerable hardship and constraint.

Messages of subservience are balanced by messages to men about maintaining respect for their wives. In this way, women's Pentecostal participation mirrors women's

initiation to spirit-mediumship. *N'gangas* who become the wives of spirit figures must willingly and passively serve their spirit-husbands. They must also treat their living husbands with respect according to the social norms of marriage. However, their spirit-husbands also closely monitor the behavior of *n'gangas*' living husbands, bringing new social control to the relationship that pressures men to respectfully live up to their responsibilities to the relationship.

With this in mind, what Kandiyoti describes as “bargaining with patriarchy” (1988, 1998) provides a sympathetic and enlightening perspective on women’s religious self-positioning in Gorongosa. In “bargaining with patriarchy” spirit-mediums and church participants confront present crises by pressuring men to live up to their obligations in marriage. Their vigorous efforts to bolster a conservative social order firmly grounded in notions of the traditional family is what Kandiyoti would term “passive resistance.” Imposing tradition by way of male authorities, *n'gangas* and Pentecostal church women are both “claiming their half of this particular patriarchal bargain—protection in exchange for submissiveness and propriety” (1988: 283).

### **Conclusion: Bringing Worlds into Balance**

In the context of the HIV-AIDS epidemic and structural adjustment programs that have increased economic inequalities, social suffering for Mozambique's poor has been intensifying in recent years. In global perspective, Mozambique is one of the world's countries where the palpability of suffering is most acute. The UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) offers a view of the intensity of challenges most Mozambicans inherit as their birth right, relative to those born into more privileged nations (UNDP 2009). On the generalized scale of the HDI, Mozambique ranks 172<sup>nd</sup> out of 182 countries. At number one is Norway. Forty-four percent of Mozambicans over the age of 15 are estimated to be literate and among women, this literacy rate is much lower. For the average Mozambican, the probability of *not* surviving past the age of 40 is 40.6 percent, whereas in the wealthiest countries that probability is around one and a half percent. In Mozambique, the probability that a person does not have access to an improved water source is 55.6 percent, whereas in other countries, that probability is zero. In Mozambique, 24 percent of children under the age of five are, on average, underweight for their age. In wealthier countries, this percentage hovers around one percent.

These statistics reveal, in numbers, the relative challenges facing most Mozambicans. In Gorongosa, one of the poorest and most marginalized regions of Mozambique, such statistics for peasant farmers, especially women, would reveal an even sharper global divide. Social suffering of the daily, grinding, demoralizing kind is not equally distributed around the globe or in any one location. In the preceding chapters, I have aimed to describe how

precarious and how difficult life has become for most Gorongosans. Much of the burden of intense economic strain, physical illness, and poor health has fallen on women. This situation is not unique to women in Gorongosa, or to women in Mozambique. In fact, Mozambique numbers among 23 of countries of “low human development” on the Human Development Index, and 74 more fall into a category labeled as “Medium Human Development” (UNDP 2009). And many more people outside “underdeveloped” countries face poverty and struggle to manage difficult lives.

Religious and spiritual resources have been a crucial tool for people facing significant hardship the world over. Like women in widely spaced places of the globe across time, women in Mozambique draw on and have been instrumental in driving a range of spiritual and religious responses that they employ to alleviate suffering. Two of the most significant responses have been emphasized here: Pentecostal Christianity and spirit mediumship. One links people to global Christianity, the other to local relationships. Both, however, relieve the suffering and strains of every day life. The increase of social suffering in Gorongosa, as in other places, has coincided with rapid religious changes, revealing how religious practices are an impressively flexible social resource that people employ to meet their changing needs.

The Pentecostal churches that have become predominant in Gorongosa are part of a global trend. The rapid spread of these kinds of churches provides one of the most “visible” examples of the attraction of religious forms. While such churches are visible to scholars, leading to an expanding literature on the subject, their global increase has been one aspect of a broader revitalization of religious practices, as is clear in Gorongosa. Thus, while the discussion below draws out some of the recent analysis of Pentecostalism, much

theorization about “why” religious movements have become attractive in recent times could apply to a range of religious formations.

