Donas da Terra
(Female Owners of the Land)

Decolonizing historical representations through an ethnography of memories of women of power and authority in Zambezia, Mozambique

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To my foremothers

Abstract

This thesis discusses the missing or underrepresented women of power and authority within the written history of Mozambique's Zambezi region. It argues that several generations of scholars, both within colonial and postcolonial contexts, have: one, centralized colonialism as a genesis for their narrative; and two, misconstrued the role of women in the region's societies, particularly those of power and authority. Crucially, the thesis demonstrates that the centralization of colonialism was done by inscribing the history of the region's peoples from their encounter with the Portuguese. This narrative also tied this region—including terming it "Zambezia"—to the expansion of Portuguese influence and colonial structures. Consequently, in hegemonic narratives the peoples and societies of interest were those that most interacted, adapted or resisted, and eventually were defeated by the Portuguese.

Writing in the immediate decades after independence in 1975, Mozambican postcolonial historians recentralized their narrative towards nation building. Though they added information from oral sources and archaeology to inform this narrative, their focus on anticolonial struggle nonetheless retained the centrality of the colonial encounter. Non-Mozambican historians, most with leftist leanings and professing solidarity with the anticolonial cause, also tended to focus on resistance to, precisely, colonialism. In these narratives too, women were either absent or were conflated within categories such as "freedom fighters", "workers" or "peasants". Feminist and women-centered scholars, meanwhile, focused on female subjugation, the centrality of gender and resistance to patriarchal norms, both colonial and indigenous.

This thesis counters and critiques such previous scholarly practice by decentralizing colonialism as the main vector of the narrative. It instead focuses on local cosmological understandings of women and power to elucidate continuities and discontinuities in the sociohistorical trajectories of the Zambezi region. The narrative that emerges is of an unbound "Zambezia," where different locations relate unevenly to different historical events. The local perceptions of power revealed three categories wielded by women: inherent (members of ruling dynasties), acquired (spouses), and

subaltern (labor organizers). These in turn relate to three expressions of power, i.e., ways their societies recognize and distinguish their types of power: metaphysical (rituals and witchcraft), performative (dances), and embodied (clothes and jewelry).

Methodologically, the study alternates between drawing on archival and ethnographic sources, and aims to set these in dialogue with each other. The archival material is used to establish the narrative of the written text. It also serves to identify where women of power and authority have been absent or misconstrued. The ethnographic material is then used to support, challenge, or contradict the existing narrative. The thesis further uses trans-temporal hinges to identify the most important events in the timelines of the different life histories. These show that different field locations have non-linear, discordant historiographies which relate to unconnected temporal and spatial references.

Part 1 of the thesis presents a comprehensive history of the Zambezi region and beyond, highlighting the diversity of its peoples and their mobility, as well as the renaming and reshaping of political organizations over the longue durée. It argues against an imagined "Zambezia" as a coherent social and historical place, as suggested by a historiography that relies heavily on colonial archives. It further argues that the existing historiography has placed undue emphasis on the different colonial structures as a precursor and unitary force of this imagined Zambezia as a bounded social complex.

Part 2 extracts from the archival material categories of women of power from this region and then contrasts these categories with those encountered in the field to examine how specific female authoritative roles were either ignored, misunderstood, or diluted in historical texts. It presents the multiple ways women operated within their societies' hegemonic structures, while critically engaging the feminist and Africanist debates about women and power.

Part 3 presents the life histories of four selected female authoritative actors who embody the three different power types also identified in the archival material. Their life histories further evidence how overarching events described in the region's

historiography produced different outcomes across different spaces within Zambezia. This part also discusses how privileging female informants adds value in highlighting gaps in the scholarly representation of the social and political structures to which they belong.

Part 4 concludes with a discussion of how, through analyzing the past, this thesis is concerned with the present and future representation of former colonial spaces and hegemonic discourses about these spaces. The decolonial lens applied to the analysis of women of power and authority in Zambezia challenges representations of women established by the colonial gaze, which have gone unchallenged both within postcolonial Marxist historiography and feminist and women-centered scholarship.

The thesis looks at women and power in novel ways. First, it looks at how and which women are located within hegemonic social structures and cosmological understandings of reality, in the process, naturalizing the presence of women in authoritative roles across time. In particular, it presents a long-running category of female authority, hitherto viewed primarily within its subalternity, that has been essential in the governing structures of precolonial, colonial and postcolonial societies alike. Second, it adds to the discussion of gender and power by showing that power is not always gendered and how leadership has generally been collaborative and inclusive of both genders. It also shows how marriage has been a source of empowerment for both men and women. Third, it eschews linear and periodical historiography for trans-temporal hinges, which are determined by spatiotemporal relationships established by the informants in the field. Fourth, it proposes decolonial emancipatory possibilities by contrasting epistemologically predefined concepts and how cosmological understandings of such concepts challenge their original assumptions.

Acknowledgments

Contents

List of Tables

List of Diagrams

List of Figures

Introductory path

This thesis' aspiration is to explore the missing or underrepresented women of power and authority within the written history of Mozambique's Zambezi region. Growing up with close ties to the Zambezian context, I have related to and perceived women from this region as prominent actors, intervening both in domestic and public contexts. My experience stood in grim contrast, though, to the existing historical texts—colonial and postcolonial alike. In this broad field of historical representations and sources, such misrepresentation included even the much-romanticized and mythologized *donas*, female feudal landowners, who (despite their notoriety) inspired more wonder as exceptions to (presumably) otherwise male-dominated social and political structures. The main character in a 1927 book authored by Emílio de San Bruno, the literary pseudonym of Portuguese naval officer Filipe Emílio de Paiva, and depicting colonial life in Zambezia, is Dona Rosário, also known as N'Fuca. She is described as follows:

> This beautiful, enigmatic and powerful figure is responsible for a
> network of relationships that involve the *luane* [manor], including from
> the loyal warrior Zudá to the great number of *mainatos* [cooks and in-
> house servants], *moleques* [houseboys] and *negrinhas* [black servant
> girls], aside from the strong influence over the local authorities (Ferraz
> Tedesco, 2007, p. 409).[1]

Although meant as a work of fiction, the novel includes real life characters and is part of "an exotic phase of the colonial literature, which translates, in many of its descriptive segments, the wonder that the discovery of the 'Other' provokes in the Europeans' spirit" (Sarmento Gundane, 2021, p. 19).

I first started conceptualizing this project in 2008–2009. At the time my interest was limited to the *donas* and the continued fascination they caused. I was especially interested in the period of their decline when their land was acquired by multinational

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[1] All translations from Portuguese, including quoting published works, are done by the author unless otherwise stated.

chartered and lessee companies. In January 2009, during my regular end-of-year visit to Quelimane, the capital of Zambezia, I conducted a few interviews with some relatives and elderly who were referred by my aunt and uncle, with whom I usually stayed over the Christmas holidays. I enquired about the different social categories, and where the *donas* fit into them. What I heard made me curious about other women. It was slowly becoming apparent to me that the *donas* were not the sole example of powerful women in the region, though they were the ones people referred to most often. Behind the racialized colonial social hierarchy, there seemed to lurk a much more fascinating story.

When I finally initiated the project in 2013, I decided to include substantial archival research. On one hand I wanted to confirm or contrast with what I had heard so far. On the other, I wanted to learn about how present or absent women were, including the *donas*, in the historiography of Zambezia, and how they were represented. What I found in the archival research and my subsequent field trips in 2014 and 2015 has reinforced my conviction that looking specifically at women's authoritative positions allows for a novel understanding of the Mozambican and Zambezian histories. Specifically, such a novel understanding can (and should) be open to a critical examination of the politics of narratives on African women, peoples, and social organization more broadly.

Therefore, this thesis rests on the principle that the hegemonic narratives available about Zambezia and Africa—which have inscribed the various discourses, whether formal, informal, scholarly, literary, or political—need to be challenged. Addressing these discursive formations from an anthropological perspective, I contrast the archival to the ethnographic material to highlight the many absent narratives—shifting between dialogue with and contrasting the existing written narratives with memories that the descendants of women of authority and power have of their foremothers.

By exploring specifically the memory of women through their association to power, authority, and hence some privilege, I intend to argue that hegemonic scholarly

work—through constructed discourses, practices of entity making, and heritage of representations—fails to "see" all actors in the historical fabrics of societies.

In the case of women of power and authority in the Zambezi region, previous works rely heavily on early explorers and colonial administrators' accounts and descriptions, and their perception of what was relevant. Notable examples are the works of historians Malyn Newitt (1995), José Capela (1995, 2010), and Eugénia Rodrigues (2000, 2002b, 2006b).[2] Despite their detailed capture of the social and political organization of Zambezian societies and their encounter with Portuguese settlers and the subsequent colonial enterprise, this is mostly done through the perspectives of settlers and their particular worldview. Even when local oral sources were used to supplement archival sources, the interest rested chiefly in the aspects affected and transformed by the colonial encounter. Importantly, the portrayal of elite women remained scarce, and reserved primarily for colonial elite women. Native elites feature even less unless they offered opposition to settlers or the colonial administration.[3]

Following Mozambique's independence in 1975, a critical body emerges within a clear nation-building agenda, privileging a narrative that reinforced national identity, cohesion, and resistance to the foreign colonial body and structures. Notable historians emerge from the history department at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (UEM), who write the country's history from an Africanist perspective. These include Carlos Serra, Arlindo Chilundo, Eduardo Medeiros, Gerhard Liesgang, David Hedges, among others (Carvalho et al., 1988; Chilundo et al., 1999; Hedges et al., 1993). There were also foreign historians focusing on anti-colonial resistance, notably René Pelissier (1994) and Allen and Barbara Isaacman (Isaacman, 1975, 1992; Isaacman & Isaacman, 1983).

Generally, even postcolonial history-writing also relied on some of the same sources, supplementing them with oral narratives and archaeological evidence. In conventional

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[2] Though in her later work (e.g. Rodrigues, 2017), Rodrigues incorporates references from African historians such as S. I. G Mudenge, Samuel Ntara, and Kings Phiri, among others. She also refers to anthropologists such as Christian Geffray and Henri Junod, who was additionally a missionary.

[3] One example is the portrayal of Sazora, in the later work of Rodrigues (2017).

narratives of Mozambican history, significant events are often limited to the following: i) the Portuguese colonial era, ii) the rise of Frelimo (Mozambican Liberation Front) and war of liberation, iii) the independence and consolidation of Frelimo's one-party rule with a Marxist ideology, iv) the formation of Renamo (Mozambican National Resistance) and civil war, v) the peace and endurance of the one-party state.

In whichever case, women of power and authority appear only marginally. In the colonial narrative, women are portrayed mostly as subordinate to male-dominated societies. The postcolonial, Marxist, and nationalist narratives—which have also been accused of being male-centric when mentioning women—favored peasants or those engaged in the anti-colonial struggle (Fernandes, 2013).

For example, the *donas* were considered a direct result of the Portuguese colonial apparatus, as exemplified by the excerpt from Capela's work below.

> The leading role of these ladies of *prazos*,[4] therefore owners of lands and men, also of men of war, was a constant from the seventeenth century, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indispensable to the 'settlement', i.e., the reproduction of the system originally intended in the hands of *reinóis* [royal subjects], the award of land concessions was encouraged on entitlement of European women. Lacking these, in Goans and mixed-race women. As the concession was usually made in three lives, in the case of the first life being on a man, it happened, on the death of the husband, that the lady became owner of the *prazo*. Thus, and due to direct titling it was frequent for women owners of great material and human wealth of great magnitude and powers that were confused with true state powers (Capela, 2010, pp. 26–27).

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[4] *Prazo* is a term for land leased by the Portuguese Crown to settlers in the early colonial period, usually over three generations (Ennes, 1894; Newitt, 1969; Papagno, 1980; Rodrigues, 2013).

Capela and Rodrigues both challenged Newitt's assertion that the rise of the *donas* should be seen from an African perspective.

> M. Newitt stressed the "dual character" of the hereditary system of the Rivers resulting from the combination of the Portuguese patrilinear system with the local supremacy of the maternal clan. According to this author, this system favored women as heirs of land and slaves, forcing men to seek concubines and positions in the Portuguese administration. It is probably an exaggerated interpretation of the importance of the African context in the elaboration of the hereditary system of the elite of the Rivers of Sena and, in particular, of the succession of the *prazos*, which followed a Portuguese normative framework, even when the letters of land tenure imposed the succession by female line, previously introduced in other parts of the Estado da Índia[5] (Rodrigues, 2013, p. 581).[6]

Other women were either portrayed as a mere parent (Santos, 1609; Theal, 1901b), sibling (Gamitto, 1854) or spouse (Mudenge, 1988; Santos, 1609) to authoritative men. Dominican missionary Friar João dos Santos' accounts of Eastern Ethiopia (how East Africa was called then) describes the first baptism of a Mwenemutapa (the ruler of the most important empire south of the Zambezi river), who received the name Sebastião, and his mother Maria. Not much more is said about her. Dos Santos' descriptions of the Mwenemutapa court also include a description of the many wives of the king. His accounts form the basis of what is known about this court, and are a

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[5] Estado da Índia (State of India) was the entity that administered the Portuguese possessions across the Indian Ocean, including those on the East African coast. It was founded in 1505. Its overseeing of the African territories ended in 1752.

[6] Rodrigues later considered that some measure of African influence was warranted, claiming that "more than the result of a presumed legal imposition, the ownership of *prazos* by women in the Zambezi valley must be related to the African context and the strategies of the colony's families to access and preserve the heritage" (Rodrigues, 2006b, p. 16).

reference to most historians. They were later translated by historian George Theal.[7] Partially based on dos Santos' account, Zimbabwean historian S. I. G. Mudenge provides the following description of the Mwenemutapa's wives:

> The last group of important court personalities were the somewhat legendary wives of Mutapa. Some say they were as many as 3000, but others claim they were little more than 300. Many claim they were unlimited. Even in the twilight days of the state in the nineteenth century, David Livingstone gives a figure of 100 wives. In the seventeenth century the wives of the Mutapa were divided into nine 'houses.' The nine wives, in order of seniority, are given as *Mazvarira (Mazarira), Nehanda (Inhahanda), Nyazvidza? (Nabuiza), Navemba (Nokavemba), Nemangore, Nizingoapangi, Nemangoro, Nessanhi and Necharunda* (Mudenge, 1988, p. 104).

What is legendary about the wives is their number, which is a testament to the virility of the king. These multiple wives did not live in the court, and the different "houses" of the royal wives were extensions of the royal court. However, little is known of these wives. The most described, however scantily, are the two most senior wives, Mazvarira and Nehanda, who were also sisters (or female relatives) of the Mwenemutapa.

The explorer António Candido Pedroso Gamitto, in his description of his expedition to the court of Muata Kazembe (emperor of the Lundas in today's Congo and Angola), describes several women chiefs among the Maravi, a polity to the north of the Zambezi river extending from the Indian ocean, across today's Malawi all the way to current Zambia. He names some, but mostly he indicates whose sister they are, even if each of them has her own court.

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[7] George McCall Theal (1837–1919) was a South African historian, considered among the most prolific and influential, who published, among other things, detailed accounts of the peoples and customs in southern Africa, as well as translations to English of Portuguese expeditions within southern Africa (Saunders, 1981).

As indicated above, much of the historical facts and historical processes in the existing body of scholarship on this region—and, indeed, others within the African continent—have gaps and contradictions that merit further exploration. This work intends to promote a critical reading of a body of work commonly accepted and broadly used, in a way that provides an understanding of women of power and authority that can no longer uphold conventional and long-standing representations, relegating them to acquiescence and marginality. As much work has been done and discussed within the discipline of history related to women in authoritative roles, the current work intends to illustrate how ethnographic engagement can provide a privileged platform to shed light on misunderstood structures and their hidden meanings.

Specifically, I argue that through engaging with memories, not just oral sources but multiple artifacts for memory keeping and discursive imagery, and contrasting them with archival sources and the existing literature, it is possible to discern meanings and understandings of sociopolitical hierarchies that are distinct from existing scholarly work. I do this by showcasing various cosmological locations of power within native social and political structures, and the kind of women who appropriated that power. The result is a contribution to the possibilities of further decolonizing our understanding of elite structures, women, and power in African societies.

The contextual place and timing of methodological engagements

Even though this work pays attention to, as indicated above, an underrepresented or misrepresented group—as is the case with women of authority—it does not intend to become a textual or political medium to provide a 'voice to the voiceless.' I therefore do not intend this thesis to contribute to an idea of a more (gender) balanced representation of historical pasts. In this, it stands both in contrast and complementary to the existing body of literature on gender in Mozambique, among which are Ana Loforte's seminal work about gender and power among the Tsonga (Loforte, 2000); Signe Arnfred's scholarship on gender, sexuality and politics in northern Mozambique (Arnfred, 2011); Kathleen Sheldon's historical overview of women's social and

economic contributions to society and history (Sheldon, 2002); and Maria Paula de Meneses' epistemological reflections from the perspective of women's knowledge (Meneses, 2013).

Ana Loforte's work discussed the male and female power dynamics regarding customary communal practices and within the household. Contrary to Loforte, this study is not concerned with comparing male and female relations. Similarly to Loforte's work, it relies on understanding customary and cosmological underpinnings of social and political organizations to understand the types and functions of women's authority in Zambezian societies.

From Signe Arnfred's work, this study borrows the understanding of female authority's workings in matrilineal societies, particularly among the Makhuwa people—which are among the peoples of the Zambezi region, a region that is part of what has been termed the matrilineal belt (Gonzales et al., 2017). Arnfred has also done exciting explorations into embodied forms and expressions of power, such as dancing (Arnfred, 2011) and clothes (Arnfred and Meneses in: Khan et al., 2019) that are very informative to part of the argument of this thesis.

Kathleen Sheldon's work highlights Mozambique's social diversity, such as differences between patrilineal and matrilineal societies, southern and northern, and others. While she recognizes that Mozambican (women's) history cannot be told as "a linear progression from exploitation to emancipation" (Sheldon, 2002, p. 33), her work nonetheless used chronological blocks, i.e., the early colonial period, changing colonial stages, independence struggle, post-independence socialism and war, and structural adjustments, also exemplifying how women fit and contributed at each stage. Additionally, while she tries to convey the country's diversity, she fails to discuss diversity within societies, mainly the difference in contribution from different women.

Finally, similarly to Maria Paula Meneses, this study intends to decolonize existing knowledge about women in Zambezian societies. However, it does not intend to propose a radical epistemological change based on the knowledge acquired. Instead, it

works mainly within the realm of the narrative within existing epistemological premises.

Therefore, this study draws on a collection of "narrative choices," which interlocutors with whom I have engaged make in constructing their ancestors' past. I then review how these align or contrast with hegemonic narratives, and discuss the implications therein. Like Allen Feldman (1991), I understand that what constitutes the past is not what happened, but rather what is narrated. The person who gets to narrate becomes vital to how one constructs the narrative, including by which means and using which devices. Feldman's understanding of narrative, inspired by Derrida's work, is that it can be both "enacted as well as written" (Feldman, 1991, p. 14). I understand this to mean that which is heard or seen, included or excluded from the informants' narratives, simultaneously reflects and produces history.

For example, analyzing women's perspectives in remembering women of power should reinforce the notion of the past's changing nature. In line with Jonna Katto, I also argue that "embodied memory cannot be separated from social memory" (Katto, 2019, p. 2). Like her, I rely on women's non-linear historical perspectives and memory to elaborate on their societies. Personal histories, then, offer a wealth of information regarding historical change and cultural meaning representing a broader historical context to which informants relate.

The field and the informants

As mentioned above, this work is based on archival research conducted in Mozambique in early 2013 and then Portugal in June-July of 2013. The initial archival research was followed by ethnographic fieldwork conducted over nine months in 2014 and three months in 2015 in four locations of Zambezia province in Mozambique. For my arguments, I also use some of the data collected during preliminary interviews conducted in January 2009.

The field locations included the city of Quelimane; in the former Prazo Carungo, in Inhassunge; in the Regulado de Voabil,[8] in Macuse; and Regulado Bala, in Maganja da Costa. Quelimane is the capital of Zambezia Province. Carungo is in the district of Inhassunge, across the bay from Quelimane on the shores of Rio dos Bons Sinais, which is part of the Zambezi Delta. Macuse is a coastal locality in the district of Namacurra, north of Quelimane. Maganja da Costa is also a coastal district north of Namacurra, with its capital having the same name (see Figure 1). I had considered alternative locations along the Zambezi, but these were not accessible due to the resurgence of military skirmishes in 2013, which compromised road access to certain areas.[9]

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[8] *Regulado* is a territory overseen by a *Régulo* (chief/kinglet). This authority was a figure introduced by the Portuguese state around the 1890s. It was to be equivalent to the paramount chiefs that existed prior to Portuguese direct state rule. After independence this authority figure was first banned and then reinstated (Farré, 2015; Lourenço, 2012; Meneses, 2006; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999).

[9] Shortly after its independence in 1975, Mozambique fought a brutal civil war for 16 years, between 1976 and 1992, which ended with the signature of a General Peace Agreement. In 2012, Afonso Dhlakama, the leader of the former rebel group Renamo, accused the ruling party Frelimo of not living up to the peace agreement. He took refuge in a former military base, and after the imprisonment of former guerrilla members which led to military clashes, sanctioned attacks along a major road linking the south and the north of the country (Vines, 2013) that comprised safe travel in the central provinces of Manica and Sofala. This also disrupted access to southern Zambezia and Tete, which are better accessible from Sofala.

Source: produced by the author

Figure 1. Map of Zambezia province, with field locations

My main base was Quelimane, where I stayed with my aunt, my mother's sister. I have always stayed with her when visiting Quelimane. When my mother wanted to wean me, it was to her that she sent me. Every school break growing up, I was sent to stay with her. As an adult, I continued the tradition of visiting her and my maternal grandparents at least once a year.

Though Quelimane is administratively a city, it is little more than a town. It has a relatively small "concrete" part, where there are a few apartment blocks. The rest are sprawling neighborhoods of a mixture of wattle and daub houses with thatched or zinc

plated roofs, and the occasional house built with bricks or concrete blocks. Most roads in these neighborhoods are dirt roads, and because Quelimane is only one meter above sea level, it is common to see water flowing on the streets. Growing up, coconut trees were ubiquitous. They are rarer now. My grandparents' property, where my aunt moved after they passed, sits at the border between the concrete city and the rest. The house that belonged to them is now a private school she co-owns. She lives in a smaller annex on a neighboring plot that was also part of my grandparents' relatively small estate.

The choice of the other field sites resulted from the dynamics of the field. From my main site, using a snowball approach, I followed leads proposed by each informant, reached new informants, and expanded the field. While based in Quelimane, I conducted trips to different sites, as required or recommended by my interlocutors. The daughter of Régulo Voabil was my main informant and entry point to Macuse. This *régulo* was well-known to several people with whom I talked in Quelimane. His *regulado* was only one of two in the district of Namacurra (Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1953), and where the headquarters of the lessee company Companhia do Boror[10] in Macuse was located.

She is a short, heavily built woman with a simultaneously stern and sympathetic look. I imagine this is due to her training as a nurse. She is a friend of my aunt. I visited her multiple times at her home in Quelimane, which was on the ground floor of a three-story building. We invariably sat in her dimly lit living room furnished with a 1980s-style heavily built hardwood armoire, a table for six, and worn leather upholstered sofas.

Régulo Voabil's daughter took some time to include women in her memories. Even when I directly probed them, she invariably returned to telling me about his father and his male genealogy. She eventually remembered a cousin, Nunu Ancha, who was her

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[10] Lessee companies were capitalist ventures with several investors, with a temporary license to explore a territory (Allina, 2012; Vail & White, 1980).

father's niece, daughter of his only full sister (from the same father and mother). In an interview in mid-January 2014, she explained why this cousin was memorable to her:

> My father consulted a niece, Ancha. [She acted] as a counsellor. She was his eldest niece, daughter of his only daughter from [the same] mother. She was like a sister [to him].

As I explain later, this niece stood for and represented the importance and complementarity of female siblings within ruling families. Ultimately, Régulo Voabil's daughter decided that I should visit Macuse and talk to other people whom she deemed would be more knowledgeable about the place. We left early on an overcast day. January is still part of the rainy season. It was a short two-hour ride from Quelimane, on a tar road until the district capital Namacurra, and then on a dirt road from there to the headquarters of former Companhia do Boror. As I detail below, we first toured the grounds of the company before heading to her father's house, where she introduced me to two *Secretários de Bairro* (neighborhood secretaries),[11] whom, as she claimed, had lived continuously on site and were therefore more knowledgeable about Macuse's history. They were also former workers of the Companhia do Boror. One was lean and taller than the other. Less talkative too. I could see that they had dressed somewhat formally, albeit not in uniform, and addressed me as they would when meeting dignitaries. Throughout our conversation they call me *Comissão* (Commission). I am used to people mispronouncing their name, so I do not correct them. When I finish my questions, I understand that it was not a mistake. They are locked in a labor conflict with the state over compensation owed to them for being laid off in 1997, when the company was formally dissolved. They hoped my visit would help them achieve a desired resolution.

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[11] *Secretário de bairro* is a title given to a community leader with responsibilities over a neighborhood. This figure emerged after independence, when the *regulados* were extinguished. They were a party-appointed position, although some of them could be related to the local ruling families. The position remained, even after the *régulos* were reinstated (Buur & Kyed, 2005; Lourenço, 2012; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999).

In my talk with the *secretários* I comprehended fully the centrality of Boror to the place and the peoples, far removed from any narrative about *prazos* and *donas*. While they listed the different authoritative women, a simple comment about one of them garnered my curiosity.

> The *nyakoda* in the colonial period was a [kind of] forewoman, a leader, [like] OMM[12] [today], the female collaboration in the *machambas* [agricultural fields].

The reference to OMM, the national women's organization, suggested that the function of organizing women continued to be relevant, even as the slavery and forced labor—with which these women were usually associated—were no longer part of the local economy. This made me aware of their double subaltern-authoritative status, and to question previous premises about them.

The *secretários* agreed to introduce me to descendants of *anyakoda* (plural of *nyakoda*) that still lived in the area. The Regulado de Voabil has five villages under its jurisdiction—Mulevala, Munigua, Raia, Mussariua, Massavira—each led by a *mwene*.[13] They chose Raia, where coincidently a woman had inherited the title *mwene* from her father. Unfortunately, I could not return to Macuse before July, during the dry season. Floods made the dirt road impassable. This would be one of the many obstacles I faced in accessing the multiple sites.

Mwene Raia's village, less than half an hour by car from Régulo Voabil's house, was a collection of square mud houses, with a *makubare* (woven coconut tree leaves) thatched roof under sumptuous trees. Though also with mud walls, hers was bigger than most houses. It had perfectly mud-plastered walls, was probably built out of clay

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[12] OMM (Organização da Mulher Moçambicana), was formed in 1973, as the female wing of the liberation movement led by FRELIMO, the Mozambican Liberation Front. It was a reflex of the female participation in the liberation struggle for the country. Their role was to inform and mobilize the rural masses to the cause of liberation (Arnfred, 1988, p. 5). Today they still play a role in mobilization and information activities, both in rural as well as peripheral urban settings.

[13] A *mwene* is one of several chiefs under a *régulo*, responsible for several families. In certain contexts, it is equivalent to a clan chief (Arnfred, 2011; Bonate, 2006).

bricks, and had a zinc roof. I describe in more detail my encounter with the daughters of the *anyakoda* in the life story of Nyakoda Marieta, a woman who featured in one of the songs they sang. They had explained to me how they and their ancestors used songs to keep memories of important aspects of their lives. The song they sang when I asked if they had songs about the *anyakoda* was about this particular *nyakoda*. After this meeting I would return one more time to Macuse, in 2015, to interview *Mwene* Raia.

I had already been in Quelimane for half a year when, during a conversation with a friend of mine, she told me that I should probably talk to the relatives of a Rainha Bala from Maganja da Costa. She held the position of a *régulo* (traditional leader/chief) and had recently passed away. My friend described the queen as renowned and fierce. She gave me the contact information of her nephew, who was the current *régulo*. When I first contacted him in August 2014, he was unavailable because he was campaigning for the presidential elections. Aside from being a leader, he is also a teacher, and both are usually drafted for active campaigning during election periods.

The drive to Maganja da Costa takes about four hours. We left even earlier than to Macuse. As with the trips to Macuse, a cousin of mine who rents cars organized a car and a trusted driver to take me. It is mostly a tar road up until Mocuba, the second city of the province, 200 km away from Quelimane. From there, there is a turn to a major secondary dirt road, which is broad and covered in red sand. The *regulado* is in the capital of the district. The houses in Bala were more sparsely placed than in Voabil and Raia.

I describe in detail my meetings with Régulo Bala in the section about Rainha Bala's life history. For this story, I insisted that I needed to hear his female relatives' version. He found it unnecessary, telling me, "I am the only one that knows the history, because I am the only one who was interested in hearing my grandfather." He finally acquiesced for me to interview his aunts and mother, the queen's cousins. That meeting was only possible almost a year later, in August 2015. After I met with them, the *régulo* requested the women to meet with him and the other representatives of the

family to give feedback on what they had told me about their collective history. I continued sporadic contact with this *régulo* over WhatsApp, and he kept me abreast of things.

During the "dead periods" when I was unable to reach the most remote sites because of the floods or an electoral campaign, I developed a habit of visiting an elderly lady who lived close to my aunt's house. I would walk there a bit before sundown, when the heat had receded. She sat invariably in front of her house, watching people go by, waiting for her son to visit her when he got off work. A few times, while we talked in her yard, she would stop other elderly people passing by and relay some of the questions I had asked her. A couple of times she also accompanied me to talk to people she thought could help me. Among those she stopped on the road was a granddaughter of a *nyanye,* who was also the daughter of a *régulo*. One of the women we visited together was the daughter of a *nyanye*, and another was the granddaughter-in-law of a *dona*. I grew up hearing people talk about the *anyanye* (plural of *nyanye*) with extreme deference. I had never understood the reason. After these and other encounters, it began to dawn on me that the *anyanye* and the *donas* were a similar category of women. They were either women born into elite families or married to men of power and influence.

The *dona* whose granddaughter-in-law I interviewed was Dona Amália Pinto. She was the widow of D. Amália's grandson, in whose house she was living when she died. This widow, a short and agile woman for her age—which I estimated to be close to 70—seemed both suspicious of and amused by my questions, and measured her responses carefully. She lived now in a rented backyard annex, having rented out her own house. D. Amália happened to be a second cousin of my maternal grandfather on his father's side. Her mother was my great-grandfather's sister.

In 2009, I had interviewed one of D. Amália's granddaughters, who used to visit my grandfather often while he was alive. At the time I was not concerned with this *dona's* life history. I did not manage to interview her again the whole time I was in the field in

2014, only upon my return in 2015. I describe in more detail our encounters in the section about D. Amália's life story.

Another informant for D. Amália's story was a great-granddaughter who had moved to Portugal as a child, and who in 2012 returned to Quelimane to reclaim her great-grandparents' estate that she had heard so much about while growing up. My uncle, my aunt's husband, suggested that I meet with her. She was youthful and excited to share her family history, although her version centered around her great-grandfather, D. Amália's former husband, Portuguese-born Gavicho Salter Sousa do Prado de Lacerda. She also agreed to take me to Prazo Carungo, her great-grandparents' estate.

We first visited the former Prazo Carungo estate in Inhassunge in January 2014. The *prazo* is located on the other side of the Rio dos Bons Sinais. We took the first barge across, which took us less than half an hour. The bike ride to the estate would take us double that time. There she introduced me to a former *capitão* (captain), with whom I talked briefly in the yard in front of his *makubare* thatched house, until the mosquitos chased us away at dusk. We also had to rush to get the last barge back to the city. Following a chance encounter in Quelimane, the great-granddaughter of D. Amália also introduced me to a former caretaker's son, whom I later interviewed. I met with her several more times, in restaurants, at parties, and even I visited her at a new place she had moved into and was refurbishing. When, at the end of my fieldwork in 2014, I called to say goodbye, she gave me her mother's contact information in Portugal.

I had planned my return from fieldwork so I would have a week's layover in Portugal, where I could meet D. Amália's great-granddaughter's mother and visit the archives once again. I met her at a bus station in a town less than an hour from Lisbon. She came accompanied by one of her sons. She was the widow of one of D. Amália's grandsons, the son of her only son who remained on the estate, and is buried in the property alongside his father, Gavicho de Lacerda. I spent an entire day with them reminiscing about life in Mozambique and memories of the estate. D. Amália's great-granddaughter confided in me that she was too young when they moved to Portugal, and she remembered very little. But her brothers were old enough, and the "return," as

the arrival of Portuguese descendants from the colonies after their independence was called, had scarred them. Her mother filled some of the gaps the daughter could not, and showed me additional family pictures. She patiently answered my questions, and treated me as a long-lost member of the family whom she missed dearly, though I never mentioned that D. Amália was indeed a distant relative of mine.

Since my field interactions and analysis are so embedded in my heritage, personal history, and relationship with Zambezia, I present more in-depth reflections on my reflexivity in a separate section below.

The multiple encounters mentioned above resulted in composite life histories—a life history constructed from fragments of different informants—of four women: Rainha (queen) Bala, Dona Amália, Nunu Ancha, and Nyakoda Marieta. Each of them represents, in my analysis, a different type of female power. Rainha Bala was a queen who fought for and held the title of *régulo*, previously an exclusively male title, by claiming rights through a lineage that includes a great-grandmother with an equivalent rank. Hers is an inherent power.

Dona Amália's mother was a *prazo* owner, and married a Portuguese-born man. She, in turn, inherited Prazo Carungo from her Goanese father. Both she and her mother, herself the daughter of a Goanese man, were part of the Zambezian Euro-Afro-Asian elite. They had both inherent power because they were born into elite families. They also acquired further power when they married men who elevated their status vis-à-vis the colonial society.

Nunu Ancha was the niece of Régulo Voabil, from Macuse. She was his surrogate sister, and the title *nunu* comes from being a Muslim woman of authority. In her case, she was descendant of *régulos* and was married to a *shehe* (Muslim cleric). The equivalent term for a non-Muslim woman of the same rank is *nyanye*, which also has some equivalence to the *donas*. Nunu Ancha, like D. Amália and her mother had both inherent and additional acquired power, through marriage.

Nyakoda Marieta was a forewoman who organized women's labor in the fields of the lessee company Companhia do Boror. She is remembered in songs. Hers is a subaltern power. But in this case, as I discuss below, I look at this power not from the perspective of subaltern resistance, but in its willing and indispensable participation as part of the governing social, political and economic elite.

What the above snippets are meant to underline is a more general aspect of my material, as well as a key aspect of my analytical approach: In each place, stories unfolded haphazardly, and without an apparent pattern and connection between places. I followed each story where it took me. However, connections between these *locales*—Quelimane, Inhassunge, Macuse and Maganja da Costa—relate to different Portuguese social and administrative structures, some of which were maintained and, to some extent, reproduced by the postcolonial state. *Locale*, as understood by Giddens (1995), is a spatially and temporally connected social system where different collectives that compose these systems interact.

The snowball method, which I employed, is consistently used to reach so-called "hidden populations" (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). Hidden populations are usually considered those that live in the margins of society. In this case, I use them to refer to those living in the margins of scholarship, specifically women of power and authority within African societies. As I demonstrate in the thesis, however, this snowball expansion showed that although the different sites are administratively linked and interact with Quelimane, they do not intersect with each other in terms of memory.

My first intention was to interview exclusively women, based on my presumption that some historical bias related to the under- or misrepresentation of women was related to there being fewer female historical sources on Zambezian historiography. This presumption was supported by discussions by women's, feminist and gender historians (Corfield, 1997, 1999; Purvis & Weatherill, 1999), as well as those within feminist anthropology (Ardener, 1985, 2005; Moore, 1988; Rosaldo, 1980; Walter, 1995). This was further exacerbated—as exemplified before regarding the exoticization of the *donas* and the description of the wives of the Mwenemutapa—by the colonial gaze,

which dominated the narrative about colonized subjects and societies, including perceptions of women and their purported role in society. This is a narrative that has survived long after colonial ties were severed (Amadiume, 1997; Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1988).

When my female informants suggested that I also talk to men, I faced a conundrum. To refuse to interview the men referred to (and introduced to me) by my female informants seemed to discriminate against the different ways women chose to tell their story, and to undermine the sources they deemed important and authoritative. In every case, the men referred to were those they thought had a better knowledge of events, were of the appropriate age, or had lived through the events/period in question. These informants also referred me to women, using the same age and event participation criteria.

The above has two implications. One implication is the perception of what the informants regarded as the history that was relevant to share with the researcher. The different narratives showcased ways of remembering and organizing the past. The men tended to recollect genealogies and mention dates. The women were less chronological, shared songs, quoted literary fiction and myths. They did not consider their haphazard memories to equate to history. The exceptions were the female descendants of owners of Prazo Carungo, which relied, for example, on genealogies drawn from church archives or inscribed in encyclopedias. This suggests that the difference may lie in literacy rather than gender.

The second implication relates to the initial intention to frame this as a work of the memories of women *by* women. This woman-centric approach begged the reflection of what constitutes a "woman" in the context of this study, or even if it is a relevant analytical category. There have been significant discussions about how to conceptualize women. Though the concept of gender as a social construct remains important in feminist theory, it has been criticized for "having the merit of stressing that gender is a social construction and the demerit of turning sex into an essence" (Moi, 2001, p. 4). For example, Judith Butler argued that gender is performative, a

"stylised repetition of acts" (Butler, 1988, p. 519), infused with historical and contextual meaning. She further argues that women as a category are ontologically insufficient, as women's experiences and cultural realities are dissimilar. This position is further developed by Marxist and black feminists, who reclaim the importance of class and/or race as equally vital parts for understanding the gendered experience (see e.g. hooks, 1984).

This monograph's objective of highlighting instances of the erasure or misrepresentation of women of authority in historical and scholarly texts, also extends to erasures done within feminist scholarship. Such erasures happen through the perception of the universalism of women's subordination (Mohanty, 1988; Ortner, 1989) or that gender is the only relevant category when discussing women and power (Arnfred et al., 2004; hooks, 1984; Oyěwùmí, 1997). Even as most feminists agree that women do not have a shared experience, many also agree that feminism is not merely a theoretical or intellectual set of endeavors but also a deeply political project. This means that sometimes it is necessary to essentialize concepts strategically to achieve the desired change (Grosz, 1990; Spivak, 1985, 1993b; Spivak & Gross, 1985). In this sense, my notion of women starts from two potentially essentialized categories: "women" of "power" or elite women, i.e., a specific class of women. As the ethnographic material will show, even within this category of women, there is plenty of diversity. This renders the strategic approach of essentializing the category of "women" useful as a stepping stone, but inevitably becomes an analytical hindrance. Therefore, the operative concept becomes "women" (pl.) of power, perceived as such within their societies. To allow for the internal diversity to emerge of persons who both are perceived as women and hold power, and who are, therefore, different from other women in their societies in their relation to the hegemonic power holders.

It is important to note that my interaction with multiple field sites is not intended as a way to locate the local within a global system (Marcus, 1995). Of course, there is no doubt that all locations are intertwined in a myriad of ways with global historical networks and processes, as the Zambezi region was part of the Indian Ocean trade network even before the arrival of the Portuguese (Bonate, 2003, 2007; Lobato, 1995,

1996; Subrahmanyam, 2007; Theal, 1916). During late colonialism, diverse international interests, including Swiss, French, British and even Norwegian, owned and managed so-called lessee companies in the region (Bertelsen, 2015; Vail & White, 1980). However, instead of focusing on the connections between these various locations and, say, international capital, the intention of this project was to understand how each location intersected with one another, as historical administrative spatial denominations would have it. Or whether their connections extended in disparate ways. In doing so, I have engaged with a type of fieldwork that Marcus has claimed to be part of the postmodernist tradition, which is to say, a "design of research that acknowledges macrotheoretical concepts and narratives of the world system but does not rely on them for the contextual architecture framing a set of subjects" (Marcus, 1995, p. 96). In doing so, I have privileged and followed "connections, associations, and putative relationships" (ibid., p. 97) to make sense of modes of world making and understanding. This mode of ethnographic research produces a "reflexive activist persona" in the ethnographer, with is concerned "about the loss of the subaltern" (ibid., p. 99) within the analysis. As Marcus further argues, this concern is offset by an evolving multi-situated field ripe with possibilities for expanding on or disrupting existing scholarly narratives. Although I would argue that a "reflexive activist persona" is inseparable from most current ethnographic projects, whether multi- or single-sited.

Additionally, I have also mapped and explored the temporality of the field, and in analyzing this I find the concept of the "trans-temporal hinge" (Dalsgaard & Nielsen, 2013, p. 14) particularly useful for the ethnographic analysis of historically contextualized multiple sites, as it "operates by bringing together phenomena and events otherwise distributed across time" (ibid.). In this vein, space becomes fluid, evolving, and dependent on emerging networks and connections. Whereas time emerges as a "glimpse of the ways in which different moments co-exist, stretch out, and allow for indeterminate series of becomings" (Grosz in: Dalsgaard & Nielsen, 2013, p. 9). By focusing on different emerging temporalities of the multiple sites, it is possible to capture change, conjunction, and disruption across perceived interconnectedness.

Analytically, this means that I have not favored a chronological or linear account of events. However, I do mention dates while quoting both historical sources and the narratives of the respondents. I have also not limited the time frame of the analysis. Instead, I have allowed the respondents' memory-based narratives to establish the relevant connections across time, space, and meaningful signifiers, fully aware that chronological and linear accounts are but narrative forms used by both the narrator (the informant) and the analyst (me).

The organization of the ethnographic text, though sequential, should not be construed as representing a linear approach to history. Instead, it traces different understandings of women of power and authority in the different sites and how these intersect or diverge, and which privilege different historical references in each site. In no way does this exercise intend to constitute a denial of coevalness, nor an allochronistic attribution to the subjects' realities, i.e., that different fields inhabit different temporal frames (see Fabian, 1983). Linear time is not irrelevant for the discussion and understanding of female power manifestation in the fabric of these societies even though the act of remembering is seldom linear, but somewhat more performative— i.e., "interpretation by which past experiences are continuously made sense of in the present" (Katto, 2019, p. 43).

Memory in orality and the archive

As should be clear from the above, the basis of my analysis was formed through a combination of both ethnographic material through interaction with my interlocutors and archival research, which I consider an additional ethnographic site. Although personal and family histories form the backbone of the ethnographic material, I use the archive as an initiator and engage with it to enrich the oral accounts. The choice to extend the ethnographic research using the archival material has led to exciting insights. A short survey of possible archives to choose from evidenced how the former colonial power holds continuing authority regarding knowledge it helped construct on its former colonies, which are preserved in its archives.

In Mozambique, there is only one archive of reference, the Arquivo Nacional de Moçambique (National Historical Archive), linked to Eduardo Mondlane University, a leading public institution. It is the reference archive for all history works about Mozambique. I visited its offices in downtown Maputo in early 2013, where I obtained a membership card. The reading room was relatively small. Around the room, sparsely filled mahogany bookshelves covered the walls. In a backroom, an archivist sat in front of an old, yellowed computer operating on DOS. I enquired about the process to access the right documents. What was described to me was akin to a lottery. It was preferable if I knew the exact title of the documents I was looking for. Key words would only yield limited results, and even if they were in the system, there was no telling if they would be found in the physical archive. Primary sources were housed in a separate building, on the university campus in uptown Maputo.

What I found, though, was to be expected. My reading of Ann Stoler (2009) had prepared me for the fact that each archive had its own taxonomy, and the search for the archive would also mean finding where and with which code one was most comfortable. It was with a somewhat demoralized heart that I started my survey of the Portuguese archives. I had hoped to feel more at home in my country's archive. I also abandoned the idea of venturing to any archive in Goa, as I initially had hoped to do.

By contrast to Mozambique, in Portugal there were several archives to choose from, all linked to different institutions. These include the Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa (Lisbon's Geographical Society), created in 1875, and dedicated to the creation of geographical knowledge about the African continent, linked primarily to Portuguese overseas possessions. The Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Tombo Tower National Archive), holds the most comprehensive collection of archival sources in Portugal, dating back to the ninth century. The Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (Overseas Historical Archives), holds the specific documentation referring to the Portuguese colonial expansion, up to the independences of its colonies following the Portuguese 1974 coup. The Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa (Lisbon's National

Library), housed in an Estado Novo[14]-styled behemoth, is the successor of Real Biblioteca Pública da Corte (Royal Public Library of the Court). This library has a long tradition of making available its documents to both the public and scholars. All these archives house documents related to the Portuguese presence and colonial history around the world.

The first archive I visited was the Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, without luck. It was closed indefinitely. This archive is in downtown Lisbon's Rua das Portas de Santo Antão. This is a pedestrian street where some important entertainment and commercial edifices of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were installed, making it one of the more modern and cosmopolitan locations of its time (Villaverde, 2006). I then tried the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, which sits in the sixteen century Palácio da Ega. Unfortunately, I had to locate every document manually at this archive, as there was no digital search option. It is near the Jardim Botânico Tropical (Tropical Botanic Garden) where the 1940 Exposição do Mundo Português (Portuguese World Exhibition) was held to celebrate 800 years of formation of the nation and 300 years of restoration following independence from Spain, and included depictions of the overseas territories' culture and pictures, some of which are still present on the grounds. The exhibition was part of the nationalist narrative promoted by the Estado Novo (Goncalves da Silva, 2008). The archives are also close to Palácio da Junqueira, where the Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas Ultramarinas (Institute for Overseas Social and Political Sciences), the institute that used to house those training to be colonial administration officers. Ironically, this was the institute where I received my undergraduate degree in Anthropology, and by then it was going without the overseas epithet.

In the end I opted for the Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa. Its high ceilings and marble walls offered a refuge from the scorching Portuguese summer heat. They also had a

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[14] Estado Novo (New State) is the name given to the corporatist regime of Portugal that was formed after the *coup d'état* in 1926 against the First Republic, which had deposed the existing constitutional monarchy in 1910. This Second Republic would remain until the *coup d'état* of 1974, which ushered multiparty democracy in Portugal and the independences of its remaining colonies in Africa.

user-friendly digital search system. Above all, they housed considerable colonial source material, though not exclusively that. People who frequented the archive had diverse interests and came from all walks of life. Some of the attendants were retired seniors who worked as volunteers at the archive. It felt like an oasis in a desert, and it became a pleasurable part of my day to be in the archive.