While Pentecostal churches have seen rapid growth in most countries, regardless of their relative “wealth” or “level of development,” they have been particularly attractive to people in the global south. Again, statistics illustrate this trend among Pentecostal churches in sub-Saharan Africa. In Ghana between 1986 and 1987, the Assemblies of God church grew by 87% and the New Apostolic Church increased by 369% (Gifford 1998: 62-63). In Zambia, the New Apostolic Church has grown with similarly explosive rates. Between January of 1982 and June of 1996, this church’s membership increased from 194,195 to 793,934: a 409% increase over 14 years (Gifford 1998:184). In Burkina Faso, the Assemblies of God today count 400,000 baptized members out of a population of 10.4 million (Laurent 2001). Similar figures come from South Korea and Latin America (Cox 1995: 219, Martin 1994:76).

The rapid and visible spread of new religious movements like Pentecostalism around the globe, which continues to gain momentum, has become a puzzling enigma for modernist philosophers who long ago predicted the “death of God.” The growing prominence of Pentecostal-style churches and their emphasis on mysticism and other supposedly “pre-modern” and “non-rational” experiences also reveals a disjuncture between Weber’s ideal type of increasing rationalization in the turn from “traditional” to world religions and actual praxis (Meyer 1996: 199). The most prominent and ubiquitous question continually nagging in the background is “Why?” Where is this coming from and why is it happening with such intensity now? What makes this

movement attractive to so many people of such vastly different backgrounds and in such widely dispersed locations?

If you ask Pentecostals why they think their movement grows at such speed, they answer: “Because the Spirit is in it” (Cox 1995: 81). Though their answer is mysteriously indeterminate, like the divine, its simplicity has the power to explain wide varieties of expression of Pentecostal Christianity. For social scientists, these answers are not satisfactory. In response, scholars have contributed to a growing body of literature exploring causes for religious movements in terms intelligible to their intellectual frameworks. Prominent among them is a tendency to see religious movements as causally linked to processes of globalization. In this model, globalization refers to the spread of capitalist forms of production and modernization to ever dispersed corners of the globe, increasing transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, pluralisms, relativism, and movement of people and ideas around and across the world, but which is a destabilizing process that leaves people feeling culturally disoriented at a deep level. Manuel Castells, for instance, has argued that religious movements are taking place a “direct response to uncontrollable processes of globalization” that it is a “reactive movement ... to overcome unbearable present times”—he sees participation in religious movements like Pentecostalism as the construction of “defensive identities that function as refuge and solidarity, to protect against a hostile outside world” (1997: 25, 65).

Just as independent church movements in South Africa at the middle part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were interpreted as a way to deal with the “anomie” that accompanied a move to urban areas under labor migration (Sundkler 1961), many scholars interpret participation in Pentecostal churches as a modernizing process, aiding in a smooth

transition for increasing numbers of people who, with increasing globalization, “are uprooted from traditional cultures but not yet prepared for the radical individualism of modern urban life” (Cox 1995: 172 and 176). Similarly, a prominent school of thought considers these new religious expressions as a more active “quest for certainty in an uncertain world,” explaining religious movements such as Pentecostalism as a means by which people “adapt” to the turmoil of their circumstances (Nagata 2001).

Still others have interpreted participation in Pentecostal churches not as a reaction to modernity or as a salve on the social wounds it causes, but as a significant *contribution* to modernity. One edited volume is dedicated to this idea, as the title, *Conversion to Modernities*, illustrates (van der Veer 1996). In Brazil, conversion to early Pentecostal churches not only shaped a new community, but contributed significantly to the formation of a middle class (e.g. Willems 1967). In nearly direct opposition to such a stance, others note the ways in which Pentecostal Christianity is an explicitly anti-modern religious expression. In this sense, Charismatic or Pentecostal Christianity reverses emphases taken for granted in the modern life world, such as “the centrality of the rational, of calculated doing, of articulate verbal skills, of doctrine, and of things Western” (Cox 1995:172). In this estimation, it is a “social strike” against modernity, a “desperate attempt to reclaim at least some elements of a quickly fading past” (172).

Continuing with the same labor movement imagery, David Martin likens the rapid growth of evangelical and charismatic Christianity in Latin America to a cultural “walk out” from “the structure and from the culture as at present constituted, and as such, from the Catholic church” (Martin 1994: 85). But, just as any labor strike is not

just empty protest or withdrawal from the world, such strike metaphors also entail an accompanying directed movement for defined goals. Such interpretations render participants as proactive, contrasting directly with the characterization of new religious movements as places of refuge from the alienation from the modern. In this sense, his interpretation of the growth of Pentecostal churches comes to align most closely with what women's religious participation in Gorongosa entails. In David Martin's analysis of Latin America, he sees the cultural "walkout" as a movement for moral reclamation and for the sake of women's social stability (Martin 1994: 85).