During this archival selection process, I found that there is no shortage of archives to collect information about Mozambique's history in Africa, Europe, and America. In an ironic example, I had to negotiate the rights to use pictures from the Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives in the National Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian, in Washington, DC. I had to do the same with the Arquivos de Macau (Archives of Macao).

The taxonomic logic of archives is filled with preconceived categories, which may well inhibit one's ability to make sensible connections or critically engage with the archival data (Stoler, 2009). After all, one must not forget that "even the most objective 'data' are obtained by applying grids that involve theoretical presuppositions and therefore overlook information which another construction of the facts might have grasped" (Bourdieu et al., 1991, p. 37).

I share the same understanding as Ann Stoler that archives are not neutral (Stoler, 2009) and they can also be regarded as sites of erasure (Luker, 2017) as well as cultural production (Smith, 1999). Whichever archive I chose would have been loaded with the heritage of unbalanced power relations and protracted intentionality. However, the intentionality carried within any study allows for profitable explorations of archival sources, as data is used to further alternate intentions, despite their original intended purpose. Or, as Mbembe reflects, the complex nature of the "Western" archive is that "it contains within itself the resources of its own refutation" (Mbembe, 2015, p. 24). The multiplicity of sites in Europe and the world where information can be gathered regarding details of Mozambique's history only adds to my conviction that there has been far more production and storage of knowledge on Mozambicans by "others," than by Mozambicans about themselves, which is not to say that they are

entirely absent. However, this unbalanced production adds a layer of urgency to enrich the representations, emphasizing those presented from within the postcolony. That is to say, a site for decolonizing knowledge, not by de-Westernizing the archive, but rather by reclaiming it and using it in ways that allow for a clearer perspective by the non-Western "Other." These are concerns that permeate this thesis and are discussed below.

In my entry to each field site, I searched as much for the narratives as the *lieux de mémoire*, "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself" (Nora, 1989, p. 7). These included the deeply embedded history in the location, architecture, and surroundings of each archive, which contributed to my uneasiness in working in some of them, rationalized under the guise of incompatibility with the taxonomic logic. In the ethnographic sites, these included the abandoned or decaying edifices, or the informants' mementos and memorabilia.

However, in each field site, the mementos and memorabilia shared by the informants varied greatly. In most cases, though, memories were based only on narratives and the occasional song. In Maganja da Costa, home of Rainha Bala, my informants offered a detailed description of her royal lineage, as they proudly identified as aNyaringa. The first time I heard the term was when I met the queen's cousins in August 2015 and explained that I wanted to hear about their history and that of Rainha Bala. The queen's cousins smiled and uttered collectively: *aNyaringa*! When I asked where the name came from, one of them explained, "We don't know, we found it," meaning that the term was in use already when they were born. Though I never asked their age, they appeared to be in their 50s to 60s. This meant that they would have been born sometime in the 1960s. I also asked the *régulo* what his aunts meant when they used this name. He responded, "The people of Maganja, the aNyaringa, they were *confusos* (troublemakers). There was a lot of resistance against colonialism."

In the literature, *aringa* is described as a wooden stockade surrounding a settlement (Isaacman, 2000; Matthews, 1981; Newitt & Garlake, 1967). *aNyaringa* thus means the people of the *aringa*. The *aringa* in Maganja da Costa is known for being run as an

autonomous republic by *achikunda*, former military slaves (Capela, 1988, 2010). The *achikunda* feature prominently in the literature about the *prazos*, as the military force that assisted *prazo* owners in waging war against local chieftaincies and polities (Rodrigues, 2006a), and against the Portuguese government, when their interests clashed with those of the *prazeiros* (Rodrigues, 2017). The *achikunda* also assisted in hunting parties. Some literature describes them as slaves "acquired through trade, slave raids, and the indigenous practice of voluntary enslavement" (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1975, p. 5). Others suggest that they could also be former or runaway slaves hired to join existing military ranks (Isaacman, 2000). Despite the literature connecting the *achikunda* history to the *prazos*, that link did not emerge in any interactions with informants from Maganja da Costa.

In Inhassunge, I could see the ruins of the buildings from the former Prazo Carungo inherited by D. Amália (see Figure 2), which was one of the last *prazos* of the region (de Lacerda, 1939). The informants of this site shared pictures of how the buildings looked initially, and of family events. They also shared the family's coat of arms, websites, newspaper clips, and genealogy charts. I visited part of the former *prazo* property, now divided into Carungo I and Carungo II. Carungo I is where the descendants of the former *prazo* workers resided, while refugees of the post-independence war mostly inhabited Carungo II.

Photo by the author

Figure 2. Ruin of the main building at the former Prazo Carungo

In Macuse on our first visit, Régulo Voabil's daughter made a point of showing me around the old Boror headquarters. We visited many abandoned buildings that formerly belonged to the company. A few buildings were occupied by the ruling party

and state structures, and by the NGO ADPP.[15] Others, now abandoned, still had faint evidence of socialist slogans celebrating the fourth Congress of FRELIMO,[16] held in 1983. At the *régulo's* house, the daughter showed me some pictures they stored on site, and that had survived the post-independence war.

When I met the descendants of the *anyakoda*, they graced me with songs that were both a parody and their memory. Two songs, which I describe and analyze in greater detail later, described the hardships of forced labor using a play on words, in line with what Achille Mbembe, using Bakhtin's concepts, called "the grotesque and the obscene" (Mbembe, 1992a, p. 4). A line in one of the songs, "*ntumo nukua ntaraku labani,*" translates as "smelly/that smells bad (*nukua*) bums/buttocks (*ntumo*) work (*labani*) the basket (*ntaraku*)." Laughing, my informants explained that this referred to a bottom clenched so tensely in fear that it could be used as to weave a basket. The third song talks about women in positions of authority.

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[15] ADPP is a Portuguese acronym that stands for Ajuda para o Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo – Development Aid from People to People

[16] FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique – Mozambique Liberation Front) is the party that resulted from the guerrilla movement that fought for the independence of Mozambique. From 1975 to 1990 it was the only party in the country.

Photo by K. Salé da Graça

Figure 3. Example of a ntaraku (basket)

What seems clear from the above snippets from each site is that life histories are connected to seemingly unrelated socio-historical events. In all cases, the shared memories belonged to similar chronological moment. These generally did not extend beyond the late nineteenth century, but each site had its own distinct relationship to this chronology. Understanding these unique trans-temporal hinges was very useful for understanding the field. In this way, these spaces, which have long shared administrative borders and a language, and have been described as sharing similar historical events, emerge instead as distinct spaces with their own historical/temporal logics and connections.

As can be gleaned from this discussion, the interviews that form the bulk of the field material do not constitute a systematic collection of historical accounts or oral traditions. Instead, they privilege family histories and social structures, which inform the historical context in which events happened. As such, and for the purpose of my

analysis, the actual historical events become secondary to family events and memories. For example, on one of my regular visits to my elderly friend, in March 2014, while describing different social categories, their characteristics, and how they interacted with each other, she recounted on two events related to her family infused with supernatural elements and that a same time can be read as commentaries to larger historical events. One included details of the First World War, with supernatural elements related to Catholicism:

> [My grandmother recounted how] Nossa Senhora do Livramento (Our Lady of Deliverance), who is Quelimane's patron saint, saved [the city]. There was a war. They almost reached Quelimane. Her husband was the commander of a boat. The German troops… English or French were coming here. He sent a message for the family to go to take refuge in the boat. They stayed for two days. The war stopped in Namacurra.[17] Nossa Senhora appeared. The Germans, when they saw this, stopped and did not go further. It was she who saved Quelimane.

The second event she described reflected on postcolonial precarity and loss of privilege. After all, my informant's grandmother had been the "daughter of influential people." She had married into a renowned family of Quelimane. The supernatural elements now turned animistic.

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[17] Namacurra is located 70 km north of Quelimane.

Her [grandmother's] father was influential in Namacata,[18] related to Indians, and her aunt was married to the administrator [of Namacata]. My "grandfather," father of my grandmother's brother from the same mother, if he were alive, we would not be suffering. He was the great healer, Nipapara. We would not be like this. He knew everything. He was a good healer. He knew everything that was going on in the area. [When] he was about to die… he raised hens at home. He had a giant rooster. One day he called his wife and told her to prepare the rooster. He was called because his son Nimangano was ill; he was weak in his legs. He [Nipapara] did not return home. That day that he had the rooster killed, he ate [it]. Took his satchel and left. Some 10 meters [later] he fell and died.

A *murmuchem* (termite mound) that sounded drums [inside] formed [where he died]. They found his cane and medicine satchel, but without the medicines. People were afraid. That road became deserted—no one [dared] to walk through it. Every day the drums sounded, [at the time he died].

Termite mounds are a recurrent theme in my informants' narratives. I explore this in more detail below, as they seem to relate strongly to the symbology of power, as alluded to by this informant. There is also plenty of literature referring to their religious, mythical, and even medicinal place in Mozambique and elsewhere in Africa (Malaisse, 2018; Premawardhana, 2018; van Huis, 2017).

The use of oral sources has been amply discussed, particularly concerning the understanding and criticism of written accounts about African societies. Two of the most influential writers about memory and oral history, Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Vansina, are concerned with collective memory (Halbwachs, 1950) and tradition and transmission (Vansina, 2009). Vansina is particularly influential in African

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[18] Namacata is located 10 km north of Quelimane.

historiographical methodology, as he was himself an Africanist. He put forward the notion that the narrated text and the written text needed different historical criticisms, as they were differently constituted:

> [Vansina's work] demands that historians evaluate oral testimonies and classify the kind of historical knowledge created in them. Oral texts are now seen as a part of the cultural history of a period and a region. With the help of a profound knowledge of their language, they should be used to study tradition and its relation to the social system (Leydesdorff & Tonkin in: Vansina, 2009, p. xii).

Vansina's work and others that followed, as they elevated oral tradition to be an equivalent to the historical text, planted the seeds of a "critical reading of European models about the African past" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 194) among African historians. Following such critical interventions, the domain of the oral was no longer deemed unreliable but instead cast as a legitimate source of scientific scrutiny and theorization. Africanist historians, including those who write about Zambezia, often refer to Vansina's body of work and include, as much as possible, oral testimonies in their work. Notable examples are the works of historians Eduardo Medeiros and José Capela, who began as a journalist and collaborated with postcolonial Mozambican historians and engaged with their body of work (e.g. Chilundo et al., 1999; see also Medeiros & Capela, 2010). Other significant works based on oral history and tradition include those of Leroy Vail and Landeg White (1980, 1983) on chartered companies in Zambezia.

Current approaches veer away from the dichotomy of oral vs. written. There is now an understanding that orality and literacy are intertwined, each containing one another's elements, particularly the latter. More importantly, each mode of communication encapsulates modes of knowledge production and transmission, of which the text (whether oral or written) is but a vehicle (Brown, 1980; Murray, 1988). It is through its symbolic content and construction, as proposed by Saussure, or through contextual utterances, as proposed by Bakhtin, that we can find meaning (G. Allen & Drakakis,

2011; Stewart, 1983), irrespective of mode. The ethnographic text is, then, the result of an "engagement with aural/oral modes and performances (and vice versa), and not just as an interaction of separate modes but also as merging, overlapping, or mutually working together as different sides of the same coin" (Finnegan, 2010, p. 10). Therefore, my text, which is produced from oral enunciations is, at times, "a transcript capturing (more or less) some spoken performance," at times "written from dictation," and at other times still a product of *aides-mémoire*, such as notes and paraphrases.

Arguably, reliance on oral sources is where (Africanist) history and anthropology mostly intersect. Nevertheless, the concern over historicity diverges somewhat. Historicity, as it concerns history, is generally focused on factuality and truth, whereas anthropology is often more concerned with how facts may have differently constituted truths, as perceived by different actors or witnesses. Marshall Sahlins defends the existence of an inextricable link between cultural practices, social structures, and historical interpretation (Sahlins, 1983, 1985, 2004). His concept of culturally specific historicities has been criticized for being unclear, as well as ignoring "residual and emergent forms, counterhistories with subversive agenda[s]" (Stoler, 1986, p. 80). He has even been criticized for being an apologist for cultural relativism, rendering anthropology "a form of cultural metaphysics, a romantic 'exercise in relativity' without scientific basis" (Shankman, 1986, p. 768).

Sahlins underlines that his point was not to argue for simple historical relativity (see Sahlins, 1999). Instead, he argues that as societies change, so do their approaches to and modes of constructing and understanding their histories (Sahlins, 2004). It is not only by comparing societies that this relativity is found, but also as related to temporality within societies. Ann Stoler concedes that despite what she perceives as weaknesses in Sahlins' approach to historicity, he offers "one of the best anthropological efforts to confront […] the relationship between structure and agency in historical continuity and social change" (Stoler, 1986, p. 80).

Taking Sahlins' integration of structure and agency into account, I would additionally argue that postcolonial communities such as those found in Zambezia, whose

representations have often conflated distinct societies into coherent social structures and cultural logic, cannot be understood only in terms of "Western" or "African" historicities. Just as there are competing political or legal logics functioning in parallel to each other (Bertelsen, 2016; Igreja, 2013; Meneses, 2006), there are also multiple historicities that constrain actors, but of which they can also make use. The interconnection between what is narrated, and how it informs existing or absent representations in the literature imbues the local historicities that emerge with both "Western" knowledge production and local "African" cosmologies.

In this knowledge production, memory stored in archives has a decisive role. It exists concomitantly as the guardian and a reminder of the shared history of the former colonizer and its former colonies. Scholarship on the archive's ethnography generally focuses on the judicial and administrative power emanating from the institution (Macfarlane, 1988; Trundle & Kaplonski, 2011). Alternatively, they follow Stoler's approach to the intricacies of the individuals contributing to the archive's creation and maintenance, with all their complexities, and carefully embedded in their historical contexts (Gouda et al., 2009; Protschky, 2011). In this case, as I explained above, I use the archive in a permanent dialogue with the fieldwork material. In this way knowledge stored and reproduced about women from the archive serves as an initiator for the dialogue about women of power in the field. Conversely, the narratives from the field inform novel ways of reading the archival material.

Matters of tongue

The interviews were conducted in Portuguese, my mother tongue, and eChuwabu, the primary language spoken in the fieldwork areas. Interviews conducted in eChuwabu were translated by other participants present during the interviews. This happened in Quelimane, when my elderly friend accompanied me to talk to the granddaughter of a *nyanye* and an elderly relative of hers who only spoke eChuwabu. We met in front of a house that stood at a crossroads of narrow pathways, where thin lines of wastewater ran down. They sat on the steps in front of the house, while I sat in front of them on

stones as makeshift chairs, and the *nyanye's* granddaughter translated for her elderly relative.

In Macuse, when I spoke to the daughters of the *anyakoda*, Mwene Raia and one of the *secretários* whom Voabil's daughter had introduced to me were present. We all sat in the front yard of the neighborhood's female *secretário's* house. Hers was a *makubare* thatched house, with well plastered clay walls like those of Mwene Raia. Around the house there was an elevated mound/step made of a mixture of sand and cement. We all took our place along this mound. The owner of the house sat in front of the house's door. Mwene Raia, who translated most of the conversation, stood under a thatched roof which led to the backyard. Mwene Raia also translated for an aunt when I interviewed them together at Régulo Voabil's house. There we sat on the front porch, Mwene Raia, her aunt, one of Régulo Voabil's nephews, who had helped arrange the meeting, and the same *secretário* who had been at the conversation with the *anyakoda's* daughters. The *régulo's* daughter had accompanied me to Macuse on that occasion too, but she tended to host affairs in the back of the house, and only joined when we let her know that the conversation was over.

In Maganja da Costa, I needed translation when I interviewed Rainha Bala's cousins. When I arrived, straw mats were arranged on the floor in front of a house, in the shade of a tree. A couple of chairs stood in front of the mats. The women sat on the mats, while the daughter of the homeowner translated. The women understood Portuguese enough that sometimes they would respond to my questions in eChuwabu before the daughter had a chance to translate.

Researching the missing and underrepresented women of power is part of a broader exercise of decolonizing the historical text. This exercise is done in both theoretical and practical ways. For example, the text follows orthographic rules when writing the different languages used in the monograph. When writing terms in Portuguese, the text follows the rules of Portuguese orthography. When writing terms in eChuwabu or other languages of Zambezia, the standardized orthographic rules for Mozambican national languages (Ngunga & Faquir, 2012) is the reference (see also glossary in

annex). This exercise is crucial because it relates to an ongoing restitution effort to give the same respect and importance to national languages that are afforded to the colonial language, Portuguese. In Mozambique, though Portuguese is the official language, since independence in 1975, there has been a movement to develop a language policy that addresses the complex sociolinguistic reality on the ground (Ponso, 2016).

Similar to French assimilationism, Portuguese late colonial language policies demoted African languages to the status of dialects, based on then-existing theories of superior and inferior languages (Farré, 2015; Michelman, 1995; Zamparoni, 2018). The exercise of exploring the terms' correct spelling goes beyond a direct translation into an effort to pursue meanings within terms. Dismissing the linguistic rules within historical and other scholarly texts is symptomatic of modes of thought and conventions that can prevent a deeper understanding of the peoples they attempt to describe and their social and political forms of organization.

Language politics is an important detail, as representation has often been coded through it. African linguists and philosophers have long argued that the ability to produce and read in one's language would help empower Africans (Thiong'o, 1992; Ukam, 2018). For example, they would have the ability to correct arbitrary classifications of peoples, places, or even languages (Mudimbe, 1988; Njami, 2011). Writer Simon Njami alludes to an effort that is necessary in order to represent Africa, one that is only achievable if one is "able to decipher the original language(s) in which they express their belonging and space in the world" (Njami, 2011, p. 202). A different view is held by fellow writer Chinua Achebe, who though saluting African writers who wrote in their native languages, contended that colonial languages had made communication among multiple language speakers possible. In his view, they were a necessary evil if one was to be understood by fellow citizens and beyond. Instead, talking about African writers using the English language, he proposed that the writer "should aim at fashioning an English that is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience" (C. Achebe, 1997, p. 347).

Like Achebe, I also believe that there is no other alternative to convey the African experience to a broader audience than to use colonial languages. The sharing of such experiences can and should be done using colonial languages in creative ways and infusing them with local terms, especially those that have not been translated, or whose translation does not convey the original meaning. For example, my informants often used the term *rainha* ("queen" in Portuguese) as the generic term to refer to women with official political authority. However, this term often did not adequately convey the original rank in their native languages. Case in point, Rainha Bala, one of the women whose life history I expand on, actually carried the rank of *régulo*. The daughter of the *mwene* who inherits her father's title, as mentioned above, is also called *rainha* in Portuguese, even though the *mwene* rank is below that of a *régulo*.

Furthermore, the term *rainha* in the European context may refer either to a female ruler or a king's wife. In Mozambique, it almost exclusively refers to either autonomous female rulers or female co-rulers within a ruling dynasty. Although women who marry rulers or other influential men also qualify as women of power and authority, they do not qualify as *rainhas*. While seemingly a minor detail, being attentive to linguistic rules and details became key to more profoundly understanding social formation and organization modes, helping us trace the endurance of categories and their social functions even when the nomenclature changes.

Reflecting on reflexivity

As mentioned above, the present thesis and the field it draws on are intertwined with my origins and upbringing. As a result of my upbringing my personal view of the society does not conform to its representations in historical texts, whether colonial or postcolonial. While I was not born in Zambezia, my foremothers were. As a child, when visiting my mother's mother on school vacations I would hear her reminisce about her past with her sister and other *avós* (grandmothers). In these accounts, women took center stage: They intervened in domestic affairs, family matters, and the interest

of the community, and they defined the course of family issues if husbands were absent, but also when they were present.

Like everyone in Zambezia, I also heard about the infamous *donas*, who feature prominently in history books and fictional literature, and how we were distantly related to them. The husbands and fathers of these women often hailed from Goa. All my great grandmothers had children from Goanese men. At least two of them were daughters of Goanese men with African women. These two were the maternal grandmothers of each of my parents. Though I have relationships with both my parents' paternal side, my knowledge of each lineage is more substantial on each maternal side. Mixed families tend not to follow traditional African lineages, as they have multiple influences. For example, the Catholic religion—followed by both sides of the family—and the legal practice of registering children with the father's surname, favor patrilineal practices. At the same time, the ethnolinguistic origins of each side of the family favor different lineage practices.

The ciSena-speaking people, to which my father's side of the family belongs, observe hybrid lineage practices resulting from the intersection of Shona (patrilineal) people and the Nyanja-speaking people. The Nyanja people are known as the Lake People. Their language was dominant among the matrilineal Maravi people and spoken north of the Zambezi River, across the Great Lakes region, including Lake Nyasa, which constitutes a natural border between Mozambique and Malawi.[19] In contrast, Shona was the dominant language south of the Zambezi River, in today's Zimbabwe and part of Mozambique (L. Rosário, 1989).

The eChuwabu-speaking people, to which my mother's side belongs, are mostly matrilineal due to their heritage from the Lolo peoples, part of the Makhuwa people who had been pushed downstream towards Quelimane by the Maravi around the seventeenth century. They later became known as the aChuwabu, or the Fort People, as they enjoyed Portuguese protection from the Maravi expansion (Capela, 2010;

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[19] Lake Nyasa is known in Mozambique as *Lago* (lake) Niassa, and in Malawi as Lake Malawi.

Newitt, 1982; Rita-Ferreira, 1975). Both Makhuwa and Maravi are overarching terms used to denominate linguistically connected polities (Medeiros & Capela, 2010). The Maravi polity, in contrast to the Makhuwa polity, was expansionist and organized along paramount chieftaincies (Gamitto, 1854; Newitt, 1982).

The reality of how kinship relationships unfold is naturally more fluid and complex than it is portrayed in most literature. As such, my family roots not only reflect the diversity and miscegenation of Zambezia, they also exemplify the mobility and fluidity of languages, identities and belongings of this imagined region (see Figure 4). Many ciSena speakers took refuge in the city of Quelimane during the civil war (1976–1992). For a long time, Quelimane—at the mouth of the river and the region's capital—was a major destination, and many families today have relatives who moved there from towns like Chinde, at the delta of the Zambezi river, or Luabo, further upstream. This movement followed routes of migration, trade, and even warfare, which had long been shaped by the river (Medeiros & Capela, 2010).

My maternal grandmother's mother was among those who moved from towns along the river to the capital. Despite being a ciSena speaker, her daughter—my mother's mother—was an eChuwabu speaker. My mother often told me how my great-grandmother would speak to her daughters in her mother tongue and they would reply in eChuwabu. Furthermore, while my grandmother spoke only Portuguese with her children and grandchildren, she spoke exclusively in eChuwabu with her sister and other *avós* (grandmothers).
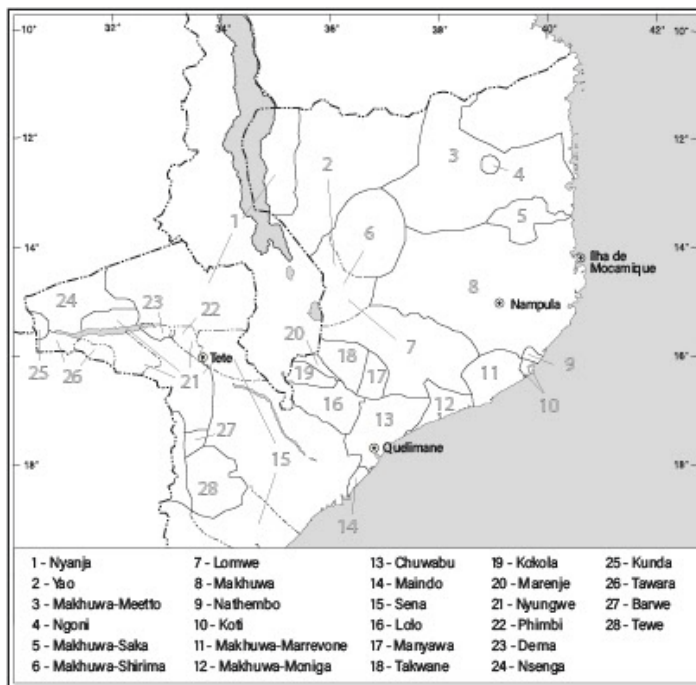
Source: based on ethnologue (Lewis et al., 2015)

Figure 4. Linguistic map of Zambezia and relevant neighboring influences

I engaged with the field through this understanding and personal stake, including all the benefits and challenges. Understanding the field was, in many ways, an exercise in understanding myself. Being a "native" researcher is always complicated. Although armed with this embodied knowledge of the field, I am also painfully aware of how distant I am from it. As Kirin Narayan puts it (see also Merriam et al., 2001), "the *loci* along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux" (Narayan, 1993, p. 671). The same process applies my relationship with my academic peers, something Narayan calls "enacting hybridity," including when ultimately the academic text is delivered with a mix of lively—often embodied—narrative and scholarly analysis.

Despite this embodiment of the narrative, the intention here is not for this thesis to be an auto-ethnography. That would have meant a conscious and visibility of my personal experience in understanding the social phenomena I am researching (Kruse & Sung, 1990). Instead, I position myself as any other ethnographer would in relation to the field, i.e., as "an active, situated, participant in the construction of accounts and representations" (Turner, 2000, p. 51), only I am in a position to borrow from particular embodied experiences that have strong ties to the places and people I am researching. And this extends also to practicalities in the field. Still, conducting ethnographic work for the academy "at home" has meant more proximity to the study object than, for example, research done through consultancy work.

While conducting consultancy research, I had institutional backup and logistical support. For this academic research, I relied mostly on personal networks to reach the field and informants. Those networks, in Zambezia more often than not, were relatives. As a result, I brought to the field a cumulative knowledge strongly informed by my upbringing and close ties with Zambezia, as well as long-term consultancy experience in the region and beyond. This has affected my analysis in two ways. Where relevant, I have added my personal knowledge to those of my informants to comment critically on the archival material and scholarly texts which I used as references. I also used knowledge accumulated as a consultant to extrapolate based on similarities found beyond the fields that inform this thesis.

Consultancy-based research is one of the few viable long-term avenues available to African researchers to conduct ethnographic work (Grinker et al., 2019; Onyango-Ouma, 2006), largely due to the defunding of African academies following structural adjustments in the mid-80s (Mamdani in: Halvorsen & Nossum, 2016; Zeleza, 2002, 2009). This type of research has been criticized for contributing to a specific type of knowledge production, one that favors a developmentalist/modernizing agenda, is weak on historicization and tends to ignore the colonial legacy, while depoliticizing and decontextualizing "the African national project and the African condition" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b, p. 78). In this context, Africans (informants and researchers alike) become "native informants" rather than producers of knowledge in their own

right (ibid., p. 83). As researchers with privileged, prolonged, and repeated engagements with the field, however, they have also been said to "listen and collaborate with local informants" as knowledge producers, all the while "devising a new ethic of audience that promotes an active engagement with its publics" (Goncalves in: Grinker et al., 2019, p. 418; see also Ntarangwi et al., 2006). This in-between location of personal and intimate connection to the field, its peoples, and its history; in-depth professional knowledge of its sociality; and academic uneasiness with its current representation are the initiators and the drivers of the analytical avenues of this academic exercise.

Decolonizing mis- and underrepresentations

The present thesis engages critically with postcolonial theory and subaltern studies, and with African, black, and intersectional feminism. Within these frameworks, as I detail in this section, I engage with the concepts of time and space as they relate to the geographies of multiple mobilities hitherto historically described concerning the colonial encounter. I use these concepts to dislodge the effects and centrality of colonialism, and to relodge other actors and effects. I also eschew periodization in favor of a *longue durée* view of history, where long-standing structures and meanings become apparent. The overall analytical exercise fits with a larger decolonial project that aims to discuss how Mozambican, particularly Zambezian, women within native hegemonic structures have so far been missing from or misunderstood by the colonial gaze. I argue further that these women have either been invisible or seen only from the perspective of resistance within postcolonial—mainly Marxist—and subaltern studies. Likewise, they have been ignored or otherwise analyzed in favor of universal male domination narratives within the feminist research and political activism that dominates Mozambican gender scholarship.

Within the decolonial project, I present possibilities for new representations of Mozambican women, and hegemonic social and political institutions based on what my analysis of the ethnographic material will show to be deeply held values in historical Zambezia. In this, I argue that hegemonic social and political institutions

have been adaptive, collective, and gender collaborative. I do this through three locations within the hegemonic. One, membership in dominant families, who have consistently controlled these institutions. Two, marriage as an essential social mobility mechanism and source of power for both women and men not belonging to dominant families. And lastly, as I show below, strategic leadership is consistently available to certain subaltern individuals within these contexts. Crucially, and central to my argument, women have occupied paramount chieftainships, meaning that many ruling positions are *not* gendered in a narrow sense, and that these leadership roles are not expected to be exclusively occupied by men. This means that women occupying them are neither usurpers nor exceptions. This can be seen in the terminology of the positions, which are often non-gendered.

Hegemony and subalternity

This undertaking contrasts Zambezian societies' epistemological representations—mostly historical texts—to cosmological understandings from the field. As I argue, these epistemological representations present a particular narrative and imagination of what has been called "the Zambezian ethos" (Capela, 2010; Medeiros & Capela, 2010). My understanding of epistemological representations is based on texts that produce and reproduce knowledge about Zambezia, its peoples, social and political organization and hierarchies, and women's place in them. These representations have prevailed even in postcolonial historical scholarship (Carvalho et al., 1988; Chilundo et al., 1999; Rodrigues, 2017) and I see them as being in need of an "epistemic decolonization" (Mignolo, 2007; see also Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a).

In this thesis, I undertake one form of decolonization through an emphasis on narratives that disclose the understanding of self and the society in which one is inserted, through song, dance, origin stories, metaphors, and others—in short expressions and material that reveal a cosmology that contradicts the narratives continued from the colonial to the postcolonial era. As argued by Joseph Hellweg and Jesse Miller, "African cosmologies shape African politics" (Hellweg & Miller in:

Grinker et al., 2019, p. 128). They permeate all interactions, rendering diverse aspects such as "wealth, reciprocity, capitalist exchange, [and] social hierarchy" inseparable from cosmology (ibid., p. 131). Cosmology here is understood as the way the world's order—or *l'ordre du monde*, as Mbembe (1992a, p. 10) puts it—is understood. It is an order that does not consider the metaphysical as separate from the social order, and how for example kinship and its intimate ties to politics generate both meaning and knowledge production (Abramson & Holbraad, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2017).

Cosmology, moreover, cannot be seen as located outside the realm of power and politics, and as I show, hegemony is located and operates within cosmological understandings. Gramsci's theory of hegemony is here relevant as it connects ideology and cultural representations, i.e., that "ideological assertions become self-evident cultural assumptions" (Lull, 1985, p. 34). In this, Gramsci differs from Marx; instead of materiality, social distinctions operate at the level of the conscious. Both Marxist-inspired feminist scholarship (hooks, 1984; Mackinnon, 1982) and Gramsci-inspired subaltern studies have focused on resistance to hegemonic structures and processes (Spivak, 1988) due to their political engagement with social change and for the emancipation of the subjected.

The concept of hegemony is relevant for this thesis in two ways. On the one hand, it is relevant for analyzing the subject matter, i.e., local cosmological understandings of women of power. On the other hand, it is also relevant for discussing the previous representations of the subject matter, i.e., epistemological representations of women of power in Zambezia. I am here mainly influenced by Raymond Williams' and Stuart Hall's reflections, who were, in turn, inspired by Gramsci and Foucault. Williams' concept of hegemony is processual, i.e., it "has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified" (R. Williams, 1977, p. 112). He also mentions the continuous resistance to hegemony, an aspect in which I am less interested.

On the other hand, for Hall, hegemony is the way power is acquired and maintained (Lull, 1985). Hall is additionally concerned with how and why hegemony succeeds. According to him, this happens because dominant classes "strive and […] succeed in

framing all competing definitions of reality" (S. Hall, 1977, p. 333). Hegemony is then the arena of interplay between domination and subjugation. It does so, not at the level of structure but rather of consciousness, in a way that does not necessarily depend on brute enforcement. It requires "willing agreement by people to be governed by principles, rules, and laws they believe operate in their best interests, even though in actual practice they may not" (Lull, 1985, p. 34).

This concept of hegemony is analytically helpful to unearth various aspects of Zambezian societies as they are remembered and represented by my informants, and which contradict long-term hegemonic narratives, for my informants are aware of the individual and structural limits imposed by both the colonial authorities and the postcolonial state to their social and political organization. Let me provide an example to illustrate the ways in which these limits both sediment and are flagged: In accounts about the choice of *régulos* in Macuse and Maganja da Costa, which I expand on further below, my informants talked about how their relatives were imprisoned for misappropriating tax revenues that they were entrusted to collect. *Preso* (prisoner in Portuguese) Raia was the name of Mwene Raia, born in prison as his mother had been punished for her brother-in-law's embezzlement. Bala *Mucheliwa* (prisoner in eChuwabu) was the name given to a *régulo* deposed and imprisoned for embezzlement in Maganja da Costa. Both men were simultaneously elite in their own societies and subaltern to the colonial state. Their symbolic existence as *mwene* and *régulo* is essential for the functioning of the colonial state, namely in their role as tax collectors. It also has opportunities and perils.

Despite all externally imposed changes and forms of violence—as in the example of imprisonment—the peoples of Zambezia, represented by my informants, manage to "make sense of their subordination in such a way as to sustain the dominance of those ruling over them" (Lull, 1985, p. 34). Here, rulers and ruled are equally subordinate to a more powerful ruling structure. However, they still relate to social and political hierarchical logics that supersede those of the ruling structure to which they are subordinated. As I show, those they rule over are too distanced from the overarching ruling institutions, the colonial and postcolonial states. As such, for the *populus*

(people at large), in a Laclauian sense (Laclau, 2018)—or the masses distinct from symbolic elites—the state is too distant. It is a mediating elite that effectively rules over them and dispenses the whims and wills of the overarching states and polities, along with their own. Therefore, while the colonial imagination distinguishes between the *dona* and *nyanye*, and subordinates the latter to the former, I show that the native *populus* sees only faint distinctions. Semiotically they represent the same: powerful wives of wealthy husbands. Their hierarchy is not meaningful in the racialized notions of the colonial representations, but rather in material wealth, i.e., gold or silver jewelry, and how intricate their clothing is. These aspects relate more meaningfully to their previously cosmological universe of power and hierarchy, which naturally diverged from that of the colonizer's imported point of view. Also because, while the colonial setting may have in some moments operated within local cosmologies—one example is the Cruz family, known locally as Bonga, who identified as Portuguese yet also related to their local subjects within their logic of leadership (Isaacman, 1972a, 1975; Isaacman & Isaacman, 1975; Newitt & Garlake, 1967)—for the most part it necessitated its own distinctions between rulers and subjects, which were the case of race and "appropriate" behavior.

Making sense of one's own subordination is possible because, according to Gramsci, "hegemony must be won and sustained through existing ideologies" (S. Hall, 1977, p. 333), and perpetually reinforced and secured in a complex arena that actively borrows from previous "ideological systems and sedimentations" (ibid). Men and women within this subordinate ruling group work to ascertain and maintain their dominant position over other subordinates and defend fellow dominant cognates and co-rulers. At the same time, subordinates make sense of imposed changes by linking new logics to recurrent meanings. In this sense, I see the women my informants acknowledge as powerful as a subaltern to the colonial system, and to a certain extent also to the postcolonial state. However, within the societies under whose logic they operate, they are part of the dominant structures. From whichever perspective, they display both autonomy and agency that stands the test of time.

Though they often possess symbolic power, at times with metaphysical roles and responsibilities, their roles are very much material and active in ruling responsibilities. They are linked to three kinds of power that I have identified as: inherent (those born into prestige and the elite), acquired (through marriage or non-hereditary ruling roles), and subaltern (members of the *populus* selected to intercede in their favor as they further the interests of the elite). I go into more detail on these categories below, in the discussion about gender and power. As I discuss further below, none of these three categories are mere arenas for women to exercise power, but rather concrete places that produce power to those within them, both men and women.

Gender, power, and feminism

Different feminist projects have accompanied postcolonial and decolonial projects. Most of them self-identified under the Marxist framework, with clear anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist agendas. These criticize colonial and Western representation of non-Western women as "monolithic, impoverished victims of patriarchy and/or capitalist development" (Asher, 2017, p. 523), neglecting other relevant locations for women, such as class, religion, race, nationality, and historical and political context. Chandra Mohanty denounces concepts such as the Third World woman as discursively produced in Western feminist imagination, with no equivalence in actuality (Mohanty, 1988). Meanwhile, Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí considers the whole framework under which gender scholarship is framed as a continuation of the colonial project and an imposition of a world vision that clashes with other world views (Oyěwùmí, 1997). The most consequential epistemological project of this critique is intersectionality, which focuses on "stressing, describing, and theorizing multiple forms of inequality among different subgroups of women" (Kerner, 2017, p. 847), with emphasis of their heterogeneity and divergent experiences (see also: Crenshaw, 2017; Nash, 2018).

Such intersectionality is particularly relevant in the literature on the African context, where women in authoritative roles feature abundantly. Examples include discussions

about queen mothers and matriarchy in African scholarship by Tarikkhu Farrar (1997); the volume edited by Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi on women in colonial histories (Allman et al., 2002); Christine Saidi's work on women's authority in East and Central Africa (Saidi, 2010); and Nwando Achebe's work on female Igbo kings (N. Achebe, 2005, 2011). These and other authors have been concerned with how female political actors were represented and affected, as well as how they related and adapted to changes forced onto them by colonial rule. However, they also underline the existence and relevance of women in African politics.

In the tradition of gender and sexuality studies, Achebe argues that analysis of any African society is incomplete if it does not consider the centrality of women, particularly in the spiritual world of such societies. For her part, Saidi refers to how commonplace female political leaders were in precolonial East-Central Africa, and to their spiritual role in their societies, using a mix of *longue durée* social history and political economy analysis. Allman et al., working on women's history—as opposed to gender history[20]—challenge the idea that there is a homogeneous way of representing African women. They also produce an alternative to the image of victimhood or subjugation often cast onto these women.

Although feminist scholarship has highlighted gender as "the primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated" (Scott in: A. Allen, 1998, p. 21), feminist philosopher Amy Allen claims that they were relatively late in developing a "satisfactory account of the concept of power" (ibid.). In feminist and gender theories, power has either been seen as domination—whether from a phenomenological (Bartky, 1990; Kruks, 2001; Young, 1997), radical (Collins, 1990), Marxist (Hartmann, 1979; Hartsock, 1985; Mackinnon, 1982), proto-intersectional (hooks,

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[20] Authors disagree about the separation between women's and gender history. Penelope Corfield held the opinion that women's history was and should be mutating to gender history, where it had a better chance of contributing to a paradigm shift, and also because a separate "herstory" had failed to emerge from women's history (Corfield, 1997). She further considers gender history to be more encompassing and inclusive without signaling the analytical supremacy of men (Corfield, 1999). June Purvis and Amanda Weatherill contend that a separate women's history must exist to maintain a specifically feminist agenda within the field of history, which they considered to continue to be overly male (Purvis & Weatherill, 1999).

1984; Truth, 1851) or intersectional (Crenshaw, 1991), structuralist (Ortner, 1972) or post-structuralist (Butler, 1999; Fraser, 1989) perspectives; as empowerment (Caputi, 2013; Khader, 2017; N. Wolf, 1994); or as agency (A. Allen, 1998; Kandiyoti, 1988; Madhok, 2013). Feminist epistemologists, more interested in the role of gender in knowledge production, tend to look at power from the perspective of standpoint theory (Harding, 1986, 1993) or assume an ontological point of view (Strathern, 1988, 2017).

African feminists like Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, Amina Mama, and Ifi Amadiume, critical of theories of universal male domination, have also favored an ontological understanding of gender and power (Amadiume, 1987; Mama, 2001; Oyěwùmí, 2005). Their primary interest in power resides in the postcolonial critique of the Global North's/West's epistemological hegemony, principally in centralizing gender in analyses concerning women. Among others, they argue that gender is not always the relevant category of oppression for every analysis of women's location in African societies (see also: Arnfred et al., 2004). Still within the postcolonial tradition, but favoring a more radical and political view, feminists like Patricia Mcfadden and Sylvia Tamale hold sexuality as central to analyzing power and oppression without diminishing the importance of race, class, global capitalism/imperialism, and patriarchal culture (McFadden, 2003, 2007; Tamale, 2006, 2020). For the most part, African feminists understand power in all its three manifestations: as domination, in the patriarchal and capitalist oppression of women; as empowerment, as understood through decolonized understandings of emancipatory female African sexualities; or as agency, as urged through political and radical feminist activism.

While depicting capitalist injustice and gender inequality, the present work does not engage with Marxist or feminist readings that address such inequality. By Marxist readings I mean works such as those of Leroy Vail and Landeg White on lessee companies and forced labor (Vail, 1976; Vail & White, 1978, 1980, 1983) or the work of Allen and Barbara Isaacman also on forced labor and resistance (Isaacman, 1975, 1992; Isaacman & Isaacman, 1983). And by feminist readings, I mean both women-centered works such those by Eugenia Rodrigues (Rodrigues, 2000, 2008, 2017) and those that engage directly on the issue of gendered political power. These include

Iamara Nepomuceno's criticism of Eurocentric narratives of nineteenth-century Zambezian society (Nepomuceno, 2019). Works from José Capela (1995) or Manuel Lobato (2013) are only partially women-centered. All the works focus on Portuguese or Portuguese-influenced colonial social and political structures.

Instead, this study is concerned with the representations that have informed those readings, and how those contribute to an incomplete or misguided analysis of the social structures and power dynamics they critique. This makes my analysis more closely aligned with George Levin's thesis on women among sixteenth- to eighteenth-century vaKaranga (dwellers of the Great Zimbabwe) (Levin, 2013) and Christine Saidi's work on women's authority in East-Central Africa (Saidi, 2010). Both argue that there was more parity than usually argued, and particularly Saidi situates her argument in a *longue durée* history. Both also suggest that colonialism created some of the imbalances that are seen today. While this is undeniable, I argue that even colonialism could not erase fundamental cosmological views of power and authority, which persisted even as social and political organizations went through radical and often traumatic change. Moreover, though gender relations did change considerably, certain women's access to power persisted in symbolic but also material ways. Moreover, these understandings of power also mediated some institutions hitherto considered products of colonialism, i.e., the *donas*.

Based on my ethnographic material, I have chosen to look at women's relationship with and location within hegemonic institutions. I focus on how they are a part of and cooperate with these institutions, rather than focusing on their eventual resistance to hegemonic and eventual loci of oppression and subordination. In my focus on "women of power and authority," I employed a Weberian understanding of these concepts primarily because Weber used them as complementary concepts. I also find that they present concrete and recognizable attributes of power and authority in the women's life histories that were shared with me. In other words, these Weberian concepts allowed me to enquire about how women could ascend to and hold influential positions even in the event of resistance (power) and how they commanded obedience (authority) (Uphoff, 1989). In this I depart from the focus on the agency, domination, and

empowerment of the above-mentioned feminist approaches, as I found that this departure served as a better route to establishing helpful dialogues for exploring cosmological understandings of power by my informants, whether metaphysical (in invocations of witchcraft), performed (in rituals like song and dance), or embodied (in jewelry and clothes), as well as how they relate to the three proposed categories of female power: inherent, acquired, and subaltern.

The Weberian concept of power is at the inception of most major power theories, from Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz's two faces of power (Bachcrach & Baratz, 1962)—decision making and non-decision making—to Steven Lukes' third power (Lukes, 2005)—ideology within a social structure. Bachrach and Baratz essentially argue that power is exerted both when an individual has the power to make decisions that affect other people, AND the ability to influence "social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous" to them (Bachcrach & Baratz, 1962, p. 948). In this, they are critical of a concept of power that relies only on the location of decision making. Lukes' contribution is a critique of Bachrach and Baratz, inasmuch as both faces of power they present focus excessively on the behavior of individuals (Bradshaw, 1976). His proposed third dimension asked for the recognition values and ideology held by individuals within societies to allow for a better understanding of the mechanism of power (Lukes, 2005).

The Weberian concept of power also partially influences Erik Wolf's four dimensions of power found in attributes of a person: in the ability to impose one's will on others, in organizational power, and finally in structural power (E. R. Wolf, 1990). This latter dimension is of interest to my analysis, as it refers to hegemony, how power is "diffused throughout a society" (J. Scott, 2008, p. 30), or in Foucauldian terms, "the power to govern consciousness" (E. R. Wolf, 1990, p. 587).

From my reading of the archives and subsequent engagement with the field, I focus on three categories of women of power: autonomous rulers or co-rulers (as sisters), to whom I attribute inherent power; adjacent rulers (as wives) with acquired power; and

finally subaltern rulers (like the female forewomen *anyakoda*) with subaltern power. Women born into ruling families hold inherent power and can contest leadership positions alongside men. Importantly, as argued by Oyěwùmí, like elsewhere in Africa, paramount chieftaincy roles in Zambezia, even as they have become increasingly occupied by men, are not necessarily gendered positions.

The most emblematic example in my field is Regulado Bala, whose name comes from a woman. The original Rainha (queen) Bala had been forced to abdicate her rule in favor of a son-in-law, however all rulers of the region descend from her. Her great-granddaughter, whose life story I will feature in this thesis, successfully challenged her nephew's appointment as *régulo*. Their rulership is not gendered, meaning that both women and men can rule. On the other hand, when ruling positions are gendered, they are often complementary, as with the *apia-mwene* (female clan co-leaders) among the Makhuwa peoples. The *apia-mwene* are often sisters or female relatives of the *mwene* (clan leader). Likewise, among the Maravi, the *mafumukazi* (women chiefs) were often sisters (or female relatives) of neighboring chiefs who ruled autonomous territories which remain interconnected and complementary to each other. In these cases there is both a female and a male ruler that rule jointly and complementarily.