Others have emphasized the direct political involvement of churches in the structuring of post-colonial Africa (cf. Borer 1998; Comaroff 1985; Gifford 1995, 1998; Sundkler 1991). Hollenweger's history of Pentecostalism draws comparisons between black Pentecostalism and Black Power movements, saying that they are both "movements of social transformation" (Hollenweger 1997: 34). Such perspectives see Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity as an *offensive* tool for action. Harvey Cox concludes that "faith does not 'adjust' Pentecostals to a society of class conflict ... It is a social protest expressed in religious form" (Cox 1995:178).

The puzzle that all of these explanations raises is why "mainline" church denominations are in decline around the world in comparison to Pentecostal and charismatic churches (cf. Poewe 1994; Martin 1994; Gifford 1998). Pentecostalism is not a singular entity that manifests itself the same way in each participant and in each community of participants which find the Holy Spirit touching their lives. In any one community of faithful, Pentecostalism plays several or none of the above-mentioned roles. Part of the power of religious expression is its ability to meet people where they



are. While the interpretation of Pentecostalism may shift and transmute over time and across distances, and indeed between individual participants, its form persists. In the end, Pentecostalism is all and none of the above explanations.

In this sense, the participant's explanation for the rapid spread of Pentecostal and charismatic churches around the world—"Because the Spirit is in it"—stands out and above all the others, able to account for the diversity and contradictory interpretations of Pentecostal Christian movements. This is a simple, yet graceful explanation, which, in its own way, more nearly approximates a kind of "truth" than scholarly attempts to delineate and pin down specific causes. What this "Spirit" entails has emerged from Pentecostalism's history, resulting in extremely flexible structures that allow Pentecostalism to be easily recognizable while remaining distinctive in widely varied contexts both across the world and across the street. In Gorongosa, the flexibility of Pentecostalism has allowed area residents to appropriate a global ideology, configuring it in historically and culturally appropriate ways. With the Holy Spirit operating through its human mediums, Pentecostal church participants have configured these religious frameworks in such a way that they meld seamlessly into familiar social fabric.

In Gorongosa, a primary focus of women's participation in both Pentecostal churches and in spirit-mediumship—whether as clients or practitioners—has been to strengthen their position in society at a time when tremendous pressures threaten their social stability. Thus, women's participation in these networks of social healing is both reactive and proactive. Pentecostals and spirit-mediums share the same underlying philosophy; that social and physical well-being depend on spiritual well-being and moral

order. Pentecostal churches and spirit-mediums both share the same goal of stabilizing and strengthening traditional society, though on different ideological grounds.

In the context of intensifying social strain, women in Gorongosa who are searching to bring order to their lives have been drawn to both Pentecostal church participation and initiation to spirit-mediumship for similar kinds of support. Both of these religious frameworks are flexible enough that they have come to provide women with real social “traction.” Through participation, women searching for ways to strengthen their social position are able to transform their position in marriage by re-situating the source of authority in the relationship. In this context, religious participation is a resource that women harness to gain new degrees of respect and control over their situations. In both the case of initiation to spirit-mediumship and Pentecostal church participation, women become conduits for male spiritual authorities that are protective and benevolent and re-order relationships among the living. Through contrasting means, women are gaining forms of power not through social revolution, but by shoring up social order. Or, viewed from a different angle, their social revolution in a world that has come out of balance, while forward-looking, is modeled on past practice.

Women’s participation in different forms of social healing serves not only to strengthen their individual positions, but also to reaffirm a broader social order. Through initiation to spirit-mediumship, women serve as a vital link to transform destructive forces, unleashed by violence and greed, into productive forces. Through church participation, women serve actively as mediums for Jesus and the Holy Spirit to realign society in a new moral order that seeks to revitalize traditional society in Christian terms.

Both avenues provide women with powerful forms of agency not often recognized as such. Both avenues are tightly connected to women's social position. As has been noted about marriage and Shona women's power in Zimbabwe: "The contradictory position of Shona women as the foci for producing the lineage but simultaneously as the responsible party for structural tensions in Shona society (wives are suspected when bad things befall the village) creates the unique situation in which Shona women's religious bodies must negotiate" (Keller 2002: 157-58). In Gorongosa, women's participation in religious movements allows them to negotiate this difficult position in ways that strengthens their position.