Feminist scholars consider marriage and sexuality as particular arenas in which patriarchy exercises domination over women. Catharine MacKinnon, for example, considers patriarchy as "a system originating in the household wherein the father dominates, the structure then [is] reproduced throughout the society in gender relations" (Mackinnon, 1982, p. 529). On the other hand, Joan Scott critiques the heteronormativity of marriage inscribed in many laws governing family matters and sexuality (J. W. Scott, 1999). Countering such generic analyses of marriage, my ethnographic material suggests that marriage can be a place of empowerment both for men and women. For instance, my informants in Macuse used the term *nyanye* to refer to an important person's wife. It was considered an equivalent to *dona*. Likewise, the wife of a chief was given the honorific *mussano*. Both roles were to be as respected as those of their husbands. Conversely, in both Macuse and Maganja da Costa, the first *régulos* instituted by the colonial authorities were sons-in-law of paramount "queens."

This means that they had acquired their power by marrying into the royal lineage. Such power also becomes limited by the fact that the ruling lineage is traced through their wives. As such, even if they had multiple wives, only children from the wife through whom they had ascended to leadership (or other descendants from her lineage) were eligible to rule.

Sylvia Tamale critiques an analysis of sexuality from the perspective of "violence, disease and reproduction" (Tamale, 2011, p. 48), in favor of one that takes into account sexual knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors (Tamale, 2011, p. 17). According to her, women's power and autonomy were eroded by a colonial-era conflation of organized religion, cultural beliefs, and state laws, which control sexualities, particularly those of women. Similarly, in my field sites, organized religion and the colonial state have worked to undermine for instance female initiation rites. These are also considered by some feminists, sites of reproduction of unequal gender roles, the entrenchment of patriarchy, and generational tensions (Osório & Macuácua, 2013). Others consider them sites of production of sexual autonomy (Arnfred, 2011; Bagnol, 2013; Bagnol & Mariano, 2012). The repeated mention of initiation rites across all sites, and the respect for the women who managed them, reinforces the latter perspective. Moreover, through their position in the initiation rites, these women could acquire and accumulate other prestigious responsibilities as midwives and counselors to leaders.

Lastly, subalternity, as discussed above, has been theorized as—following Foucault— the lack of need for direct disciplinary action, as "people have learned to exercise self-discipline over their own behaviour" (J. Scott, 2008, p. 30). In a Gramscian sense, subaltern coalescence—complicity in one's own domination—is possible because dominant ideology "transcends [dominant social groups'] narrow economic-corporate interests, that includes the interests of subaltern groups, and is capable of acquiring the active consent of the popular masses" (Green, 2011, p. 399). As Gayatri Spivak contends, subaltern women are "even more deeply in shadow" than other subalterns (Spivak, 1988, p. 28). Generally, subaltern studies, like many feminist epistemologies, attempt to highlight aspects of subaltern agency and resistance "in order to pursue

emancipatory possibilities" (Chandra, 2015, p. 563; see also Escobar, 2001; Guha & Scott, 1999; Spivak, 1988). On the other hand, my ethnographic material shows in the *anyakoda,* a long-running element of subaltern leadership with authority conferred by hegemonic ideological structures that serve both the dominant and subaltern groups' interests. Women in this position had an increased possibility of social mobility, as was the case of a *nyakoda*, who lost her subaltern status when she became a *mussano* (wife of a chief). They also interceded for other subalterns they led, and had the legitimacy to speak up against colonial excesses while at the same time being complicit in them.

Challenges of time and space

Time and space are critical postcolonial concepts and have been central in subaltern studies. As historical anthropologist Saurabh Dube put it,

> The first formations of subaltern studies were founded on dominant,
> singular yet hierarchizing, temporal and spatial representations that
> located (passive) subaltern groups and their governing (feudal) cultures
> of rule in times and spaces that were behind those of modern politics.
> (Dube, 2016, p. 14)

The alternative representations offered by subaltern studies provided new "temporal–spatial matrices," albeit "only once the subalterns broke through the codes that governed their passivity" (ibid.). For Dube, time and space are part of knowledge-making, and mostly set community in opposition to the state when explaining social interactions and politics.

General historiography on Mozambique is firmly centered around Portuguese conquest and power consolidation. For example, Malyn Newitt's *History of Mozambique* (Newitt, 1995) initiates in the sixteenth century. On the other hand, post-independence historiography reveals the other side of the same coin by relying heavily on the colonial encounter and anti-colonial resistance. This despite a noble effort to include

precolonial elements based on archaeological evidence and oral account registries. Three volumes produced post-independence by the history department of the country's then sole university are entitled: *História de Moçambique. Vol. 1, Primeiras sociedades sedentárias e impacto dos mercadores (200/300-1886)*—The first sedentary societies and the impact of merchants (200/300–1886) – volume 1 (Carvalho et al., 1988); *História de Moçambique, Vol. 2: Agressão Imperialista (1886/1930)*—The imperial aggression (1886/1930) – volume 2 (Chilundo et al., 1999); and *Moçambique no Auge do Colonialismo, 1930–1961*—Mozambique at the height of colonialism (1930–1961) – volume 3 (Hedges et al., 1993).

Additionally, this historiography has relied upon a periodization primarily informed by colonial archival resources, even when oral sources are also used. As a result, time and space fail to become detangled from the colonial lens and representation. Historicity, which is history understood as linear and progressive, assumes a purposeful time-consciousness that defines history and the ontology of life (Marcuse, 1987). Even subaltern studies scholars (Chakrabarty, 2000; Guha & Scott, 1999; Spivak, 2012) have been criticized for being unable to escape historicity, instead perpetuating chronologies and eventually also categories established and fixed by historical texts (see e.g. Dube 2016). It follows that existing texts and their timelines often limit our understanding of the trajectories of diverse (read: "Other") collectivities.

While working to piece together the historical context of Zambezia, I attempted to understand its social and political configurations, in both time and space, beyond the Portuguese colonial historiography and established borders. Scholarship of the region (Capela, 1995; Isaacman, 1972b; Newitt, 1982; Newitt & Garlake, 1967; Rodrigues, 2013) already suggests extreme mobility, social formation volatility and self-ascription. However, it generally establishes a timeline that is centralized around the *prazos* and geography that imagines a collective identity loosely linked to their establishment, prevalent even after their extinction (Capela, 2010; Medeiros & Capela, 2010).

Instead, my ethnographic material suggests that individuals and communities in the different sites exist on coeval (contemporary) timelines, yet diverge in the references they establish across these timelines. This aligns with historian Reinhart Koselleck's multiple temporalities theory, which imagines the possibility of different timelines, focusing on different periods and moving at different speeds (Jordheim, 2012). As I detail below, in Quelimane and Inhassunge, informants held memories linked to the former *prazos*, those in Maganja da Costa related to the *aringa*, and those in Macuse related to the lessee companies. Their spatial references also diverged. Though some cosmologies related to social and political structures, hierarchies, and authoritative categories may have been unifying, they can be understood to exist beyond colonial references and even an imagined Zambezian ethos.

Giddens (1995) uses the term *locale* to define these spatial references. *Locales* are where one can understand social systems because they are where different collectives interact on a day-to-day basis. This concept is a part of his structuration theory, where he argues that societies both *are* and *consist of* social systems structured in time and space. Importantly, *locales* are not fixed immobile areas, nor are they contained within boundaries. Daily interactions in these locales turn into practices, and the most persistent may transform into institutions.

For example, the *anyakoda* persisted in places where female collective work was significant. They were mentioned in Quelimane, concerning the *prazos*, and in Macuse, concerning forced agricultural labor in the lessee company. They are also mentioned in the literature concerning mining in the Maravi polity (Gamitto, 1854; Newitt, 1995). Geographically, some of these spaces coincide, as one system took over another, making the persistence of this category possible. However, in Maganja da Costa—where *prazos* also existed, but direct administration happened earlier, and female collective work was not considerable—this category is not mentioned.

On the other hand, though eliminated in all sites, the initiation rites persist in the margins of those living in Maganja da Costa, extending their spatial reference to a Makhuwa-speaking region even though they are eChuwabu speakers. Also, the name of the rites,

emwali, derives from a Maravi queen. It is a term used across the north of the Zambezi, a legacy of the Maravi polity's reach, shared by multiple peoples even after its demise.

Finally, the *donas* had a special relationship with Quelimane, where they stayed even though their *prazos* were located elsewhere. Their use of ciSena, as the preferred language of communication in a place where eChuwabu dominated, indicates their emotional and spatial attachments.

Decolonial futures

The decolonization debate, though it has been unfolding for a while, is not yet completed. Due to global colonial experiences, there are multiple trends, some advocating for definite epistemological alternatives (Adesina, 2008; de Sousa Santos & Meneses, 2010, 2020; Escobar, 2016; Mafeje, 1992). African scholars like anthropologist Archibald Mafeje are critical of epistemologies used to study, describe, understand, and represent African peoples and realities. He, among others, called for the decolonization of social sciences "from biasing Eurocentric rationalist, modernist, development theories that dismiss the active role to African people's genuine local cultures in their self-critical and endogenous emancipation" (Devisch & Nyamjoh, 2011, p. 2). Mafeje was highly critical of anthropology and its use of epistemologies exogenous to the peoples it studied. Likewise of African scholars who have internalized and continue to reproduce misrepresentations of their own lived experiences. He held that social knowledge production was based on a "racialised epistemological underpinning" in which "Africans have been co-opted and schooled as passive consumers without voice even on matters pertaining to their own realities and existence" (ibid., p. 4).

Other decolonial advocates opted for a less radical rupture, but with reinforced awareness and critique of knowledge production (Bhambra, 2014; Mamdani, 2016; Mbembe, 2015; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a; Okech, 2020). Proposals for change in the epistemological paradigm include co-production with study subjects and engagement

with subjects that are in their interest (Devisch & Nyamjoh, 2011). It also includes the recognition and consideration of knowledge produced outside the academic venue, with the intention of reducing the extractive trend wherein the African contributor is not acknowledged simultaneously as a producer of knowledge (Grinker et al., 2019). These proposals face a challenge in creating epistemic narratives and thoughts that do not essentialize and further exoticize African peoples and ontologies. These narratives often lead to the myth of the revivalism of idealized ontologies untainted by colonialism (Zeleza, 2002).

The additional challenge of endogenous knowledge production is to make it simultaneously relevant to epistemological discussions outside Africa. However, this has been criticized as an "uncritical celebration of the globalization and cosmopolitanism that underpin European hegemony" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 48). Radical projects like *Epistemologies from the South* (de Sousa Santos & Meneses, 2010), which set out to challenge all forms of epistemic sovereignty, have been criticized for using the "conceptual and theoretical tools of Northern thinking" (Nunes, 2009, p. 117). More critically, epistemology as a concept is itself embedded in a specific form of knowledge production, which it calls scientific. It establishes the criteria for truth and falsehood in knowledge, with the conscious purpose of demarcating science from other modes of knowledge. It would be contradictory to consider "epistemological" modes of production that do not conform to those criteria. Other authors have used "ontology" as an alternative, meaning ways of understanding reality (Blaser, 2013; Castro, 1996; Escobar, 2016; Ingold, 2013; Latour, 2013). In what follows, I have preferred to establish the possible dialogues between the established epistemological narratives and "cosmologies" (modes of world-making) emerging from the field. As a whole, this thesis is an experiment in outlining possibilities for resituating African women vis-à-vis hegemonic structures by criticizing the persistence of colonial representations, including in postcolonial scholarship.

The discussion about decolonial possibilities neither focuses on the past nor seeks to map the colonial impact, but instead on the current potentialities and previously

neglected perception of Africa. This project reacts to a perception of the continent as static, sedentary, and condemned to backwardness associated with "tradition." Contrary to commonly held perceptions, the processes of decolonization and foundation of independent states, with their paradigm discussions and shifts, have happened in a "space of confluence shaped out of cultural mobilities, encounters, and inventions" (Fila-Bakabadio & Palieraki, 2018, p. 120), with production at the local, national and transnational levels. This approach holds that "African researchers have to assume the responsibility of knowledge that carries at its foundation a scientific discourse that is the emanation of the material life of their social political contexts" (Sarr in: Boukari-Yabara, 2016, p. 151). This allows Africa's own "self-apprehension" instead of the continuous position of informant or subject of issues that do not relate to its epistemological concerns and priorities (see also: Grinker et al., 2019).

Based on my ethnographic material, I present possibilities for rethinking notions of power and hegemony critically, as well as women's relationship with them through membership in an elite group, marriage, or leadership of a subaltern group. These reinforces the concept of women exercising non-gendered political power, present marriage as a distinct empowering arena for both men and women, and looks at subalternity from the perspective of cooperation with the hegemony. The result is a narrative of social and political organizations where governance is collective and network-based, including both men and women, and representatives and organizers of the subaltern. This means that despite them being highly hierarchical, African societies also possess characteristics that would otherwise be characterized as inclusive. Were ideals of modernity to be followed, the existing template does not impede democratic practices or gender equity projects. Suppose one is critical of the Eurocentric underpinnings of the modernization project that effectively funds and permeates African governing politics. In that case, one can still argue that given the continuous experience of violent relationships with the state—both colonial and postcolonial—Africans can, within their self-understanding, expect inclusive institutions with rulers and governance that can also be contested.

Organization of the text

This monograph is divided into four parts. In Part 1, I present a comprehensive history of a sociologically imagined Zambezia by engaging with the literature about the area and its peoples. There, I present the diversity of the people and their mobility, as well as the renaming and reshaping political organizations over the *longue durée*. I argue against a view of Zambezia as a coherent social and historical place, as suggested by the historiography relying on colonial archives and representations. I further argue that the existing historiography has placed undue emphasis on the *prazo* system as a precursor and unitary force of Zambezia as an imaginary social complex. In doing so, I set the scene for connecting social and political phenomena otherwise dispersed across time and establishing multiple historical timelines not based on chronology but a trans-temporal association of networks and meanings.

In Part 2, I extract the different categories of women of power and authority described in the scholarly literature on the history of Zambezia and its peoples. I then contrast these categories with those encountered in the field to examine how specific female authoritative roles were either ignored, misunderstood, or diluted in historical texts. I present the multiple ways women operated within their societies' hegemonic structures, critically engaging with the feminist and Africanist debates about women and power. With a focus on three forms of power held by women emerging from the field—i.e., inherent, acquired, and subaltern—I showcase which forms of power are gendered and which are not. Likewise, I present instances of women yielding power from a subaltern position in ways deeply imbedded within the hegemony, as opposed to the most common form of understanding subaltern power through resistance. I argue that a decolonized appreciation of women's power categories arises through a combination of ethnographic engagement and a *longue durée* historiography. This way, such categories' deep meaning can be contrasted with their description and representation across time. By decolonizing, I mean recognizing the differences between epistemologically predefined concepts and how cosmological understandings of such concepts challenge their original assumptions.

Part 3 presents the detailed life histories of selected female authoritative actors who embody the different power types described in Part 2. This part further evidences how overarching events described in the region's historiography produced different outcomes across different spaces within Zambezia, and to the roles of authoritative female actors in these diverse ethnographic realities. I also engage in the discussion of memory from a historical and methodological point of view, through the lens of privileging female informants. I show how they provide an added value in evidencing gaps in the representation of the social and political structures to which they belong.

Part 4 reviews how the ethnographic engagement has contributed to a critical reading of how women are portrayed in the existing literature of the Zambezi region's historical records. In doing so, it positions itself within a broader Africanist decolonization debate regarding scholarly work representing Africa, its peoples, and social and political structures. In this part, I argue that the decolonial project, though analyzing the past, is concerned with the present and future representation of former colonial spaces and hegemonic discourse about these spaces. The decolonial lens applied to the analysis of women of power and authority in Zambezia challenges representations of women established by the colonial gaze, which, as I show, have gone unchallenged both within the postcolonial Marxist historiography, and feminist and woman centered scholarship.

On the one hand, it allows for an insider understanding of enduring power systems and how they adapt and survive. On the other hand, it showcases the concrete ways certain women are located within the hegemony, not as tokens, but as active participants and interested parties. Their participation is not a means of guarding the patriarchy against other women, but rather reveals them as part of a ruling elite of men and women, often with complementary powers, operating through distinct notions of hierarchy and dominance.

1 Empires, *prazos,* and companies - coeval time and space, discordant distributed histories

To contextualize the discussion that follows, I critically expand on the broad historical context of the area where I conducted my fieldwork with reference to the literature. In this engagement I point out what I perceive to be gaps and contradictions within the existing literature. The description encompasses a broad period, and discusses changing geographies of naming and identity attribution to peoples and languages. The main objective is to present the mobile, complex, and hyper-diversified context that is the ethnographic space of this monograph. With this, I argue that Zambezia should not be viewed as a social and historical place whose diversity is contained within a singular ethos, as suggested by some scholars (e.g. Medeiros & Capela, 2010). The discussion further eschews linear temporality in favor of a trans-temporal view of time, i.e., looking at social phenomena and organization modes "that are otherwise distributed across disparate moments in time" (Pedersen & Nielsen, 2015, pp. 123–124). Overall, the issues brought up here serve as a prologue to the following discussion, which explores the gaps concerning women of authority in the region.

The historical description is purposefully *longue durée*, with two goals. One is to be able to display the scope and convergences of the many actors and societies, including African states and polities, Asian traders, and finally European settlers. As such, it favors a view of this region's history that is not centered chiefly on European arrival, even as it still uses a European archive as its main archival source. The second is to prepare the contextual ground in which the ethnographic material will be embedded.

Unveiling the chaos behind the bounded chronology of the history along the Zambezi

The name *Zambézia* (in Portuguese), which currently stands for a province of the same name in Mozambique, derives from a long-debated denomination for a broader region, the Zambezi Valley. While reading different scholars who write about the history of Zambezia, and by extension, the Zambezi Valley, I have found the notion of the

"Zambezi Valley" to be almost ungraspable. One reason is that the term is used in a relatively broad sense by scholars. The influential Portuguese historian of Zambezia José Capela affirmed that only scholars use the notion of the Zambezi Valley (Capela, 1995). Instead, he considers that the correct toponomy for the region to be Zambezia. However, his understanding of Zambezia does not correspond to the province of the same name, but rather to a more expansive region where a distinct hybrid "manorial system" developed (Capela, 1995, p. 15). The manorial system he refers to is that of the *prazos,* land leased by the Portuguese crown to Portuguese settlers, and passed through inheritance for several lives (generations). This system, for Capela, stands for the centrality of the Portuguese presence in the construction of the region's sociocultural matrix and identities, and subsequent hybridity. Zeleza has scathingly criticized this highly celebrated form of hybridity in the following terms:

> Valorization of the colonial ambivalence and hybridity ignores the fact that colonialism was a space and moment that entailed not only negotiations, but also negations (Zeleza, 2009, p. 130).

Capela is not the only scholar who sees this region as more of a sociological than a geographical space (see e.g. Pelissier, 1994)—a space that is purportedly linked to a shared history and is intricately linked to the early Portuguese colonization of the region. The interchangeability of "historical" Zambezia and the "scholarly" Zambezi Valley comes from a decree dated 4 February 1858, where the term Zambezia was used for the first time. The decree states that all territories of the Portuguese Crown in the "Zambezi valley" should from then on be called "Zambezia" (Capela, 1995, pp. 17–18). This term would then serve to demarcate precisely and almost exclusively the geography of the *prazos*. Thus, constructed on these terms, the term immediately negates and ignores the relationships and interactions of native peoples that may have occurred within and beyond this delimitation, and alternate forms of organizing. It establishes an immediate subordination of existence with a mere decree.

The *prazos* included territory beyond the area immediately adjacent to the Zambezi River, where over time, land owned by Portuguese subjects had expanded. Because

most *prazos* stretched along the Zambezi River, following a prolonged presence of Portuguese forts, trading posts, and settlement towns in the area, this historically derived colonial practice of expansion and naming sealed the association between the denomination of the area and this specific form of settlement.

To complicate matters further, for anglophone scholars like T. I. Matthews (1981), the Mozambican part of Zambezia is called the "Lower Zambezi complex." The term separates the Portuguese-influenced Lower Zambezi, situated in present-day Mozambique, from the Middle Zambezi, which runs across and creates a border between Zambia and Zimbabwe, previously English colonies. This separation exemplifies one of the many instances where "the colonial era defined the borders of an artificial African space" (Njami, 2011, p. 198). This border setting often leads to a scholarly assemblage of historical interconnections contained within artificially assigned borders, whether concrete or perceived, which sever or ignore meaningful relationships that may extend beyond those borders or operate in distinct ways.

As I discuss below, the body of scholarly work about "Zambezia" *does*, to some extent, recognize the richness and diversity of its peoples and their interactions. However, it problematically links the sociology of this space chiefly to Portuguese expansion in the region. As a result, the Zambezi Valley idea seems to be associated (if unconsciously) with the "myth of creation" of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique. Through this logic, scholarly work has fixed "space"—however flexible and imaginary—to the colonial enterprise, forcibly ignoring (or downplaying) other relations, influences, and polities.

In considering them integral—wittingly or not—to a colonial geopolitics of expansion and its concomitant naming practices, scholars have defined the "time" and "actors" of this imagined sociological area in a singular way, bounding them to an assumed and connected sociality. As I have argued above, due to the development of various forms of stereotype and conflation, such a view under- and misrepresents grossly—particularly regarding women—the multiple ways peoples are integrated within and affect sociopolitical contexts. The origin of such failures of representation relies,

ultimately, on the historical links of the region and how its peoples are invariably related to the history of the *prazos*, limiting the possibility of establishing links beyond the logic of this specific social and historical trajectory. The geography of this imagined space has receded or expanded with the limits of the *prazos*, which scholars claim to be one of the first forms of the Portuguese colonial establishment in Mozambique (Capela, 1995; Chilundo et al., 1999; Papagno, 1980). By linking the sociology and geography of this region to the *prazo* system, scholars such as José Capela, Malyn Newitt, the Isaacmans, and others have effectively (albeit unwittingly) perpetuated a single vision conforming also to the colonizer's perspective.

Two important competing narratives emerge out of this vision. One privileges hybridity, in which Portuguese administrative structures have a determining influence on the local peoples and their social and political dynamics (Capela, 1988, 1995; Medeiros & Capela, 2010). On the other hand, the Portuguese colonial structures are permeated by African influence (Isaacman, 1972a; Isaacman & Isaacman, 1975; Newitt, 1969, 2010). However, time, space, and experiences outside the colonial order become external and insignificant, as is the case in many other places in the formerly colonized world (see E. R. Wolf, 1997).

Even in cases where scholars engage critically with the archival material, such as in the case of historian Eugénia Rodrigues' rich *oeuvre* on the women of the Zambezi, their work still contains a somewhat problematic reification of the typologies of the other and reproduction of the colonial reading of "Zambezia."

In 2006, in the abstract of a conference proceeding, Rodrigues affirmed that

> Unlikely what happened in other Portuguese colonial areas, women got a remarkable protagonism in the Zambezi valley, in Mozambique. This notoriety was associated with the possession of extensive territories, called *prazos*, granted directly by the Portuguese crown or acquired by succession (Rodrigues, 2006b, p. 15).

The other colonial space she alludes to is Goa, whose *prazo*-related legislation is usually analyzed in conjunction with that of "Zambezia," as both regions fell under the jurisdiction of "Estado da Índia,"[21] the entity that administered the Portuguese possessions across the Indian Ocean, from the East African coast to the China Seas.[22] In fact, there is literature that alludes to the existence of other women of power in former Portuguese colonial geographies such as in Angola and Guinea-Bissau (Oliveira, 2018; Pantoja, 2004; Pantoja & Paula, 2001), though these too, like the *donas* of "Zambezia," are part of an Afro-Portuguese colonial elite. This leads me to suspect that other women less connected or visible to the colonial gaze may have also been neglected.

More recently, Rodrigues has explored Southeast African women's role as political actors (Rodrigues, 2017), though still chiefly based on Portuguese archival sources. She concludes that how these women exercised their authority and how this extended to the colonial society needs to be further studied.

Despite the region's native peoples featuring in scholarly work, their existence, relevance, and historical agency are always described through their link to the Portuguese colonial enterprise. For example, historian António Rita-Ferreira mentions that "the Marave were already firmly established when the Portuguese went up the Zambeze" (Rita-Ferreira, 1975, p. 60), in a book commissioned explicitly in the year of Mozambique's independence, about precolonial Mozambique. A follow-up book of his is more specific in its focus on the Portuguese fixation, though it also attempts to include precolonial history. His introduction begins with the following statement:

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[21] The administrative capital of the *Estado da Índia* was Goa, where the viceroy sat, ruled, and legislated over the vast territory. Goa's rule over the Zambezi possessions lasted from its inception in 1505 until 1752, when the administrative dependency transited from Goa to Lisbon (Martins, 2011; Rodrigues, 2006a). The general-captaincy of Moçambique, Rios de Sena, and Sofala was created then, with the capital in *Ilha de Moçambique* (Mozambique Island).

[22] Pedro Barreto de Rezende, secretary to the viceroy of India, describes the extension of the "Estado da Índia", based on the chronicles of Antonio Bocarro, as such: "this State of Eastern India commences at the Cape of Good Hope, which lies in south latitude 34 1/2°, and ends at the point of the bay of Nankin at the farthest extremity of China, in latitude 34° N" (Theal, 1898, p. 401).

So flagrant were the distinctions among the inhabitants of the present
Mozambican coast (distinctions in languages, costumes, weaponry, food
habits, tattoos, and scarifications, etc.) that it is not surprising that with
the first Portuguese started the attempts of "ethnic classification." Today,
we recognize that these attempts, repeated by numerous authors, as the
knowledge about the native peoples increased, represent a futile waste of
time and efforts (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 21).

Even while holding a critical view towards the Portuguese attempts to classify the
peoples they encountered, by affirming that the Portuguese attempted to classify
ethnicities first, Rita-Ferreira ignores previous classifications by non-European actors
long present in the region, as well as self-classifications by the natives.

More recently, Medeiros and Capela (2010) have presented work where they have
explicitly developed the notion of a "Zambezian ethos." In it, they refer to postcolonial
attempts to deconstruct the colonial classifications. Like Rita-Ferreira, they also argue
that, though the earlier Portuguese classifications may have been flawed, there were
actual identities that emerged due to colonial contact and policies.

In particular geographic zones, determined through missionary activity
and *luanes* (large residences) of the lords of the *prazos*, would emerge
mixed, assimilated individuals, *donas* (ladies), '*línguas*,'[23] *sipaios*
(guards) and so on. These different groups formed what will be defined
here as the 'Zambezian Ethos.' The individuals adhering to this
overarching identity would still be interrelated with the 'new' local
ethnic groups (like the above-mentioned Nyungwes, Senas, Chwabos, or
the Podzos, Maindos, etc.), but they lived in a border situation as
described by Hannerz, in a permanent process of trans-ethnic
acculturation (Medeiros & Capela, 2010, p. 42).

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[23] The authors explain that this label was given to translators working for the colonial services. Literally, the term means
"tongues."

Thus, the underlying assumption is that "Zambezia" and the socio-polities within it were shaped or forged through the Portuguese presence and interference. Moreover, within this sociocultural complex it centralizes the "identities" of those groups which interacted more closely with the Portuguese, while relegating the preexisting or other emerging "identities" to a secondary plane.

In what follows, I dispute this assumption by critically discussing the idea of "Zambezia," to identify whether there is a basis for a continuous claim that it should be viewed as a bounded sociological space. Furthermore, I would like to challenge the idea that the Portuguese presence is a driving force without which Zambezian socio-polities cannot be understood.

To do so, I expand on the region's broad historical context by engaging with the literature that describes it and its peoples, and pointing out perceived gaps and contradictions. Sources used for this discussion include work done by scholars who have worked on or contextualized the history of "Zambezia," some of whom I mentioned above. It encompasses a broad period, discussing changing geographies of naming and identity attribution to peoples and languages.

The construction of Zambezia as an analytical category and its links to the *prazo* system are also closely related, through the *donas*, to the perception of women and power in the region as being linked to Portuguese settlement. Despite the acknowledgement of other forms of female authority, mostly preceding the emergence of the *donas*, power is associated mostly with males and colonial institutions. By re-analyzing the space and peoples, and by dislodging the colonial imagery, I argue that it is finally possible to visualize enduring forms of organization that include women and non-colonial institutions. This requires a purposeful and critical engagement with the existing discourse about the *longue durée* history of the region.

Dislodging geo-imageries

A passage in George Theal's *Records of South-Eastern Africa, Vol. VIII* astonished me.

> On the 12th of June 1641 a truce for ten years was concluded between
> the two governments [of Portugal and the Netherlands], in which, among
> other clauses, was one defining the Portuguese possessions in South-
> Eastern Africa that were thereafter to be respected by the Dutch. They
> were Mozambique, Kilimane, the rivers of Cuama, Sena, Sofala, Cape
> Correntes, and the adjacent rivers. (Theal, 1902, p. 488)

I was not aware until I read this passage that the Dutch had disputed the Zambezi
region with the Portuguese. Moreover, the territory of "Zambezia" comes partially
from what was initially known as "Rios de Cuama" and subsequently "Rios de Sena,"
which included Quelimane and Sena, with the latter as the capital (Rodrigues, 2006a;
L. Rosário, 1989). Authors generally accept that modern-day Zambezia is not identical
to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Rios de Cuama or Rios de Sena, and that
using the terms interchangeably is historically and conceptually inappropriate (e.g.
Thomaz, 1985, p. 13).[24]

Cuama was the name given to the Zambezi in Portuguese documentation in the
sixteenth century, although a name akin to Zambezi was already used, as mentioned by
Theal, citing Portuguese historian João de Barros.

> The river which flows towards Sofala, […] divides into two arms. The
> [second] arm enters the sea twenty-five leagues beyond Sofala, and is
> called Cuama, although in the interior other people call it Zembere
> (Theal, 1900, p. 265).

Theal offers an exciting perspective on why there could have been a potentially
confusing variety of naming practices. According to him, the "Quilimane" (or Kiliane)
was the northernmost outlet of the Zambezi. Other outlets included the Luabo and the
Cuama. The largest of the islands of the delta bore the same name. However, regular

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[24] Historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam is among the few who specifically equates the Portuguese "East African territories of the
Rios de Cuama" to the "Zambezi Valley" (Subrahmanyam, 2007).

floods changed the riverbeds frequently, and the mangrove would spread rapidly, so the very spaces (and their names) were in constant flux.

At the end of the seventeenth century, Cuama was finally recognized as part of the different branches of the Zambezi, hence called rivers in the plural. In its Treatise on the Rivers of Cuama, concluded in 1696, António Conceição—the ecclesiastic administrator of the Portuguese Zambezi settlements at the end of the seventeenth century—refers to Cuama as the port at sea, which the Portuguese called Luabo. According to scholars of the region, his treatise is one of the most important early accounts of the peoples and polities of the Zambezi and their interaction with the Portuguese (e.g. Newitt, 2009).

The region later became known as Rivers of Sena, with authors using both names interchangeably. For example, the linguist Lourenço Rosário mentions that the land was given by the Mwenemutapa to the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. "These territories would later be designated 'Rivers of Sena' or 'Rivers of Cuama'" (L. Rosário, 1989, p. 35). On the other hand, Capela refers to two clergymen who arrived in Sena in August 1590. He states that "their destiny was not Rivers of Sena" (2010, p. 20). However, it is doubtful that this denomination was already in use if we take Theal and Conceição as a timeline reference.

Historian Manuel Lobato (2013, p. 112) refers to the Rivers of Cuama as the delta region of the Zambezi, a territory not adjacent to any other territories under Portuguese control, whereas Rivers of Sena would be the more vast territory extending from the delta until Tete, along the Zambezi.

In the eighteenth century, the land occupied by the Portuguese was definitely known as Rivers of Sena (Rodrigues, 2008). Eugénia Rodrigues considers that the main population settlements at that time remained Quelimane, Sena, and Tete (Rodrigues, 2006a, p. 59, 2010, p. 254). The latter became the capital of the Rivers in 1767, presumably substituting Sena. Historian Gerhard Liesegang, referring to the so-called Ngoni invasions period in the early 1820s, presents yet another geopolitical arrangement. When he describes the Rivers of Sena, he includes the Zumbo

possessions and Manica, as well as the previously mentioned Sena and Tete, but excluded Quelimane (Liesegang, 1970, p. 337).

Lobato underlines that in the year 1821, when the effects of the so-called Ngoni invasions reached the Portuguese possessions, Governor Alves Barbosa considered the Zumbo "outside the western limit of the Rivers of Sena captaincy, due to the discontinuity of the Portuguese dominion above Caborabassa" (1996, p. 173), contradicting Liesegang's inclusion of the Zumbo within the territories of the Rivers of Sena.

Therefore, the 1700s Rivers of Sena differed from post-1821 Rivers of Sena in concrete and verifiable ways that were continuously changing. When in 1858, the area was renamed "Zambezia," the Portuguese territory is said to have extended from the mouth of the delta to Zumbo, with its limits in Sofala to the south and Angoche to the north (Cruz, 2008, p. 36). Ultimately, the naming and understanding of what constitutes "Zambezia" has suffered changes generally attributable to, as mentioned above, the Portuguese expansion and conquest of the land. That the peoples who inhabited these areas did not relate to each other under the same logic does not seem of consequence. The difficulty of producing a coherent rendition of what "Zambezia" might be and the subsequent vague, impalpable attempts to define it stems from an external logic trying to corral a multiplicity of peoples and polities with divergent connections and references. The result is a cohesion that necessitates the exclusion or marginalization of actors that do not fit such logic.

In the process, there is a muting of social and political organization logics that defy the colonial conquest narrative, and later those that do not fit the postcolonial nation-building narrative. There is also a top-down view of power and influence, with colonial institutions perceived as inevitably influential over changing native practices. These narratives show populations that become hybrid, are co-opted or openly resistant to colonialism. Change influenced by non-colonial polities becomes secondary to this overarching colonial influence, with the result being that practices introduced to conquered populations—previous or concomitant to colonial

expansion—are mistaken for original and untouched indigenous traits. Local adaptation to changing polities is considered co-optation, and the cosmologies that make this adaptation possible are ignored.

Changing geo-polities and actors

The name "Zambezia," as mentioned earlier, was created in 1858 through a decree. It included what was then called the districts of Quelimane, in present Zambezia province; and Sena, part of present-day Sofala province. The Quelimane district, which at one time equated to the current Zambezia province, had been created in 1817, dissolved in 1829 and incorporated in the district of Sena, and finally reinstated as a district again in 1853 (Carvalho et al., 1988, p. 249). This shifting of administrative borders and renaming of places was a constant in the interaction between the Portuguese and the colonial space, following shifts of commercial interaction, as well as administrative expansion and conquest.
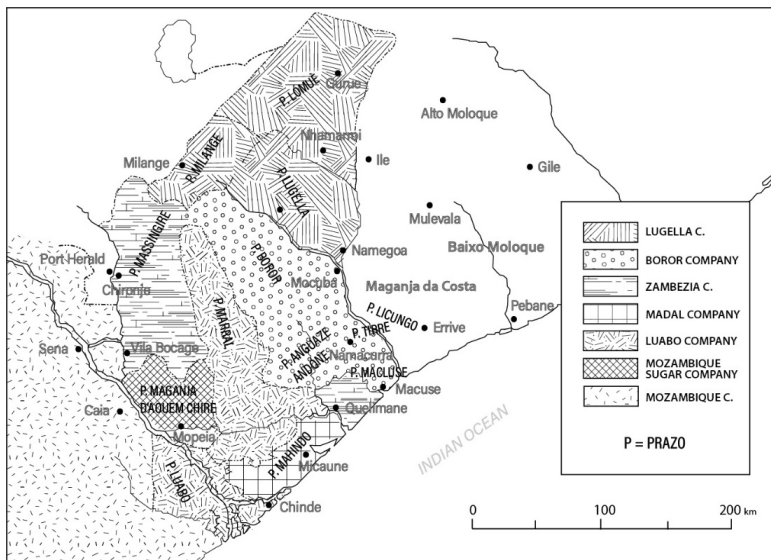
Source: based on Vail and White (1980, pp. 9 and 179)

Figure 5. Map of Quelimane district's intersecting colonial administrations

The map above (Figure 5) is interesting because it superimposes several types of Portuguese administration. The former *prazos*, which, as mentioned above, were land leased to settlers over three generations. The system that followed were the majestic and lessee companies. These were how Portugal managed to secure the claims to its African territories following the Berlin Conference of 1884/85, where European powers claimed and agreed on the limits of their African possessions. These companies were independent commercial ventures, with "far-reaching monopoly rights and quasi-sovereign powers" (Vail & White, 1980, p. 113), which were to help secure the colonial occupation and at the same time develop the colonies economically. Majestic companies received majestic powers from the Portuguese crown to manage vast territories overtaken from *prazos* (Bertelsen, 2015; Vail & White, 1983). These had been extinguished repeatedly in legislation, starting from 1854 (Capela, 2006). The most prosperous and powerful company operating north and south of the Zambezi was Companhia de Moçambique, detained by English capital and mimicking the British Company (L. Rosário, 1989), owned by shareholders and headquartered in London. Smaller lessee companies such as Companhia do Boror, Companhia do Luabo, and Societé du Madal submitted to larger majestic companies (Bertelsen, 2015; Pelissier, 1994).

Though these two forms of territorial administration were dominant in the region, other administrative forms existed in parallel. These included expanding on African polities which resisted colonial incorporation and threatened the borders of the *prazos*, and the effective occupation and administration of the land until the beginning of the twentieth century. Following pressure from the Berlin Conference of 1884/85, so-called pacification campaigns were conducted to submit rebellious African polities (Isaacman, 1975; Pelissier, 1994). These campaigns were also used to submit military states that had developed from the incorporation of *prazos*, and that had become defiant to the Portuguese state (Lobato, 2013; Newitt & Garlake, 1967). Areas outside the *prazo*/company borders were under direct state administration, as with the case of Maganja da Costa (Vail & White, 1983), which nevertheless had also been subjected

to "pacification," as it too had previously been a location of *prazos* and subsequently of a military state (Bonate, 2003; Capela, 1988).

The literature about "Zambezia" is scarce regarding non-European and non-Christian actors, which remained relevant in trade and the interactions with the increasing Portuguese administrative domination. This erasure was the case, for example, with the Indian merchants from Gujarat who continued to trade across East Africa and India (Antunes, 2007; Lobato, 1995, 1996). Their presence is generally acknowledged in discussions about regional trade, where they are represented as transient and external actors (Lobato, 1995), contrary to their Christian Goanese counterparts, which are represented as settlers on par with the Europeans. Similarly, Muslim polities, such as was the case of the Angoche Sultanate, are reflected within the coastal slave trade of northern Mozambique despite the ruling families having kinship networks extending to the Zambezi Delta and across East Africa (Bonate, 2003; Newitt, 1972). Historian Manuel Lobato talks about Muslim traders of the Zambezi as having been confined to the delta "where they developed subaltern roles" (Lobato, 2012, p. 3). He argues that Islamization was more successful in the North of Mozambique, particularly in the coastal areas and interior, among the Makhuwa peoples. He connects this success to the economic expansion of the slave traders to the interior, new militarized polities articulated with the "Angoche sultanate and other coastal sheikdoms," the feebleness of the colonial state, as well as "demonstrations of tolerance and openness from the pombaline administration,[25] which translated into the installation of Muslim networks in areas previously controlled by afro-indo-portuguese" (Lobato, 2012, p. 1). However, from the perspective of the African societies, which I present later,

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[25] The pombaline administration refers to the administration of the Marquis of Pombal, who was Secretary of State to King Joseph I of Portugal from 1750 to 1777. His reforms were highly influential both in Portugal and in its colonies. His tenure was characterized by anti-clerical sentiments, particularly against the Society of Jesus and what he perceived to be its excess of wealth, power, and influence over the Portuguese state (Zamparoni, 1998). The impact of the pombaline reforms in the Rios de Sena, and its more effective integration with the rest of the Portuguese empire, began from 1763 with an edict that abolished the distinction between Portuguese vassals born in the in the kingdom and those born in India. It also reduced the power of *prazo* holders in relation to the crown, but not over their native subjects (Rodrigues, 2013, 2006a, 2006b).

narratives from my informants recurrently showed that Muslim traders—both African and non-African—remained influential in the region.

Bilad al Sufala (the land of Sofala)

The way the history of "Zambezia" is told, and how and which peoples are "spoken" about, reflects a specific chronology and singular perspective. This perspective centers consistently around the Portuguese's arrival to the region and their interaction with the existing peoples and polities. This view is similar, irrespective of whether historians are Portuguese, other European/Western, or even Mozambican. In what follows, I present a critical description of the precolonial peoples of "Zambezia" based on the few existing sources—preceded by a discussion about the preference for Portuguese sources. I also refer to the neglect of the potential richness of less explored sources, such as those in Arabic and *ajamia* (indigenous languages written using the Arabic script) scripts. As such, I give preference to the description of the fixation of the non-European population and their interaction with the region.

Among the reasons given for not prioritizing non-European actors in the regions is the wealth of records provided by early Portuguese chronologists and the unreliability of oral sources. For example, S. I. G. Mudenge, the great historian of the Mwenemutapa kingdom, said,

> The history of the Mutapa empire from its foundation until about 1490 suffers from lack of accurate dating. But after that date Portuguese sources can be used to reconstruct its story. Prior to that time, historians have relied on oral evidence collected in the eighteen, nineteen and twentieth centuries. Although these oral sources purport to give specific names/events of the Great Zimbabwe state period and the Mutapa state before 1490 it is not at all clear as to how reliable these can be (Mudenge, 1988, p. 37).

Something to the same effect is advanced by Rita-Ferreira, who claimed that "the great mass of information that has provided modern scholars precious elements about the internal organic of the rozwi[26] origin States" (Rita-Ferreira, 1975, p. 40) was due to the "prolonged contact between Mwene Mutapa and the Portuguese!" (ibid.).

Archaeological findings, which are mostly used by post-independence African scholars, corroborate data on the precolonial period. Additional data exists in the Arabic script, which is accessible to the few who can read it. As with non-European and non-Christian erasure, the Arabic script is one other grave erasure. According to historian Liazzat Bonate, there is abundant documentation, mainly correspondence between the Portuguese and African rulers in *ajamia* (Bonate, 2010). As elsewhere in Africa, this is an understudied field. Under the prejudicial assimilationist language policies mentioned above, although many were literate in Arabic script, Africans were portrayed as illiterate until they acquired the ability to write in the Latin script (Bonate, 2014; Munin, 2014). Likewise, sources in Arabic were disregarded as irrelevant.

The existing *ajamia* scripts on Mozambique are predominantly in Kiswahili, the *lingua franca* of the East African coast. Most of them refer to the coastal settlements concentrated in northern Mozambique, chiefly present-day Cabo Delgado, Mozambique Island, and adjacent continental territories (Bonate, 2008, 2010). Though Portuguese documents suggest that Muslim traders had established inland fairs to trade in the Mwenemutapa kingdom (Mudenge, 1988; Newitt, 1969; Theal, 1901a), knowledge of the interior was still scarce. Islam and Africanist scholar John Hunwick noted the following in this respect:

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[26] The Rozwi (also spelled Rosvi) polity mentioned by Rita-Ferreira is the Rozwi-Changamire dynasty of the Mwenemutapa. This polity was funded circa 1684 by Dombo/Changamire and lasted until circa 1833/4, largely without any major succession crisis (Mudenge, 1974). According to Alpers, the "Rozwi dynasty was progenitor of several other ruling houses in the area. From the early eighteenth century, in recognition of its overwhelming political supremacy, the chief of virtually every ruling house in the region had to be installed in his office by the reigning Changamire, or his representative." The power of the Rozwi declined after the Nguni invasions in the 1830s, however they were able to retain ritual powers of installation up until the twentieth century (Alpers, 1970, pp. 209–210).

> While the little that was known of the African continent away from the
> coast where European merchants had been trading was known
> principally from Arabic sources, it had to be admitted that that 'little'
> was itself only imperfectly known (Hunwick, 2005, p. 104).

Works about precolonial history typically refer to the Bantu migrations during the first millennium, from the Congo to southern Africa. These migrations were followed by the "progressive and slow fixation of populations coming mainly from the Persian Gulf" (Carvalho et al., 1988, p. 24). Most commercial transoceanic trade seemed to relate to the gold-rich regions between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers, with an important port in Sofala. Authors diverge about when the port was created, mentioning evidence from as early as the fifth century (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 35) to flourishing trade post between the ninth and thirteenth centuries (Carvalho et al., 1988).

Mozambican historians' work refutes the existence of a port of Sofala, based on the writings of tenth-century Arab historian Al-Masudi, who referred to *Bilad al Sufala*[27] (land of Sofala) as the southernmost frontier visited by the Arab Omanites and Persian Sirafis. "In his opinion, Sofala did not define any particular settlement; instead, it meant 'shoal' or shallow lands [*terras baixas*]" (Carvalho et al., 1988, p. 26).[28] This land was dependent on Sayuna, a commercial center situated at the mouth of the Zambezi River (see Figure 6). Portuguese scholar Manuel Lobato holds a similar position on Sofala.

> [By the] designation of Sofala, Arab travelers and geographers wanted to
> refer to a set of ports and mercantile establishments that sat along the
> coast to the south of the Zambezi delta to the Bazaruto (Lobato, 1995, p.
> 159).

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[27] Some authors also spell *Bilad as Sufala*, as it is pronounced in the spoken form.