In this way, women's religious practices in Gorongosa draw on different frameworks in ways that meet their social and spiritual needs. The social stability and material support offered by church groups and spirit-mediumship are an aspect of the benefits that women who undergo personal religious transformation may enjoy in their new networks. Membership in deep networks of fellow participants affords women enhanced security and stability. In these circles, women are elevated in social esteem as conduits for authorities that guide the moral order. At one and the same time, women participants in different religious formations are "agents" that bring about transformations in both their particular social standing and in society at large.

Women's religious participation in Gorongosa provides insights into forms of power and agency that are often not recognized as such by Western scholars. Asad has pointed out how contemporary study of religion is based on a model of subjectivity that reflects Western configurations of religion. He argues that it is only through recent understandings of Christianity that religion has been understood as an individual's beliefs,

to which, Keller adds that: “ones’ religiousness is compartmentalized as a distinct symbolic entity for personal reflection, separate from other practical forms of everyday life” (2002: 56, Asad 1993). Asad critiques how scholars have employed this understanding of religion across history and cultures and therefore have not understood the relationship of religion to struggles for power. Thus, religious movements, like those that have been gaining force in Gorongosa, have often been analyzed as symbolic rather than an expression of meaningful power.

Asad’s critique extends to Western notions of agency that have further contributed to the misunderstanding of the power of religious action. He argues that, through the Enlightenment, a new philosophy of agency was developed that accompanied a philosophy of progress. This view of agency is based on a teleology of “progress” where “one assumption has been constant: to make history, the agent must create the future, remake herself, and help others to do so, where the criteria of successful remaking are seen to be universal. Old universes must be subverted and a new universe created” (Asad 1993:35). Thus, actions seeking to maintain the “local” status quo, or to follow local models of social life, do not qualify as history making. Asad’s critique is vital to understanding how religious formations in Gorongosa and many other places have been seen as a regressive symptom of inequality. Employing a teleological view of agency, religious movements, especially in postcolonial societies, have been devalued since, from this perspective, they do not further an agenda recognized as progressive. Socially conservative religious movements have been perceived as an anachronism—as a kind of desperate clinging to “tradition” in the face of “modern” changes. From this perspective, women’s possession and women’s participation

in “anti-modern” religious movements “is treated as a signifier of regressive or repressive conditions” (Keller 2002: 59).

Women’s religious participation in Gorongosa necessitates a revision of feminist notions of power and agency. Second-wave feminists and postcolonial theorists have similarly argued that evaluating the agency of “third-world women” requires re-thinking conceptual categories. Like Asad, they have critiqued the concept of agency as having largely been constructed on a liberal model that privileges autonomous agents. In contexts where people’s agency has been affected by patriarchal and colonial systems, evaluations of religious action are founded on “liberal assertions of the freedom of the individual to act against or despite oppressive conditions” (Nair 1994: 83). As Keller has noted, “until anthropologists can see other forms of power, they will miss the very real ways in which women exercise power in their communities” (2002: 61). If they cannot see other kinds of power, they are likely to perpetuate “the myth of male dominance and will describe women as victims of masculine domination” (61).

Gorongosan women’s work to re-order the world offers a vexing problem for liberal notions of the agent. Through possession by male figures, whether they be the spirits of deceased Africans or the spirit of Jesus, women become conduits for spiritual agents. While conversion is seen as an active choice, spirit-possession is conceptualized as “acceptance” of another agent’s desires. In both cases, “possessed persons do not appropriate the world, but rather their bodies appropriate the world, serving as instruments for the ancestor’s deity’s or spirit’s will” (Keller 2002: 79). In this way, religious possession constructs a nonautonomous model of human subjectivity, when a person’s fate or fortune is associated with the relationship to spiritual and divine figures. Women participants in these forms of

religious possession appear to be neither passive victims nor active agents. They are the conduits of an instrumental agency, “a practice and a place,” for the will of their possessing entities (158). While women’s participation in spiritual healing transforms their relationships in ways that benefit them, they are not the sole “agents” of these changes, but willing vehicles for larger transformative powers.

It is in this sense that women religious participants in Gorongosa negotiate with power that is greater than their individual agency. Their enhanced social position is not accorded them due solely to inherent individual qualities, but due to their position as channels for moral guides. Their struggles for control are not their own, but part of a larger battle. Thus, religious participation in Gorongosa is inseparable from politics. As seen in Chapter 2, political figures in Gorongosa have long been “religious figures.” As intercessors for royal ancestors, traditional leaders have mediated for moral guardians that control land and bring prosperity to the collective. Similarly, as intercessors for various divine figures, women’s religious participation brings different moral guardians into relationship with people. In this way, religious actions are ways that people negotiate with power. Women’s religious actions confront greater forces that impact their lives, from the personal to the social to the political.

Women’s Pentecostal participation and initiation to spirit-mediumship provide a perspective of how agency can be enacted through a moral project of social renewal and through acceptance and attempts to solidify social norms. They offer a view of agency that can be present not only in the ways that people resist norms, but in the multiple ways in which norms are inhabited. In fact, by strengthening sources of authority that govern society, women’s work to heal society exists in subtle yet extremely powerful forms.

Religious transformations have become deeply entangled within the political, economic, and social contexts in which they are found. In Gorongosa, women's participation in spiritual healing provides a powerful resource for confronting turbulent social contexts shaped by global transformations. Their struggles give us a close view of how processes of globalization differentially affect women, and how, through complex dynamics, their struggles reshape social worlds.

## Appendix I:

### List of Church Groups in Gorongosa District in Chronological Order of Establishment

I compiled this list from a number of sources. Principally, the list is drawn from documents at the Department of Religious Affairs in Gorongosa District. Officially, all church groups must be registered with this section of the district administration. However, because it can take years for a church to be registered officially, where possible, I have recorded the year the church was first active in Gorongosa. Also, because the records at this administrative office were scattered and incomplete, I also drew on interviews with church pastors and lists of church groups compiled by a local league of church pastors. I was unable to find dates of establishment for churches that appear at the bottom of the list.

Most of the churches listed below are of a Pentecostal Charismatic type. A few have styles of worship that are significantly different. Next to the church name, I have indicated those churches that would not be considered Pentecostal-Charismatic: Zionist **(Z)**, Apostolic **(A)**, Seventh Day Adventist **(S)**, and “mainline” churches<sup>1</sup> **(M)**.

1. Igreja Johane Malangue <b>(A)</b>	1950
2. Igreja Evangélica Assembleia de Deus	1953
3. Assembleia de Deus Africana	1970
4. Zioni Christian Church <b>(Z)</b>	1980
5. Igreja Evangelica Africana	1981
6. Igreja Pentecostal Triunfante Jesus	1985
7. Igreja Nova Aliança	1987
8. Igreja Evangélica Nova Aliança Hebreu 8:8	1987
9. Igreja Evangelica Amor de Deus	1987
10. Evangélica Salvação de Cristo	1989
11. Igreja Sagrada	1989
12. Igreja Ministério da Nova Vida	1989
	(official in 1999)
13. Igreja Glória de Deus	1990
	(official in 2000)
14. Igreja Pentecostal Unida em Moçambique	1990
15. Missão Evangelica Rural	1990
16. Igreja Betânia	1992
17. Igreja Evangélica em Moçambique	1992
18. Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia <b>(S)</b>	1993
19. Ministerio Internacional Corpo de Cristo	1993
20. Igreja Apostolica Zion Nazareth de Moçambique <b>(Z)</b>	1993
21. Igreja Paz Luz Para os Povos	1993
22. Monte de Louvar Miqueias 4:1-2	1994
23. Igreja Evangélica Betesda de Moçambique	1994

<sup>1</sup> Included in “Mainline” churches are offshoots of Baptist, Methodist and Lutheran church bodies.