[28] A similar description is also presented by Mozambican scholar Lourenço Rosário (1989, p. 21), based on the same source.
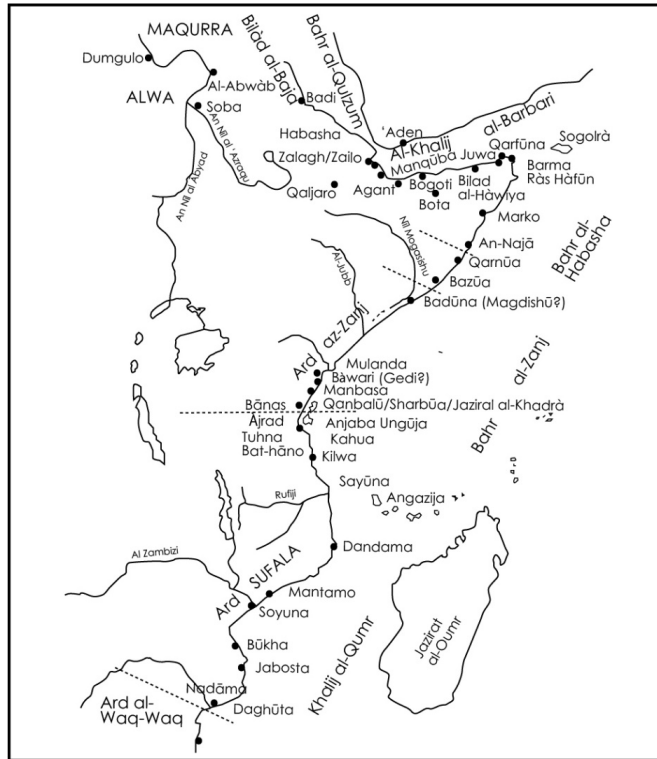
Source: based on Carvalho et al. (1988, p. 25)

Figure 6. Map of Indian Ocean in the twelfth century, according to Arab geographer Al-Idrisi

The sultan that ruled over Sofala was in Kilwa, in present-day Tanzania. The previous ruling center had been Mogadishu, present-day Somalia. Around the 1300s, when Ibn Batuta visited the region, he described the existence of three distinct communities of "Asiatic origin" on the East African coast: the Emozaidi, descendants of early waves of Arab migrations; the orthodox Arabs, newly arrived migrants; and Persians (Theal, 1916, p. 75).

The first economic and political centers of power developed between the ninth and twelfth centuries around the Limpopo River, away from the coast, but with an apparent

relationship with the Zambezi's coastal settlements. These were later eclipsed by the Great Zimbabwe populations, which between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries dominated from the Limpopo and the Zambezi (Carvalho et al., 1988, pp. 30–31). From the fifteenth century, the Great Zimbabwe fragmented into the Butua and Mwenemutapa states due to migrations of the ruling lineages (Rita-Ferreira, 1982) and trade along the Zambezi (Carvalho et al., 1988).

The Portuguese only arrived at what they termed the port of Sofala at the beginning of the 1500s. They had already docked in other trade ports along *Bilad al Sufala*. However, it was at this port, which they conquered militarily (Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005, p. 104) from 1505, that they settled and established the post from which they could expand into the hinterland (Alpers, 1970, p. 205; Carvalho et al., 1988, p. 55; Isaacman, 1975, p. 38; Isaacman & Isaacman, 1975, p. 3; Newitt, 2002, p. xiii; Theal, 1910, 1916). The reason for choosing this location was owed to the description by Arab geographers, explorers, and merchants, which overstated the region's riches. Many authors mention a proxy crusade and the belief that "the East African hinterland was the home of the legendary mines of King Solomon" (Elkiss in Isaacman, 1982, p. 833; see also Papagno, 1980; Theal, 1916, p. 253).

The land referred to in Arabic as *Bilad al Sufala* was named Oriental Ethiopia by the Portuguese before it became Portuguese East Africa. The peoples that inhabited it, called *Zinj* (dark-skinned people) by the Arab traders, were renamed *Cafres* in the Portuguese texts, from the Arabic word *kafir* (unbeliever). Most references about the existing polities in "Zambezia" for scholars initiate with Portuguese merchants and missionaries' chronicles. They also initiate an attempt to denominate what they perceive as different peoples and their costumes. As mentioned previously, this was an exercise that was fraught with errors. These misconceptions are the focus of the next section.

Early polities of the Zambezi – reflections beyond the homogenizing terms *Bantu* (people) and *Zinj* (dark-skinned people)

Peoples and polities along and around the Zambezi feature prominently in scholarly works on the general history of Mozambique (Capela, 2010; Chilundo et al., 1999; Newitt, 1995), as well in specialized studies of sociopolitical organizations of the area (Bonate, 2003; Isaacman, 1972a, 2000; Liesegang, 1970; Martins, 2011; Newitt, 1969, 2010; Rodrigues, 2008). It also features works about the precolonial period (Carvalho et al., 1988; Rita-Ferreira, 1975, 1982). One of the few authors on precolonial history, the Portuguese scholar António Rita-Ferreira, mentions the existence of pre- and proto-colonial population centers along the Zambezi river, and generally all over the south-central African hinterland (1982, p. 22). The Mozambican and Mozambique-based historians who organized the most comprehensive post-independence historiography of Mozambique at the University Eduardo Mondlane note that the Zambezi separated the cattle-rearing patrilineal peoples to the south from the matrilineal peoples to the north of the river (Carvalho et al., 1988).

The most prominent, also said to be among the earliest organized polities along the Zambezi, was the already-mentioned Great Zimbabwe, located south of the river, which led to the Mwenemutapa and Butua kingdoms (Carvalho et al., 1988; Mudenge, 1988). North of the Zambezi, it appears that there were no expressly organized polities until close to when the Portuguese established themselves in the area. Before such polities, the peoples likely organized in clan-based allegiances (Carvalho et al., 1988; Newitt, 1982).

The Portuguese claim to have initiated the regional classification of peoples. Among the oldest ethnolinguistic groups classified north of the Zambezi were the Makhuwa-Lomwe. Rita-Ferreira (1982) describes these peoples as originating north of the Rovuma River and populating the whole region from the Indian Ocean to Lake Niassa, the Chire, Zambezi, and Rovuma Rivers.

Rita-Ferreira further mentions that archaeological evidence, historical linguistics exercises, oral tradition, and old Portuguese records suggest that a separation occurred between two branches of proto-Makhuwa-speaking peoples during the first millennium. The ones who settled in the north and east relate to the contemporary Makhuwa peoples. The ones who settled to the south and west relate to the Lomwe and Lolo. The latter came into contact with the Maravi, who originated in Luba country, in today's Congo, as they descended towards the coast through the central plateaus to the west of Lake Niassa. This contact was not always pacific.

> Above Sena the northern bank is called Bororo […]. The term Bororo referred to the country of the Lolo people and we know from later sources that they were part of the Makwa language family and were clearly distinguished from the Maravi. Indeed the rise of the Maravi chieftaincies in the seventeenth century pushed the Lolo downstream to the region round Quelimane (Newitt, 1982, p. 152).

Currently, Lolo-speaking peoples can be found around Morrumbala and Derre, to the west of Quelimane, along the northern banks of the Zambezi River. The eChuwabu-speaking people who constitute most speakers in Quelimane and its surroundings are said to derive from Lolo speakers (Newitt, 1982, p. 159).

There is some disagreement about when the Maravi peoples reached the Zambezi region, owing to these pervasive population movements and definite records. However, Newitt is critical of the dominant narrative, which states that the Maravi arrived in the Zambezi region around the fourteenth century (Newitt, 1982). He maintains that the Maravi "chieftaincies were only formed in the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century by a number of different groups who migrated into the region north of the Zambezi and who conquered the existing population" (Newitt, 1982, p. 162). Historian Megan Vaughan, on the other hand, claims that it was around the fifteenth century that "an emergent Maravi political culture began to make itself felt in present-day Malawi and in eastern Zambia" (Vaughan, 2000).

Different from the other peoples of the region, the Maravi did not constitute a linguistic group. Instead, it was a confluence of chieftaincies that pledged allegiance to the invading and expanding Phiri clan. The association of one language with the Maravi peoples did not happen until Nyasaland's independence and subsequent renaming of the country to Malawi (phonetically also pronounced Maravi), in 1964.

Other 'identities' said to have derived from the Maravi include the Nyanja (people of the lake) and the Yao (the people around the Yao Mountain).

> Indeed, the more one probed back into Yao oral history the less substantial they appeared. Not only did it appear that at least some of the 'Yao' were really originally 'Lomwe' (this was a whole other problem), but that many who now identified themselves as 'Yao' were, as their own traditions testified, 'really' Nyanja (Vaughan, 2000, p. 243).

A group of Mozambican historians led by historian and sociologist Carlos Serra holds that these ethnicities, formed around geographies, gained traction after the Maravi state's demise (Carvalho et al., 1988, p. 20), which happened around the eighteenth and nineteenth century. However, Rita-Ferreira suggests that the Yao were evident as a group already in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, conducting trade as far as Kilwa (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 90). Some works seem to give weight to the perspective of Mozambican historians (e.g. Linden, 1972). I favor Vaughan's perspective, which is more nuanced and shows how identities were fluid, contextual, and even strategic at times. Likely some form of these designations, which would be later appropriated and fixed, may have existed for a long time fluidly, as was argued by Medeiros and Capela in relation to the Makhuwa.

Vaughan further problematizes the Yao identity, claiming that some historical accounts establish that the region's original settlers were Nyanja. She considers the latter "a former component of the Maravi, and a group which, in the modern Malawian nation, was being claimed as 'Chewa'" (Vaughan, 2000, p. 243). Thus, this identity evolved separately in present-day Malawi and Mozambique, where the Nyanja remained in name separate from the Chewa while acknowledging linguistic affinity.

The Yao engaged in a long-distance ivory and slave trade with the coast. Their dominance was established in the nineteenth century, reinforced by colonial policy. According to Medeiros and Capela,

> The contact with Europeans either destroyed the pre-existing political structures or reconstituted them in the service of the traffic. This traffic would shape new local identities: individuals would define themselves as slave-catchers (as in the case of the Yao of Nyassa) or as refugees from those predations (2010, p. 38).

The testimonies collected by Vaughan revealed that the Yao, in the nineteenth century, had assimilated some of the Nyanja, sometimes forcibly through the institution of slavery. Malawi's Nyanja peoples have dwindled, and their existence as a separate group is reduced because of this assimilation (Vaughan, 2000). However, in Mozambique, the group is more extensive and has retained a separate identity from the Yao's.[29]

Another significant population movement between Mozambique and Malawi occurred in the nineteenth century, when a wave of Lomwe-speaking people crossed to present-day Malawi, fleeing from forced labor and heavy taxations from Chartered Companies in the Portuguese colony. The British colonies had similar policies but were purportedly more comfortable to bear (Martins, 2011; Newitt, 1995; L. Rosário, 1989; Vaughan, 2000). Through inter-marriage, these Lomwe became Yao or Nyanja.

Figure 7 below illustrates how Mozambique's human geography looked, as viewed by the late colonial scholarship of the twentieth century. It is striking here that the unified representation of the Makhuwa-Lomwe group, which from the point of view of the speakers, is presently less unified than shown. Some pockets of Ngoni speakers appear, which are remnants of the Ngoni *Mfecane* (great migration) following the Zulu

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[29] According to the 1997 population census, CiNyanja speakers were close to 3.5% of the population, with CiYaao speakers around 2% (Ngunga & Faquir, 2012). In the 2017 population census, the number of CiNyanja speakers had grown to 8%, while CiYaao speakers were conflated with other less spoken languages in the country (INE, 2019).

wars, and which reshaped the geography of southern Africa from the mid-1800s (Alpers, 1970; Liesegang, 1970). This great migration was a significant event, disrupting European settler communities and African polities alike, and in some cases giving rise to new polities. The wars started in South Africa, and according to Mozambicanist historian Gerhard Liesegang, several groups moved into and through the Rios de Sena region.

> At least four groups moved into the area under consideration; one of them, the Gaza Nguni under Sotshangane, continued to remain in possession of a part of it after 1839, when the other three had left, dominating an area where, before 1820, more than fifty independent political units had existed (Liesegang, 1970, p. 317).

On the map, Shona appears as a unified language in the area formerly subject to the Mwenemutapa Empire. At its peak, this empire extended between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers in today's Mozambique, and from the Indian Ocean, beyond the highlands of present-day Zimbabwe, into parts of current Zambia and South Africa. Mozambican historians hold that, like the identities and languages mentioned above, Shona only gained meaning in the nineteenth century, i.e., around the empire's demise. In Mozambique, it became recognized as a language only in the twentieth century (Carvalho et al., 1988).

Similarly to the Maravi state, the Mwenemutapa Empire subdued and incorporated groups that did not speak the same languages as the conquering group. The peoples of the empire were collectively denominated Shona-Karanga. However, initially, the invaders were called Makorekore by the subjected populations. Their princes were known as Machinde (Carvalho et al., 1988; Mudenge, 1988).
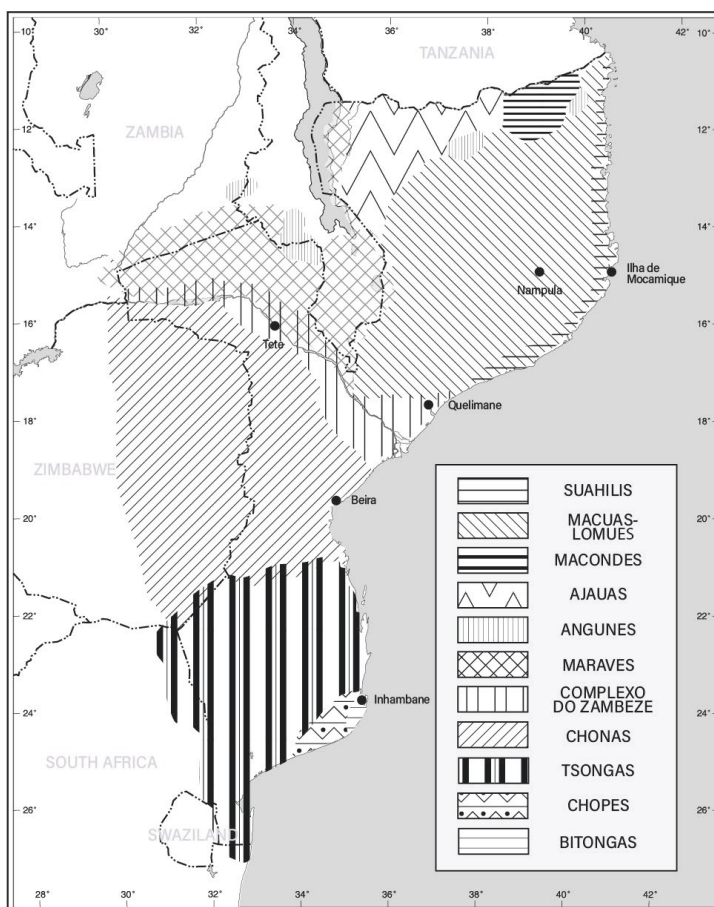
Source: based on Pelissier (1994, p. 33)

Figure 7. Late colonial ethnolinguistic map of Mozambique

While map above (Figure 7) shows some of the region's linguistic diversity—freeze-framed through a colonial lens at a particular time—it does not capture the full diversity, mobility, and self-identification ambiguity of the region. In sum, what this ethnolinguistic mapping cannot do is reflect the volatile nature of the identities it freezes in time. However, by looking at the dominant polities described by scholars and then analyzing the literature about these polities beyond their relationship with the Portuguese or another colonizer, it is possible to identify continuous population

movements and relationships beyond colonial administrative impositions. It is also possible to see how different African populations had relevant interactions with each other before and after the *prazos'* creation and despite their existence. These relationships challenge the notion of a single Zambezian ethos, even more so when such an ethos represents the erasure of groups, identities, or structures that were marginal to the colonial narrative and apparatus. I am not suggesting that a Zambezian ethos is non-existent. As mentioned above, Medeiros and Capela's notion of Zambezian ethos rests on a separate identity held by certain natives that interacted more closely with the colonial structure, an identity that transcended ethnic boundaries and rested on acculturation into hybrid Afro-European traits. The fascination with this has been driven the narrative about "Zambezia," and the peoples within its geography have ultimately stood for the Zambezian native, i.e., a successful result of colonial interaction.

What I am proposing is an exploration of "Zambezia" outside a Zambezian ethos, where even individuals purportedly belonging to this ethos—like the *donas* or the *régulos*—retain certain cosmologies that undermine a historiography centered on the colonial encounter. In what follows, I present peoples and polities in "Zambezia" that interacted in multiple ways with the colonial apparatus, and showcase how this apparatus adapted to and was itself influenced by the existing social and political reality.

Other geographies along the River(s)

Previously I have presented the generic denominations and early descriptions of today's Mozambique both in Arabic (who named it Bilad al Sufala) (Carvalho et al., 1988; Wood et al., 2017) and Portuguese (who called it Oriental Ethiopia) (Santos, 1609). Based on population movement and interactions with the region, I have highlighted the multiple and changing identities of the peoples of "Zambezia" and beyond. It is also useful to look at Portuguese settlements in and around the Zambezi, and how they interacted with the existing populations.

As mentioned before, the gold trading port known as Sofala was occupied in 1505 by the Portuguese. Initially, the only formal Portuguese settlements along the Bilad al Sufala coast were the Sofala and Mozambique Island ports. However, individual Portuguese also settled along the coast, away from ports and at gold trading fairs to the interior. Generally, the Portuguese tended to settle in areas previously settled by Arab traders (Pearson, 1998, pp. 133–134; L. Rosário, 1989, p. 23). For instance, Quelimane, the current capital of Zambezia Province, had been a town set up and dominated by Muslim traders before the Portuguese arrival.

Being at the Qua-Qua river's banks (also spelled Cua-Cua), trade in the Zambezi linked Quelimane to two other towns further upstream, Sena and Tete, also towns founded and dominated by Muslim traders. The Quelimane settlement already existed in 1499, when Vasco da Gama passed through. A wooden fort surrounded by a trench guarded the Portuguese settlement in this town. It was known as *chuambo*, giving its name to the peoples and the language now spoken in and around the town of Quelimane, including Inhassunge, across the Rio dos Bons Sinais, and northwards up to the district of Maganja da Costa.

> By the middle of the seventeenth century the country north to the Lurio river and inland to the Shire had been divided into prazos under the jurisdiction of the captain of Quelimane, and the people living on the prazos in the vicinity of the town had acquired a distinct identity and were calling themselves Chuabo. (Newitt, 1995, p. 139)

Opposite Quelimane, on the other bank of the Qua-Qua, in Inhassunge, the language Mahindo emerged within the confines of its namesake *prazo*. Islamic and Christian practices, introduced through Quelimane and Chinde ports, influenced cultural practices on both banks (see Figure 8). Due to these influences, though both eChuwabu and Mahindo are related to the Makhuwa language, their speakers are not matrilineal like the latter group (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, pp. 261–262).
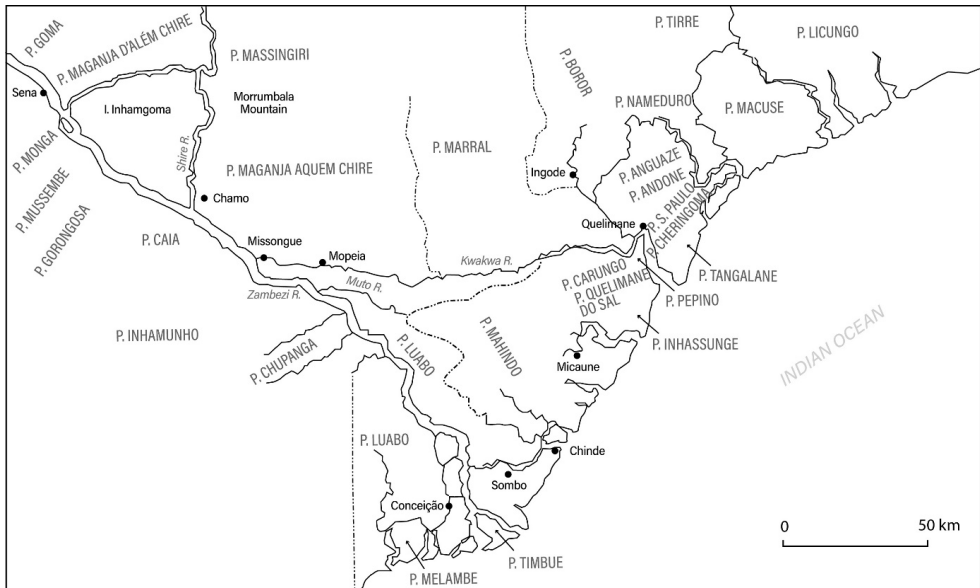
Source: based on Vail and White (1980, p. 9)

Figure 8. Map of the town of Quelimane, the port of Chinde and Prazo Mahindo area in the Zambezi delta

CiSena is another language spoken in the delta of the Zambezi. Mozambican historians pin its emergence around the seventeenth century (Carvalho et al., 1988, p. 20), although unlike eChuwabu it did not seem linked to a particular identity. Rita-Ferreira suggests that the peoples that settled around the delta may have named themselves after the Islamic settlement of Sayuna (Rita-Ferreira, 1982). They had a political organization similar to the Tonga peoples, who resided in the Lower Zambezi. However, unlike the Tonga, they were not subject to any paramount chief. There seems to be an agreement that the Sena had a language with a Maravi linguistic predominance and cultural practices similar to the Shona-Karanga (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 118; L. Rosário, 1989, pp. 25–26). Contrary to Rita-Ferreira, who considers that the formation of the Sena culture can be associated with the *prazos*, Rosário contends that the emergence of this culture, although shaped by the Portuguese

presence, existed before the occupation of Tete, Sena, and the Zambezi delta by the Portuguese, as can be seen by the quote below.

> 'Mwala wa' Sena is the door of the S. Marçal de Sena fort, the old capital of the Rivers of Cuama Territories.
>
> It is a belief among the Sena, in their genealogic narratives, that their ethnic origin originates from that door. According to us, it is one of the flagrant examples of how the Sena community partially lost their ancestral references with the settlement of the Portuguese in the region. (L. Rosário, 1989, p. 281)

Rosário further argues that although the Arabs had previously used the Zambezi Valley languages in their trading activities, the Portuguese used them more systematically. ciSena became somewhat of a *lingua franca*. As a result, although the Sena did not conquer any other group militarily, the language became dominant because the Portuguese used it to communicate with peoples along the Zambezi. This reference to the Portuguese use of the Sena language is important, though rarely mentioned by historians.

Another language that sprang up along the Zambezi was ciNyungwe, which Rosário claims has the same origin as the Sena, although further upstream, closer to Tete. Whereas Sena speakers were known for their river sailing abilities, the Nyungwe people were known for their elephant hunting capabilities (L. Rosário, 1989). Rita-Ferreira also links them to the nineteenth century's militarized *prazos*, whose military assets they would reinforce (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, pp. 258–259). Several authors consider the Nyungwe part of a larger group called Manganja (Pelissier, 1994, p. 77; Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 258; L. Rosário, 1989, p. 26), and an offshoot of the Nyanja. According to Pélissier and Rosário, their mixture with the Shona south of the Zambezi incorporated them into the Zambezian social complex.

There is a disagreement concerning the Maravi influence origin/influence of ciSena and ciNyungwe. Rosário (1989) and Pélissier (1994) concur that both Sena and Nyanja

have similar Maravi antecedents, and were a part of the Manganja group. However, Rita-Ferreira (1982) does not consider the Sena as part of this latter group, but instead a combination of Maravi with Shona-Karanga influence.

A group that was most certainly a product of the *prazo* structure was the Chikunda. As mentioned previously, these were military slaves and the former slaves of various peoples in the region, who mostly served as warriors of the *prazos* during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As part of the military apparatus, they could have land, guns, cattle, women, and had the right to hunt and raid. "Within each *prazo*, they were grouped in companies, *butaca*, in a well-defined location, which formed the basic units and were made up of a military and administrative hierarchy" (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, pp. 256–257). Rita-Ferreira argues that the isolation of each *butaca* from the other *abutaca* and autochthonous populations, coupled with their "foreign" origin, favored the emergence of a distinct identity. However, Allen and Barbara Isaacman claim that it was not until the "disintegration of the *prazo* regime and the flight of the ex-slaves to the remote interior of the Zambezi" (Isaacman & Isaacman, 2006, p. 22) that an actual identity was formed, around the 1850s.

The aChikunda of Maganja da Costa have a unique history. After the death of João Bonifácio Alves da Silva in a battle against the Sultan of Angoche, the owner of several *prazos* and one of the largest *aringa* (fortified fort) in the late 1800s, his *achikunda* returned to the *aringa* and remained there (Bonate, 2003; Capela, 2006). They were often used as mercenaries by the Portuguese authorities (Rita-Ferreira, 1982).

Several authors mention that the use of slave warriors was a common practice in the region, not exclusive to the *prazos*. For instance, the Karanga kings had the vanyai (Capela, 2010, p. 26; Mazarire, 2008; Newitt, 1995, p. 201; Rodrigues, 2006a). Not all agree on whether they ever constituted a separate identity from the Shona-Karanga. Historian Gerald Mazarire argued that "somehow the 'Nyai' was transmogrified to relate to a 'tribe,' thanks to the work of early ethnographers and colonial administrators" (Mazarire, 2008, p. 14). Although they had long been represented as

mere soldiers to the Mwenemutapa state, by the time the Rozwi rose, in the 1690s, they had become a vital force, more akin to a class than ethnicity, and firmly based in the Mwenemutapa's clientelist foundations. In any event, the "ethnic" label of the Nyai was a long-running label adapted to changes in social structure and political power. In its essence, however, it can be understood as a positionality in relation to others. As explained by Lancaster, "each subordinate group acted as a *vanyai* to the next powerful neighbor, and there was sporadic conflict whenever dominance hierarchies appeared to be uncertain" (Lancaster in: Mazarire, 2008, p. 13). Seen from this perspective, they appeared to differ from the Chikunda, as they were part of a social network's mobile hierarchy. However, this could be an erroneous perception related to misguided attempts to codify another social and even political organization.

The other groups that existed in the periphery of the Portuguese penetration do not feature prominently in their historiography, and description of their origin and social organization is meager. These include the Dema, the Dande, the Pimbe, and the Gova, to name a few. Some became so insignificant in number that they eventually assimilated into one of the major groups, such as the Shona, the Chikunda, or other populations related to the *prazos* (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, pp. 260–261). The languages of these groups, like Dema and Pimbe, still have speakers in Tete province, a sign that these peoples somehow still exist.

Only a few sources exist about the Tonga mentioned above. Linguists in Mozambique consider the Tonga language a variation of Sena (Ngunga & Faquir, 2012). Theal, based on Portuguese sources, mentions their allegiance to the Mwenemutapa, and that they dwelled on the southern bank of the Luabo river. He also refers to their conflicts with other peoples and friendliness towards the Portuguese, despite being "powerful and rebellious" (Theal, 1903, p. 308). Newitt and Garlake suggest a relationship with the Tonga people in present-day Zambia, based on pottery found in Barwe (Mozambique), as described by Schofield (Newitt & Garlake, 1967). Though not always aligned with the Portuguese, these peoples were prominent enough to feature in most of the literature about "Zambezia" (Lourenço, 2012; Matthews, 1981; Rita-Ferreira, 1982; Rodrigues, 2006b). They had strategic relationships with other groups,

and despite being a decentralized polity, "a degree of continuous if small-scale political authority did develop in the nineteenth century and possibly earlier, stimulated partly by the impact of the 'Lower Zambezi complex'" (Matthews, 1981, p. 26). The Tonga would change alliances frequently, initiating, or abandoning the relationship with *prazo* owners altogether. They also established an allegiance with the Mwenemutapa Empire, uniting with the *vanyai* to fight against the invading Ngoni or Chikunda slave raiders. Yet, evidence suggests that some identity fluidity also may have occurred among the Tonga with some Tonga and even Shona becoming "temporarily, Chikunda" (Matthews, 1981, pp. 34–36; see also: Rita-Ferreira, 1982).

Some authors, like Rita-Ferreira, Medeiros, and Capela, consider that identities/ethnicities such as the aChuwabu, aMahindo, vaNyungwe, maSena, and maPondzo, were "more connected to the history of the Portuguese colonization than to the Mozambican ethno-history" (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, pp. 261–262; see also: Medeiros & Capela, 2010). It is telling that colonization is considered an entirely separate process from the remaining polities. While the Portuguese presence was, in many ways, disruptive to unfolding processes, it was hardly the only process disrupting identity formation in the region. All the expanding and subjugating groups, such as the Shona-Karanga or Maravi, earlier the Arab and Persian traders, and later the Ngoni, had similar influence with respect to shaping groups into or out of existence.

Additionally, Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique, as elsewhere, was linked to the internal processes of the space and its peoples, and just as strongly influenced by them, as has been discussed in some works related to the *prazos* (e.g. Isaacman, 1972a; Newitt, 1969). Identities formed around the institution of *prazos* by the Africans, Europeans, or Asians as they interacted with each other. Processes of hybridity, exchange, and influence were not uncommon elsewhere in the world, in Asia and the Americas.

Hybridity as a concept has been a significant concern within postcolonial studies. As mentioned above, this concept and its "sibling" concept of borderlands developed by Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) has been criticized by Zeleza (2009) for ignoring the

negations of the colonial space, even as this space developed inevitable confluences created by the colonial encounter. To be clear, hybridity in postcolonialism has been used to critique Western/Enlightenment epistemology and knowledge-producing institutions (Puri, 2004); it has been "claimed that it can provide a way out of binary thinking, allow the inscription of the agency of the subaltern, and even permit a restructuring and destabilizing of power" (Prabhu, 2007, p. 1). Two major proponents of this concept, Homi Bhabha and Paul Gilroy in particular, discuss the issue of neglected heterogeneity in the colonial gaze and scholarship (Bhabha, 1994), as well as the misunderstandings regarding multiple and seemingly contradictory allegiances, especially as a result of population mobility (Gilroy, 1993).

The hybridity evoked in the historiography of "Zambezia" pushes to the margins manifestations that do not fit within its narrative, especially those not converging towards the Portuguese aesthetics or gaze as the center or the mediator. This includes which groups and practices get to be described and how. In a typical example, Rita-Ferreira, in his *Fixação Portuguesa e História Pré-Colonial de Moçambique* (The Portuguese fixation and a precolonial history of Mozambique), has a section about "scattered tribes across the Zambezi Valley, between Tete and Zumbo" (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 259), among which he included the Dema, Dande, Pimbe, and Gova. The Dema are described in the following manner:

> Tribal leaders sought to make the most of their strategic situation on the important trade route between Tete and Zumbo. In the 1750s the main tribe suffered a punitive incursion directed by Inácio Caetano Xavier who accused it [the tribe] of anthropophagic practices and called its *régulo* an "infamous thief of farms and lives" (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, pp. 259–260).

Very little else is added, except that for a second punitive excursion by a "Mutapa 'prince'," which made the "*régulo* to flee and seek refuge among the Maraves" (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 260).

About the Pimbe he wrote:

> In 1858, in the fortified *aringa* [wooden fence] of their boss
> Chaguaniqueira, the Pimbes offered incarcerated resistance against the
> famous *aportuguesado* [Portuguese-like] of the Caetano Pereira dynasty,
> known as "Chissaca", who died in this fight (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 261)

This follows the division of the land among several *prazos* and final conquest. Nothing else is known about them prior to this decisive battle. The "Chuabo and Mahindo," whom he includes also among these groups of scattered "tribes," are described as "more connected to the history of Portuguese colonization than to Mozambican ethno-history" (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 261). They also receive a longer description about their origins and interconnections, which is to say that subjects recognized as hybrids are agents of their destinies. At the same time, those in the margins of history's gaze continue to have history happen to them, as they eventually fade into oblivion. Women, even those among the ruling elite, receive similar treatment. They are mentioned enough that we know that they exist, but not enough to know how they existed and do justice to such an existence.

The Portuguese of the Zambezi

The diversity, mobility, and changing characteristics of the African peoples also applied to the Portuguese of the Zambezi. According to accounts given by the early Portuguese historians, the first Europeans to settle along the Southeast African coast were a mixture of soldiers and sailors (Theal, 1901a, 1916). Furthermore, the first form of "Portuguese land-ownership in the Zambezi area, and hence the origin of the social and political influence of the Portuguese and Africans on one another" (Newitt, 1969, p. 67) took the form of trading fairs.[30] These were located on the Zimbabwe plateau, in the heart of the Mwenemutapa kingdom. The fairs were under the

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[30] See also S. I. G. Mudenge's *A Political History of Munhumutapa…* (Mudenge, 1988).

jurisdiction of officers of the Portuguese Crown. The individual traders did not live within them but rather in nearby settlements.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, Portuguese settlers were actively involved in the internal conflicts of the Shona-Karanga kingdoms. For their support to one or another as a ruling contender, these adventurer traders with a conqueror spirit would require compensation for each victory won, in the form of land or mineral concessions. Once in possession of the land, their new proprietors sought recognition through land titles by Portuguese Law.

> This recognition was essential for the defence of their lands against
> jealous rivals who might go behind their backs for a royal title. […]
> Titles were being given as early as 1596, but the first detailed land titles
> that survive are dated 1612 and 1613. (Newitt, 1969, p. 72)

The ultimate compensation for political interference came in 1629, when the ruling Mwenemutapa, entitled Mavura, ceded sovereignty of the kingdom to the Portuguese Crown for protection against dynastic rivals (Mudenge, 1988). From this moment, land titles were granted regularly. These new land titles were granted as "emphyteutic tenures, […] to last for three lives on condition of the payment of a quitrent," and were called *prazos da coroa* (Newitt, 1969, p. 72; see also Rodrigues, 2013). According to Newitt, these land titles were like those used in Portugal. Other authors, such as Papagno (1980), Rodrigues (2006b), Capela (2010), or Lobato (2013) specify that although originating in Portugal, the introduction in the East African territories was through the *Estado da Índia*.

As previously mentioned, this link to the *Estado da Índia* is essential, as it underpins the relationship between the Portuguese African and Asian possessions. It also reinforces the blurriness of who qualified as Portuguese. Rodrigues mentions that despite the 1763 decree abolishing the distinctions between those born in Portugal and in India, there were tensions between *prazo* owners born in in Africa, in India and in Portugal, with the latter claiming supremacy (Rodrigues, 2013). However, Capela notes that the *reinol*—meaning the originally European Portuguese—"was a rare

specimen up until the end of the nineteenth century" (Capela, 2010, p. 117). Although soldiers and even exiled convicts arrived "in droves," many did not survive the (for them) inhospitable conditions of the African territory. This created a challenge for the creation of a European population which could guarantee Portuguese sovereignty. This reality led to an acceptance, according to Capela, of mixed European and Goanese vassals populating the East African territories. The principal trade and administrative relations of the Portuguese East African territories were with India rather than Portugal.

There is much to be said about the racial politics surrounding Portuguese colonization. Some records suggest that there was a deliberate politics of miscegenation (Lobato, 2013). Brazilian scholar Gilberto Freyre developed the theory of Lusotropicalism, which held that miscegenation proved that, compared to other colonial powers, Portuguese colonialism was characterized by more benign relations between colonizers and colonized (Anderson et al., 2019). Portugal used this theory to justify retaining its colonies until much later than the other European powers (Bartelson, 2017; P. Gupta, 2007). However, much of the literature shows that, particularly in the later colonial period and around the time that assimilation laws were introduced in the early twentieth century, the Portuguese considered themselves superior to natives and other non-European who inhabited their colonies (Farré, 2015; Lobato, 2013; Zamparoni, 2018).

However, this perception of racial openness was a dominant part of the colonial ideology of Portuguese colonialism that extended to narratives of Zambezia, for example in the mythologization of Afro-Euro-Asian *donas* or fascination with the dynamics and expression of the so called Zambezia ethos. The idea of who was considered Portuguese extended beyond mixed Eurasians to include Christian "naturals of India." In the archive, this narrative created the assumption that Portuguese equated to European when this was far from the truth. Historian Cyril Hromnik (1977) argued that both Portuguese and non-Portuguese authors did not differentiate between European Portuguese and Goanese, or "Canares," as they were called initially. Eventually, the so-called "colonial elite comprised individuals from

Portugal and from the Portuguese 'Estado da Índia' and their mixed-blood descendants, known as *naturais* (i.e. local-born children) the offspring of unions with African women" (Rodrigues, 2008, p. 32).

What constituted "natural" or *reinol* had different meanings. To Capela, "natural" applied specifically to out-of-wedlock children, as, according to him, "the Zambezian lord very rarely wed" (Capela, 1995, p. 77) with the native women. However, in 1792, legislation for India established that all Portuguese citizens were equal to the *reinóis* (plural of *reinol*). This law integrated the Zambezi region's strongly mixed population and elsewhere in Portuguese East Africa into the Portuguese elite, and they would consider themselves "whites, children of the soil" (Capela, 2010, p. 126).

The local population called these Portuguese subjects of diverse origin *mozungo*.[31] Later the term was used exclusively to refer to white persons, notably when the *prazo* system was abolished, the white settler population increased, and the colonial elite aimed to distinguish itself from the non-white populations.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, the trade settlement in the Portuguese East African possessions continued to be dominated mostly by "naturals of India," some of which qualified as Portuguese, either because they were Portuguese born in India (of mixed European and Indian parentage) or Christian. Portuguese could also mean those born in Brazil (Lobato, 2013; Rodrigues, 2010, 2013).

Essentially, as with African "ethnicities," non-African actors were also classified using ever-changing criteria. However, their classification is not presented by the authors as identity categories, but rather as administrative ones. Identity seems to be exclusively applicable in the case of hybridity (cultural or racial) with Africans, which establishes the European (whether actual or attributed) as the standard. These need no further

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[31] "Mozungo" (plural *azungo*) literally means 'lord' in ciSena. Starting from the seventeenth century it was used to refer to the Afro-European or mestizo population, although it could refer also to men of European and Asian origin, or even Africans with power and influence (Capela, 1995, pp. 103–104; Isaacman, 1972a, p. 59; Isaacman & Isaacman, 1975, pp. 9–10; Lobato, 1996, 2013; Newitt, 1995, pp. 127–129).

study or analysis, whereas Africans (and those influenced by them) are the permanent focus of "the gaze."

The permanence of becoming

In the sections above, I outline the Zambezi region's constant state of impermanence. I have done this by critically expanding on the broad historical context of "Zambezia," deliberately contesting a view that it is a social and historical place whose diversity is contained within a singular ethos of trans-ethnic hybrid identity, as I have outlined above. By looking at a broad period, I have highlighted the changing geographies of naming and identity attribution to peoples and languages. Thus, I have set the scene for how the different peoples in the different sites belong to different *locales*, in the Giddensian sense, within which collectives interact regularly. These *locales* further establish relationships with multiple and divergent temporal and spatial references.

I argue that these multiple and divergent references thereby create not one unified but multiple "Zambezian" regions. Borrowing from Giddens, I understand "regions" to be "aspects of the settings which are normatively implicated in systems of interaction, such that they are in some way 'set apart'" (Giddens, 1995, p. 40). He emphasizes two aspects of regionalization. One is that it is associated with "the episodic nature of interaction." The interpretation of episodes and their nature are "typically reflexively categorized by participants, and can also be so categorized by sociological observers." Second, regionalizing *locales* helps conceal or make visible social practices that are "a phenomenon of significance for the analysis of power relations" (ibid.).

Additionally, using a *longue durée* timeline, with multiple sources (colonial, postcolonial) and references (American, European, African, Indian, and Arabic), highlights an array of timelines based on the specific interests and perspectives of historians and other scholars. I have purposefully eschewed a linear and chronological narrative in favor of a trans-temporal view of time, i.e., looking at social phenomena and organization modes "that are otherwise distributed across disparate moments in time" (Pedersen & Nielsen, 2015, pp. 123–124). As a result of this trans-temporal

approach, I understand Inhassunge as part of the spatiotemporal region of the *prazos*. Macuse is part of companies' spatiotemporal region, and Maganja da Costa is part of the spatiotemporal region of the *aringa*.

On the surface, this regionalization still establishes its ties to the colonial enterprise. As I show in the following sections, underneath the colonial structures, and across these different regions, there were recurring social categories and similar understandings of changing categories. For example, the *anyakoda* have been mentioned as part of the Maravi polity, the *prazos,* and the companies, thus effectively making it a precolonial unifying category of the two regions. On the other hand, the category of *dona* appears as a successor to *nyanye*, and retains a similar meaning and perception while changing denomination.

As a result, it can be argued that although the hybrid spaces and identities—even when understood from a Sahlinsian perspective of mutual incorporation—are described in the literature as a unified Zambezian ethos, when in fact hybridity was not uniformly distributed or incorporated. More importantly, colonial hybrid spaces overlap with non-colonial hybrid spaces or those resisting hybridity. The current sociopolitical order still retains meanings based on persistent cosmologies, whichever interactions the peoples around the Zambezi were exposed to. These have helped make sense of the constant state of impermanence that was their reality. By centralizing colonialism, historical texts relegated those groups, spaces, languages, and identities that least interacted with it or were less influenced by it to oblivion.

Therefore, archival sources alone are insufficient to capture more profound meanings and connections and changing networks. The scholarship that focuses on colonial engagement, even when critical, tends to reinterpret the same archival material (see Medeiros & Capela, 2010; Rodrigues, 2017). Postcolonial scholarship, which has relied upon additional oral sources and archeological evidence, also constructed a grandiose African narrative bent on reviving precolonial pride (Carvalho et al., 1988). Simultaneously, at least in Mozambique, the post-independence regime was factually engaged in the decimation of culture considered backward and undesirable (Arnfred,

1988; Igreja, 2013; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999). Left-wing historians, French and American, focused on colonialism's extractive, exploitative nature and the resulting resistance (Isaacman, 1975, 1992; Isaacman & Isaacman, 1983; Pelissier, 1994; Penvenne, 1995; Vail & White, 1980, 1983).

All these knowledge production modes led to erasures and epistemic blindness to some continuities, adaptations, and ruptures. There has been some interest in the role of women in the social, economic and even political fabrics of the country (Arnfred, 1988; Sheldon, 2003), as well as in the customary leadership arrangements (Igreja, 2013; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999). There has been less written about how these converge, and what values and long-standing practices ensure women's continued participation in these structures. Zambezia's history, which has centered on the colonial encounter, interference and ultimate conquest, has agglutinated, erased and essentialized places, peoples, and practices.

This thesis aims to decentralize colonialism without diminishing its importance or essentializing African cultures. When juxtaposed, the current scholarly works already undermine the coherent histories told about "Zambezia" and their reliance on unidimensional typologies of colonial archives. The evidence shows that multiple peoples inhabited this region, with their long historical processes, administrative organizations, commercial relations, and networks. The Portuguese were but one of these groups. They did not manage to unify the others under their rule— euphemistically called pacification—until other European imperial powers forced them to during the late nineteenth century. Influential African empires and polities— the Mwenemutapa empire south of the Zambezi and the Maravi to the north—changed capitals or remodeled almost every time a new king was nominated. Kingdoms seceded, like Quiteve and Sedanda from the Mwenemutapa. Geographies shrank or enlarged. New identities emerged; others vanished. Still others were absorbed into broader identities.

Achille Mbembe claims that the postcolony is "a plurality of 'spheres' and arenas, each having its own separate logic yet nonetheless liable to be entangled with other

logics when operating in certain specific contexts" (Mbembe, 1992b, p. 5). As such, "the post-colonial 'subject' mobilizes not just a single 'identity,' but several fluid identities which, by their very nature, must be constantly 'revised'" (ibid.). He provides a fair assessment of how identities wax or wane, preceding even the postcolony and not necessarily instigated by the colonial enterprise—at least not that alone. Peoples in this highly mobile place were under multiple overarching powers, states, and polities. They needed to adapt to every new system while retaining familiar and understandable logics.

The Portuguese presence certainly contributed to these shifting processes, and it changed itself multiple times. However, they were not the only force of disruption. Their realities and intended structures were just as disrupted and impermanent as those of the other peoples living in the area. Eventually, they did become the force with the most enduring legacy. However, that did not manage to erase lingering influences, from Arab and Indian merchants to African polities and cosmologies.

Some scholars claim that there was no state-controlled trade among the Indian Ocean traders before the Portuguese arrived (Hofmeyr, 2010; Pearson, 1998). In contrast, state-sponsored expansion appears to have been the standard European approach. Nevertheless, there are accounts in which the Portuguese are said to have acted both ways initially. Though they did act in representation of the Portuguese Crown in most instances, individual interests often superseded that of the Crown and could even be at odds with it. That was certainly the case with the older self-proclaimed "Portuguese" elites of the Zambezi (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1975; Lobato, 1996; Rodrigues, 2013).

Despite this permanent fickleness and turmoil, certain events appear to have impacted the Zambezi's peoples' realities more than others. These events have in common that they appear related by dynamics external to the region. According to the literature, these included the increased raids to feed the Atlantic slave trade—which depopulated the slave populations of the *prazos*—and the Ngoni invasions, known as *Mfecane*, prompted by the expansion of the Zulu empire (Carvalho et al., 1988, p. 88; Liesegang, 1970; Newitt, 1969). The consequences of the scramble for Africa and its

partition were accompanied by a transition from the feudal patronage of the *prazos* to a more capitalist venture of the lessee companies; and from slave to forced labor in the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries (Da Silva, 2016; Vail, 1976).

Other global events such as World War I also had a devastating and traumatic effect, making "Zambezia"—among other regions of the then-Portuguese East Africa—a peripheral proxy to a larger global stage. Though less mentioned in the literature, particularly in its impact on the native populations, this was the only event mentioned by respondents in <u>all</u> the field sites and collectively remembered as *Guerra do Mulimao* (War of the German). One example of this is in the recollections of my elderly friend mentioned above, about how Nossa Senhora do Livramento (Our Lady of Deliverance) saved Quelimane from being invaded. I present other examples when I expand on the life histories of Nunu Ancha and Nyakoda Marieta of Macuse.

Mozambique (or Portuguese East Africa) was an extension to the East Africa Campaign site, where many Africans were dragged into the war mostly as guides and carriers. According to some historians, although unevenly distributed and unintended, the African theatre became an important one (Moyd, 2016; Rathbone, 2014). "It was also a time when colonial rulers tightened their grip on Africans," and when famine and disease spread (Pesek, 2017, p. 1). From an African vantage point, it was a traumatic moment that, at the same time, was entirely external to them and their logic.

Independence also brought radical changes in the newly introduced form of Marxist ideology. Among the effects was the persecution of traditional practices and leaderships (Arnfred, 1988; West, 2001; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999). This ideology was the result of international cooperation among socialist nations. The exodus of skilled labor after independence, along with the exodus of settlers, led to the signature of agreements with the Soviet Union and the Eastern European bloc, as well as an ideological alignment of the county's economic policies (Brito, 2019).

The internal war that followed independence picked up on grievances contesting the above-mentioned persecutions (Christian Geffray, 1990; M. Hall, 1990; M. Hall & Young, 1997; Morier-Genoud et al., 2018). In many respects, it was also a proxy for

the larger Cold War that followed World War II (Emerson, 2019). It was waged by RENAMO (Mozambican National Resistance), a rebel movement that opposed the policies of the independence-movement-turned-single-party-ruler, Frelimo. Many authors refrain from calling the conflict a civil war due to the role played by the minority white governments of Rhodesia and South Africa in funding and arming the rebels. However, authors like Christian Geffray (1990), Margaret Hall (1990), or Harry West and Scott Kloeck-Jenson (1999) recognize that despite the "international aggression" element, there were internal seeds of discontent. Those included the decline in *régulo* authority and recognition after the county's independence. Historians Eric Morier-Genoud and Michael Cahen and political scientist Domingos do Rosário (2018), though, argue that another rebel movement preceded RENAMO in Zambezia, which made it easier for rebel action to achieve a foothold in the province.

While arguing for a recovery of indigenous values and knowledge obliterated or belittled by colonialism, most liberation movements adopted Marxist ideology, focusing on class struggle in their efforts to achieve equality. Criticism of this ideology mostly rested on the fact that it also relied on a dialectical evolutionary imagination resting on concepts of modernity likewise alien to Africa and no less reactive to indigenous values and ideologies. The failure of African states to materialize prosperity under Marxist ideals only reinforced the inadequacy of the paradigm (Botchway, 1977). The structural adjustments imposed by the Bretton Woods Institutions (the World Bank and IMF) through the Washington Consensus, to correct the shortcomings of Marxist economic policies, did not result in any greater prosperity (Afolayan, 2018; Bertelsen, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b). In the example mentioned above of Companhia do Boror, laid-off workers are caught in a continuous conflict with the state for its divestment in the existing industrial park.

All of the above highlight the global influences on local experiences and contexts raised by Marcus (1995) and Gupta and Ferguson (1997) in defense of a multi-sited ethnography according to which global links to local realities, events, and practices could be made evident. According to them, anthropology's pairing with disciplines

such as history, or collaboration in multi-disciplinary arenas such as feminist studies, significantly contributed to a greater awareness that

> the world system is not the theoretically constituted holistic frame that gives context to the contemporary study of peoples or local subjects closely observed by ethnographers, but it becomes, […] integral to and embedded in discontinuous, multi-sited objects of study. (Marcus, 1995, p. 97)

The premise of multi-sited research was that single-sited fieldwork could not give insights into the complexities of local phenomena. More recent discussions have suggested a return to bounded field- sites or "arbitrary locations," i.e., sites "with no overarching 'meaning' or 'consistency'," and that bear "no necessary relation to the wider object of study" (Candea, 2007, pp. 179–180). Alternatively, there have been calls for un-sited fieldwork that "need[s] not correspond to a spatial entity of any kind, and need not be a holistic entity 'out there' to be discovered" (Cook et al., 2009, p. 68)—effectively arguing that it is not physical space that determines the sites. Instead, it is the theoretical possibility of interconnections established by the ethnographic exchange.

The volatility of nomenclatures and identities presented above challenges essentialist views about their denomination. It also challenges the definition of a united sociological space, suggesting instead that multiple social, cultural, and linguistic realities coexist that relate differently to historical references. Unlike traditional multi-sited fieldwork, where one follows "connections, associations, and putative relationships" (Marcus, 1995, p. 97), my field is deliberately un-sited—without a definite space. Though I can pinpoint the sites where I conducted fieldwork, they do not connect to each other evenly or coherently. This un-sitedness allows me to explore the ways the diversity emerging is reflected in the production of memory and meaning-making of the past.

In only one case, I followed the life history outside the field's most immediate boundaries. This was in the pursuit of D. Amália's life history, when I interviewed her

granddaughter-in-law and great-grandson in Portugal. However, locally there was plenty of evidence of global linkages. In Inhassunge, refugees from the post-independence war had 'overrun' D. Amália's *prazo* Carungo. As I mentioned above, the area was now divided in two, Carungo I and Carungo II. The presence of the former refugees now turned permanent residents of Carungo II is a constant reminder of the proxy wars of the Cold War.

In Macuse, the abandoned buildings formerly owned by Companhia do Boror—which Régulo Voabil's daughter made a point of showing me in our first visit there—featured fading socialist slogans, making them a double testament to colonial global capitalist ventures and the anti-capitalist anti-colonial response.

Anthropology and history have certainly facilitated the study of global interconnectedness. African anthropologists (and historians), like their postcolonial peers from elsewhere, have been particularly concerned with modernizing expectations or failures in the continent and its continuous misrepresentations—whether through the colonial encounter, Marxist post-independence regimes, neoliberal structural adjustments, or developmental agendas (Adesina, 2008; Devisch & Nyamjoh, 2011; Grinker et al., 2019; Nyoka, 2019a, 2019b; Zeleza, 2002, 2006). Though generally critical of historical linearity, most works have not been able to shed it effectively. History's "obsession" with chronology often also forces time-bound brackets of historical meaning and purpose. Historical tradition tends to create nomenclature that can create "false models of reality" (E. R. Wolf, 1997, p. 6), like the West, East, or Third World. Likewise, the idea of "Zambezia," chiefly produced by historians, continues to be reproduced in the writing of its history—as shown above. Elements of any social configuration are seldom stable. Even the connections within those social configurations are marked by tensions, friction, contradiction, and rupture. At the same time, all societies and cultures have always formed part of larger systems, even if not always at a global scale.

The alternative "Zambezia" that I present below does not have a unifying ethos; it is segmented into different classes and societies, with multiple not-always-coinciding

timelines. This defies the conventional organization of context and narrative. For example, in many presentations of my project to academic peers, I was systematically asked about which period I was focusing my ethnography on, or how far back I was looking into history. Having embraced a broader understanding time without the usual restrictions on spatiotemporal influence has allowed me to better visualize the societies' impermanent nature at these evolving sites.

The problem with the historiographic chronological bracketing of "Zambezia" is that it centers around colonial expansion and its relevant dates and events. Other forms of relating to time and trajectories become misconstrued, eclipsed, or sidelined. Likewise, alternative chronologies and timeframes based on more relevant local experiences become invisible in the grander historical frame.

2 Looking for Anya Elabo by way of Rainhas, aNyanye, aNunu, and aNyakoda

In Part 1, I presented a critical view of the *longue durée* history of the region known as "Zambezia." I demonstrated how historically the area had been profoundly unbounded, with multiple actors and societies intersecting continuously. I contest the narrative of converging hybridity offered by much of the literature about this region. This long description is intentional, to give a fair description of the temporal and geographic scope that inform the study of this region. It also presents the far reach of the different trans-temporal hinges related to each field site, and the possibilities of the differently constituted *locales* emerging from each site. I also purposefully present a genderless version of history in Part 1, in order to have the opportunity to properly discuss the gaps and misrepresentations of women within the same literature.

In this part, I showcase different categories of women of power and authority described in the scholarly literature about "Zambezia," with the specific intent of contrasting those encountered in the field. Therefore, my central arguments will be based on the archival material, with some snippets from the ethnographic material. The bulk of the ethnographic material, which presents the composite life histories of the selected women, will be presented in Part 3. By bringing to light female articulations of power through a close reading of the historical colonial archive and juxtaposing it with localized understandings of power, I highlight how women in authoritative roles have been either ignored or misunderstood, or their influence has been diluted within the existing written texts. Likewise, this discussion forms the basis from which I select the categories of powerful women that I go on to describe.

For, as I show below, even literature that is more explicit about female authority tends to refrain from attributing them overarching powers, instead characterizing them as still being part of a male-dominated society. For example, Rodrigues mentions that "although in all these states, the principal holders of power were men, women occupied relevant positions in the political structure" (Rodrigues, 2017, p. 8). The

states she is referring to are the different aforementioned African precolonial polities of the Zambezi region (i.e., the Mwenemutapa empire and the Maravi polities).

Several authors, among them historian António Rita-Ferreira, reproduce a particular idea about power in these societies that, while allowing women's relevance in authoritative positions, place them in relation to men, as daughters, sisters, but primordially wives.

> The chiefs' power resided in the number of wives, always reinforced by the vast parentage of relatives and akin, by ascendants, collaterals, and descendants. These wives were not simple means of reproduction but powerful personalities in their own right, possibly vassal chiefs' daughters. They had land, settlements, and armed forces. The title of 'wife' was eminently in fulfillment. The very dynastic designation of "Caranga" meant "wife." The power and prestige they enjoyed led the most ambitious to interfere in political life. (Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 67)

As mentioned above, the previous part critically attempted to disrupt the narratives arguing for a bounded hybrid "Zambezia," which is a chief product of the *prazo* system, a colonial institution. In this part I work primarily to decentralize narratives based on colonial sources, and to present localized, ethnographically based understandings of power. Indeed, when first approaching the field, I had been relying on universalistic notions of power as a point of departure, being ignorant of the local. When explaining my project, I would specify that I was interested in women who had power or yielded authority. At this point I understood power in much the way Weber conceptualized it, as the "probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance" (Weber in: Uphoff, 1989, p. 299). And its auxiliary concept of authority, i.e., the "probability that a command […] will be obeyed" (ibid., p. 300), or that one holds the ability to command consent.

The results of my enquiry using the terms "power," and "authority" produced mixed results. One of the first interviews I conducted in January 2014 was in Macuse, with the *secretários* suggested by Régulo Voabil's daughter because she did not feel that

she knew enough of the history of Macuse or even her own lineage to help me. They started by describing the administrative division of area. They also explained that the *régulo* was the one appointed to rule over the different settlement villages. About women they said, "before they were not leaders, but by being a daughter of a noble man people had consideration," meaning, they respected her.

I also attempted to use more nuanced terms, such as "respected," "famous/known," or "important," similar categories and descriptions as in the literature—i.e., the sisters, daughters, and wives of chiefs or important men. At the same time, some of these and other categories appeared in a different light. In the same conversation, I switched the terms, mirroring their adjectives. Their response was as follows:

> The important families were Voabil, Raia, who was a *mwene*, head of the village; they had schooled children and economic standing. Coroa, who was a farmer. Tadeliua, who was a counselor, an influential elder. The *nyakoda*, D. Lidia from Mulevala; Dalvina, who was head counselor from Munigua; Atália from Munigua. The eldest of the women was the head.

While not immediately associating the terms "power" and "authority" with women, the way informants articulated the meaning of "salient" and "influential" women—as some of them were described—in their relationship to others in their society, these women undoubtedly held power and authority in the Weberian sense. This became particularly evident in my last conversation with Mwene Raia in 2015, where one of these secretaries was also present. When I explained that I was done with the interview and asked if they had something to add, particularly in relation to the distinction between these women and other women, the *secretário* replied,

The difference that existed between these women was that they were salient, and the others were not. This can really happen because those who have a position have their own merit. Someone who is above has their consideration. The person is responsible [for something], the other one is not responsible. The person who is responsible has their merit based on their work and dedication. This is the difference that exists from these women with the others.

Based on the ethnographic material gathered, I identified the following forms of localized categories of women with power: inherent (members of ruling dynasties), acquired (spouses), and subaltern (labor organizers). These in turn relate to the following expressions of power: metaphysical (rituals and witchcraft), performative (dances), and embodied (clothes and jewelry). The former three represent what kinds of women yield power. The latter three are the way their societies recognize and distinguish their type of power. Following African feminist debates, I argue that, like elsewhere in Africa, women's authoritative positions need not be gendered, and gender is not always related to sex, with equivalent gendered roles performed by both men and women (N. Achebe, 2020; Oyěwùmí, 1997).

Notably, the focus on a subaltern category's power requires a discussion of hegemony in the Gramscian sense, which is to say, a discussion on cosmologies that allow for "a *process* by which a historical bloc of social forces is constructed and the ascendancy of that bloc secured" (Stuart Hall in: Morley & Chen, 1996, p. 43). The focus on actors described as subaltern differs from the literature on subalternity in general (Chandra, 2015; Spivak, 1988) and scholarship on Mozambique in particular (Isaacman, 1975; Pelissier, 1994; Vail & White, 1983), which tend to focus on resistance, whereas the focus here is on the full participation and complicity with the hegemony. This focus is not intended to pass judgment on the complicit subaltern groups. Instead, it explores the necessity and mechanisms of inclusion by the hegemony of such groups within the power circle.

Exploring a *longue durée* historiography, using ethnographically informed categories, functions, and denominations allows for spotting continuities and ruptures in hegemonic manifestations of power and authority, and their most profound meaning. They also allow for identifying overarching hegemonies that may coexist across time and space. Accessing the different hegemonies' symbols and signifiers requires acknowledging how our scholarly hegemonies may function as a barrier to identifying blind spots.

Breaking modes of constructing knowledge about women, power and authority in "Zambezia"

It may seem contradictory that I argue and show that women in Zambezian historiography are under- or misrepresented, and then to proceed not only to list several women who are mentioned in historical texts but also to analyze the forms of power they wielded. Every time I mention my interest in women of power in "Zambezia," those familiar with the historiography immediately assume that my interest lies (solely) in the *donas*, the female feudal landowners of many of the Zambezian *prazos*, described by José Capela as the "autonomous female owner of land and slaves" (Capela, 1995, p. 79). Ironically, this monograph's title—*Donas da Terra* (owners of the land)—only adds to the confusion. I deliberately chose to keep *donas* in the title as a way of challenging perceptions around powerful female figures in the region, and to increase the visibility of others who also deserve the same prominence. In this way, as indicated above, I purposefully engage with decolonizing perceptions around women and power in "Zambezia" by pluralizing female manifestations of power and authority and inverting the prominence given to the *donas* in other scholarly texts. Therefore, I am starting with the description and reflection of other women of authority that show that *donas* were part of a specific cosmology and a wider variety of female power expressions. As I detail below, I challenge the notion that manifestations of female power are necessarily gendered or subversions of male-centric orders. Instead, I argue for a fluid and complementary understanding of locations of power based on carefully crafted and mobile hierarchies. I do this while

purposefully altering how native terms have been subverted and redrafted to conform to the Portuguese language rules.

As mentioned above, I am aware of the numerous mentions of women in historical texts about "Zambezia" (Gamitto, 1854; Linden, 1972; Ntara et al., 1973; Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005; Rodrigues, 2013). Despite this, many of these mentions are either superficial or, in many cases, misconstrued—though it is not only analyses of women that are superficial or misconstrued. Also, I am not only interested in the *donas*, who are the more broadly mentioned and studied authoritative female actors of Zambezian history (Capela, 1995; Nepomuceno, 2019; Rodrigues, 2000, 2008, 2006b) and fiction (de San Bruno, 1927; Sorensen, 1998). Instead, I unpack and discuss how we can understand a broader range of women in positions of power and authority.

My focus on women as the subject of research and informants, particularly women of power and authority, has created further assumptions that this is a gender study and/or a means of restoring to their rightful place female actors silenced or ignored by history. In my mind, it is neither. This focus is intended to bring visibility to hitherto ignored or misrepresented historical actors, and with that to disrupt the existing representations of social and political organization in "Zambezia," particularly around figures of power and authority. It is not my aim to claim that women were as powerful or more powerful than men. Instead, I intend to ascertain that in the conceptualization of this region's societies, power and authority are understood and lived in ways that the historical texts have failed to grasp, due to both a male- and Eurocentric bias, and compounded by epistemological limitations.

I first came across mention of women chiefs in Rodrigues' text about the *prazo*-owner elites (Rodrigues, 2013). She referred to a text by Gamitto, mentioned before, where he references the "*fumo-acáze*," as either women chiefs or sisters of chiefs (Gamitto, 1854). In all my curiosity, I could not find detailed descriptions of these chiefs. In her text, Rodrigues mentions one of these chiefs, Sazora, present in colonial documentation because she had opposed Portuguese settlers. Sazora is referred to as a

"subject of the Undi"[32] (Rodrigues, 2013, p. 581). Isaacman makes a brief mention of the chieftaincy of Sazora. He does not mention that a woman held it, and he further called it a "relatively defenseless" Chewa polity (Isaacman, 2000, p. 114). In her later work, Rodrigues goes more into detail about this woman, whose title had been mislabeled as a personal name, a princess and queen. In reality, it was a title bestowed on women by the Undi, responsible for governing vassal chieftaincies (Rodrigues, 2017).

Previously, apart from the many references to *donas*, I only read about the multiple wives of the Mwenemutapa, and to a lesser extent those of the Maravi Karonga. As I learned by thoroughly searching the archive, these women also had successors, some appointed, some inherited, just like their male counterparts. In the case of the Karonga, his wives' titles were hereditary, while the actual Karonga's title was not (Rodrigues, 2017). In the case of the Mwenemutapa, there are detailed accounts of dynastic successions, including reflections on the difficulty of establishing a credible chronology relying partially on oral records (Abraham, 1959; Alpers, 1970; Mudenge, 1988). No such effort exists concerning the Mwenemutapa wives. They are consistently presented statically by their titles, and as per the initial trader and missionary accounts (Bocarro, 2011; Theal, 1901b, 1903). The lack of detail in the description of female royal titles and often suspected misinterpretation of their significance and role has limited further attempts to provide fuller descriptions of these women (Levin, 2013; Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005; Rodrigues, 2017).

Aside from the misunderstanding or misrepresentation of women in a social sense, there are also linguistic complications, namely that historical texts also often conjugated using Portuguese language rules, even when they are not Portuguese in

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[32] Undi was a branch of the Maravi Karonga empire, as it was called by the Portuguese, resulting from succession splits (Isaacman & Isaacman, 1975; Newitt, 1982; Rita-Ferreira, 1982; Rodrigues, 2013, 2017).

origin. In Portuguese, the plural typically uses an –s suffix. In the Bantu languages,[33] the plural is constructed using varying prefixes. Scholars have often not respected this linguistic rule.[34] That early missionaries, adventurers, and settlers used Portuguese or English plural logic on native terms, categories, or expressions is understandable. It seems less understandable that scholars, especially those aware of the linguistic rules, choose to follow the same practice.

Opting to break with this pattern deliberately, I have used the –s suffix when words or authority categories have Portuguese or pidgin origin, as in the case of "Dona*s*"[35] or "Sinhara*s*."[36] In categories mentioned by my informants that do not have a Portuguese equivalent, such as "Nyanye,"[37] "Nunu,"[38] or "Nyakoda,"[39] I used the plural according to the language of origin. Hence, the plural for these women becomes "*a*-Nyanye," "*a*-

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[33] African languages spoken in Zambezia belong to the Niger-Congo language family. There is no consensus about the subgroupings of this language family, but Ethnologue (Lewis et al., 2015) classifies them as part of the Southern, Narrow Bantu, Central subgroup of the Bantoid complex.

[34] Notable exceptions include Liazzat Bonate (2007) in her reference to the "apia-mwene", as well as Malyn Newitt (1995) on the denomination of the "a-chicunda". Allen and Barbara Isaacman (2006) prefer the Portuguese plural structure, though they will use both Portuguese and Bantu plurals in conjunction (e.g. a-ngonis, a-nsengas, a-tauaras, etc.). Eduardo Medeiros and José Capela, in their work about "Processes of Identity-Building in Zambezi Valley…" (2010), on the other hand, acknowledge the grammar rule, but opt to use the plural in Portuguese, even when their text is in English, and leave the Bantu plural structure in brackets.

[35] The name is the female equivalent of the honorific title 'Don' used in the Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian medieval context. It was a title originally reserved for royalty, select nobles, and high ecclesiastic officials. It was extended to the respective colonies so that it came into use also in Latin America, Portuguese-speaking Africa and even the Philippines. Presently it is still used in these same places as a mark of esteem for a person of social distinction or a person of significant wealth.

[36] A pidgin term corrupted from the Portuguese *senhora* (madam), a way to refer to respectable women.

[37] The term used to designate the wife of a powerful, influential or wealthy man in both ciSena and eChuwabu.

[38] The term used to designate the wife of a respectable Muslim man in several languages, including ciSena and eChuwabu.

[39] The term used for women who oversee other women's work.

Nunu," or "*a*-Nyakoda," instead of "Nhanye*s*"[40] or "Nhakoda*s*," as they are constructed in the historical texts.

The (in)visible places of women in the Zambezi historiography

The question of language has had a lasting impact on the (mis)representation of African polities and social organization. These (mis)representations extend, for example, to the misunderstanding of the place and meaning of "wives" in African historiography. Historian Florence Pabiou-Duchamp (2005) makes that case when she notes that confusing "woman" with "wife" may have led historians to underestimate, if not wholly misinterpret, the role of women in the sociopolitical structures of the Zambezi, principally due to a more ceremonial and backstage role rulers' wives had in European royalty.

As part of the African political landscape, women have been reduced to European categories of power and gender, mostly because scholarly work about them borrows directly from often misguided depictions developed during the colonial encounter (Aidoo, 1977; Farrar, 1997; Oyěwùmí, 1998). In this view, scholars could recognize that women held royal titles or political positions; however, these positions and titles were still perceived as largely ceremonial, with the "real" power held by men (e.g. Cohen, 1997). Critical postcolonial historiographies have attempted to upset this view by focusing on precolonial examples of politically and economically relevant women (Awe, 1974; Denzer, 1994; Perrot, 2005). Meanwhile, Afrocentric scholars, chiefly Cheik Anta Diop among them, have argued that ancient and precolonial women enjoyed higher status than anywhere else in the world (Diop, 1989).

Scholars of "Zambezia," however, have understood women's authority as existing within male-dominated systems (Rita-Ferreira, 1982; Rodrigues, 2017). The above differing perceptions and portrayals of women follow two trends. One focuses on

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[40] Also spelled *nhanhes*.

women's prominence around public political and/or economic authority. The second sees them as unique heroic manifestations of power, whether legitimate or not (N. Achebe, 2011; Miller, 1975).

In these depictions, colonialism's interference subverts common precolonial structures, and power held by women is the most misunderstood and disrupted (Allman et al., 2002; Bonate, 2018; Farrar, 1997). Alternatively, the structures and manifestations that persist are mostly devoid of power. Women are said to continue to hold sway only in their relationship with the spiritual realm (e.g. Bonate, 2006; Mokwena, 2004). Spirituality and the spiritual realm feature prominently in the analysis of African, and Mozambican, political authority structures and legitimacy, where women regularly feature as the managers of ceremonies and bridges between the corporeal and spiritual realm (Buur & Kyed, 2005; Englund & Nyamnjoh, 2004; Meneses, 2006; West, 2005). Still, their role is understood mainly as symbolic and ceremonial, and lacking concrete power.

By interrogating the archival depictions of women, on which I expand below, I demonstrate that the understandings of power—particularly its female dimension—within "Zambezian" societies' structures remain for the most part uncaptured within the contemporary and historical text. Notably, this ignores the continuing legitimating role, spiritual and otherwise, that women confer on hegemonic power structures. In one example from my field, from my last conversation with Mwene Raia, it transpired that the leadership in Voabil is threatened. It faces the possibility of the end of a lineage. The current *régulo* is ill, and there is no one left in the locality descended from the legitimate woman's lineage to inherit the leadership. I asked if there was a possibility that a child from one of the other wives could succeed. Although the first Régulo Voabil had many wives, only those descended from his mother-in-law's daughters could inherit the rulership. "Maybe if they sat down among each other and the owners [ruling lineage], but is it possible? Don't know." Mwene Raia entertained the idea just for a moment but finds the possibility unlikely. After all, the rulers have a spiritual connection to the land, and the other wives' lineages are not owners of this particular land.

Likewise, in Maganja da Costa, female descendants of the original Rainha Bala, in different generations, contested the chosen rulers, leading to leadership change. An earlier generation led to a change in male leaders, but most recently it led to the appointment of Rainha Bala, whose story I detail further below.

As also outlined in the introduction, gender and power categories in the African context have previously been challenged by authors like Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí (1997, 1998), who questions the applicability of Western concepts of gender in understanding sociopolitical structures and women's authoritative roles. According to her, Western gender epistemologies affect how African societies, social relations, and structures are analyzed and represented. She contends that gender in African social formations diverges from mainstream gender research in two ways. For one, "woman" does not equate to a fixed gender category, as in many societies, social roles do not necessarily match expected biological roles. Second, gender is not linked to sex and sexuality, given multiple examples in West African societies, where gendered roles are performed by both male and female individuals (Oyěwùmí, 1997). Anthropologist and poet Ifi Amadiume discusses this same issue using the examples of male daughters and female husbands (Amadiume, 1987). Historian Nwando Achebe presents the example of a female king (N. Achebe, 2011). In contrast, Christine Saidi (2010), analyzing precolonial women's authority in East and Central Africa, challenged the assumption of African societies as inherently patriarchal. On the other hand, Allman, Geiger, and Musisi (2002) argue that African women in colonial contexts are more complex and diverse than is credited in the scholarship.

The combination of their insights is confirmed by what I observed in the field. Not all leadership and authoritative roles were gender specific. Positions equivalent to the *régulo*, which were exclusively male during colonial times, could be occupied by women in precolonial times and again in postcolonial times. The reasons uttered for choosing a woman to rule are generally similar to those used for choosing a man, i.e., responsibility, appropriate personality, good character, and literacy.

As I expand on below when I present Rainha Bala's life history, in my meeting with her female cousins on my last trip to the field in 2015, they told me that the queen was chosen because "she was good and studied." During the same conversation, they also told me that her grandfather had been chosen because his mother-in-law "saw that he was good, was not rude to anyone." Even in situations where gender may have been determinant for a long time, other factors supersede gender in legitimizing leadership. These include appropriate lineage and character, as women can hold legitimate claims to authoritative roles, even when male contenders exist.

A *longue durée* overview of history helps to unveil persistent authoritative categories. In what follows, I look at the different positions occupied by women of authority and try to ascertain, through the etymology of the nomenclature, whether such positions were in any way gendered, what meaning did they carry, and what equivalents did they have in different times. The analysis also focused primarily on social and political forms of organization and women's place in leadership roles, not as an exception but as a norm. It also takes for granted their agency, but it does not deploy this concept to evidence resistance or ingenuity in, e.g., navigating constraining/patriarchal social structures. Instead, I view them as an integral and necessary part of the structures they inhabited and within which they operated.

I present first the most common female authority categories in the colonial historical texts, those of spouses and descendants of kings and influential men. Intertwining with material from the field, I demonstrate how marriage can be as prestigious for men as women, and how men also derive power through it. After making this argument, I look at the most common categories in texts from the postcolonial era, queen mothers and sisters. Similarly, reflecting the text through the field, I centralize the importance of the female myths of origin and "big women", understood here as an equivalent to "big men." Lastly, I discuss the authority and influence of so-called forewomen (*anyakoda*), both under- and misrepresented in colonial texts. I compare different descriptions across time with the current description of the equivalent category. I include this category informed by my discussions with informants in the field. I had researched the archives and established the first two categories as powerful before I

engaged with the field, but the third came as a surprise. I had heard of these forewomen. My mother explained that they stood for the *dona* when she was absent. Similarly, Capela identifies the *nyakoda* (which he spells *inhacoda*) as part of the *prazo's* organization of the slaves: "in front of an ensaca [group] of female slaves there is an inhacoda" (Capela, 1995, p. 203). Because they were described mostly by their subaltern slave status I had not understood their close connections with power, nor their occurrence in the different polities, and across time.

(Big women), queen sisters, and mothers: the women behind the myth of origin

As referred to above, big women were a feature of African polities across the Zambezi region. In addition to the Portuguese "big woman," protector of the doors to the kingdom, the other big women were the wives of the Mwenemutapa and the Maravi Karonga, who administered territory, defined the succession line, and established diplomatic relations (Newitt, 1995; Rodrigues, 2013, 2017; Theal, 1900, 1903). However, their portrait in history books lacks the depth accorded to other (male) historical actors.

While the literature generally lacks in-depth analysis of authoritative women, a few exceptions do exist—beyond the works by Florence Pabiou-Duchamp (2005) and Eugénia Rodrigues (2000, 2006b, 2008, 2010, 2017), that is—both of which I have already referred to and drawn on. As mentioned previously, Liazzat Bonate (2006, 2007, 2018) also writes extensively about female political leadership, specifically in the context of the matrilineal Islamic societies of northern Mozambique, and in particular the Makhuwa. As the Makhuwa are also part of the larger social complex of peoples of "Zambezia," her work is often relevant, even if seldom included as such. Moreover, the high mobility of the peoples in the region, particularly the intertwined history of the Swahili and Arab trade networks, demands that one looks beyond the region as locked into the *prazo* geography.

A few authors (Gamitto, 1854, pp. 178, 425; Rodrigues, 2013, p. 581) mention the Maravi *"fumo-acaze,"*[41] described as women chiefs or sisters of chiefs, who owned their administrative territories. Gamitto was the first and only to first-hand report on these women (subsequent authors refer to his text on this matter) (see e.g. Alpers, 1970; Bonate, 2018; Grinker et al., 2019). Nonetheless, he and the others have failed to realize that being a chief's sister often equates to being a female chief. Crucial in this regard is that there are several terms for "sister." In ciChewa (also known as ciNyanja, in Mozambique), the language of the matrilineal Maravi, "woman" translates to *mkazi*, and *mfumu* to "king" or "chief." "Sister" is *mlongo*, and sisters of chiefs who were not chiefs would most likely be referred to as such. The term *chemwali* refers to a sisterly friend, an unrelated female friend held in high regard. *Mlongo msuweni* refers to a "cousin-sister," i.e., the daughter of a parent's sibling. In general, the translations of African kin and social categories have not sufficiently reflected their rich hierarchy and complexity.

Still, during my last, and long, conversation with Mwene Raia—in which her *namalaga* (counselor) aunt and *secretário* also participated—I asked her to explain the distinction between sisters and wives, which she obliged in the following exchange:

> Me: Between the sister of a leader and the wife of a leader, who would have more consideration?

> Mwene Raia: between the sister of a leader and the wife of a leader? The sister of a leader may be considered and may not be considered. Because sometimes… marriage is something else. Sometimes you can be the sister of a leader and marry a disgraced family. You will disgrace yourself.

> Me: [She] will lose her consideration?

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[41] An alternative spelling is *mfumukazi*.

Mwene Raia: She will not lose it, but people will say, 'Be careful with that lady, even if disgraced, she is the leader's sister.' She was [still] respected.

Me: So, a woman who is born into an important family will always be important?

Mwene Raia: Yes, she is important.

Me: And a woman who is not part of a family like that. To become important, is it possible?

Mwene Raia: It is not possible.

Secretário: It is possible, as long as she marries a nobleman.

Me: That is the only way?

Secretário and Mwene Raia: Only that way.

This conversation informs us of two essential power manifestations. One is inherent for women born into power, i.e., a powerful, influential family. The other is acquired, for women who marry into power and influence.

In some instances, sisters of rulers were assumed by the Portuguese chroniclers to be wives, as they were the ones who held authoritative power alongside their brothers, particularly (but not exclusively) in matrilineal contexts. Mozambique lies along the so-called "matrilineal belt," which stretches from Angola, through the Congo Basin, across Zambia and Malawi. This, according to Pauline Peters, "raises significant questions about gender relations and the dangers of ethnocentrism in analytical or theoretical approaches" (Peters in: Grinker et al., 2019, p. 38):

> During a journey to the Congo in the mid-nineteenth century, the
> missionary David Livingstone became exasperated with what he called
> "petticoat government," in which a chief insisted on consulting with a
> woman Livingstone assumed to be his wife, when in fact, she was his
> sister, with apparently superior authority. (ibid.)

This illustrates how the true importance of the *mfumukazi*, the women chiefs among the Maravi that Gamitto described only in their relation to a male chief, could have been gravely underestimated. Consequently, for example, knowledge of the name or lineages of the big women of the kingdoms and polities of the Zambezi is scant. As I discuss below, the dearth of archive material shows how their importance was relegated to a second and often symbolic plane, even though many women inherited their position from their mothers or aunts, in the same fashion as their royal brothers did. The result is that with time, even women who could legitimately claim a genderless position through their matriliny, like Rainha Bala, might have chosen not to do so. Meanwhile, gendered positions, some of which complemented and legitimized male leadership, are not recognized. During my consultancy years, I came across many "queens," especially in Niassa province, a strongly matrilineal region. Two of the queens I met, in the predominantly Makhuwa southern part of the province, were sisters of the *régulos*. They were not officially recognized as traditional leaders and were not called to public meetings with the other leaders. However, when community consultations occurred in their area, which was also under their leadership, the brothers invariably called them to be consulted.

With time, the mention of *mulheres grandes* (big women) of the great empires, kingdoms, and states of "Zambezia" and beyond have become invisible, as if the disappearance of dynasties to which they belonged dictated the disappearance of the type of authority they enjoyed. Most analysis on women's authority in the Zambezi focuses on spiritual or indirect power, i.e., one exercised symbolically or invisibly. Indirect power implies that it is exercised through unsanctioned or unofficial means (Anderson and Zinsser in: S. Hall & Gieben, 1992), making it likely to create the least resistance from sanctioned structures and overt power (Abu-Lughod, 1990). And while

symbolic power, in the Bourdieusian sense, implies "the power to impose upon other minds a vision" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 23) when used to refer to women's social standing, it often implies localized, ritualized power exercised not reproduced in society at large.

The symbolic nature of women's authority is generally described in mythological historiography, which focuses on societies' origin myths. This historiography inscribes women's symbolic place in their societies describing rites, and transcribing oral tradition. Two works discuss Mwali within the origin myth of the Maravi. These are Leo Frobenius and Douglas Fox's collection of *Folk Tales and Myths from Africa* (Frobenius & Fox, 1966) and Ian Linden's *'Mwali' and the Luba Origin of the Chewa*. In these, Mwali is either embodied by the noble damsels that stand for their peoples' prosperity and fertility or the ruler's ritual wife.

Alternatively, women are described as custodians of the lineage's memory, bridging the physical and the spiritual world and the clan's ancestors (Bonate, 2006; Vaughan, 2000). They are also mentioned, though marginally, as being present and even leading rituals that legitimize traditional leaderships or protect peoples from calamity (Bertelsen, 2016; Buur & Kyed, 2005; Meneses, 2006; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999).

Mazvarira (Mazarira) and Nehanda (Inhahanda)

According to Portuguese archival sources, Mazvarira[42] was the main—possibly the most powerful—woman of the Mwenemutapa Empire. Dominican friar João dos Santos, in his work *Ethiopia Oriental* (1609), describes Mazvarira as the principal *mulher grande* (big woman) to the Mwenemutapa (see also Bocarro, 2011; Mudenge, 1988; Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005; Rodrigues, 2017; Theal, 1901a). According to all sources that base their information on dos Santos, she was the Mwenemutapa's full

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[42] Spelled by Portuguese chroniclers Mazarira and S. I. G. Mudenge as Mazvarira. I use Mudenge's spelling, except in quoted text.

sibling, meaning that they shared the same father and mother. Dos Santos further writes that she was the one who protected the interests of the Portuguese.

> Monomotapa has many wives. His chief wife, called Mazarira, whom he dearly loves, is his full sister. She is very friendly to the Portuguese, and she speaks for them and takes their part with the king, for which reason when they give the *curva* (tribute) to the king, they also give this wife a present of cloth. No person speaks to the king or to this wife without offering a present. (Theal, 1901b, p. 288)

The second so-called *mulher grande* was Nehanda (Inhahanda),[43] who, it is stated, looked over the interests of the *mouros* (moors/Arabs).[44] She was the Mwenemutapa's half-sibling. The third woman was Nabuiza, his actual wife and the one who lived in his *zimbaoe*.[45]

> Bocarro informs, right after, that the second woman is 'Inhahanda, who speaks for the moors,' as the Portuguese designated the Muslim as Swahili traders that dominated the trade with the coast, before they became the principal intermediaries of these routes, while the third was Nyazvidza, 'his true wife, because only this one lives inside the king's court,' i.e., in the Zimbabwe, where she had 'her services and officials like the king.' (Bocarro, 1876, p. 539 [c.1635]). (Rodrigues, 2017, p. 10)

Aside from the third wife, all other women of the Mwenemutapa lived outside the court, in territories that they administered. Rodrigues notes that Bocarro, though recognizing that the Mwenemutapa had multiple women, valued the one living in his court and his true wife "according to the catholic model" (ibid.). However, this society

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[43] Portuguese chroniclers spell Inhahanda, whereas Mudenge uses Nehanda. As with Mazvarira, I use Mudenge's spelling.

[44] Name given by the Portuguese to Muslim traders (Bocarro, 2011, p. 539).

[45] At times also spelled Zimbabwe, the *zimbaoe* was the Mwenemutapa court. I use this spelling to distinguish from the country or kingdom.

was polygamous and patrilocal, which made the likelihood that the king had only one true wife small (Mudenge, 1988; Rodrigues, 2017). Still, polygamy, patrilocality, and patrilineality were no impediments for women to exercise autonomous authority.

Of the many women of the Mwenemutapa, the lengthier description was of the first three women described above. Just six other women are mentioned in the records: Navemba, Nemangore, Nizingoapangi, Nemongoro, Nissani, and Nekarunda (Newitt, 1995, pp. 45–46; Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005, p. 101). Of the latter women, there is no description other than the name and the fact that they administered territories.

There is a certain fixedness in how the women of the Mwenemutapa are described, which I take to mean that the names refer to royal titles rather than their given names. There are only a few (big) women mentioned by name rather than title. One of these women is Inhacanemba, queen of Mungussy. According to Bocarro (in: Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005, p. 100; Rodrigues, 2017, p. 10), Mungussy was the most important vassal kingdom within the Mwenemutapa Empire. It is not explicit whether this woman was the Mwenemutapa's full sister, given her importance. By the fact that she did not live in the court but administered her territory, it might be assumed that Inhacanemba was the *mazvarira* alongside Gatsi Rusere, given that Bocarro was writing about the years 1612–1617, when this Mwenemutapa reigned.

The other woman mentioned by name is Dona Luiza, a Christian name given to the principal woman of one of the aMwenemutapa at his and her conversions. Missionary Antonio Suarez introduces this big woman in a chronicle dated 1652, the same year she was baptized. She was likely the principal woman in Mwenemutapa Mavura's reign, who was baptized in the same year. It is not entirely clear whether this woman was also a *mazvarira*. In his baptism description, allegedly penned by himself and translated by Portuguese missionaries, he calls the woman his queen consort, which means that she may have been a Nabuiza.

> On this day we issued from our palace with great pomp, accompanied by
> all the nobles, the soldiers of the garrison, and by the afore said religious
> who walked on each side of our person. On arriving at their church,
> richly decorated and prepared with great magnificence, we prescribed
> the order in which the waters of baptism were to be administered, which
> was in this manner following: we caused Friar Giovanni de Melo to
> baptize us and the queen our consort, Friar Salvador of the Rosary being
> godfather and bestowing upon us the name of Dom Dominic, the day
> being consecrated to that saint, and upon the queen the name of Dona
> Louisa. (Theal, 1898, p. 447)

D. Luiza and Mwenemutapa Mavura were not the first converts. Gonçalo da Silveira had converted Negomo Mupunzaguto, who reigned c. 1560–89, approximately one century before Mavura. In this first conversion of a Mwenemutapa, he was named D. Sebastião and his mother, D. Maria (Frobenius & Fox, 1966, pp. 38–39). This ruler was still young when he succeeded his father, and may not yet have other women who could be converted with him, hence his mother's conversion. It is noteworthy that at least one woman is associated with each Mwenemutapa conversion. However, the chronicles' focus on a "principal" woman in the kingdom has led to ignoring other *mulheres grandes* of the Shona-Karanga dynasties and their roles within the empire's sociopolitical structure. This erasure is visible by the lack of detail about their lives, succession process, and administrative territories, for all but two women, the Mwenemutapa's ritualistic wives, Mazvarira and Nehanda.

Mazvarira is part of the founding myths of the Mwenemutapa Empire. According to these myths, when the first Mwenemutapa, Matope, migrated to establish his kingdom, he took his daughters and enate sister Mazvarira. His son Mutota, not having access to women of the appropriate lineage, had sexual intercourse with his half-sister Nyamhita. She received the lands neighboring those of the king, and the title of Nehanha (Abraham, 1959; Alpers, 1970; Mudenge, 1988; Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005), later transcribed in Portuguese texts as Inhahanda.

Mazvarira is referred to by the chronicles as the "mother of the Portuguese," seemingly to attach particular importance to the recently arrived settlers and ignore her centrality in the founding myth of the Karanga. It is a reasonable assumption that in the sixteenth century, Mazvarira may have added to her plethora of duties to intercede for the interests of the Portuguese. Being known as the mother of the Portuguese certainly speaks to her advisory and diplomatic roles. However, from the chronology of the Mwenemutapa dynasties, her position existed for at least one century before the Portuguese arrival.

Both Mudenge and Pabiou-Duchamp question whether the importance Bocarro gives to Mazvarira speaks more to his bias towards Portuguese prominence than to her actual position in the hierarchy of *mulheres grandes* (Mudenge, 1988; Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005). Mudenge, in particular, challenges the fact that Mazvarira was senior to Nehanda.

> It is therefore unclear why Mazvarira became number one wife in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is possible the Portuguese sources are deliberately misleading in an attempt to show their importance at Mutapa's court in relation to the moors whose interests they claim were looked after by the second wife [Nahenda]. (Mudenge, 1988, p. 105)

Mudenge's objection to the centrality of Mazvarira relates to the fact that in the fifteenth century, Nehanda was the principal wife, as the only available noble marriageable woman. He reinforces his argument by pointing to a source from the eighteenth century that claimed that Nehanda both enjoyed "all the privileges and rights of the Emperor," and treated junior wives (also called *mukaranga*) "as her subjects and slaves" (Miranda in: Mudenge, 1988, p. 105).

Given the myth of the origin of the Karanga*,* it is safe to assume that Mazvarira was an equally important woman in the kingdom. More important than being the "mother of the Portuguese," she was the mother of the nation and "of all kings" (Frobenius, 1973, p. 195). Perhaps the status of Mazvarira as the mother of all kings gives prominence to the Portuguese when she becomes their protector. Moreover, whether mythological or

concrete, it is evident that women played a central role in the social and political organization of the polities of the Zambezi. They reinforced the power and legitimacy of the rulers. They also ruled the vassal kingdoms. In line with Oyěwùmí's assertion about the gendered nature of ruling positions, I would argue that since males also ruled vassal kingdoms, it should follow that the position of rulers of such kingdoms was not dependent on gender. Instead, it was linked to affiliation to the royal lineage.

The symbolic and mythological transgressional unions between siblings, father/daughter and mother/son, are found in many central and southern African cosmologies, particularly among royalty or nobility. These myths of origin stand for the state's foundation, and establish appropriateness and separation rules for individuals and the citizenry (De Heusch, 1975; Mudimbe, 1987). The relationship between myth and reality is a complex one. In societies like the ones in "Zambezia," as advanced by De Heusch, the ruler's power is related to the ability to mediate between the natural and supernatural worlds to benefit his or her citizenry.

> In all cases, what is emphasized is the radical difference of the sacred king, his fundamentally different nature as an ambiguous—necessary but dreadful—being. He is defined in a symbolic space where the mysterious powers of the natural and cosmic order are put to work for the social order. The king's military functions are never foremost in myths. Fertility and wealth, both associated with the hunter, have precedence. (De Heusch, 1988, pp. 214–215)

De Heusch's structuration and interpretation of myths' reality do not consider women's role as fertility symbols. Yet, these are self-evident. In the founding myth of the Mwenemutapa, the royal incest carries guarantees of authenticity, reproduction, and continuation of society, which can only be achieved through women of the royal bloodline. Leo Frobenius and Douglas Fox (1966) describe similar founding myths for the Wahungwe (vaNyungwe), who refer to Mazarira as the Queen-mother. Though the Wahungwe's foundational myth links the royal house's fertility to that of its people, incest is not the dominant theme.

On the female side the court consisted of the Mazarira, the queen
mother, who lived in retirement from the day of her son's accession to
the throne, of the Wahosi, the Mambo's (king's) first wife, who reigned
supreme, of the Wuabanda, (older women of royal blood) to whom the
Wahosi passed on her orders, and of the Wuarango or Mukaranga who
carried these orders out. […] The king's daughters, the Wasarre (singular
Musarre) were also Mukarangas. (Frobenius & Fox, 1966, pp. 39–40)

According to Anita Jacobson-Widding, myths and orally transmitted narratives play an
essential role in establishing the symbolic relations of power and individual identity,
including across and between genders. For her, culture derives from language and the
symbolic system. "Both are constructed according to coherent patterns, that have an
inherent consistency and logic" (Jacobson-Widding, 1992, p. 22). Among the Manyika
people, she found that these narratives evidenced coexisting "cultural models," which
included concomitantly overt patriarchy, spaces of gender equality in some ritual
performances,[46] and female dominance (Jacobson-Widding, 2000). Elsewhere she
refers to "muted truths" as those "that are told in fairy tales, or acted out in semi-
clandestine rituals." These muted truths are as opposed to the "'official' truth, which is
presented in public contexts, and when the order of the world is outlined as a matter of
principle" (Jacobson-Widding, 1993, p. 26), in which women submit to the patriarchal
order.