24. Igreja Zion Betesda de Moçambique <b>(Z)</b>	1994
25. Igreja Fé dos Apóstolos em Moçambique	1995
	(official in 2000)
26. Igreja Velhos Apostolos <b>(A)</b>	1995
27. Igreja Independente em Cristo Internacional	1995
28. Igreja Enviado de Deus	1996
29. Igreja Missão Baptista <b>(M)</b>	1996
30. Igreja Ministério Embaixadores	1996
31. Ministerio Esperança de Metodista	1996
32. Igreja Aliança Church	1997
33. Igreja Salvação de Cristo	1998
34. Encontro Fraternal Sétimo Bairro Maticuane	1998
35. Igreja Zioni Jerusalema <b>(Z)</b>	1999
36. Igreja I.I. Nacional	1999
37. Igreja Ministério Autriz	1999
38. Igreja Fé Apostólica	1999
39. Igreja Pedra Angular Preciosa em Moçambique	1999
40. Igreja Vitória do Tabernaculo Pentecostal	1999
41. Igreja Fé em Acção	2000
42. Igreja Evangélica Luterana, Moçambique <b>(M)</b>	2000
43. Igreja Sons de Missão Apostólica em Moçambique	2000
44. Igreja Ministério Jesus Salvador Completo	2000
45. Igreja Evangélica de Cristo Pentecostal Guardai a Vinda do Senhor- Mateus 25:13	2000
46. Comunhão na Colheita-Ministério Arco Iris	2001
47. Igreja Nova Aliança	2001
48. Igreja Exercito de Salvação de Almas	2001
49. Igreja Evangélica de Cristo Pentecostal em Moçambique	2001
50. Igreja Zioni Cristá Espirito Santo de Moç (Z.C.E.S.M.) <b>(Z)</b>	2001
51. Igreja Pão de Vida	2001
52. Igreja Sal do Mundo	2002
53. Igreja Evangelica Assembleia Livre de Moçambique	2002
54. Igreja Ministério da Vitória	2002
55. Igreja Pentecostal Jesus em Salvação	2002
56. Igreja Evangélica Area de Salvação de Moçambique	2002
57. Igreja Pentecostal Jesus Está Connosco	2002
58. Igreja de Convivência de Deus em Moçambique	2002
59. Igreja Aliança Church	2003
60. Igreja Embaixador	2003
61. Igreja Assembleia de Deus Australiana	2003
62. Igreja Evangelica Cristo Vive em Moçambique	2005
63. Igreja Peniel de Moçambique	2005
64. Igreja em Cada Localidade	2006
65. Igreja Membro em Cristo	2007
66. Igreja Assembleia de Deus Internacional	
67. Igreja Fé Africana	

68. Igreja Amor de Deus
69. Igreja Zioni de Moçambique **(Z)**
70. Igreja Cristá
71. Igreja de Deus Remanescente
72. Igreja Assembleia Nova Aliança
73. Igreja Independente em Cristo
74. Igreja Paz de Cristo
75. Igreja Sagrada de Cristo
76. Igreja Nova Vida
77. Igreja Carvalho
78. Paz Luz para os Povos
79. Emmanuel de Gorongosa
80. Igreja Independente de Moçambique
81. Igreja Sagrada
82. Baptista Renovada **(M)**
83. Assembleia de Deus Internacional
84. Vida Vitorioso
85. Igreja Fiel Africana
86. Igreja Pentecostal de Cristo
87. Igreja Nova Vida
88. Igreja Luz da Paz
89. Igreja Pão de Vida
90. Anjos de Cristo
91. Igreja Evangelica Comunhão de Deus
92. Igreja Unida Africana
93. Igreja Independente Internacional da Paz
94. Igreja Evangélica Gloria de Deus
97. Internacional União Africana
98. Igreja Nhani Hiwari
99. Igreja Advertiça Terceiro Dia da Paz
100. Igreja Assembleia Apostolica de União Africano
101. Igreja Pentecostal Cruz de Deus
102. Igreja União dos Irmãos Áfricanos
103. Igreja Internacional São Paulo

**Appendix II:**

Translation of classified ads for traditional doctors published in a Maputo newspaper

**DOCTOR SOFRIMENTO NINGORE**

ESPECIALISTA EM MEDICINA TRADICIONAL

Grande Astrólogo com experiência de 20 anos



**VOCÊ QUE SOFRE DE:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>   HIV/SIDA</li> <li>   Impotência Sexual</li> <li>   Esterilidade</li> <li>   Corrimento</li> <li>   Borbulhas no pénis</li> <li>   Sífilis</li> <li>   Doenças venéreas crónicas</li> <li>   Asma</li> <li>   Dores de útero</li> <li>   Período prolongado</li> <li>   Diabetes</li> <li>   Hemorróides</li> <li>   Comichão</li> <li>   Dores de coração</li> <li>   Aumento o sexo e aumento a potência</li> <li>   Ser apertado por espíritos à noite</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>   Sonhar a fazer sexo</li> <li>   Deixar de fumar</li> <li>   Dar sorte no serviço</li> <li>   Recuperação de amor perdido</li> </ul> <p>As crianças com menos de cinco anos recebem tratamento gratuito. Dirija-se ao consultório do médico Ningore, no Bairro da Malhangalene, Rua do Alba nº 56, perto da Delta Segurança</p> <p>Consultas: das 08:00 às 12:00 horas e das 14:00 às 18:00, contacto: 82-8050930</p> <p><b>BOA SORTE!</b></p>
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**ZAINABO MOHINA**

**Médica tradicional vinda de Zanzibar**



Trata doenças tais como: Impotência sexual, asma, tensão, paralisia, esterilidade, malária cerebral, recupera amor perdido, dá sorte no trabalho, faz subir de cargo, segurança no lar e mais.....