Despite what myths may mean for the different societies or how and in which spaces
they may be symbolically re-enacted, history shows that royal women, just like the
men, are not bound by the same rules as others. This is particularly apparent in the
records about the kingdoms of Quiteve and Sedanda, originally part of the
Mwenemutapa kingdom, then vassal kingdoms, which finally seceded and became

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[46] See also Bertelsen (2010) for a discussion about gendered nature of sovereign power and fertility among present-day
WaTewe, in Manica province.

autonomous.[47] These kingdoms, collectively referred to as Shona-Karanga, situated to the south of the Mwenemutapa (see Figure 9), had a formidable female hierarchy in their court.
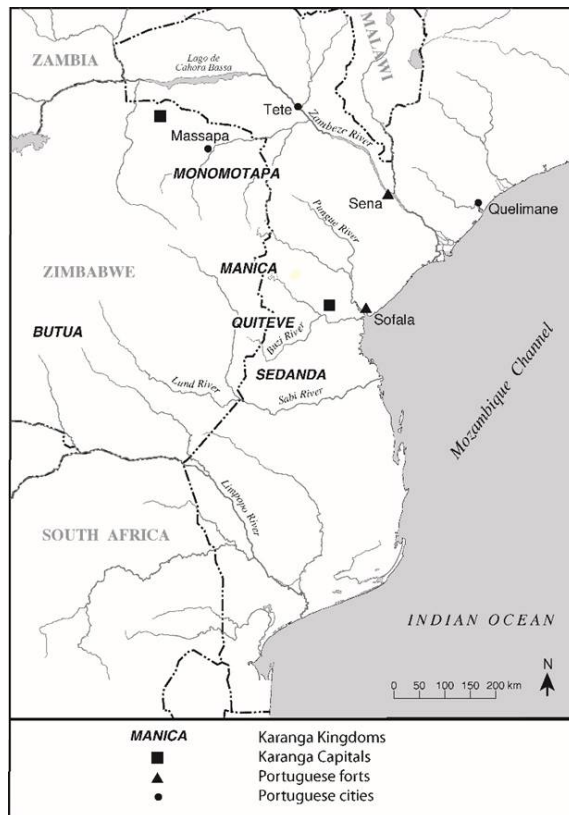
Source: based on Pabiou-Duchamp (2005, p. 97)

Figure 9. The Karanga kingdoms, late sixteenth-early seventeenth centuries

The queens of Quiteve were Ningomanye and Nemaunga. They were instrumental in selecting the kingdom's heir and would rule until the new king was selected upon his

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[47] According to some descriptions, Quiteve and Sedanda were sons of a Mwenemutapa, who were given the territories because he was unable to govern all the land alone (Carvalho et al., 1988; Dias, 1958).

predecessor's death (Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005; Theal, 1901b). The king's additional "wives" were either his sisters or close female relatives—often inherited from the previous king[48]—or daughters of important vassals (Newitt, 1995; Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005). The Quiteve reign would be inherited first by the brothers of the king, and in the second generation by *one of* the eldest brother's sons (Newitt, 1995). The Mwenemutapa kingdom had a similar succession pattern before the Portuguese arrival (Mudenge, 1988). In any event, the future Quiteve male ruler was not necessarily foreseeable beforehand. Whereas the queens' title was hereditary, and their daughters were born into the title. It was known beforehand who would be the next *ningomanye* and *nemaunga*, but not the next *quiteve*.

> The name of the Quiteve King is not hereditary and only just the Queens Ningomanhe and Nemaunga, the latter reputed as Queen and the former as Empress; in the other kingdoms the King's name is hereditary and those of the Queens is not. (Silva in: Rita-Ferreira, 1982, p. 146)

Eugenia Rodrigues (2017) is one of the few historians who describe women's succession in more detail by focusing on the history of Sazora, the important woman in the Maravi polity mentioned above. Also, historian Luisa Martins (2011) describes Naguema, in the Namarral polity that formed, supposedly due to the Ngoni *mfecane*. Naguema is inscribed in the Namarral myth of origin and was represented by a uterine sister or niece of the clan's leader. Both women have been recorded in history for their clash with Portuguese interests.

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[48] There are contradictory accounts about the destiny of the *mulheres grandes* upon the demise of the Mwenemutapa or the Quiteve king. Some sources indicate that the wives would also be killed, to accompany the king in the afterlife (Levin, 2013; Santos, 1609; Theal, 1898), other sources indicate that the successor was rather appointed and enthroned by the widows, whom he would inherit as his wives with the exception of his mother if she happened to be one of them (M. D. D. Newitt, 1995; Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005; Theal, 1901b).

> The kidnaping of Maquia, daughter of Naguema, by the Portuguese, who
> kept her imprisoned at the fort in Ilha de Moçambique, would have been
> decisive [for the political collapse of the Namarral]. This "daughter"
> would be, very likely, the successor of Naguema, which would have
> caused an internal turmoil. (Martins, 2011, pp. 191–192)

In my fieldwork, as I describe in more detail below, certain leadership positions
(chiefly the *regulado*) are more contested than others and also do not have a
presumptive heir. Others, chiefly the gendered positions, seem less contested, and
presumptive heirs naturally step into the new function. In the case of Régulo Voabil,
according to his daughter, he relied on counsel from his eldest niece, the daughter of
his deceased "full" sister. Also, the position of the *anyakoda* was a life appointment.
When one died, she would also be replaced by a "daughter."

Mafumukazi and apia-mwene

North of the Zambezi, irrespective of language, *mwali* means maiden or virgin. It often
refers to the pubescent girls ready to undergo initiation. Initiation rites were a recurrent
mention from several informants. Already in 2009, my elderly informant from
Quelimane said that women "learned to dominate men in the initiation rites." In the
meeting with the *secretários* from Macuse, in 2014, they offered more details about
the female initiation rites and the prominence brought to the women who led them.
They mention one of these women by name:

> Aissa was a counselor who led the rites. The rites don't exist any longer.
> The missionaries end them. She [Aissa] was a *curandeira* (traditional
> healer). She had a group of women that led the initiation rites. [They
> taught] how to be in a home, the duties towards a husband. When the
> rites were eliminated, she assisted with births and treated newborn
> children. Her treatment was the most recognized. It was only for women.
> [With her] labor delivery happened in an instant. Hard or not, she
> managed.

Rainha Bala's cousins also mentioned the rites and how they were banned by the post-independence state, though they still survive in some areas. As I detail in the next part, the systematic prohibition of rites reduced the arenas in which women could exercise influence and hold power.

None of my informants could tell me where the name originated. The literature, however, suggests that Mwali was the chief queen among the Maravi. Like Mazvarira and the Karanga, the status of Mwali relates to the origin myth of the Maravi polity in their interaction with peoples they incorporated (see Figure 10). Based on oral sources, Ian Linden (1972) presents two different descriptions and perceptions of queen Mwali. On the one hand, those who trace their genealogy to Sosola, the last *karonga* (Maravi king), describe *mwali* as a merely honorific title given to the wife of the *karonga*. On the other, those who trace their genealogy to the last *mwali* insist that she was the true *mwini dziko* (owner of the land), and whoever married her would be called *karonga*.

According to Linden, this dual understanding of the same figure started when, in the 1870s, the last remnants of the Maravi polity disappeared with the death of Sosola and the last *mwali* at the hands of the Yao Mangochi chief, Nenula. From then on Nenula was known as "Mpemba," the protector. The next *mwali* was called "Kafulama," the one who subjects. Until then, the *mwali* was a *mfumukazi*, a priestess, as well as the wife of the *karonga*.
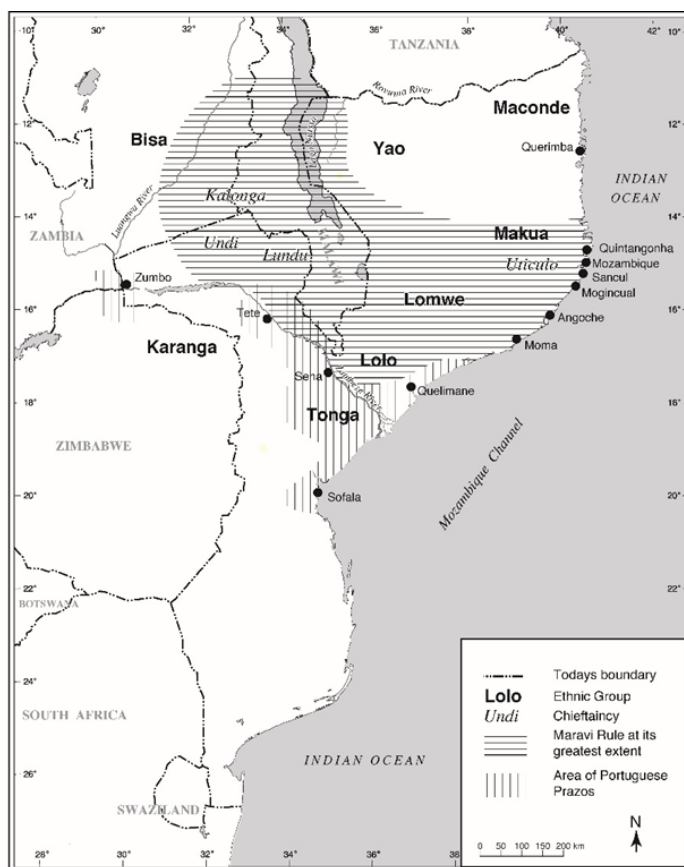
Source: Newitt (1995, p. 69)

Figure 10. The Maravi states, its conquered and non-conquered neighboring peoples, circa seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

Another woman of the Maravi court was Nyangu, a "sister" of the *karonga* yet considered ritually his mother (Linden, 1972). As the ritual mother of the *karonga* she becomes the ancestral mother of the ruling clan (Newitt, 1995; Schoffeleers, 1992), and by extension, the nation. The *mwali* was relevant in the mediation of succession crises, even if the succession lineage resided in Nyangu, a uterine relative of the *karonga*. However, the wife, the original *mwini dziko*, was the one who could legitimate his power, thus guaranteeing that the outsider male rulers had a legitimate

claim to the land they ruled. I found a similar logic in legitimating the overtaking of outsider sons-in-law in the *regulados* of Voabil and Bala, where their wives conferred them legitimacy.

Like in the case of Mazvarira and Nehanda, I have failed to find additional specific examples of *amwali* or *anyangu*. Instead, I have found a few references to *mafumukazi*, from the Portuguese traveler António Gamitto. In the chronicles of his trip to the "potentate" of Mwata Kazembe in present-day Zambia, Gamitto describes them as chiefs and landowners, sisters of chiefs. These were gendered positions, as only women could succeed them. In total Gamitto mentions four "*fumo-acaze*": Muenha, Capinda Imbire, Insábué, and Massinga (Rodrigues, 2017). He gives little detail about these women, other than that he has either camped in their territories, which male ruler they were related to or to whom he has sent some departing tribute. He hints at their prominence by mentioning that they too lived in fortified *zimbaoe*, as other rulers. The example of Massinga suggests a hierarchy among the *afumukazi*:

> The latter does not pay homage to anyone because she has the title of Mukáze-Chissumpe, which means wife of Chissumpe or prophet of the Maravi. (Gamitto, 1854, pp. 31–32)

Chissumpe is described as the supreme divinity, adored by some of the peoples incorporated by the Maravi polity that retained its centrality after incorporation (Rita-Ferreira, 1982). *Chissumpe* had a prophet, who spoke in its name, and whom Gamitto considered an "*embusteiro* (impostor)" (Gamitto, 1854, p. 63), who was equivalent to the divinity itself. Hence the attached power to the "wife" of the divinity. It helps to remember that *mkazi* can mean both woman and wife. However, as the description is missing the preposition *wa*, it is difficult to ascertain if this means that she was the wife of the prophet or herself a prophet too. Importantly, the above shows that both male and female rulers had joint secular and spiritual responsibilities.

This joint leadership is most evident among the Makhuwa peoples. They shared some similarities with the sociopolitical organization of the Maravi, although they never formed a polity with a paramount chief. The matrilineal system is seen as an

impediment to a centralized power equivalent to the Mwenemutapa (Linden, 1972; Newitt, 1995). However, the Maravi, who were also matrilineal, had a paramount chief. Also, at least one example of paramount chieftaincy exists among the Makhuwa, the Namarral polity (Bonate, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2018; Capela, 2010; Lobato, 2012; Martins, 2011).

Among the Makhuwa, who are spread across four provinces (Zambezia, Nampula, Cabo Delgado, and Niassa),[49] the female participation in the sociopolitical structure has been described as follows:

> the mother and the sister of the chief enjoyed a certain political preponderance. The eldest daughter of the former, the *pia-muene*[50] (woman-chief), was the guardian of the customs and was responsible for the burial places of the matrilineage. (Rita-Ferreira in: Newitt, 1995, p. 64, note 9)

Similar spiritual responsibility of *apia-mwene* towards the origins of the clans has been described for example by the priest Francisco Lerma Martínez (Martinez, 1989) and post-independence Mozambican historians (Bonate, 2007; Carvalho et al., 1988).

> While chiefs were the ones who authorized the discourse on tradition, they also relied on a complex entourage for the process of elaborating and legitimizing it. The entourage, when the chief was a male, included the female branch of the matrilineal chiefship, the *apia-mwene* […], bearer of the ancestral mythical substance called *nihimo* in Makua (Emakhwa), which defined the spiritual hold of the chiefly lineage over the land and its people. (Bonate, 2007, pp. 31–32)[51]

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[49] They can also be found in Malawi, in the Makhuwa-Lomwe branch.

[50] Also spelled *pia-mwene*, where *pia* is woman and *mwene* is chief.

[51] My underscore.

The chief's female branch was to act also as a counselor to his leadership (Martinez, 1989; Martins, 2011). The underscoring of co-leadership with the female branch, *when* the chief was male, indicates that women could be chiefs in their own right. Bonate presents a couple of examples of *apia-mwene* from the early twentieth century, including some which were not the chiefships' female branch, but rather principal chiefs. One such example is a queen elected to substitute the *shehe*[52] Matibane Musa Phiri[53] after his passing in 1902. Another example is the "queen" Cebo of Chicoma, who ruled sometime between the 1930s and 1940s. She was the daughter of a *shehe* subordinated to the Quitangonha *shehe,*[54] and was sister to the principal chief of the Nacala region, Suluho Mumba (Bonate, 2007).

The Namarral polity, a rare example of a centralized polity among the Makhuwa, was formed in the second half of the nineteenth century. It controlled the slave trade from the hinterland to the coast across from Mozambique Island. The head of state was the dynastic leader Mucuto-muno. Naguema (Bonate, 2007; Martins, 2011), the *pia-mwene* to Mucuto-muno, was his "eldest 'sister,' […] the main woman of the village, followed by his uterine niece, Naguema's daughter" (Martins, 2011, p. 177).

Despite the relatively scant detail available on women's roles in the social and political structures of polities across and beyond the Zambezi, it is possible to see that they were a permanent fixture with both gendered and non-gendered positions. Women in positions of command and influence feature in both matrilineal and patrilineal contexts. Despite the recurrent turmoil in the region and relatively frequent administrative change, their political presence seems to have endured, from African polities to colonial and postcolonial administration. Much of the literature considers that, in some contexts, their power and influence may be merely symbolic. Their

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[52] Swahili chief in the Mozambican coast (Bonate, 2007, p. xi).

[53] The Phiri name suggests a connection to the Maravi royal Phiri lineage. Shehe Musa Phiri of Sangage, was among Muslim leaders who resisted the Portuguese rule up to 1912–13 (Bonate, 2007, p. 77).

[54] This *shehe* also led the resistance against the Portuguese occupation and was persecuted for it (Lobato, 2012; Rodrigues, 2006a).

endured presence within political and influential social structures (officially or not), even when repeatedly undermined, suggests they are an indispensable part of power spheres.

Generally, the archival material reinforces Oyĕwùmí's contention that gender is not the most relevant aspect for understanding women's possibility to access or exercise power as women exercised both gendered and non-gendered roles. Beyond this, both archival and ethnographic material present "marriage" (actual or symbolic) as a central form of mobility (acquired power), but also co-leadership. Women within ruling/elite families (inherent power), i.e., queen mothers, royal sisters, and uterine nieces, are better positioned to exercise and compound their power, and even exercise it autonomously.

In this context, Régulo Voabil relied on his niece, "eldest daughter from his only sister from [the same] mother," as confided to me by his daughter already in one of our first conversations in early 2014. This niece was both a natural and necessary choice as a surrogate for his deceased sister. It seems to have helped that she was respectable and the wife of a *shehe*, of whom the *régulo* was also a good friend.

Both in Macuse and Maganja da Costa, the succession continues to follow the uterine line. Although the establishment of the *regulado* temporarily allowed sons to succeed their fathers, successors continued to be from the original woman's lineage and not the men who married into the lineage. After the initial post-independence ban, the reinstitution of the *regulado* reverted to a more familiar succession by uterine nephews and, at times, daughters. Even while Régulos Voabil and Bala explicitly trace their ascendance to the first *régulo*s of the region, their authority is legitimized through their equal descent from their mothers-in-law's uterine line.

The examples above reveal how, even as the previous visibility of "big women" waned in societies across the Zambezi, the importance of mothers(-in-law), sisters, and other female relatives remained fundamental in the sociopolitical organization and legitimation of power. In some cases, it allowed women to argue for their ascendance to power, as is discussed in more detail in the ethnographic descriptions of part 3.

Betwixt and between "wives" (and daughters) – *aNyanye, aNunu, aMussano, Donas* and *Sinharas*

I mentioned in the previous sections that female siblings and queen mothers were an essential part of African leadership structures, including in "Zambezia." Also, as previously mentioned, wives' role and influence have been either neglected or underestimated in the literature. Alternatively, as in the case of the *donas*, they assume a near-mythical aura in fictional literature (Medeiros & Capela, 2010). The most renowned literary works are *Zambeziana* (de San Bruno, 1927), *D. Theodora e os seus Mozungos* (Sorensen, 1998), *40 graus à sombra* (Monteiro Filho, 1939), and *Luane* (Afonso, n.d.). These works mostly depict the "Zambezia" of the *donas* and the *azungo*, thus cementing the mythical status that these women and the *prazo* system endure to this day as representatives of the Zambezian social complex or ethos. Some of this literature portrays *donas* as engaging in mystical rituals to consolidate their power or spell over men, a perception that was reproduced also by some of my informants. Already in 2009, a couple of days before the new year, I was sitting with my elderly friend whom I would visit regularly in Quelimane during my 2014 fieldwork hiatuses, and she told me the following:

> D. Eugénia Peixe (one of the last *donas*) was married to a white man. Her husband did nothing. There was [a lot of] tradition. She bathed at night on the road. She didn't mind. The husbands saw nothing but the wives. Their power increased by the *curandeiros'* (traditional healers) power. The ladies were very drugged [with traditional medicine]. They dominated the man. What she said was what had to be done.

I heard the same detail about D. Peixe from D. Amália's grandson's widow.

> She was friends with D. Amália. She died badly. After she lost her
> property in the city, she went to live in Janeiro [a neighborhood in
> Quelimane], in a greenhouse that turned house. <u>She did not bathe in the
> bathroom, only after midnight, naked, in the yard.</u>[55]

However, as presented below, there are enough references—albeit few—that suggest that wives' (and daughters') authority manifested in very concrete ways, beyond the spiritual and mythical.

Overarching aNyanye*, unmentioned* aNunu, *and fearless* aMussano

Sisters and mothers of African rulers are perhaps the most respected female figures within their societies, possibly due to their link to the royal houses and role in establishing the royal line (Aidoo, 1977; Cohen, 1997; Farrar, 1997; Kaplan, 1997). The same applies to both patrilineal and matrilineal traditions. In some patrilineal traditions (e.g. Swazi), after the death of the king a council chooses, not the future king, but the mother of the prince that shall become king. This council included female relatives of the deceased king, such as his sisters and paternal aunts (e.g. Beidelman, 1966). In matrilineal contexts, kings were succeeded by a son from a maternal uncle. His female relatives mediated the selection and succession process (Frobenius & Fox, 1966). In both contexts, there is no heir apparent.

Wives receive less attention in the literature, as outsiders to the royal houses and without control over the royal line's establishment. As a result, there is considerably less written about them. Among the few exceptions are the works from historians Stephanie Victor and Maria da Conceição Vilhena, both focusing on the wives of captured African chiefs in South Africa (Victor, 2014) and Mozambique (Vilhena, 1999).

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[55] Emphasis mine.

However, the scant information that exists in the archives suggests that power afforded to wives should not be underestimated. Furthermore, according to my informants, though women became powerful because they were married to powerful men, this power was mutually reinforcing, as many husbands in "Zambezia" were outsiders to their wives' area, as exemplified by this example with Mwene Raia in our last conversation.

> Mwene Raia: This queen called Ritinha. She was rich, she was a *nyanye*. She got married with a man from Mazoao. Here in Macuse, but in the Sede (headquarters of the locality). The man was from Mazoao community [village]. He took her there. She was rich, very rich.

> Me: When she got married, she was already rich?

> Mwene Raia: She was rich with that man. They say she had always been rich. She left property here. She died there [in Mazoao], with her man. The man also gave her good conditions. They say that the hole where she was buried, the floor was cemented. They cemented it, and then they put in the coffin. The relatives said, 'We don't want it. You can do whatever, we want her in our area.' They went to get her and bring her here. The family took over. The husband came and made a tomb that looked like a house. A beautiful thing. A tree grew in the tomb, so much that it broke the tomb and came out.

As such, the men's affluence may have conferred power and influence on their wives. But in return, the women's ties to the land granted him legitimacy to exercise his power. In the case of the *régulos*, if they were outsiders, they could be chosen and hold the position legitimately only if they were married to a female descendant of a previous female ruler. Men would naturally prefer to marry into a royal or an affluent family to increase or reinforce their status, which was also often the case with the different "Portuguese" settlers.

When I started gathering the stories around women of authority, I realized that the memory of the powerful Shona-Karanga and Maravi "queens" presented above had been long forgotten by my informants, even if a similar leadership logic seemed to have been retained. The farthest my informants' familial memory stretched was to events going back to the late nineteenth century. Both in Macuse and Maganja da Costa, the lineage description started with the first *régulo*. In my first interview with Régulo Voabil's daughter, in January 2014, she introduced her family history in the following manner: "My father was Muslim. He comes from a renowned family. Both his father and my father were *régulos*." She added, along our conversation,

> My grandfather was not from Macuse. They say he was from Upper Zambezia. But among the elderly he was the smartest. The government determined that he should be the *régulo*. It was not by election.

This was how her grandfather became the first *régulo* in Macuse. He was also married to a woman belonging to the local ruling family, who did not have any living sons from the maternal line. Still according to her, he lived in the nineteenth century, her father died in 1972, just before the independence, and her brother who succeeded him died in the 1990s.

In Maganja da Costa, in my first interview with Régulo Bala, in October 2014, he mentions that the name Bala comes from a queen, however, he still starts his genealogy with his grandfather, who was appointed the first *régulo* of the area.

> The first Régulo Cabo Verde ruled during the colonial time. He appointed his son, Albino Cabo Verde to succeed him. But from 1975 *régulos* could only be *secretários*.

Like in Macuse, Cabo Verde was also married to a woman of the local ruling family who only had sisters. There is plenty to unpack here, including the post-independence hostility towards traditional authorities. What is important for this discussion is that in both cases, they were the sons-in-law and their appointment *de facto* deposed sitting female rulers. Also, in both cases, there were only two *régulos* before independence.

In the case of Macuse, my informants were clear that the Portuguese authorities selected the *régulo*. In several conversations, they refer specifically to a change in the format of the colonial administration. As indicated above, in my conversation with the *secretários* during my first visit to Macuse, they explained that

> The *regedor* (another name for *régulo*) here was Voabil. [He was] appointed to oversee all the settlements. After the power of the companies was extinguished, they created the *regedores*. It was like a monarchy.

As referred to before, the Berlin Conference demanded closer management of the territory. Although implemented unevenly across the territory, from the late 1880s to the early 1900s, the territory was divided into *circunscrições* (circumscriptions) ruled by *regedores* (*régulos*) selected from the local ruling lineages (Hedges et al., 1993). The reference to monarchy seems to do so because although there were ruling lineages, some of the succession logics were disrupted, namely with sons inheriting the rule in regions where traditionally the sisters' children had been preferred in the succession line.

In Maganja da Costa, the narrative seemed to suggest that the selection was endogenous. In my first encounter with the sitting Régulo Bala, in late 2014, he described the beginning of his lineage in the following manner:

> [The first *régulo*] was Bala's son-in-law. He was chosen for his good behavior. The name Bala comes from a queen. When she saw that she could not hold the power, she asked the son-in-law that was well-behaved.

Despite these qualities, as I discuss further below, this *régulo's* ruling was challenged by his sisters-in-law, to the point that he relented and appointed his son to succeed him. Importantly to my argument here, even though the lineage name comes from a woman, which was not the case in Macuse, memories about her were still not shared.

Only the relatives of D. Amália had registers going back several generations, especially those of her husband Gavicho de Lacerda. Even in her case, memories centered on her husband, who arrived in the region in the early 1890s, and her mother, D. Ernestina de Menezes Soares. Some of my informants relayed that Gavicho had worked for D. Amália's father, António Maria Pinto, from whom she inherited *prazo* Carungo in 1894 (Negrão, 2006).

Instead of dynastic queens that I expected to find, when I probed about historically memorable women in Macuse, the first to be mentioned were the *anyanye*. I heard of them in the context of the *donas*, but the literature did not hold them in as high regard as my informants. The few times the *anyanye* are mentioned, they are described in a pejorative manner, for example, as "amázias dos *mozungos*" (*mozungos'* mistresses) (Capela, 1995, p. 67). As explained in a previous note, this term was most commonly used to refer to the Afro-European or mestizo population.[56] This example outlines the racial undertones that surrounded the colonial hierarchies and the intersection between those considered indigenous and those taking part in the colonial social structure. In the female segment, these hierarchies held *donas* at the top, followed by *sinharas,* and at the bottom were the *anyanye*.

For the *mozungo* elite, especially in the later colonial period, the *anyanye* were not equivalent and were unworthy even of marriage (Capela, 1995), though they could cohabit. Each could be distinguished by their degree of miscegenation, at the bottom being the least miscegenated. However, this distinction did not function similarly among native societies. To my informants, racial distinctions mattered less than clothing and accessories to assess affluence and importance. In one of my visits to the elderly lady, granddaughter of Nimangano, she took me to visit a *nyanye's* daughter, who was accompanied by another older woman. The *nyanye's* daughter repeated the commonly held racially based hierarchy:

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[56] However, it could also refer to men of European and Asian origin, or on rarer occasions to Africans with power and influence (Capela, 1995, pp. 103–104; Isaacman, 1972a, p. 59; Isaacman & Isaacman, 1975, pp. 9–10; Lobato, 1996; Newitt, 1995, pp. 127–129).

> Sinhara was the Dona's mother. It is like nobility, clergy, and plebe. Sinhara was more. They were mixed. Sinhara was the daughter of a white man. Nyanye was a black woman married to a white man. They wore a vest with long sleeves, a pin, and a button. They wore a long *combinação* (petticoat) like a dress, *baju* (overcoat), had gold combs, *maluata* (money purse), golden belts.

Régulo Voabil's daughter and other informants from Macuse did not make such racial distinctions, and they mentioned a wider variety of men to whom these women could marry.

> *Nyanye* and *sinhara* were the same. [They] did not have defined *tarefas* (roles). [They] were ladies married with white or Indian men, and with men with authority. *Shehes*, traders.

The *secretários* to whom she introduced me, and who supposedly knew more about the local history, said something to the same effect:

> *Nyanye* was the wife of an elite man. *Sinhara* was the same, *dona* was the same. She should be exemplary. Give good advice to her husband.

Women who wore gold jewelry were naturally more affluent than those who wore silver (e.g. Figure 11). As seen above, they also wore other symbols of affluence. Several women mentioned a clinking money purse donned around the waist, called *maluata.* They might also dress differently from each other. For example, some women would wear a combination of a *combinação* (petticoat), a *capulana* (multipurpose colored, patterned cloth), and a *baju* (sewn overcoat with material typically imported from India). This description was given to both to describe *anyanye* and *sinharas* clothing. The reference to clothing, jewelry, and other accessories are recurrent *lieux de memoire* (Nora, 1989) among my informants. As Signe Arnfred and Maria Paula Meneses mention, *capulanas* were (and still are) "identity markers, symbols of love, means of communication and archives of history and memory" (Khan et al., 2019, p. 186).

Photo, undated, courtesy of L. Voabil

Figure 11. One of Régulo Voabil's sisters wearing a baju, a capulana, and silver bracelets

More affluent women usually used an *ombreiro* (a long-sleeved blouse). This was typically described as the clothing of the *donas* (see Figure 12).

Photo, undated, courtesy of C. Barros

Figure 12. Dona Amália's mother, Dona Ernestina de Menezes Soares, wearing a laced turtleneck blouse and long-sleeved coat

As far as I understood from my conversations, in Macuse at least, *nyanye* was the all-encompassing term for an elite woman. Women married to leaders or affluent men, sisters or daughters of leaders, women who had properties of their own and means, were *anyanye*. Therefore, *donas* and *sinharas* were considered the same class of women. They may have been wealthier and closer to the colonial authorities, but they were still *anyanye*.

Furthermore, *nyanye* also meant that the woman was either Christian or non-denominational. Muslim elite women were called *nunu*. There is virtually no literature that mentions this category of women. The exception is Liazzat Bonate's research on female Muslim political leadership in northern Mozambique (Bonate, 2018). Their

erasure is emblematic of the multiple silencing of Zambezian social and political context and realities. Not including these women in the analysis and representation within scholarly texts has several effects. For one, it ignores continuous religious diversity across the region. Despite overwhelming Catholic influence, significant pockets of Muslim populations continued to exist. These populations lived and interacted with their non-Muslim peers with shared social and cultural signifiers while retaining or being given distinct denominations that identified their religion. Furthermore, ignoring Muslim populations and their hierarchies within "Zambezia's" social fabric is symptomatic of downplaying the continued Islamic influence and prominence, as I also discussed below in the section about women within royal lineages.

The region had plenty of Muslim traders and landowners. Some of them practiced the same property adjudication to their wives as European, Eurasian, and Christian traders. Likewise, foreign Muslim men married or similarly coupled with indigenous women as other foreign men, even without the Portuguese crown dowry incentive. Moreover, there were also local African Muslim affluent families. The women of these families were all *anunu*.

During my 2009 initial field prospect, a cousin's grandmother, an octogenarian *nunu* explained how common practice it was to offer land to women. At the time I was convinced that the *donas*, daughters and wives of Portuguese men, were the only ones who participated in and benefited from the female landholding economy. Her words sowed the seed that made me curious about other women who benefited from similar practices, without being connected to the Portuguese. Because this would mean that the ascension of the *donas* was not an extraordinary occurrence for the local societies.

> The land was bought by the husband and given to the wife. They [the wives] had the means to help people. Those who were married to a white or a *régulo*. When [she] separated from the husband, [he] did not yank [the property], he left [with her] their possessions and land. Whites and blacks gave land to their women.

Hence, Portuguese legislation benefitting female land ownership was not the only way women could access land and become influential, as scholars of "Zambezia" like Rodrigues (2006b) and Capela (1995) suggest. Neither does it seem to be a simple question of lineage practices, as Newitt suggests (Newitt, 1969, 1995). As Negrão describes, land ownership was common among women as many inherited land (Negrão, 2006). Moreover, the same family could have members from either faith. Régulo Voabil's niece, who according to his daughter was also his advisor, was a *nunu* because she was married to a *shehe*. In contrast, the *régulo's* wives and sisters were *anyanye*.

If the *anyanye* were the all-encompassing elite women, and the *anunu* were the elite Muslim women, the spouse of a chief had another denomination. In Macuse they were called *mussano*. In Maganja da Costa they were called *mwadamwene mwanu*.

In 2015, as I was winding up my third and last visit to the field, I asked one of the *secretários* (neighborhood secretaries) I had interviewed previously in Macuse to arrange for me to have a more extended meeting with Mwene Raia. As I mentioned previously, she had inherited her father's *mwene* title. Her rulership was part of the *regulado* de Voabil. I had met her the previous year while interviewing the *anyakoda's* (forewomen) daughters. She met me accompanied by her aunt, a *namalaga* (counselor). The position and name *namalaga* was non-gendered, I ascertained. The *secretário*, remained while I talked with the two women, and several times I had to ask him to refrain from intervening unless explicitly asked by one of them. The conversation was mostly in Portuguese. The *namalaga* spoke only eChuwabu, though she understood Portuguese. The *mwene* and the *secretário* would translate, as necessary.

During this exchange, I understood that *mussano* was also one of the *anyanye*. The distinction from other women was not in the clothes, but to whom she was married; a *mwene*, a *régulo,* or even a *sipai* (native police).[57] The reach and sources of the

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[57] The term *sipai*, spelled in Portuguese *cipaio*, comes from the Persian *sipahi* (cavalryman). It was the term used for native soldiers both in India and Mozambique (Capela, 2010; Rodrigues, 2006a).

anyanye's power and the *mussano*'s influence became more evident as we progressed with the conversation:

> Me: The wife of a *mwene* did not fear [the (colonial) government]?
>
> Mwene Raia: No. The wife of a *mwene*, it was [like] respecting the *mwene*.
>
> Secretário: She was called *mussano* because of her husband.
>
> Mwene Raia: She would sit at home, receive visits.
>
> Secretário: [She was] a judge too.
>
> […]
>
> Me: How about these… *[a]nyanye*?
>
> Mwene Raia: It's the same thing. But they were not just *mussano*. It was also people who were a little bit wealthier. When she has some property, she is not like the others.
>
> Me: She does not need to be the wife of a chief [to be a *nyanye*]? She can she be a *mussano* or not?
>
> Secretário and Mwene Raia: She can be a *mussano* or not.
>
> Mwene Raia: That time there were people who had power, *possibilidade* (means). They were called *nyanye*.
>
> Me: Is she *nyanye* because she is married to someone or because she alone has power?
>
> Mwene Raia: She alone has power too. She is *nyanye* too. People respected her.

> Me: So, you are saying that *mussano* is someone married to a leader, someone important she is *mussano* and so has some consideration. If she is born in a family, is she also considered?
>
> Mwene Raia: Yes, they are these *[a]nyanye*.
>
> Me: But for example, the sister of a leader.
>
> Mwene Raia: The sister of a leader was also called *nyanye*. She was not *mussano*. *Mussano* is a woman married to a leader.

This exchange elucidates the diversity within a seemingly straightforward category, the *anyanye*. It also hints at one of the roles befitting the wives of leaders, to receive people at home and mediate conflicts. Most of all, it shows a privileged relationship with the colonial authorities. As expressed here, they enjoyed the same respect as their male spouse and were not bound to the same demands as the other men and women. Primarily, this meant exemption from forced labor. As mentioned before, forced labor was a significant part of the memories in Macuse, due to its close relationship with Companhia do Boror. This relationship seems to mediate all organizational structures, set up to serve the company's interests, and which were highly exploitative and oppressive (Corrêa & Homem, 1977; Ishemo, 1995; O'Laughlin, 2002; Vail & White, 1980).

Hence, escaping forced labor was the highest form of privilege, as I found out still during my exchange with Mwene Raia, as she exemplified it with the fate of a *nyakoda* turned *mussano*.

> Me: But, for example, when we talked the other time with the *[a]nyakoda*, they said that there was one *nyakoda* that married a *mwene*, and stopped being *nyakoda*.[58]

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[58] This is a reference to an interview with *anyakoda's* descendants in July 2014, where Mwene Raia was also present.

Mwene Raia: Laudina. She married my father. She was *nyakoda*, then married my father. Then stopped that work.

[…]

Mwene Raia: The family chose someone else. She could not do that work any longer because she had another *pasta* [position of responsibility].

(The *mwene* and *secretário* talk to the *mwene*'s aunt in eChuwabu)

Me: Being the wife of a *mwene* is also a *pasta*?

Mwene Raia: It is not a *pasta*, but it was a [highly] considered person.

Secretário: [She was] Considered because of the husband.

Mwene Raia: Because of the husband… She could not do work like this.

These conversations highlight a way of accessing power—i.e., through marriage—that is not seen as empowering, particularly in feminist theory (Gilligan, 1982; Mackinnon, 1982; Mill, 1869; J. W. Scott, 1999; Wollstonecraft & Brody, 1992). The histories of the different marriages show that marriage could be mutually beneficial. Women ascended in status if they married men of wealth or authority. At the same time, men benefited if they married women in affluent families or from royal lineages. They also reveal that empowerment through marriage did not come exclusively through marriage to European settlers. Instead, it elucidates why the Portuguese *prazo* legislation offering land as dowry to women successfully empowered women in Portuguese African territories and not Indian territories. I elaborate on these marriages to settlers and foreigners in the following section. These were different constellations of marriage, which provided additional opportunities for social mobility, which has historically been an essential form of empowerment and autonomy accessible to

African women (Roque, 2009) and continues to be relevant in Mozambique (C. Rosário, 2008).

Afro-European and Afro-Asian Donas and Sinharas

According to Capela (1995), the *donas* first emerged at the end of the seventeenth century. Quite spectacularly, by the end of the eighteenth century, they held 65 percent of the *prazo*-leased lands (Rodrigues, 2013, p. 579), controlling enormous areas and resources and wielding considerable power over its inhabitants. These women's prominence is often mentioned as an exception introduced by the colonial order. In Capela's words, "for the first time, women as such were at the helm of History and not limited to a merely decorative figuration" (Capela, 1995, p. 69). Rodrigues adds to this perception of exceptionalism in the following manner: "differently from other spaces of the Portuguese colonization, women acquired a notable leadership role in the Zambezi Valley region, in Mozambique" (Rodrigues, 2006b, p. 15).

On the other hand, though not contesting the particularity of the Zambezian *donas*, Newitt points out that they had "their counterparts in the Afro-Portuguese *nharas* of Guiné and powerful women landowners of São Tomé and Principe" (Newitt, 1995, p. 230). It appears that there were plenty of other examples in other Portuguese African territories, such as Angola (Candido, 2012a, 2012b; Lopo, 1948; Pantoja, 2001; Wheeler, 1996) and at least one in Cape Verde (Cabral, 2015).

Moreover, Rodrigues (Rodrigues, 2013, 2017, 2006b) refers to *donas* in Ilha de Moçambique. Due to administrative separation between the District of Moçambique and Quelimane, historical descriptions have tended to look at the two geographies separately. Much of the evidence shows how interconnected these territories were and how irrelevant administrative borders were, though.

The multiplicity of the examples of influential women across the Portuguese empire, especially in Africa, reinforce positions such as Sheik Anta Diop's that women in African polities were common and influential. As mentioned above, this does not seem

to have been the case in the Portuguese Indian territories (Boxer, 1975; Rodrigues, 2006b).

> In the Província do Norte (Northern Province), particularly in Damão (Daman) and Baçaim (Vasai), women were also in a position of administrating villages, but their power over these small territories does not seem to have been comparable to the 'donas' of the Rios (Rios de Sena) (Rodrigues, 2013, p. 580)

Even so, and as mentioned above, "Zambezia" historian Capela favors the position that the legislation privileging land and property inheritance through the uterine line was central to female ascension to power (Capela, 1995). Rodrigues, on the other hand, is somewhat concerned that historians may have overestimated the female inheritance preference (Rodrigues, 2006b). She maintains that the regal order on which most authors base their interpretation was rather meant for the Northern Province. Only later does the order extend to the Rios Cuama, albeit meeting with resistance both in India and the Eastern African territories (Rodrigues, 2013, 2006a).

Effectively, there is no agreement among historians about when the first royal order benefited women's land ownership explicitly. Capela refers to the Regal Ordinance of 14 February 1626, as establishing that the *foreiros* (forer/rent payer) should nominate their daughters if they had them. They were to marry "worthy Portuguese men born in the kingdom and who had served His Majesty in the regiment years" (Capela, 1995, p. 21). He adds that this demand was not implemented until 1678 and lasted up to 1686. It was also challenging to apply the letter of the law, as there were not enough individuals, male or female, to satisfy the required conditions (Capela, 2010).

Newitt put forward the year 1677 for the change in legislation (Newitt, 1969). Strangely, in earlier work, Garlake and Newitt had mentioned that the legislation regarding the *prazo* system suffered changes in 1675, 1759, 1760, 1779, and 1832 (Newitt & Garlake, 1967). They only offer details about the nature of changes for the year 1675, when, according to Lobato, this is the year female inheritance started applying to the Rivers territory. No change is mentioned for the year 1677 that Newitt

uses in his later work. This inconsistency in the dates renders them somewhat irrelevant. The reality is that women inherited land and became quite prominent as a result, both in colonial society and in the archives.

Other scholars only mention that the system was instituted in the early 1600s (Ennes, 1894; Papagno, 1980). This is contested by Rodrigues, who says that it was not before the late 1600s. Rodrigues identifies 14 March 1675 as the first registered correspondence between Portugal's prince to the Vice-Roy of the State of India, establishing female inheritance preference (Rodrigues, 2000). Only in 1692 was the condition of female inheritance extended to the Rios (Rodrigues, 2006b, p. 24).

Another supposition regarding possible sources of the power of the *donas* is matrilineality. Newitt (1995) and Isaacman (1972a) consider that the matrilineal context of the peoples along the Zambezi was a determinant to how the *prazo* institution developed, including the power that *donas* enjoyed. However, it is noteworthy that matrilineal peoples inhabited the north of the Zambezi, yet *prazo* territories extended across both margins. Even Capela's list of *donas*, in his seminal book *Donas, Senhores e Escravos*, includes women from Tete and the southern margin of the Zambezi, in a region with patrilineal customary practices (Capela, 1995).

Rodrigues takes an intermediate position between Capela's legislative determinism and Newitt's and Isaacman's preference for the influence of customary practices. She agrees with Capela in that the legislation made female inheritance through the uterine line possible. However, she considers that the female inheritance bilaterally "corresponded to the structuring of a certain social model and constituted an instrument for the administration of the territory" (Rodrigues, 2006b, p. 16). The original legislative intent was to benefit women of European descent. There was a promise by the Crown to send orphaned and other women to the region dating from 1635 when it was acknowledged that "in Manamotapa, and the Rivers there is a lack of women with whom the settlers can marry" (Lobato, 2013, p. 110). However, it was not until 1677 that women started arriving, and even then, the number of those that

eventually reached the Rios Cuama was below the expected. They soon vanished without a trace from the existing documentation, Lobato further argues.

Several attempts to provide the region with an external female population followed, eventually including *canare* women (of Goanese origin), but indigenous women would always be higher in numbers. They also had a privileged relationship with the local population through familial relations, which provided them, according to Rodrigues, with an advantage over their foreign husbands. She reinforces the point of powerful local *donas* versus foreign husbands by contrasting it with female landowners' situation in the Northern Province of Portuguese India, where the legislation first benefited women's land ownership. There, she argues landownership did not translate into similar power for women because their husbands were natives (Rodrigues, 2006b).

Based on my findings on the *anyanye*, and as I detail further below when I present a selection of excerpts from life histories, marriage was instrumental and beneficial to both men and women. The *prazo* institution undeniably manifested as an intersection between the settler and native societies. It was a *mestizo* society of Afro-European and Afro-Asian owners and their descendants. Throughout the 300-plus years that the *prazos* existed, it created both men (the *azungo*) as women (the *donas*) with parentage from the indigenous populations. For example, Manuel António de Sousa, the lord of Bárue and Gorongosa in the nineteenth century, had several wives that would ensure his authority over his territories (Capela, 1995; Isaacman, 1972a), much like the *mukaranga* kings of the Mwenemutapa state before him. Furthermore, the women who administered land and ruled over people were familiar figures of authority and power, irrespective of lineage type (matrilineal or patrilineal)—as were affluent men guaranteeing their affluence through marriage with strategic women and their families. In this sense, *donas* emerged as a prominent group who benefited from favorable legislation in an already conducive environment.

The above discussion intends to highlight cosmological continuities in power modalities related to male and female positions within hegemonic structures, which

precede the colonial encounter. And which have been eclipsed by the colonial and postcolonial writing of history about this region. Through this, I insist that *donas* were one expression of a larger whole. An expression of prominence granted more visibility through colonial imagination and discourse, which appropriated it, racialized it as a category, and distanced it from its more native kin. This distinction and distancing are at the basis of colonial hierarchization, where race and gender distinctions figure significantly (see also Stoler, 2002).

The colonial imagery established a hierarchy by which the *dona*—the lightest in skin color—was above the *sinhara*, usually darker, and at the bottom, the *nyanye*, the "indigenous" (meaning a black woman who is assumed to have no previous intermixing). As shown above, distinctions were not always clear, particularly to the "indigenous," to whom the colonial categorizations were not part of their understanding of social distinction. One person with whom I discussed these categories was the widow of D. Amália's grandson in whose house she died, whom I mentioned previously. This grandson was the son of D. Amália's son and a black woman, born out of wedlock. In the colonial hierarchy, particularly in the early twentieth century, these children were considered illegitimate and indigenous. His widow explained this confusion about the categories in the following manner:

> [A] black woman that married a white [man] was *nyanye*. But the distinction with *sinhara* is difficult. *Donas* were the daughters of white [men]. Some *sinharas* were daughters of Indian [men], but the distinction is not clear.

D. Amália's granddaughter, sister by the same African mother as the above informant's deceased husband, explained that *sinhara* was the *nyanye's* daughter. She would receive this denomination upon her mother's death. She was also the daughter of a *mozungo*, as the *nyanye* was married to a white man. My elderly friend, whom I visited during my fieldwork hiatus, was uncertain about who was indeed more powerful, between the *nyanye* or the *sinhara*. She called the *nyanye* "a superior caste."

Yet, on another occasion, she had told me that there was a hierarchy of *donas*, *sinharas,* and *anyanye*.

Capela acknowledges that there are discrepancies between various definitions, but for him, the *dona's* primacy within the sociopolitical order is never disputed or challenged by any of these. Moreover, he describes the Zambezian *dona* as a "claim by the *mulata* (mulatto woman) in the affirmation of the acquired status" (Capela, 1995, p. 69) through the white husband or father. Further, referring to Azevedo Coutinho,[59] he describes nineteenth-century *donas* as "women with running (straight) hair" (Capela, 1995, p. 67), a symbol of their European and/or Asian heritage. Newitt, citing eighteenth-century author António Pinto de Miranda, described all *donas*, "whether Europeans, mulattas or having their origin in Goa" as being "usually haughty and of proud disposition" (Newitt, 1995, p. 230). Thereby excluding indigenous women without foreign ancestry from the category. Similar descriptions are used in fictional works such as *Zambeziana* (de San Bruno, 1927) or *D. Theodora e seus Mozungos* (Sorensen, 1998).