**VISITE-A**

Ax. 24 de Julho nº 3298, 3º andar, flat-5

Em frente ao Quartel-General

Cell: 82-5386597

The two classified ads, above, for “traditional doctors” were printed in the configuration shown here in the classified section of the Maputo weekly paper *Magazine Independente* on Thursday April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007, page 18. The top ad reads:

**Doctor Sofrimento Ningore**  
**Specialist in traditional medicine**  
**Great astrologer with 20 years of experience**

**You suffer from:**

- HIV/SIDA
- Sexual Impotence
- Sterility
- Diarrhea
- Lesions on the penis
- Syphilis
- Chronic venereal diseases
- Asthma
- Pains of the uterus
- Prolonged menstruation
- Diabetes
- Hemorrhoids
- Itching
- Heart/chest pains
- Increased genital size and sexual potency
- Being seized at night by spirits
- Dreams of having sex
- Stop smoking
- Give [you] luck in [your] job
- Recuperation of lost love

Children under age five receive treatment free of charge. Come to the consultation room of Doctor Ningore, in the Bairro da Malhangalene ... [address]

Consultations: from 8:00 to 12:00 and from 14:00 to 18:00; contact: [cell phone number]

---

**Zainabo Mohina**  
**Traditional doctor from Zanzibar**

Treats illnesses like: Sexual impotence, asthma, high blood pressure, paralysis, sterility, cerebral malaria, recuperation of lost love, to give luck in work, help you get promoted, protection at home and more ...

**Visit her:** [address of an apartment, cell phone number]

### Appendix III:

Below is the price list distributed by AMETIM in Gorongosa beginning in late 2007. The original table lists 86 separate treatments. I have removed several entries in the interest of brevity, but retain their original numbers here. The first column provides the name of the treatment in chi-Gorongosi, and the second column provides the name in Portuguese. The third column presents the price in *meticaís*. I have only altered the table by translating the Portuguese *directly* into English. My translations appear in bold print next to the Portuguese.

## Republica de Moçambique Associação dos Médicos Tradicionais Independentes de Moçambique

**Tabela Actualizada de Tratamentos Tradicionais**  
(Official Table [of Prices] for Traditional Treatments)

1	Kudididza	Consulta Normal <b>(normal consultation)</b>	50 MTN
2	Bafu	Maconico Com Pedra Quente <b>(steam treatment)</b>	50 MTN
3	Kuteta Muzimo	Girar Espírito Mau <b>(send away bad spirit)</b>	200 MTN
4	Kutintha	Consolidar Espírito <b>(consolidate spirit)</b>	250 MTN
5	Kufunga Muzimo	Fechar Espírito <b>(close off spirit)</b>	200 MTN
6	Kufemba Npfúkwa	Pesquisar Espírito Mau <b>(search out <i>npfukwa</i> spirit)</b>	500 MTN
7	Kusosera Muzimo	Solicitar o Espírito Mau <b>(call a spirit to possession)</b>	350 MTN
8	Kuvara Mucha	Fortalecer a Casa <b>(fortify a house)</b>	500 MTN
9	Kumanga Mucha	Construir Lar <b>(build a [spirit] house)</b>	450 MTN
10	Kurapa Mapere	Curar a Lepra <b>(cure leprosy)</b>	350 MTN
11	Kurapa Ngiringir	Curar a Doença de Ataque <b>(cure epilepsy)</b>	500 MTN
12	Kurapa Chicotsorua	Curar a Tuberculose <b>(cure TB)</b>	400 MTN
13	Kurapa Maquio	Curar a Asma <b>(cure asthma)</b>	350 MTN
14	Kupiquira Ntsanganiko	Tratar Cerimonia de Morte <b>(treat death ceremony)</b>	200 MTN

15	Kupiquira P'hiringanissu	Tratar Cerimonia Social <b>(treat p'hiringanissu)</b>	150 MTN
16	Kurapa Nhandundo	Curar Bilhasiose <b>(cure bilharzia)</b>	100 MTN
17	Kurapa Sik	Curar a Doença de Transmissão Sexual <b>(cure sexually transmitted disease)</b>	350 MTN
18	Kurapa Manhoca	Curar a Diarreia <b>(cure diarrhea)</b>	100 MTN
19	Kurapa Chivuimbo	Curar o Enchaço <b>(cure swelling)</b>	300 MTN
20	Kurapa Nzon	Curar as Cólicas <b>(cure colic)</b>	200 MTN
21	Kurapa Mazino	Curar Dores de Dente <b>(cure toothache)</b>	50 MTN
22	Kurapa Nsanga	Curar a Burbulha na Vista <b>(cure eye lesion)</b>	150 MTN
23	Kurapa Chipenda Nsona	Curar a Doença de Cabeça <b>(cure headache)</b>	50 MTN
24	Muchena	Medicamento de Ter Sorte <b>(treatment for luck)</b>	750 MTN
25	Kurapa Chicamba	Curar a Doença Infantil <b>(cure infant illness)</b>	50 MTN
27	Kussungira Mucuzi Mwana	Fortaleza da Criança <b>(protection for a child)</b>	100 MTN
28	Kurapa Manhoca Adultos	Curar Diarreia (Adultos) <b>(cure diarrhea in adults)</b>	150 MTN
30	Kufunga Kurutsa	Suspender a Vômitagem <b>(end vomiting)</b>	100 MTN
31	Kutsimika Wakazi	Concepção da Gravidez <b>(treatment for conception)</b>	1,000 MTN
34	Kubata Badza	Juramento de Pegar Enxada <b>(“hoe trial” [a form of trial for spirit/witchcraft accusations])</b>	150 MTN
26	Kurapa Mpirindir	Curar Sarampo <b>(cure measles)</b>	200 MTN
27	Kurapa Maoundo	Curar Feridas na Boca <b>(cure oral sores)</b>	50 MTN
30	Kurapa Ndzone	Curar Doença Otorrinolaringológica <b>(cure aural illness)</b>	50 MTN
31	Kurapa Mussana	Curar Coluna Vertebral <b>(cure back pain)</b>	50 MTN
37	Kurapa Ngomua	Tratamento de Potência Sexual <b>(treat male impotence)</b>	250 MTN
39	Rukahô	Evitar a conjugal cometer adultério <b>(treatment to avoid spousal adultery)</b>	1,000 MTN

43	Kugadzirwa Puaramwarira	Evitencia da Morte <b>(treatment to avoid death)</b>	350 MTN
44	Kuika Mundu Wacafa	Consultar a Causa da Morte <b>(consultation to find the cause of death)</b>	250 MTN
48	Kurapa Munthu Arumua na Nhoca	Tratar pessoa que foi mordido com cobra <b>(treat person bitten by a snake)</b>	350 MTN
49	Kotsora	Tosse Simples <b>(treat a simple cough)</b>	50 MTN
50	Kuchangira Mbava	Evitencia dos Furtos <b>(treatment to protect against theft)</b>	2,000 MTN
52	Kuvara Stopo	Fortalecer Estabelecimento Comercial <b>(fortify a commercial establishment)</b>	150 MTN
53	Kurapa Pudzi	Curar Érnia <b>(cure a hernia)</b>	100 MTN
55	Kupenga	Curar um Malucu <b>(cure insanity)</b>	550 MTN
67	Tratamento da Machamba	<b>(treatment of agricultural field)</b>	600 MTN
68	Tratamento de Campo de Futebol	<b>(treatment of soccer field)</b>	250 MTN
70	Tratamento de casa, machamba, empresa que caiu trovada <b>(treatment for house, field or business struck by lightning)</b>		2,000 MTN
71	Tratamento de Casa Queimado pelo Fogo <b>(treatment for house burnt in a fire)</b>		200 MTN
74	Tratamento Prevenção de Acidente de Viação <b>(treatment to prevent road accident)</b>		1,950 MTN
76	Levantamento do Curandeiro à Mesma Província <b>(fee to bring spirit-medium for in-home treatment, within the same province)</b>		250 MTN
77	Levantamento do Curandeiro Para Foura da Província <b>(fee to bring spirit-medium for in-home treatment, outside province)</b>		350 MTN
78	Não há Problema <b>(there are no problems [a powerful treatment for good fortune in many pursuits])</b>		1,000 MTN
81	Tirar Alguém da Prisão <b>(release someone from prison)</b>		150 MTN
85	Medicamento de Querer Sorte com as Mulheres <b>(medicine for luck with women)</b>		550 MTN
86	Medicamento de que Quando Roubas Não ser Apanho <b>(treatment to avoid capture after robbing)</b>		3,000 MTN

**Appendix IV:**

**Marriages officially registered with the District Administration of Gorongosa  
between 1997 and 2007:**

1997	1
1998	0
1999	5
2000	10
2001	4
2002	5
2003	0
2004	10
2005	8
2006	2
2007	2
<b>Total</b>	47



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