These descriptions contrast with photographic images of *donas* in the early and mid-twentieth century, such as the one on the cover of Capela's book *Donas, Senhores e Escravos,* from a postcard purportedly depicting *donas* of Quelimane in Portuguese East Africa (P.E.A. on the postcard) (see Figure 13). Similarly, as with a picture portraying a *mzungo* and *dona* of Chinde (see Figure 14), located at the Zambezi River's delta, none of the women seem to have the "running hair" described above, yet they are portrayed as *donas*. Moreover, in the postcards, they are also called native. This contradiction between the early twentieth-century imagery and historical description puts the *dona* closer to my informants' perceptions and the *nyanye*.

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[59] A Portuguese military official who commanded multiple military interventions in Mozambique served as governor of Zambezia, when it was called the district of Quelimane, and as general governor of Mozambique (Capela, 2006, p. note 9).

AFRICA ORIENTAL PORTUGUÊSA — "DONAS" DE QUELIMANE
P. E. A. — NATIVE TRIBES, HABITS AND CUSTOMS

Photo: *Africa Oriental Portuguesa "Donas" de Quelimane, circa 1935* [Portuguese East African Women from Quelimane, circa 1935], Published by Santos Rufino (Lourenço Marques), EEPA Postcard Collection, Mozambique, EEPA MZ-20-44, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution

Figure 13. Donas de Quelimane as depicted on an early twentieth-century postcard
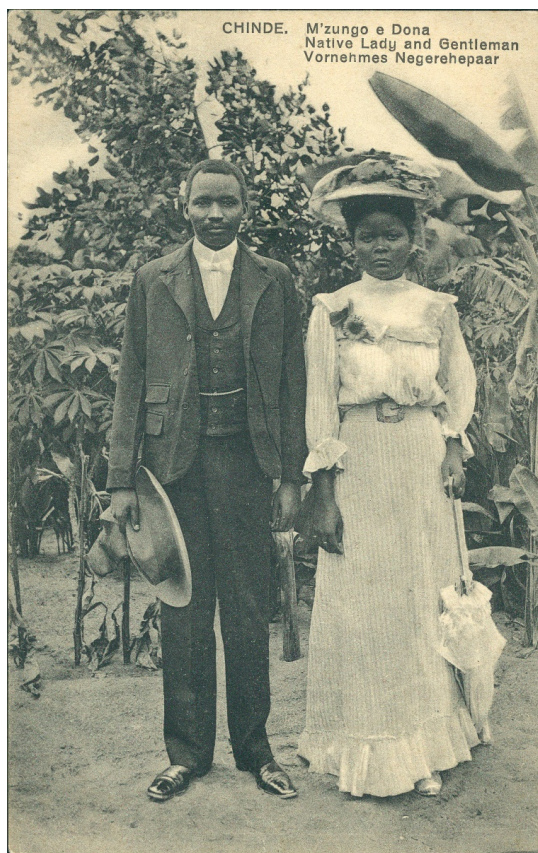
Photo: *[Casal nativo] M'Zungo e Dona - Chinde, Moçambique* [(Native couple)
M'zungo and Dona – Chinde, Mozambique], circa 1914, Collection C. Coutinho, MO-
0357 c. 1914, Arquivo de Macau [The Archives of Macao]

Figure 14. M'zungo and dona from Chinde an early twentieth-century postcard

To complicate this scenario, as described above, the "Zambezia" was a place where intersections due to invasions and migrations were commonplace. Moreover, there were also *donas* and *azungo,* who had no familial links to the indigenous population. Among the first women to own *prazos* were Dona Ignez Garcia Cardozo, owner of *prazo* do Luabo*,* and Dona Sebastiana Fernandes de Moura, owner of the *prazos* Quizungo, Macuse, Sone, and Inhasoreire, both of Goanese origin (Capela, 1995).

Their ability to retain prazos and rule over their populations weakens the argument that women needed African kin for their authority to be recognized.

Ironically, the *donas'* visibility, compared to other women, obfuscates the context in which they could become powerful and the other multiple ways women could command authority and power in the different social and political contexts in the region. It fails to recognize that *donas* inhabited an authoritative space that existed before their existence as a separate category, that of the *anyanye*, as argued above. Those who defended that their comparative advantage over their husbands stemmed from the fact that they were natives and their husbands were foreigners understated that their foreign husbands enjoyed high social standing that effectively reinforced the *donas'* authority. Like the Goanese *donas* mentioned above, foreign male *prazo* owners were recognized as powerful in their wealth and lordships over the peoples who dwelled in their territories.

At a structural and political-economic level, the decline of *donas'* affluence in the late 1800s related to the rise of a global capitalist enterprise embodied by the charter companies. These labor-intensive ventures geared towards export and industry rather than land ownership reduced the *prazos* and their owners' competitiveness (Bertelsen, 2015, 2016; L. Rosário, 1989; Vail, 1976). This reduction in affluence, which is amply discussed concerning the Afro-European and Afro-Asian landowners, also substantially impacted the *donas'* "indigenous" counterparts, the *anyanye*. Access to land by natives was reduced, and new political structures limited women's ability to exercise their authority.

The new sociopolitical organizations devised by this new form of colonial enterprise included the *regulado*, which, as explained above, was part of reorganizing the colonial administration into *circunscrições* (circumscriptions), as well as an integral mechanism of support for a regime of forced labor and taxation. They were central in the collection of different taxes, such as the *mussoco* (head tax) and *imposto de palhota* (hut tax) (Bertelsen, 2015, 2016; Hedges et al., 1993; O'Laughlin, 2002; Vail & White, 1983), which I describe in more detail below.

Taxation was not an invention of the companies. However, the taxation regime was also considered tax farming, by which their tribute collection sometimes surpassed profits from any other activity (Bertelsen, 2015; Ishemo, 1995; Negrão, 2006; Vail & White, 1980). Taxation in the region was standard, and before the companies, taxes had been levied on the local populations already by African polities.

> The amount of taxes paid by the people for the maintenance of government was not fixed, as it is in European states. The ordinary revenue of a chief was derived from confiscations of property, fines, and presents, besides which his gardens, that were usually large, were cultivated by the labour of his people. The right of the ruler to the personal service of his subjects was everywhere recognised, and it extended even to his requiring them to serve others for his benefit. (Theal, 1910, pp. 181–182)

The owners of *prazos* continued with this practice. Under the company regime and direct administration, it became unbearable and impossible for native populations to comply, leading to frequent punishments and increased destitution. Around the same time, as mentioned, native female rulers were also being stripped as rulers by the change in the forms of colonial administration. By different means from *prazos, régulos* substituted existing leaderships and initiated the perception that women were not fit to lead.

The Portuguese (male) women of the Mwenemutapa

An essential work by historian Florence Pabiou-Duchamp on seventeenth-century Portuguese settlers sheds light on the importance of the "wife" in the African polity leaderships of "Zambezia." She explores the recurrence of the title of "woman" given to certain influential Portuguese men, one of whom was considered a *mulher grande* ("big woman").[60] This "woman" was the "captain of Massapa—a fair situated at the

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[60] "Big woman" understood as the female equivalent of "big man."

heart of the Monomotapa [Mwenemutapa] kingdom—also named 'captain of the doors'" (Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005, p. 96).[61]

Pabiou-Duchamp complains that the Portuguese chroniclers of the Mwenemutapa, and historians subsequently "informed by their masculine vision of royalty where women were above all spouses, […] could not understand the role of these women and, by extension, that of the Portuguese so-called 'kings' wives'" (Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005, p. 94).

Historian Philip Warhurst also mentions Portuguese male women. His description refers to the nineteenth-century Gazaland political context in southern Mozambique, an entirely different kingdom/empire, although at its height around the 1860s also bordered the Zambezi River. This mention refers to an episode in which messengers of the Gaza kingdom visited the British in Natal, present-day South Africa. When the British referred to the messengers as Portuguese subjects, they responded negatively by saying, "Mzila is king; the Portuguese are women" (Warhurst, 1966, p. 50).

In both examples, the Portuguese are portrayed as "women." In one, they seem to hold the responsibility of protecting the kingdom, whereas in the other they are seen as subordinates. Naturally, both may also co-occur.

There is an essential distinction between the term "woman" (in Portuguese *mulher*) and "wife" (in Portuguese, either *esposa* or *mulher*) that may result in misunderstandings and misrepresentations in historical texts. Pabiou-Duchamp points this out when she chastises W. G. Randles, a historian of the Mwenemutapa empire, for his "masculine view of royalty:"

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[61] All references to Pabiou-Ducamp's are translated from French.

> Symptomatically, Randles translates the Portuguese term 'mulher' to
> that of 'spouse,' which remits to the marital concept […]. If effectively
> 'mulher' were to be used in that sense, it should mean above all
> 'woman'; the term 'esposa' is not used in the Portuguese documentation.
> Randles, in choosing this translation, suggests the idea of an exclusive
> marriage between the karanga kings and their 'big women', while this is
> not discussed at any moment in the sources. Ultimately, Randles denies
> the political role of the 'big women' within the karanga royalty. For him,
> royalty could not be symbolized but by a king. (Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005,
> p. 105)

Ironically, the English translation of Pabiou-Duchamp's abstract uses the term "wives" instead of "women." Although Warhurst is silent on the discussion of what the notion of "woman" means in his case, I would posit, following Pabiou-Duchamp's understanding, that each kingdom used the denomination in both cases of "woman" to include the Portuguese, who were active politically, in the existing political system. Given the influence that the Portuguese had in the court of the Mwenemutapa, being attributed the status of "woman" should not, then, be construed as a minor role. As "women of the king," the Portuguese were part of the aristocracy and integral to the political order. Furthermore, Pabiou-Duchamp refutes the assertion held by some historians of "Zambezia" who hold the view that these male women either held an "honorific title" (Newitt, 1973, p. 43) or symbolized the African polity's "mere deference towards the Portuguese" (Randles in: Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005, p. 105).

Critical to this discussion is that "women," at least the "king's women," had a central role in these kingdoms. "They were lords of territories surrounding the court and symbolized the continuity of the kingdom" (Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005, p. 104). Though subordinate to the king, their role in enthroning him and of protecting the system meant that "they participated fully in a royal system dominantly masculine" (ibid.).

In my field, I encountered two examples of women taking over presumably male titles. One was the daughter of Mwene Raia, and the other the daughter of Régulo Bala.

While in Portuguese, the title *rainha* (Queen) grants authority, it is relatively vague about the functions and precise about gender. The term *mwene* in eChuwabu (and eMakhuwa) is male and precise about the functions. Among the Makhuwa, *amwene* are clan leaders, the highest level of authority. Among the Chuwabu, the *mwene* rules over families they are not necessarily related to and are subordinated to the *régulo*. Their examples reinforce how Portuguese denominations obfuscate and erroneously genderize differences.

When I asked the *secretários* when I first met them in Macuse, they told me that she became a *mwene* because "her brothers either died or were absent." When I interviewed her, Mwene Raia told me that both her grandfather and the first Régulo Voabil were men who married into the Coroa family. As mentioned previously, Coroa was a prosperous farmer; the term also means crown. They were also chosen by the colonial administrators to lead. In a clear preference for male rulers, particularly by the colonial administration, they were chosen because they were "smarter than others" and could "write a little." Literacy was central, as one of the most critical activities of local chiefs was to collect taxes from the natives, for the company or the colonial state. A skill that most women, even the powerful *donas*, did not have.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, the Portuguese occupation did not focus on creating infrastructure or investment in the betterment of the African populations. Only after the change to direct rule were administrative and other social infrastructures created, including schools. Even so, literacy remained low among the African population, and boys' education was prioritized, although a few girls and boys had opportunities for education in missions (Sheldon, 1998). At the same time, a new discourse developed, which "sustained by academic terms that refer to the cognitive (un)capabilities and the character of the black "race" as a way to justify the superiority of the European civilizational model" (Santo, 2015, p. 92). The result meant functional literacy for the men, while women were trained for domestic chores and propriety (Santo, 2015; Sheldon, 1998).

Régulo is the title of a lesser king, often translated to "kinglet" in English. It is a male title, with no direct female equivalent. The term *rainha* (queen) is the female equivalent to *rei* (king). In Mozambique, currently, it refers to any woman with a formal authoritative role, irrespective of rank. Possibly, taking advantage of post-independence emancipation rhetoric, Rainha Bala in Maganja da Costa claimed the right to assume the *regulado* after her father, as the legitimate *régulo*. In my first interview with Régulo Bala in 2014, while enquiring if there were memories of women of power in his area, given that his aunt had claimed the throne, he explained that "a long time ago they did not give [the title] to women. When her father died, it was her cousin-brother [who took the title]." In a follow-up interview the following year, when I was negotiating to interview the women of the family, he explained further that "she argued that [the title] was hers by right because her father was the son of the first *régulo*."

Based on my conversations with her successor, Régulo Bala, and also her cousins, I noticed that that Rainha Bala did not assert her right to rule through her great-grandmother, who according to her nephew, effectively gave the area its name. It should be noted that her great-grandmother did not have the title of *régulo*, but likely had a title that preceded the appointment and denomination of *régulo* by colonial authorities, and during colonial times only men could be *régulos*. Though it is still the original Rainha Bala's lineage that gives legitimacy to the area's rulers, the lineage narrative is held by her son-in-law, who became the first *régulo*.

My last conversation with Mwene Raia, in 2015, was the most clarifying about the local polities' leaders' denominations. Both her and several informants in Quelimane mentioned the so-called *samasoa* as the paramount chief that preceded the *régulo*. According to Mwene Raia, "before the *colono* (settlers) gave this name *régulo*, it was *samasoa*. But even before, it was *kalinde*. *Mwene* was *nyakawa*." With each invading force, the ruling roles seemed to become more gendered than before.

Similarly, West and Kloeck-Jenson describe how in Maganja da Costa, the lowest ranking chief in the new system introduced by the Portuguese was called a *chefe de*

murda.[62] This figure was previously called *mwinha wa elabo* (owner of the world/land, could be either men or women), and was a successor to the area's founding elder. Each *chefe de murda* was subordinated to a figure who previously was called *nyakazoa* and *samasoa* afterward. The *samasoa*, on the other hand, was subordinated to a *mazambo*. This level became the equivalent to the *régulo* (West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999, p. 471).

Table 1 below presents a summary of the difference of flow of the denominations as presented by my informants and the scholarship.

Table 1. The flow of leadership terminologies, field informants vs. scholarship

Informants in Macuse	West & Kloeck-Jenson (1999), in reference to Maganja da Costa	Current official terminology nationwide
Kalinde – Samasoa – Régulo	Mazambo – Régulo	Chefe comunitário do 1 escalão (1st echelon community leader)
Nyakawa – Mwene	Nyakazoa – Samasoa Nyakawa	Chefe comunitário do 2 escalão (2nd echelon community leader)
	Mwinha wa elabo – Chefe de murda	Chefe comunitário do 3 escalão (3rd echelon community leader)

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[62] *Murda* means a small piece of land.

This table helps illustrate an important point made by West and Kloeck-Jenson, that historically contextualized understandings of the changes in terminology for the different levels of responsibility held by local leadership enrich our understanding of the social and political structures and functions. They argue that "in each generation, in each historical epoch, 'traditional authority's' past versions are subjected to erasure even as they are rewritten, and new forces are brought to bear on the fabrication of political legitimacy" (West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999, p. 484). Their principal critique was that analysis of the so-called "traditional authorities" ignored the complex history of nomenclature, hierarchies, and distributed responsibilities. They framed the way this complexity could be answered in the following questions: "who claims 'legitimacy,' by what argument, who is persuaded, and why?" (ibid.). An intervention by Mwene Raia during our last meeting makes me think that even though nomenclatures may change and memories of past titles may be erased, the cosmological connections of ruling lineages, and therefore how they can claim legitimacy, reveal remarkable endurance.

> When they [Frelimo] came, all [*a*]*mwene* and *régulos* ceased functions. So, they chose *secretários*. But lately they thought that it was not alright. 'If we continue like this, the government will fall. We need to take back the old leaders for us to work better.' They did a mapping [of all the leaders]. Before, the *secretário* could be from Bajone, he would be s*ecretário*. He could be from Quelimane, he would be *secretário*. He could be from anywhere. They [the people] said that we have problems because sometimes they are not from the region. When we make sacrifice [rituals], the souls do not accept it because they don't know the person who is giving the sacrifice.

The unrecognized power of female forced laborers under late colonialism, the *aNyakoda*

The authoritative female categories—in the Weberian sense—of wives and royal females mentioned above, though under-analyzed in their secular administrative roles, are still relatively often mentioned, and their authority is arguably also recognized to some degree, even if in passing. Similarly, the *anyakoda's* authority is also acknowledged with respect to their role of commanding female slaves. In this, the literature is consistent in attaching their authority to their parallel servile role. Hence, it was with some surprise that I found that my informants counted these women among those with power.

When the *prazo* lands began being substituted by lessee companies at the end of the nineteenth century, family patronage gave way to a global capitalist industrial economy. *Prazeiro* families slowly lost their influence. The substitution was not even. Some *prazo* land continued to exist well into the twentieth century, as was the case of Prazo do Carungo, in Inhassunge, inherited by D. Amália de Menezes Soares Pinto and managed by her husband Gavicho de Lacerda. In Quelimane, the *azungo* and *donas* remained influential, particularly in the "native" social hierarchy—as they became now cast to the periphery of colonial society (refer back to Figure 13 and Figure 14)—but especially in the collective memory.

The same did not happen in Macuse. There the change in property ownership brought about significant change in the leadership structure. Companies were to help consolidate the Portuguese occupation of then-Portuguese East Africa (Vail, 1976; Vail & White, 1980). Companies such as Companhia do Boror, in Macuse, managed just that. Companhia do Boror, founded with French capital, "grew coconuts and sisal in a group of five prazos to the north and northwest of the town of Quelimane" (Vail & White, 1983, p. 889). The African leaderships were co-opted. The *prazeiro* families lost their property and authority to the point that they do not remain in the collective memory. Rather, in Macuse, it is the Company that has become central in memory and history.

Descendants of *anyakoda* in Macuse tell me of two moments of structural change: the "time of the company" and the "time of rice," or, as they claim, "when colonialism began," referring to the transition of direct administration. Both used forced labor. In the first case, the company's administration defined the production rules. In the second, it was "the [colonial] government" directly. The relationship with the colonial apparatus became closer to the colonial subjects, and for the first time, they were subject to rules outside their logic. In my interview with the daughters of *anyakoda*, they put it in the following terms:

> Before the [colonial] government, there was the Company. The
> government created the *machambas* (agricultural fields). The strictest
> was the rice regime. They would go house to house. People almost didn't
> sleep. At Boror they would go to work and come back. There was less
> suffering.

The way these informants establish their timeline informs us of both the locally meaningful time and the space that constitutes the community to which this time is relevant. For example, their understanding of when colonialism effectively began was not until direct administration was introduced. Also, it centralized the area's memory around forced labor, initiated by the companies and continued by the colonial administration. Still, changes in the local political organization, like renaming the existing leaderships and placing favorable actors in leadership positions—including deposing female leaders—did not lead to their collapse. Instead, the subjected populations made (and continue to make) sense of the newly created leadership categories or attributed responsibilities through meanings for previous social and political contexts. Looking from the perspective of subaltern studies, "power—of state, nation, empire, modernity, patriarchy, or discipline—as dystopian totality" is rendered a "distant enemy" (Dube, 2016, p. 14).

The *anyakoda* are indeed an example of subalternity, as important actors within a forced labor organization. I had first heard of them in 2009, when I first began exploring this subject in an interview arranged by my mother, a maternal great aunt's

sister-in-law and her husband, also showed deference towards the *anyakoda*. They explained how in the *prazos'* time, the *nyakoda* was "the one that entered the house of the lords of the village. She oversaw everything. They led everything." When the *prazo* manors disappeared and Companies introduced forced labor, they became *dinamizadoras* (energizers), as described by the *anyakoda* daughters.

> They entered the machambas and said, 'Go on, go on (*força, força*),' or else you know, '*Kalimany, kalimany munatabue*', so the person would not suffer in the future.[63]

The literature focuses on their subaltern status, even if recognizing their differentiated role. Whereas my informants focused on their responsibilities. Newitt describes them as <u>female slaves</u> in charge of other female slaves, in the context of mining north of the Zambezi, in the *karonga* lands in the eighteenth century (Newitt, 1995). Gavicho de Lacerda, while describing late-nineteenth-century Zambezia, refers to the *anyakoda* as <u>female slaves</u> or <u>daughters of slaves</u> whose "mandate [was] of a certain responsibility, of absolute trust of the *Dona*, usually falling onto an elderly woman" (de Lacerda, 1944a, p. 74).

The recurrence and apparent transmogrification of the category of the *nyakoda* within diverse societies, geographies and timelines—eighteenth-century Maravi polity, nineteenth-century Quelimane *prazos*, and twentieth-century companies and direct administration—seems to have a parallel in the *vanyai*, the slave warriors of the Mwenemutapa. Like them, the *anyakoda* could be understood as a class; they exist as a long-running label that has adapted to changes to social and political structure and power. They can also be understood as a positionality towards others. In their authority—in the Weberian sense, as inferred from my informants' descriptions—they were indispensable leaders of the subaltern. They should be understood as an essential tool of hegemonic power structures.

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[63] *Kalimany, kalimany munatabue* is what was told in eChuwabu to the women laborers. My informants used the same expression in Portuguese and eChuwabu to give it more emphasis.

The *anyakoda* were not the only authoritative subalterns in this context. The *régulos, amwene*, and all other native leaders who had authoritative roles within the local social and political order were part of an "elite of the subjugated." Although hierarchically superior, highly respected, and feared by their native subjects, a *régulo* or a *mwene* had some limits, such as deciding whether to accept their role as leaders once the colonial government chose them. Though the choice among leaders commonly fell within the lineage, it was sometimes against the wishes of those chosen to take on the responsibility. In my last interview with Mwene Raia, where her aunt and the *secretário* accompanied her, she explained how her father got his position as a *mwene*:

> Mwene Raia: My father was born in prison. They tied my grandmother when she was pregnant with my father.
>
> Me: Why did they tie her?
>
> Mwene Raia: the brother-in-law diverted the tax revenue. The company also charged taxes; he collected [for them].
>
> Me: Why did they take the sister-in-law, then?
>
> Mwene Raia: He ran away; they took her to punish and for him to come back.
>
> Me: So, when your grandfather died…
>
> Mwene Raia: My grandfather died and left my grandmother pregnant. The *pasta* [leadership responsibilities] went to his brother. […] The night my grandmother was taken to jail, my father was born. When he was born, they called him Preso [prisoner] Raia.
>
> […]
>
> Me: So, he grew up…

Mwene Raia: So, he grew up, and people in the family were running away; they were afraid. Because if the person diverted even one cent, there was trouble.

Me: But since the time that the brother-in-law ran away, there was no *mwene*?

Mwene Raia: there was another *mwene*, but one that was not from the family; he just *assegurava a pasta* (carried the responsibility).

Me: Who chose that *mwene*?

Mwene Raia: They say it was the government who asked for someone to be chosen to *assegurar a pasta* while my father was young.

Me: He was from another family.

Mwene Raia: He was from another family. He carried the responsibility. When he became old, my father had grown up. So, the government started saying, "this one is old, he must leave this *pasta*, let's look for that child who was born in jail." They opened the book and saw my father, Preso Raia. They said: "look for this kid until you find him. Is he alive?" They said, "He is alive." When they looked for him, they found my father. That day, his family was this one (pointing to the other woman beside her), from the mother's side. They told him to run away too. If the *donos* (owners/rulers of the land) are running away, why are they looking for you, a child?

The dialogue above illustrates the extreme meddling by colonial authorities in native political structures. It also recalls the already mentioned extractive and punitive taxation nature of companies, both towards leaders and their subjects. The *anyakoda*, in this system, were in charge of controlling the other source of extraction, forced labor, which in Macuse was predominantly female.

In Maganja da Costa, colonial authorities were equally meddling in selecting leaders and imprisoning non-compliant actors. As mentioned above, Régulo Bala, in our first interview, explained that colonial authorities forced the original Rainha Bala to abdicate in favor of her son-in-law. This caused animosity in the family. The colonial imposition was not immediately accepted by the ruling family, even if the choice fell upon a person who was later described as having an acceptable behavior.

> [He] was the husband of the first daughter. There were three daughters. […] There was a revolt among the daughters. They did not agree that [the son-in-law] was the most known[64] for a *pasta* that was not his. One of the other daughter's sons, Bala Mucheliua (prisoner), took power. He was imprisoned for [diverting] tax money. The family sat again, and the son-in-law returned to power. He could receive power from the daughter-in-law. To have more legitimacy, he appointed one of his sons, [who was] a cotton monitor.

Contrary to Macuse, in Maganja da Costa, the labor was not exclusively female. Therefore, instead of the *anyakoda*, the colonial authorities used labor monitors. Therefore, this category of women was not present in the recollections of people from Maganja da Costa.

There was no consensus among my informants on whether the *nyakoda* title was inherited or not. During my encounter with the daughters of the *anyakoda*, they confided that*:*

> [The] *[a]nyakoda* were chosen by the [colonial] government. [They would] sit the women and choose. The *régulo* chose. She would be *nyakoda* for life. When she died, she was replaced.

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[64] In Portuguese, the *régulo* used the expression "*mais conhecido*," which translates into "most known" and in this context can be understood as most appropriate.

But in my last interview with Mwene Raia, she mentioned that "if that *nyakoda* died, they would elect another. The daughter, who had the same heart as the deceased."

The *secretário*, who was present during this interview, highlighted that the choice of the *nyakoda*, as with any other leader, relied on specific personal characteristics. These characteristics included the ability to influence people and get them to act according to her wishes, i.e., authority in the basic Weberian sense.

> She was chosen because she was a balanced person, a patient person, with a particular gift to guide other people. So, they saw that she was a person who was capable of guiding these issues.

As the *anyakoda's* daughters had explained, these women primarily energized people into producing with their: *Kalimany, kalimany munatabue!* They also interceded for peasant women, so they would not be punished if they did not meet their assigned production quotas:

> Someone would [come to her and] say, 'what will I do? The child is crying; my work is delayed. […] Help me, mother.' She would say: 'All right, I will talk with the *mwene*.'

They could also be instrumental in leading people to resist forced labor, as Mwene Raia describes from an event that she witnessed as a child.

> Even this [forced labor] work that they did, when it ended,[65] I heard that they called the communities to the *posto* (administrative post) and said that the work was to continue. The communities said, 'No, no, no, no!' [clapping]. 'When someone spits (*cospe*), will they take the phlegm (*ranho*) back into the mouth? It doesn't happen! No, no, no!' They started yelling. I asked, 'What's happening in the *posto*.' Then my mother told me, 'There was a woman who was courageous. She replied to the white men.' She replied, 'No way!' And when she clapped her hands, the other started yelling, 'It doesn't happen. Someone spitting out and then putting the spit (*cuspo*)[66] back in the mouth?'

Despite being revered by her peers, they were also painfully aware of the limits of their power. "When people saw that the *nyakoda* was coming, they were humbled," the *anyakoda's* daughters tell me. But they feared the colonial government, Even more so than the *régulos*, *amwene*, the *amussano* (wives of leaders), and other leaders did. The daughters illustrate this fear by singing one of the peasants' songs the *anyakoda* sang to describe their plight.

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[65] According to my informants and literature (Vail & White, 1980, 1983), the forced labor of rice and cotton cultivation in "Zambezia" ended in the early 60's.

[66] In the interview, Mwene Raia used word spit both as a verb (*cospe*), and as a noun (*cuspo*, which can also be spelled *cuspe*).

Table 2. Nyakoda Marieta song

eChuwabu	Portuguese	English
Nyakoda Marieta	*Nyakoda Marieta*	*Nyakoda* Marieta
Agamona Sincera	*Quando vê Teixeira*	When she sees Teixeira
Onowela veruane	*Sobe encima do "murmuchem"*	She climbs on top of a termite mound
Ntumo nukua ntaraku labani	*As nádegas até trançam cesto*	Even her buttocks weave a straw basket

The song is metaphorical in many senses, even if the people named were real. The women who sang the song explained that climbing on top of a termite mound is something no one wants to do. Still, it was the lengths even a respectable and renowned person like *nyakoda* Marieta would go to stay out of the way of Teixeira, a Portuguese foreman. This avoidance was out of fear. This is evidenced by the hyperbole of her "clutching the buttocks tightly enough to weave a basket." Though not explicitly uttered, the supernatural association with termite mounds, as discussed previously, could serve as a defensive and protective space for the *nyakoda*.

Vail and White found similar satirical songs (see below) developed in the early 1900s by workers of the Sena Sugar Estates, which owned land from "the lower reaches of the Zambesi River from the Shire mouth to the coast" (Vail & White, 1978, p. 1). These estates were founded by British capital on territory belonging to three *prazos*.

Paiva - ay   Paiva

Wo -o -o, Wo

Paiva - ay

Wo - o _ o, Wo

Paiva - ay

Paiva ndampera dinyero   Paiva, I've killed his
ache   money for him

Nsondo wache!   His penis!'

                                              (Vail & White, 1978, p.
                                              2)

For these authors, the songs were about protest and resistance, and to remember the suffering of forced labor. I do not necessarily agree with the wholesale understanding of these as a simple expression of resistance and protest. However, both Vail and White's archive of songs and those I recorded by the descendants of the *anyakoda* had similar elements of mockery, disgust, and obscenity. This aspect is vital to understand colonial and postcolonial forms of power within the African context.

As argued by Achille Mbembe, the use of obscenity by the subjugated is integral to a particular modality of power. It is "used as means of erecting, ratifying, or deconstructing particular regimes of violence and domination" (Mbembe, 1992b, p. 6). Although he is talking in the context of the postcolony, his analysis fits perfectly with the colonial regime. As he acknowledges, "the colony had its own arsenal of punishments and devices for disciplining the 'natives'" (Mbembe, 1992b, p. 18). He further states that coloniality was about "docility and productivity," by which coercion and violence had the purpose of making the colonial subject more profitable. Also, "to force upon the African an identity concocted for him, an identity that allowed him to move in the kind of spaces where he was always being ordered around, and where he had unconditionally to put on show his submissiveness" (Mbembe, 1992a, p. 12). Case in point, Mbembe criticizes perspectives that view power relations in terms of either resistance or domination—as Vail and White do. Indeed, just in the postcolony, what Mbembe calls "intimate tyranny," that which is embedded into everyday life, can also be observed in the context of the *nyakoda* relationship, with its respective authorities, whether the *prazo*, the Company or the colonial government, in which "subjects of the commandment have internalized the authoritarian epistemology to the point where they reproduce it themselves" (Mbembe, 1992b, p. 23). Beyond being part of the masses and their benefactors, they were also executors of the existing order. As my great aunt's sister-in-law elucidated, while savoring a delicious Zambezian snack in her courtyard,

> [The] *[a]nyakoda* and *[a]nyanye* [had people] punished, beaten with a broomstick.

Of women and power in the Zambezian social complex

I presented above different categories of women of power and authority through a close reading of the historical colonial archive about "Zambezia." I juxtaposed it with localized understandings of female power. With these, I highlight how the influence of women in authoritative roles has been either ignored, misunderstood or diluted in written texts. I focus on three primary forms of localized perceptions of power held by women: inherent (as members of ruling dynasties), acquired (as spouses), and subaltern (as labor organizers). I contrast these with similar authoritative figures mentioned in the literature. These include "big women" of African empires and dynasties (mothers and sisters), *donas*, and *anyakoda*. I also unearth how specific categories mentioned by my informants in the field are either absent, neglected, or underestimated within the literature.

Though female authority is mentioned in primary sources and scholarly work, it tends to diminish or sideline its value. This is apparent in the scarcity of mentions of female paramount chieftaincies[67] in the literature. However, evidence from the field shows that they may have been common at least until the onset of the *regulado* system by the Portuguese authorities. Both in Macuse and Maganja da Costa, the *regulado* "dethroned" women leaders.

Analytically, wives, sisters, and heads of slaves—the female authoritative female figures emerging from the field and mentioned by the literature—have been undervalued. As discussed before, in feminist literature, marriage has been viewed as oppressive to women, and one of the primary arenas where patriarchal power is exercised. Though this assertion is not incorrect, the evidence from the field suggests that marriage can also be an empowerment arena. In all sites, wives of wealthy men (*anyanye*, *anunu,* and *donas*) and chiefs (*mussano* and *mwadamwene mwanu*) were among the first female power categories mentioned. Conversely, in the transition to

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[67] In this case, paramount chieftaincies understood as leaderships over unrelated families and clans, not kingdoms.

the *regulado*, men who married women descendants of female paramount chiefs were also empowered when the colonial authorities chose some of them to become *régulos*.

There are mentions of wives of the emperors and paramount chiefs in the historical literature. Among the most powerful of these women were two sisters (or female relatives) of the Mwenemutapa emperors, who were simultaneously their symbolic wives (Mazvarira and Nehanda). Their royal titles were intimately linked to the origin history of the empire. In the Maravi polity, the literature mentions several *mafumukazi*, sisters of chiefs with either vassal or autonomous chiefdoms. Analogous co-leadership of clans between *apia-mwene* (female clan leader) and *mwene* (male clan leader) still exist today among the Makhuwa.

Finally, the *anyakoda* are a category of women recurrent in the literature of different economic, political, and administrative settings. In all settings, they retain the same description as female organizers of slaves. From the fieldwork iterations, I understood that they were an integral part of the native leadership. Additionally, they were described for their inspirational skills, not their subaltern status.

In historical texts, the wife's role can also have diminished importance. The *donas'* prominence is centered chiefly around power acquired through the Portuguese colonial enterprise in scholarly descriptions. Their advantage over their husbands is explained through matriliny and their native kinship and networks. Beyond the ethnographic material, some scholarship holds clues to how Goanese *donas*, without kinship networks, were no less prominent or influential (Capela, 1995). This suggests that matriliny and native kinships and networks alone cannot explain the ascendance and acceptance of the *donas'* authority.

Moreover, the principal wives/big women of both the matrilineal Maravi paramount chiefs—Mwali and Nyangu—and patrilineal Mwenemutapa emperors—Mazvarira and Nehanda—were likewise prominent and influential political and spiritual actors. The whole concept of wife/woman may have been misinterpreted by chroniclers of "Zambezia," like João dos Santos or António Bocarro, who report on the Mwenemutapa empire and his wives. Dos Santos, for example, reports on

(Portuguese) male "women of the king," one of whom—the captain at the doors to the empire—was considered *Mulher Grande* (Big Woman) of the Mwenemutapa court (Pabiou-Duchamp, 2005, p. 96). This suggests that the gendered position of the "big women" did not depend on their sex. Though it implies subordination to the emperor, it also suggests responsibilities towards the empire.

The conflation of the two terms, wife and woman, has been attributed to the Portuguese, since *mulher* can be used for both. However, it is also plausible that the chroniclers did not understand the symbolic/ritualistic marriage institution or the role of women in co-rulership. This is also evident in the lack of understanding of how the spiritual and material intersect and determine power, making symbolic and ritualistic iterations equivalent to other material manifestations of power. The interactions between the spiritual and material worlds in African governance, as discussed by West (2005), lacks a gender dimension but provides insight into the spiritual realm's importance. Anta Diop (1989) and Badejo (1998), who perhaps exaggeratedly emphasize matriarchal mythologies, rightly stress that African matriarchal myths and their worldly equivalents have largely gone unnoticed or have been misunderstood.

The authoritative women of the different ruling lineages of the Zambezi, such as the *afumukazi* and *apia-mwene*, should not be understood as only sisters (or female relatives) of kings and chiefs, with the mere ritual and spiritual roles within clans or vassals to their male siblings. In Badejo's conceivably overstated poetic rendering, "African women's power is feminine, mysterious, and beautiful, and it exists as a complementary expression of the African man's power" (Badejo, 1998, p. 110). As discussed above, these women represented their lineage and guided it spiritually. In the royal lineages, they were central in legitimizing succession. They held land that needed to be crossed before reaching the heart of the kingdom, thus becoming their de facto defenders, like the Portuguese male women of the Mwenemutapa who defended the doors to their kingdom.

As shown above, and in the Introduction to this thesis, European categories of power and gender dominate women's portrayal within the political landscape of "Zambezia."

In other words, they are mostly seen as subservient to male power. The use of terms like sister, mother, and wife is certainly a testament to this. They establish a woman's existence through her relationship with a man, which I need to apologize for perpetuating. However, I use these terms to clarify which women were part of the circles of power. I do not intend to reify their relationship as subordinate to men—mainly because native terms do not transmit the same subordination. The *apia-mwene* are the female part of the clan leadership, suggesting parity. *Mfumukazi* means only female chief; it does not imply subordination to anyone. Even the Portuguese term *rainha* (queen) is not used to refer to a king's spouse but either an autonomous female ruler or a co-ruler.

The archival material in interaction with the ethnographic evidence necessitates an engagement with the Africanist debate regarding the conceptual relationship between women and power that challenge existing mainstream epistemological narratives. The interaction with different informants interrogates women's existing depictions in the scholarly texts, where understandings of the complex relationship between power and gender remain largely uncaptured by contemporary and historical texts.

Ifi Amadiume's challenge to Western notions of gender asserts that they stem from colonial impositions and the effective weakening of precolonial female forms of power. According to her, Western feminist ideology perpetuated these notions by portraying women as subjugated and needing to be saved and empowered (Amadiume, 1987). Together with Oyěwùmi, Amadiume argued that power structures in African societies should not be assumed as dominated by one gender, nor that females in authoritative roles were an anomaly. Oyěwùmi further argued that both the colonial enterprise and the historiography informed by it created some of the currently existing gendered asymmetries by making male actors dominant (Oyěwùmí, 1998). It follows that gender alone is not enough to understand who has access to power, and often is an unhelpful concept. Instead, in the "Zambezian" societies, for example, lineage and seniority, and even behavior could take precedence over gender.

In the years since, Amadiume's and Oyĕwùmi's critique has remained "an important political and historical argument, and one that remains part of the academic consensus" (Hoppe, 2016, p. 499). However, they have been criticized for not describing power relations and institutions as negotiated and permanently evolving. Historian Kirk Hoppe, in particular, lists history and anthropology scholarship that has emphasized the emerging nature of the different "pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial institutions and ideologies" (ibid., p. 498). This includes discussions about how colonial institutions could simultaneously empower and disempowered women, "depending on status, generation, profession and geography" (ibid.; see also Allman et al., 2002).

The starkest criticism of Amadiume's and Oyĕwùmi's insights is that while they challenge conceptions of gender determinism and are critical of colonial and contemporary capitalist patriarchy, they are more lenient towards precolonial African male power structures or hierarchical gendered institutions (Bakare-Yusuf, 2001; Hoppe, 2016). Despite these shortcomings, but in line with their premise, I show how persistent, localized cosmologies of power produce a more balanced understanding of power institutions and their eventual gendered dimensions. Instead of focusing on empowering and disempowering opportunities created by either colonial, socialist, or neoliberal postcolonial modernizing disruptions, I focus on enduring meaning institutions that have survived despite them.

As should be expected, women in different *locales* do not relate to the same colonial symbols or experience of power and subjugation. Their relationship with coloniality relates to different space-time regions, which in turn provide different temporal references. Conversely, non-colonial symbols provide partial unification of these *locales*. In Quelimane and Inhassunge, their experience is intimately linked to the history of the *donas* and their *prazos*. In Macuse, on the other hand, women's experiences of power were linked to marriage to wealthy men (*anyanye* and *anunu*) and chiefs (*amussano*). They also yielded power as counselors (*anamalaga*) to the native leaders and controlling female forced labor (*anyakoda*) for the lessee companies and beyond. The equating of the *anyanye* to the *dona* provided a better logic for

understanding the latter's affluence, power, and authority beyond matriliny and native kinship, while also recognizing the power of the wealth of their foreign husbands.

In Maganja da Costa, the lineage and name of the rulership derived from a woman, Rainha Bala, who like another queen in Macuse, had to concede her rulership to her son-in-law in the advent of the *regulado* and direct colonial administration. None of the other colonial references from the other sites transpire in this *locale*—the first to be administered directly among the three—after the dismantling of the local *aringa*, and which is the local colonial reference. Instead, they relate to the other *locales* by their reverence towards chiefs' wives (*mwadamwene mwanu*) and leaders of female initiation rites (*emwali*), even after the latter ceased to exist.

Maganja da Costa is also the site where a female descendant of Rainha Bala challenged a sitting *régulo* for his position, and he conceded. Though this woman did not argue for the right to rule by claiming her lineage through her namesake, I argue that her ascendance reflects the non-gendered nature of her type of leadership: paramount chieftaincy. Naturally, in an environment where structurally—i.e., the postcolonial state promotes a discourse of gender equality—her rulership becomes acceptable both for the overarching state and her subjects alike. Not all positions are equally non-gendered. Wives and sisters occupy distinctly gendered power positions. However, wives and sisters should be viewed from a co-rulership perspective, as they are afforded the same respect and deference as their husbands or brothers.

In the dynamics of ruling families, sisters and mothers and daughters of rulers possess inherent power and access to both gendered and non-gendered authority. Though they are symbolically responsible for their peoples/subjects' wellbeing, fertility, productivity, and continuity, they often also possess formal administrative responsibilities and are at the center of the hegemony. Male rulers are also expected to perform spiritual rituals for their subjects' wellbeing, often in conjunction with their lineage's female members. Their power should be understood from the perspective of power as domination. Wives' acquired power through marriage, on the other hand, should be viewed from the perspective of empowerment.

Amid these different typologies of power, the *anyakoda* emerge as an essential governance tool, the concrete manifestation of subaltern power. The *longue durée* analysis of this recurring category enables a slightly different understanding of its nature. While critical of its oppressed status, they yielded power beyond resistance, usually the center of interest of subaltern studies. This subaltern authority is exemplified in mockery and obscenity in *aide-mémoire* songs portraying disempowerment in the face of colonial oppression, coupled with the informants' focus on their mediator and persuasive skills, rather than their subaltern status. Previous focus on the *anyakoda*'s subaltern status failed to fully appreciate the existing reverence towards them and their participation in the whole hegemonic structure.

The *anyakoda* are an excellent example of a both gendered and subaltern position. In their recognizable subaltern position, they can exhibit agency in navigating the often-violent reality that begets them and those around them. This we saw above in the example of *nyakoda* Marieta's song. However, they also had an institutionally appointed role that gave them open and legitimate power to act with authority. The hegemonic understanding about their position seems to miss what their authority meant to other subalterns; namely, the ability to communicate with other authoritative positions and mediating the fate of those under them. Their existence quietly guaranteed—and still does in its contemporary equivalent, OMM—increased and efficient production in the mines of the Maravi *karonga*, in the household of the *donas*, or the forced labor camps of the lessee companies. Today they still rally the masses at the whim of the postcolonial state.

Due to this category's perception as mainly subordinate and unworthy of analysis, the literature does not fully grasp their place in the power hierarchy, simultaneously instrumentalized and a bridge between hegemony and subalternity. I would argue that their particular position of power, though not entirely in their interest, provided possible mobility paths away from extreme subalternity. It allowed for playing from within the system in the other subaltern's perceived interest without necessarily

challenging the overall *status quo*. Ultimately, they represent the most palpable form of governmentality, if ever there was one.

The apparent lack of challenge to the *status quo* may be interpreted as a lack of political consciousness or a sign of powerlessness. However, this category's endurance in women's social, economic, and political organization suggests otherwise. It suggests that none of the different social and political organizations that have existed in the region(s), where women were a central productive force, have been able to govern without the assistance of the *anyakoda*. They become a category through which governance becomes possible, whether organizing female labor in the mines of the *karonga*, that of slaves in the absence of the *dona,* or by supporting political work as OMM. This role is strategic in the manufacture of consent to subordination, that which Gramsci called civil society, and is itself its own space of hegemony (Green, 2002).

The insights above into old social categories and their power location pose interesting questions about how and where power is engendered and whether gender is a relevant concept when ascribing female power. By contrasting the existing archival material on authoritative women and those mentioned by my informants, I argue that there are both gendered and non-gendered forms of power available to women. However, gender is not the most relevant category for analyzing women's power within the hegemony. Instead, political governance in African societies should be viewed as collective and in charge of both the material and spiritual worlds. This means that women play a central role as material co-rulers and co-spiritual guides. There is also a vital mobility mechanism in marriage (to influential, wealthy men or chiefs), which empowers non-elite women. It can also empower men who marry into ruling lineages. Moreover, hegemonic governing structures are not composed only of elite individuals and co-opted subalterns. The survival of cosmologies entails adaptation to change while retaining the deeper meanings of how the world is understood and organized.

These insights challenge assertions about female power, such as being symbolic, indirect, or based on specific gendered traits. Women occupied concrete places in the social and political elite networks and echelons of their societies' structure, and

wielded influence and power through embedded cosmological symbology and ritual, which were manifested materially. In what follows, I present examples of how their power and authority manifested through the life histories of four of these women, Rainha Bala, D. Amália, Nunu Ancha, and Nyakoda Marieta.

3 Finding the Anya Elabo, the owners of the land

Part 2 presented categories of women of power and authority in the existing literature about "Zambezia." It discussed three specific categories—wives with acquired power, royal mothers and sisters with inherent power, and forewomen with subaltern power—with existing literature representations in dialogue with some ethnographic material. The ethnographic material highlights existing gaps in the literature while complementing and critiquing the representations around these women. In this part, I use four women's life histories to develop further the arguments initiated above by describing their localized social, political, and historical context, as recalled by their descendants. The result is a narrative that shows how a coeval historical timeline impacted each location differently, creating distinct *locales*, social systems with divergent historical references (Dube, 2016; Giddens, 1995; Sahlins, 1985). These life histories shed further light on the mis- and underrepresentation of prominent social and political female actors by focusing on localized cosmological understandings of power embedded in the narratives. I also discuss the value of memory and female oral histories to inform women's representation within their social and political contexts. Within feminist studies, this has long been argued as the best method to highlight their agency, diversity, and intersectionality, and to critically engage with the power structures they are subjected to (Abu-lughod, 1991; Geiger, 1986; Kandiyoti, 1988). I use their histories instead to understand how they are inserted in and use hegemonic structures to exercise power over others. In addition to agency and intersectionality, it naturalizes the place of women within hegemonic spheres. It also makes it possible to understand how and which women have exercised actual and perceptible power and when this was gendered.

Dislodgment of the historical space by the ethnographic place

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, my original intention was to write about women from women's perspectives. This does not mean to suggest that women are the only ones who can talk about women, but that female interlocutors can contribute

different perspectives to the existing literature. I have presented above how hegemonic narratives of history have misconstrued women's actual power and authority in a Weberian sense by ignoring non-colonial epistemologies/cosmologies of power. In what follows, I focus on how general memories—of women in particular—are organized and kept; namely, to which aspects communities give importance, and how they communicate with the existing literature regarding their past in terms of time and space.

As mentioned before, not long after I initiated my interviews, I realized that, although I wished women to be my primary informants, they would often suggest a potential male informant for me to talk to. Refusing to interview these men seemed to disrespect the different ways women chose to tell their stories and reduce the importance of sources to which they gave authority.

The above has two implications worth discussing. One implication relates to what was perceived as history—generally either heroic or mythical—by informants (Sahlins, 1983). This led to self-censoring what was considered relevant to share regarding what they perceived were my research interests. The second implication relates to the understanding of gendered power. The stories collected reveal that even where gender categories are not relevant, studying women's place and role in societies remains relevant. This sheds light on a more in-depth understanding of societies' power dynamics, where women partake not always in gendered ways, as argued by Oyěwùmí (1998).

Narratives were complemented by diverse material and immaterial mementos, such as pictures, news clips, genealogies, songs, and visits to physical spaces and edifices. The physical markings of the passage of time in some edifices were the most apparent *lieux de memoire* over which individuals produce continuous and equivalent meaning, even after a regime change. In Macuse, for example, the ruling party had taken over the Copacabana Club, a meeting place for the *assimilados* (assimilated). These were natives who had embraced "civilized" behavior under colonial rule, and hence had more privilege than non-assimilated natives. A hall used by white settlers was used by military

officials during the civil war and lies now empty and abandoned. As such, a "native" power space is repossessed by a new form of power that can be incorporated into the former ways of understanding power, including in its visual representations. The foreign/external power space is temporarily re-occupied by external forces beyond the local power cosmologies.

The same happened in Inhassunge, where soldiers also occupied the main house of *prazo* Carungo during the post-independence war. And external refugees took up residence in a land where the "native" residents weren't permitted to build previously. The edifices names used during colonial times, Copacabana Club or Vila Gavicho continue to be used today, even as they have been repurposed, lie empty or in ruins.

At each site, life histories related to different economic and social logics that produced different forms of relating to the different Portuguese colonial administration forms. Other emerging meanings not linked to colonial structures also arise. Some of these linked to precolonial elements of influence, such as the Maravi expansion. Others linked to the interaction with other external actors, such as Islamic traders. As a result, each site establishes time and space links that do not conform to the borders of either current or historical "Zambezia," and therefore do not relate to a unified "Zambezian ethos."

Rainha Bala and the site of the *aNyaringa*

Maganja da Costa was, in fact, the last of the sites that I visited. During my first field visit in 2014, a friend told me that a famous queen hailed from there. She was Rainha Bala, and she had passed away the previous year. She was more contemporary than the women I had in mind; however, she constituted an excellent example of female leadership. I wished to investigate further the processes that allowed it, notably, in her quality as *régulo*, which I understood to be a male ruling position. I arranged to meet with her nephew, the current *régulo*, hoping that he would put me in contact with her female descendants. He was open to receiving me and to put me in contact with other older males in the ruling family to assist with compiling the history of their lineage.

He was not so keen that I meet with his female relatives, as he did not think that they knew their story as well as he did. When he finally consented to my meeting with his other aunts, he still arranged for a session for them to report on what they had told me. His narrative and his aunts' are generally similar. However, there are subtle differences, mostly around the legitimacy of her contesting his appointment as *régulo*.

Rainha Bala's contesting male authority and the *loci* of women of power in the Bala influenced region

I first interviewed Régulo Bala in October 2014, at his home, in the shade of a mango tree. I had one additional meeting after that and kept intermittent communication by phone during fieldwork. When we made the appointment, he explained that his responsibilities as a *régulo* kept him busy, but he would be pleased to talk to me about his family history. The campaign for the presidency and parliament general elections had just finished, and he briefly shared his opinion on the campaign's local politics. An elderly relative sat at a distance, in the shade of another tree. From time to time, the *régulo* would consult him to confirm whether the shared facts were accurate. In what follows, I present a composite of his statements (as I also do with the other texts) reordered to form a coherent narrative. These texts are longer narratives with some of the snippets presented previously.

He started with the genealogy of his family as rulers over the region.

Diagram 1. Bala genealogy by the Régulo
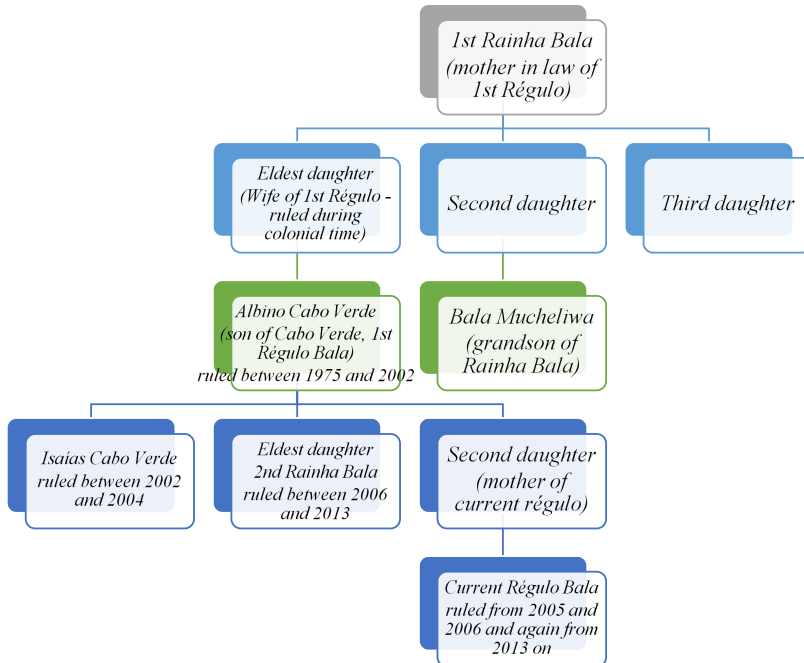
As he explained:

> The first *régulo* in the colonial era was called Cabo Verde. This was a
> name that was given to him, not his actual name. He was not originally
> from Maganja da Costa. The name Bala came from a Queen. Cabo
> Verde was her son-in-law. In the colonial time, she had no way of
> holding power. When her brother died, there was no male to succeed
> him, as the Queen only had daughters. Therefore, she chose Cabo Verde,
> who was her son-in-law, to succeed because of his good behavior.

The original Rainha Bala lived in the *vila* (district center) and had three daughters. Cabo Verde was married to her eldest daughter. But the other daughters contested this choice and claimed that he was not entitled to hold power. They appointed the son of one of the other daughters, called Bala Mucheliwa.

Mucheliwa means prisoner. He was arrested because he stole money from the taxes he collected. As a result, he was unseated, and Cabo Verde was reinstated. The family had to accept that he could receive power from the mother-in-law. To gain more legitimacy, Cabo Verde appointed one of his sons, Albino Cabo Verde, to be his successor. Albino was a "cotton monitor" (*monitor de algodão*).

The cotton regime was instated in 1938 and lasted more than two decades. According to Allen Isaacman, this was based on a repressive regime of forced labor "completely predicated upon state intervention at the point of production" (Isaacman, 1992, p. 487). This regime was implemented across Mozambique but was most prevalent around Zambezia and the northern provinces of Nampula, Cabo Delgado, and Niassa (see Figure 15). It lasted until the early '60s, and it came to represent a metaphor for colonial oppression.
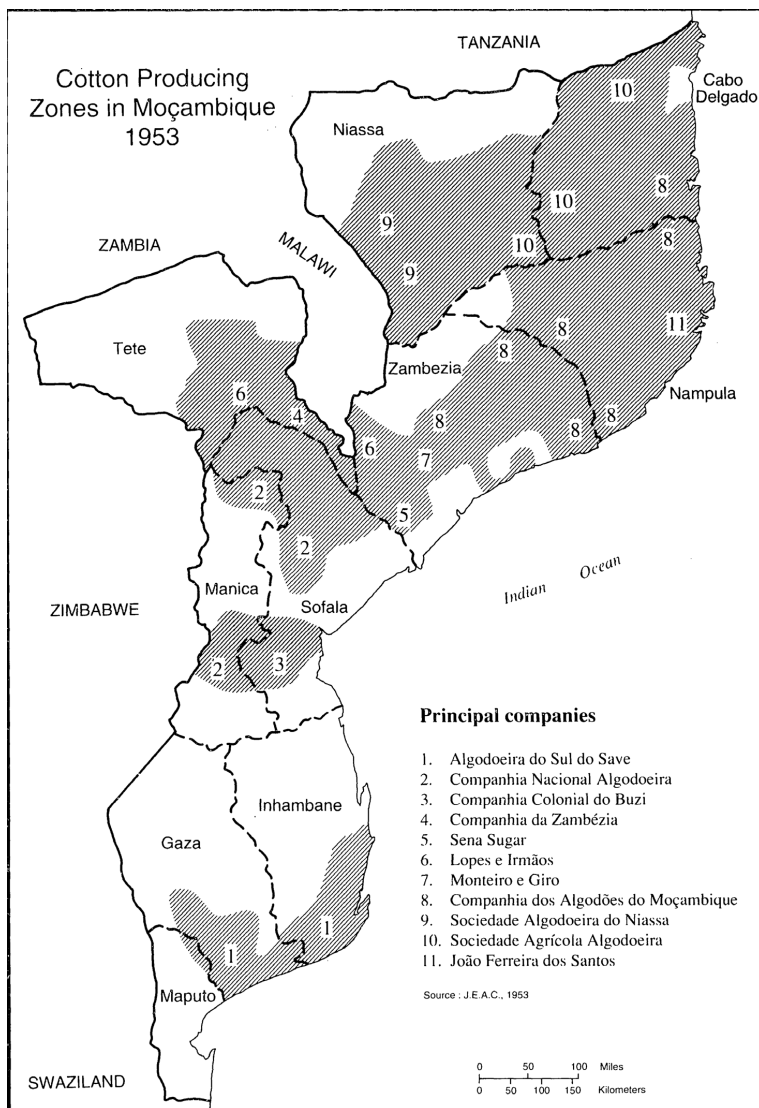
Source: Isaacman, A. F. (1992, p. 494)

Figure 15. Cotton-producing zones in Mozambique, 1953

> The next *régulo*, Albino Cabo Verde ruled during the war time
> (somewhere between independence until 1992). He had three wives.[68]
> His first wife, Rainha Margarida, was unable to have children. He then
> took a second wife from a plantation in Nante. The third wife was from
> another *regulado*, Jiripiwo.

I inquired if the name Cabo Verde had anything to do with the Cape Verde islands, which were also Portuguese colonies. As I discuss below, when presenting memories of D. Amália, people of the different colonies were often exiled to other colonies. Régulo Bala said that it was just a coincidence, "just a name that he was given." And continued his narrative,

> In 2002, when they [the government] came with the uniforms to
> legitimize and reinstate the old traditional leaderships, Albino Cabo
> Verde ceded his position to his son Isaias. This son died in 2004, and he
> was then appointed. He remained in power until 2006. At this point, his
> mother's eldest sister claimed that she should be the rightful ruler, as the
> eldest daughter of the former *régulo*, who was the son of the first *régulo*.
> He relinquished his power; only got it back after her passing in 2013 by
> being reappointed by the family.

After independence in 1975, Mozambique adopted socialism as its governing ideology. Certain aspects of tradition were deemed incompatible with the modernizing socialist state project. It then looked to eliminate certain practices and institutions which it considered backward and a remnant or symbol of colonial dominance, among which "traditional leadership" like the *regulado* system was the most visible (Bertelsen, 2016; Buur & Kyed, 2005, 2006; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999). In the war that followed independence, the removal of traditional leaders from power featured heavily among the grievances against the new policies (Christian Geffray, 1990; M.

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[68] When setting up a meeting to meet his aunts, Régulo Bala mentioned that his grandfather had a woman (*mulher*) and wives (*esposas*). When I later asked if there was a distinction between the two, he said that there was none. That he considered both as women and wives.

Hall, 1990). After the war, as part of the democratization and decentralization process, the ruling party reintroduced traditional leaders as part of local governance. It reinstated deposed leaders or their descendants, in case they were deceased or too old to rule. They were renamed "community leaders" and organized into three echelons. Those in the highest echelons, formerly *régulos*, received symbols of the republic like the flag; all echelons received uniforms according to rank (see Figure 16). This is what Régulo Bala meant by the government "coming with uniforms."

Photo by I. T. Induo

Figure 16. Traditional leaders in Maganja da Costa with uniform, 2020

Régulo Bala further explained that "being a *régulo* is not of one's preference; it is a family consensus." Although seemingly there can still be friction and contestations within the family, as exemplified by the contestation of the first Rainha Bala's choice of successor and the second Rainha Bala contesting her nephew's rule.

Though the current *régulo* did not contest his grandfather's decision to appoint his son to rule, he didn't necessarily agree that it was the right decision. After all, "the *regulado* is a matrilineal issue." As such, the rightful successor should have come from one of the daughters' lines and not a male line. His mother was the one who had a son. He was the presumptive successor, not his uncle Isaias. Likewise, he also disagreed with his aunt's claim to power. He hinted that there was no family consensus for her to take power, and her rule was only accepted because "her power came from her father." He did not openly say that her being a woman was an impediment. Also, there seems to be some contradiction in his narrative when he mentions that her aunt's power comes from her father and not her father's maternal line. In between the lines, I understand that Rainha Bala uses her seniority to contest her nephew; else, the succession would skip a generation. This was confirmed when I finally talk with the *régulo's* aunts, who claimed that his young age was indeed a factor in his initial unseating.

Régulo Bala further tells me that a cousin of the *rainha* contested her claim to power. In his words*,* "she was always clashing with a cousin who wanted the power." When I asked why this cousin had not been appointed initially, instead of the current *régulo*, he answered that

> The issue was not legitimacy to inherit the post, but qualification. My uncle was not well behaved. It is suspected that he even killed the queen.

This insinuation does not refer to an actual assassination, but rather that she was killed by "envy" associated with witchcraft. The accusation derives from the fact that she governed only a short time before she died. It appears to symbolize male opposition to female rule, which cannot be openly admitted. It may also be a simple dispute between different contenders for the same position, where the paranormal is used to explain the inexplicable. The metaphysical is an essential element of power, as argued by many Africanist scholars (Adler, 2004; Ashforth & Ashforth, 2005; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993; Niehaus et al., 2001; West, 2005), particularly concerning female authority (Agadjanian, 2015; Badejo, 1996; Diop, 1989; Olupona, 1991; Van Allen, 1975).

However, most literature focuses on female authority's spiritual nature, and their ritual and symbolic connection with ancestors. Alternatively, in the public sphere, witchcraft or sorcery is presented as genderless (or assumed male), and in private, as mostly female. This example subverts these views but retains an important one. It suggests that power and the invisible are interconnected, both in public and private, irrespective of gender.

According to Bruce Kapferer, sorcery is one of the faces of power, and is imbued in its processes. It follows that "we can understand power and the processes of power better by taking sorcery seriously" (Kapferer, 1997, p. 287). Anthropologist Harry West, who has conducted fieldwork among the Makonde in northern Mozambique, argued that in a context of unreliable modernization efforts from an overarching centralized power, sorcery's discourse was used as "a social diagnostics of power relations" (West, 2001, p. 119). These also served to cope with external, often failed modernization initiatives, with meanings built on local historical contexts.

Régulo Bala asserts his qualification to rule when he says that he "was the only one in the family who was ever interested in the family history." This position was renewed when I requested to meet with his female relatives and he replied that he was the only one interested in in hearing his grandfather, as I mentioned previously. By knowing about the past, he seems to believe that he is more qualified to carry on the family's legacy.

He continued the family history, telling about the time when traditional leaders were destitute after independence.

> For a long time, *régulos* were not allowed to rule. From independence until 2002, only *secretários* (party representatives) were recognized as legitimate local leaders. *Régulos* had to operate as *secretários* if they wanted to retain their authority.

Régulo Bala recognizes the role of the war in restoring his family's rule. "The *régulos'* [authority] was recognized through Renamo."

Presently the responsibilities of a *régulo* are to "control the kingdom." That means

> to go from village to village, receive information on their current situation, and convey to the government. Have an interest in visiting the population (*população*). Sit down with the family and the population and resolve matters. Organize families to clean the cemeteries, roads, latrines, and neighborhoods. Additionally, *régulos* are responsible for collecting personal and bicycle taxes; they sit on the different Consultative Councils and participate in deciding how to disburse the District Development Fund known as "*7 milhões*" (seven million),[69] and meet other leaders to debate matters regarding the population.

Régulo Bala recalls that in the past, "*w*hen there were events, the first to be taken care of was the siblings [of the *régulo*] and then the rest of the population." The same was true whenever there was a redistribution of goods. He complained that currently, there is no longer the same respect for the position of the *régulo*.

> [During colonial times] the *régulo* was entitled to a house. When the white man wanted to do a survey (*inscrição*),[70] he would enter the village [and talk to the *régulo*]. Today, people come in and do as they please, without the *régulo* knowing about it.

This complaint echoes those registered by state authorities when they considered reinstating the *régulos* and other customary ruling roles. In consultation workshops around the country after the war, representatives of ruling families "expressed desires to mobilize 'lazy populations' to labour as they once had in the colonial period, or to discipline those in their communities who committed crimes or, even, those who

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[69] The District Development Fund was created in 2005, in the context of decentralization of governance. Through it, each district would be subsidized in the amount of 7 million *meticals*, at the time valued at around 300.000,00 USD. What was supposed to be a tool for participatory and decentralized planning became a "loan mechanism similar to a microcredit" (Orre & Forquilha, 2005).

[70] The word "*inscrição*" translates into inscription, enrollment, or registration. The term is currently used to refer to household surveys conducted for multiple purposes and by multiple agencies.

showed 'disrespect' for authority" (West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999, p. 465). After more than 20 years, some grievances seem to remain the same. Régulo Bala feels, in a similar sentiment mentioned by the *secretários* to whom I spoke to in Macuse, that traditional leaders do not have enough authority. Like Mwene Raia, when she talked about her father's choice for *mwene*, Régulo Bala presents his leadership as an obligation conferred upon him by inheritance. "To be an authority in Mozambique is misery (*desgraça*), but because we inherited, there is no way out (*não há como*)."

Régulo Bala then tells me about the leadership nomenclature changes, which have not significantly affected leadership structure.

> Currently, there are echelons. Instead of names, leaders are given numbers: first, second, or third echelon leader. Among the leaders in my area, there is a woman in the second echelon. She is called queen because she is a woman.

Régulo Bala could not tell me how she became queen, as he does not remember the family to which she belongs. In his region, he tells me that "other women that are called queens are the wives of leaders or *mwadamwene mwanu*." This term is equivalent to the term *mussano* used in Macuse.

The majority of the literature about traditional leaderships are mum about gender, i.e., do not discuss it or assume and describe traditional leadership as typically male (Alexander, 1997; Bertelsen, 2016; Buur & Kyed, 2005, 2006; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999). However, my field has shown that multiple ways in which power and authority positions are conspicuously non-gendered and cannot be assumed to be male, even as males are predominant. At the same time, these positions do not play out simply in the visible governance structures, but in a myriad of other ways, both for men and women.

For example, when talking about women of power, authority, or renown in the area, other than governing chiefs (or wives of chiefs), Régulo Bala mentioned the "traditional queens." These were responsible for the *emwali* (female initiation rites). He explained

that there was "circumcision" both for boys and girls.[71] The female rites are called *emwali*, and the male rites *eluga* for boys, as I later learned while interviewing the *régulo*'s aunts. The *régulo* then explained the objectives of the rites.

> Emwali is a tradition that educates people not to know men too soon,
> respect the man when married, the way to dress, the way to respect the
> parents… Today there is no longer that tradition. It ended with Frelimo.

Female rites were headed by female healers and sages, while male healers headed the male rites. The rites, of course, are sites where gender roles are transmitted to the younger generations. They have been both criticized as sites of production of gender and generational inequality (Osório & Macuácua, 2013), as well as understood as a site where women learn and create forms of sexual empowerment and autonomy (Arnfred, 2011; Bagnol, 2013; Bagnol & Mariano, 2012). Prohibition of traditional practices considered "obscurantist" were part of the post-independence modernizing socialist project, alongside the temporary prevention of *régulos* from performing their authoritative roles (Arnfred, 1988, 2011). This prohibition is echoed in Macuse, as already mentioned. There too initiation rites were banned, but earlier on, by the church.

Women's emancipation and equal participation was part of the rhetoric for building the new nation (Arnfred, 1988). This rhetoric gave way from the 1990s to a new developmentalist discourse of gender equity and gender empowerment. The first democratically elected government, elected in the first multiparty elections of 1994, was also the first "to introduce the concept of gender in the design, analysis and definition of national development policies and strategies" (Casimiro & Andrade, 2009, p. 140). As feminist scholars and activists Isabel Casimiro and Ximena Andrade point out, the result was not equity or transformation of oppressive realities. Instead, institutional power's cooptation led to the devaluation of the analytical content of the

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[71] Régulo Bala used the term "circumcision", however there are no reports of de facto female genital mutilation in Mozambican female initiation rites. There have been reports of genital manipulation, which some scholars understand to constitute mutilation, in the broader sense (e.g. Geisler, 2000).

concept of gender. In whichever system, colonial or postcolonial, gender, power, and authority become political fields shaped by an overarching imposing state or polity.

What is left in Maganja da Costa that includes a strong female presence are dances, which are currently solely performed on official occasions when state dignitaries visit the area. These can include "open presidencies," which have become a "method of keeping contact with and 'orienting' the local electorate, party structures and governments" (Weimer & Carrilho, 2017). They happen more often during the election campaigns. This arena for selective exposure of cultural apparatus is a "fetishization of tradition" that empties the original purpose to serve another ideological regime. Alan Cole uses the term in relation to religion, as follows:

> The term fetishizing tradition points out those nodes in the development of religious thought when the complex and disparate forms of prior tradition were reduced to one singular and terribly exciting Thing that supposedly subsumes and overcomes its antecedents (Cole, 2015, p. 5).

However, this also applies to governing structures. Mbembe, starting from his *Provisional Notes on the Postcolony* (Mbembe, 1992a) critiques the grotesque and the carnivalesque contours of the 'aesthetics of power' in the postcolonial context, "particularly with regard to state ceremonialism and the discursive centrality of bodily metaphors" (Kalström, 2003, p. 57). In this case, traditions once filled with meaning, purpose, and hierarchy are emptied and reduced to mere entertainment. This follows a similar cooptation, appropriation, and redeployment as the concept of gender, resulting in its ultimate disempowerment.

Dances, also mentioned as mediums of power performance in the context of Macuse, emerge as a cosmological substratum where men and women demonstrate their positions of power in both gendered and non-gendered ways. By chipping away the power components, performances, particularly those by women, can become exoticized, and the performers sexualized and objectified.

Régulo Bala mentioned three dances performed by women.

> One is called Siriri, in which only older women participate, entering a
> circle one by one. There was a famous dancer whose daughter [also]
> succeeded in heading the dancing squad. Another dance is the Muzobe,
> which is danced by jumping a rope. The third dance is the Tufo.

He marginally mentions one dance, *Alula*, which includes men. It was not possible to
observe any of the dances, as no formal official event took place while I was in the
field. And when there were visits, I had not yet established a rapport with the *régulo*.

All the dances mentioned are of Makhuwa influence. Tufo dancing is the most
renowned. Signe Arnfred writes about this dance and its role in meaning-making and
identity for women (Arnfred, 2011). The dance has roots in Islam.[72] In the northern
Mozambican coast, they are mostly still associated with Islamic practices and
celebrations. Elsewhere, where the influence has extended, but where secularization is
occurring, "Tufo development display an expansion of women's culture and a renewed
source of status and identity for participating women" (Arnfred, 2011, p. 290). I would
argue that it is more than a source of status, and identity is a slippery slope concept.
Dance is a form of communication and embodiment whose message is quickly
apprehended by those who understand the code it is transmitting, similar to clothing
and jewelry. They contain a modality of power performance that is either not
contained or is not understood within Western forms of conceptualizing power and
authority (Reed, 2016).

On probing further into other women of renown, Régulo Bala indicated that the
daughters of *régulos* were "untouchable." *Régulos* and their families were considered
assimilados (assimilated). A similar description of the status of *régulos* is found in
Macuse. The assimilation status relates to a law passed in 1917, where the principle of
"tendential assimilation" (*assimilação tendencial*) was legislated. A distinction was
made between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples (Farré, 2015; Lourenço, 2010).
Indigeneity was not based on birth but instead on the absence of European roots or

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[72] The name Tufo derives from Swahili *Dufu*, which is a large-diameter frame drum (Bonate, 2007, p. 69 footnote 273)

perceived inability to absorb Europeanized behavior. This law granted those with *assimilado* status to benefit from civil and political rights within the colonial institutions, denied to indigenous people. The distinction between citizens and non-citizens became increasingly racialized and exclusionary. The increasing inflow of white people put pressure on the colonial government to defend this population, to the detriment of the non-white population, whether indigenous or assimilated (Lourenço, 2010).

Régulo Bala recalls that "in the colonial time everyone was equal" in the eyes of the colonial society and authorities. "Only the wives of the white men were queens. It is only today that one can distinguish. Before, people did not stand out." According to him, "presently one immediately recognizes the powerful woman and the rich" because they are visibly distinct from others. From this, I infer that the Portuguese and those in their relational spheres dominated everyone else. Because intermixing was not as common in Maganja da Costa, as in Quelimane, Inhassunge, or even Macuse, there were fewer ways by which the native population could connect to the colonial structures. This exemplifies one of the multiple ways in which location informs distinct relationships with and references to the colonial enterprise, as I present below.

Among those who were distinct in the colonial elite was a white man, Amaral Marques. "This man had a plantation, cattle, bakery, butchery and an *armazém* (warehouse)." [73] Régulo Bala says Amaral Marque's wife was "known" because her husband was rich. Known in this instance stands for a person of renown. From secondary data (*Anuário da província de Moçambique: informações oficiais, comerciais, geográficas e históricas*, 1972), I gathered that there was an Álvaro do Amaral, owner of the Companhia Agrícola da Murrôa, Lda. located in the Bajone Administrative Post. He owned three establishments together with an António Marques. The association between the two was called Amaral & Marques, Lda. As such, "Amaral Marques" may not have been one single person but an enterprise. It is

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[73] Typically, an *armazém* would serve as a store for purchase agricultural produce from farmers and the sale of various products.

hard to know who of the two the *régulo* is referring to, and by association to whose wife he is referring.

A different source mentions Álvaro do Amaral as *Chefe de Posto* (Head of the Administrative Post) of Mocubela (*Anuário de Lourenço Marques*, 1947), which as Bajone were part of the Maganja da Costa circumscription (see Figure 17). António Marques, on the other hand is referred as the Secretary of the Administration, in substitution of the Administrator while the post was vacant in 1946 (*Anuário do império colonial português*, 1946).
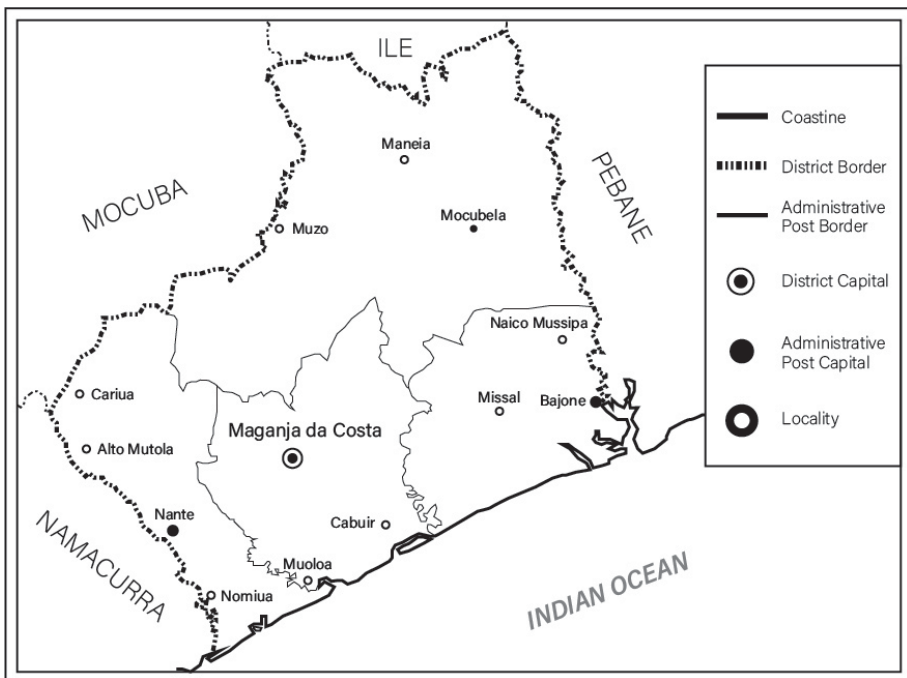
Source: based on *Governo do Distrito de Maganja da Costa, 2005. Plano Estratégico de Desenvolvimento Distrital 2006 – 2010* [Government of Maganja da Costa District, 2005. District Development Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010]

Figure 17. Maganja da Costa Administrative Map, prior to 2013 redistricting[74]

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[74] In 2013, the District of Maganja da Costa was divided and the Mocubela Administrative Post was elevated to District.

To his recollection, the remainder of the rich people in Maganja da Costa were "Indians." He referred to two by name, Abubacar, and Amade. The Delagoa Directory (1926) mentions an Amade Jumá, an Aboo Bacar and a Suleman Amade among the traders in Quelimane district. According to Manuel Lobato, most of the Indian traders established in African ports were Muslim (Lobato, 1995). Asians and their descendants, particularly Muslims, occupied a parallel place in the colonial society. They were discriminated against just like the indigenous populations (Bonate, 2007). This is notable in the deprecating terms used to describe them both colloquially and in the literature (Zamparoni, 2018), including how undermentioned they were. On the other hand, for indigenous populations, Indians were equally foreign and prominent because they were materially wealthier than most natives.

The *régulo* mentioned the lessee companies Madal, Boror, and Zambezia in passing. However, the relationship with the companies in Maganja da Costa was not like in Macuse, where Boror mediated all social interactions. I would not understand the difference in the relationship with the different actors until I interviewed the Bala family's women.

In all my interactions with the Bala family, I heard the term *aNyaringa* slip in, almost inaudibly. The aunts told me proudly that that is the name by which the people of Maganja are known. When I enquired to the *régulo* why they were called so, he was unsure. "Probably because they were very disorderly (confuses)," he added; "there was much resistance to colonialism."

As mentioned above, Maganja da Costa is known for having been run as an autonomous republic by *achikunda* former warrior slaves. This happened around the end of the nineteenth century, when the *prazos* started organizing in the *aringa* system. According to the literature, the allegiance of the *achikunda* with Afro-Portuguese *prazo* owners resisted the expansion of the lessee companies. They were driven by the wish to prevent loss of privileges, as in the companies would be transformed into mere labor camps (Isaacman, 1975), thus disempowering both groups. Authors like Capela

(2006) mention that runaway slaves often composed the population of the *aringas*. In Maganja da Costa this was not the case. They are descendants of the *achikunda* who conquered Angoche led by their lord João Bonifácio Alves da Silva (Bonate, 2007; Capela, 2010; Newitt, 1995). Upon his death, the *chikunda* returned to their respective *aringas* in Maganja da Costa, and self-governed in what became known as the Military Republic of Maganja da Costa, eventually developing a distinct ethnic identity that lasted until the republic was extinguished in 1898 (Newitt, 2010). After this point, the region came under direct administration earlier than elsewhere in the region.

Interestingly, "and as was traditional in similar circumstances, they recognized symbolic titularity of lordship upon João Bonifácio's mother" (Capela, 2010, p. 74). This is the woman that Maria Sorensen writes about in the book *D. Theodora e seus Mozungos* (Sorensen, 1998), her full name: D. Teodora Temporário de Matos.

Rainha Bala's righteousness and tensions of modernity

My conversation with Rainha Bala's cousins took place in 2015, under a shady tree in one of the queen's female cousins' yard. Present were two sisters, who were daughters of one of the queen's father's "cousin-brothers."[75] Two other sisters were daughters of one of Rainha Bala's father's sisters, and another was the mother of the present *régulo*. The fifth was the house owner, the daughter of yet another of the queen's father's brothers.

The elderly women sat in *esteiras* (straw mats) on the floor; they had prepared chairs for my translator, a daughter of the house, and me. She was an impromptu translator, as they preferred to speak in eChuwabu, though they could understand and speak Portuguese. In contrast, the conversations with the *régulo* had been conducted entirely in Portuguese. This setting contrasted that during the conversation with the *régulo*, as we had both sat in chairs. In this all-female congregation, I was faced with multiple

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[75] In Maganja da Costa, as in many places across Mozambique, children whose parents are siblings consider themselves siblings. To distinguish actual siblings from cousins, some call them cousin-siblings.

locations of power, even my own, stripped of the gender element. I was surprised by the elevation of a daughter, hence junior woman, to the chair. If ever there was a sign of power attributed to the Portuguese language, this was undoubtedly one. Indeed this was a momentary contextual elevation, which certainly would be stripped away once her source of power, e.g., fluency in Portuguese, ceased to be relevant.

The setting seemed familiar to the many times I had conducted fieldwork related to development research. It established a distance between my informants and me, which made me weary. During and after the interview, I wondered about how this distance, which was not of my design, affected my interaction with the women. Did it make me less interested in what they had to say? Was it conditioned by the things I had already learned in my previous encounter with the *régulo*, who claimed to be the legitimate bearer of the family memories? Was I falling prey to a similar bias that I claimed that other scholars had? I had no alternative but to accept the conditions they have laid for our encounter. Of all the interviews, this would prove the most difficult to conduct.

At my request, the queen's cousins explained that she was chosen because

> She was a good person, and she studied. The current *régulo* was appointed to substitute his grandfather, but the community felt that he was too young to take over the post. As an alternative, the family proposed her [the queen]. She was the eldest of Régulo Albino's (Cabo Verde) four children.

She had a brother, but he resided in Maputo. They confirmed that "a long time ago" women did not get the *régulo* position, hinting that her brother would probably have been favored if he were present. Their account diverged slightly from that of the current *régulo* with respect to the agreement of the community and the family with both his and the queen's appointment. Seniority seemed to play a double role. The queen was the *régulo's* generational senior, but the *régulo* was also seen as too young to rule. Also, they did not immediately open up about the challenges to the queen's appointment by her male cousin.

The queen's cousins gave more detail about the children in each generation than the *régulo* had given. They specified that the first Régulo Cabo Verde was originally from Bajone, a neighboring locality. They further mentioned that

> The mother-in-law, who did not have male sons, saw that he would be a good *régulo*. He [the son-in-law] was not mean or rude to anyone. He did not drink and behaved himself around people. Cabo Verde had five sons, among which Albino was chosen to succeed his father. When Albino died, one of the [queen's] cousin-brothers became *régulo*. He was chosen because he had a good heart, but he freely left the post, leaving the position open for succession again.

They made no mention of Bala Mucheliwa, nor the initial challenge to Cabo Verde's rule. There seems to be an additional contradiction when they say that it was a nephew and not Albino's son who took charge after he died.

Diagram 2. Bala genealogy, as per the female cousins of the queen
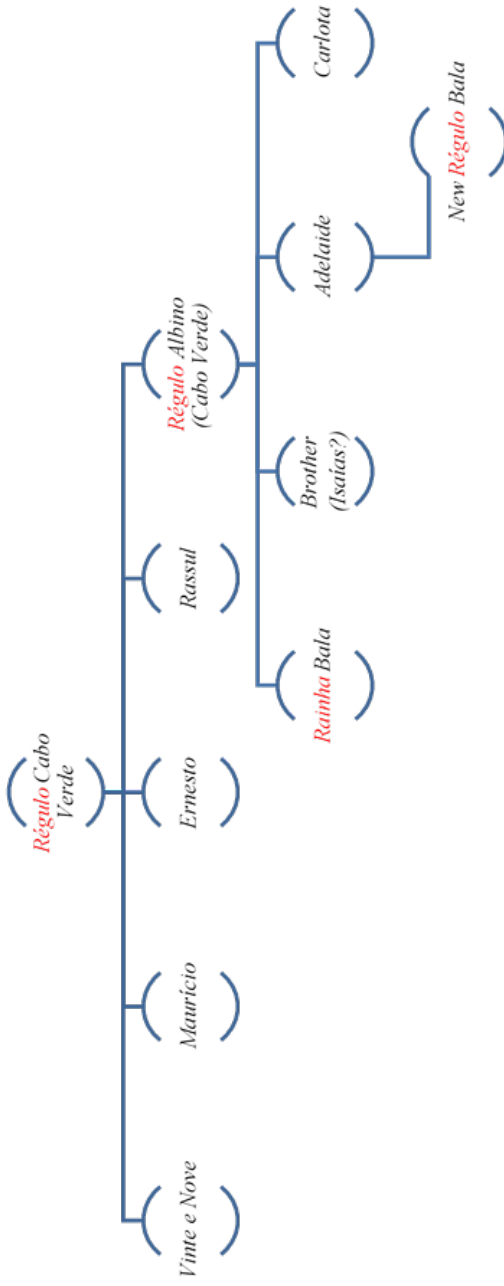
The queen's cousins think of her as kind-hearted because she looked after the family.

> She advised, mediated, and educated. She was also respected, and family
> and community alike looked up to her and sought her help. She became
> ill soon after she took power and passed away shortly after.

They claimed not to know why she died. Perhaps influenced by what I had heard from the *régulo*, I perceived that they also believed it was due to witchcraft. However, as they proceeded to inform me of a *régulo* responsibilities, they only mention the responsibilities within the visible realm. "When s/he is called to the *vila* (district center), s/he should go and listen, then return to inform the community of what s/he heard." From the literature that so far has been either male-centric or gender blind (West, 1997, 2005), and previous conversations with Régulo Bala and Mwene Raia in Macuse, I know there is an invisible realm for which *régulos*, irrespective of gender, are responsible—possibly the same realm that claimed the queen's life too early.

They proceeded to elaborate on the *Emwali* rites and the male initiation rites, which they called *Eluga.*

> They [the initiates] would go to the bush when their period started.
> Women would stay a week. Men would stay for one month, they would
> be circumcised.

They confirmed that the "government" forbade the rites and added that the *curandeiros* (traditional healers) who performed them had all died. "Boys are now circumcised in the hospital," they added. Although. "in other provinces one can [still] 'dance.'" I found it interesting that they equated the rites to dance.

Signe Arnfred also mentioned how Cabo Delgado's initiation rites were also associated with drumming and dancing (Arnfred, 1988). Effectively, in the northern Provinces of Nampula, Cabo Delgado, and Niassa, the initiation rites are still performed regularly, to the point where several State interventions have taken place to regulate them since

independence. The Mozambican state has considered initiation rites "the supreme expression of male dominance and female subordination" (Arnfred, 1988, p. 8). More recently, they have been linked to early sexual initiation and early marriages, interrupting girls' education by prematurely preparing them for adulthood and motherhood (Osório & Macuácua, 2013).

The women mentioned Bajone as a place in the district where the rites are still performed. They speculated that perhaps it was possible to practice the rites there because it was not yet as urbanized as where they lived. This pointed to the emerging constant separation between "developed/modern" and "backward/traditional." People from the *vila* would travel to Bajone to participate in the rites. My translator talked of *curandeiros* (healers) who would travel as far as Beira to perform the rites. She claimed that she had not been initiated but had been studying in Beira when some of her female colleagues originally from Maganja were summoned by their families to take part in the rites. Her mother had refused, claiming that she needed to study instead.

I noticed that the women's tale was less concerned with chronology and timeline. They could detail the different generations but did not care about specifying dates. They were also more interested in discussing the differences between the old days and present-day behavior among youth, male and female alike, with apparent concern over the loss of "some" traditions. Their narrative still contained meaningful indications that allowed trans-temporal connections between their present, the past, and possible aspirations for the future.

For example, they referred to the attachment to their birthplace, having returned to it after relocating to Quelimane during the war. I asked them why they had chosen to return, even though, according to them, "life in the city is more comfortable [than where they now lived]." To which they replied that they "could not get used to life there, and this [Maganja da Costa] was their home."

Like I had heard some of my informants in Quelimane, the queen's cousins claimed that they were children when some of the things I asked about had occurred. They didn't remember. However, they told me that

> A long time ago, the parents would get the children together in one place and present them to the family so that if they saw them on the street, they would greet them. To the children who traveled away, they would ask that they "walk well [behave], because you are not on your land."

They also recalled that there were dances, *mazoma* (drums), and traditional music. They contrasted that with today, where [the youth] only listen to music from the radio. As if defiantly, a radio played loudly in the background.

They confirmed that now they "only dance in the *vila* if a dignitary comes."

> The elders dance their part, as in the old days. The young [also] dance their part. When we were young, we danced but did not understand [the meaning of the dances].

This exchange seems to hint at concerns about the loss of identity that losing traditional dancing and drumming skills could bring about. Especially bearing in mind how identity and cohesion have been strongly mediated by these activities at initiation rites and beyond. A significant implication seems to be that the loss of such skills either creates a void or is substituted with alternatives devoid of any empowering element. Instead of social meaning, the dances that the youth are interested in bring about a breach with the customary hierarchies of reverence. Because the youth mentioned are not gendered in the narrative, the perceived power loss is then generational rather than gendered.

To my questioning about the political structures, they reply that "today" the *régulo* is helped by the *secretários*. "Before," he was helped by the *cabo de terra* (land corporal)*.* This rank was also attributed by the Portuguese, being one among those that replaced traditional ranks. The literature (Florêncio, 2004; Hedges et al., 1993; Lourenco, 2012; Martins, 2012; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999; Zamparoni, 1998,

2012) always mentions *cabos de terra* in conjunction with other gentilic (native) authorities (such as *régulos* and *sipai*), without describing their responsibilities in detail, other that they were assisted the *régulos*. They were particularly important recruiters and managers of the forced laborers (Lourenço, 2010; Meneses, 2006). The women explained that among the responsibilities of *cabos de terra*, was assisting the *régulo* in collecting taxes and "to do this work of *ser mandado* (being told what to do)." The overarching state seems to determine the actions of traditional authorities. Therefore, it is not through these actions that their power is either asserted or recognized.

As soon as they could control the narrative again, the women turned the discussion to comparing economic conditions during the colonial period to those of today. Clearly, my interests in women of power and authority were not of interest to them. Instead, they were interested in how they have lost purchase power, and with that autonomy.

Like most others who appear in the region with a similar apparatus as me—a car and a driver, a notebook, and irrelevant questions—I am close to the state. So they complain about the current status of things, as they would with any other state emissary. They tell me how,

> During the colonial period, we could buy oil, dry fish (cod) with 3 *escudos*. In the time of the [cashew] nut, we bought cigarettes, paraffin, flour. We produced coconut, orange, mandarin, cashew nut, sweet potato, peanuts, which we sold in the market. Men and women worked in the fields together. Men were tailors, master builders, sold tobacco.

By "the time of the cashew nut", they mean the season when the cashew matures and is harvested. Cashew nuts were the country's largest export until the 1980s. Following the World Bank-imposed structural adjustment reforms, the sector virtually collapsed, sending many people in the processing industry into unemployment, and rural families dependent on it from cashew nut production without revenue (Hanlon, 2000; Mcmillan et al., 2003). More than any other aspect of their past, this seemed to be the most impactful and disruptive development of their lifetime.

They did not mention cotton production nor forced labor. Neither did they mention the lessee companies. From their narrative, and differently from Macuse, Maganja da Costa's agricultural production was not a predominantly female activity.

They then continued to mention the existing commercial networks.

> People from Alto Molócue (another district, neighboring Nampula province) came [to Maganja da Costa] to buy [the local produce]. People from Lichinga, in Niassa province, came and spoke with the *régulo* to sell. They sold their produce and then left. They sold [tobacco] in a wheel. People here resold it or smoked it.

While the *régulo* talked about this region's peoples as resisting colonialism, the women's narrative did not include any suggestion of resistance. Instead, it denoted a certain nostalgia for a time that scholars assure was traumatic. Colonial nostalgia by the colonized has been addressed by several authors (e.g. Bissell, 2005; Werbner, 1998), as a reaction to "state collapse or unpredictable interregna, a sense of loss" (Werbner, 1998, p. 1).

This sensation of loss is best illustrated by the final notes I took from my conversation with the queen's cousins.

> We escaped the war, some to Quelimane. When we came back, we found nothing.

D. Amália and the shadow of the site of *prazo* Carungo

In Inhassunge, I was pursuing the life-story of D. Maria Amália Pinto. She is a *dona*, who inherited Carungo from her father, an "Indo-Portuguese" called António Maria Pinto (Negrão, 2006, p. 48). Development economist José Negrão describes her as António Maria Pinto's daughter with a black woman whom he had married. Capela, in turn, says that D. Amália was a "natural daughter" (*filha natural*), i.e., illegitimate, who only was recognized when she married Gavicho de Lacerda (Capela, 1995, p. 78).

Despite her having inherited land and Gavicho becoming a *prazo* owner, she becomes just a daughter, a wife, a few sparse lines of irrelevance in the annals of history.

Similarly, her mother, the woman described by Negrão only as a black woman appears as an anonymous, unimportant character in history. She was called Ernestina de Menezes Soares, and was in fact, herself also the daughter of a Goanese man. I had privileged information about her family history because she was my maternal great-grandfather's sister, i.e., my grandfather's aunt, which made D. Amália my grandfather's cousin. This made it easier for me to identify inconsistencies in the textbooks and confront them with the memories being shared in the family.

By all accounts, D. Amália's Portuguese husband, Francisco Gavicho Salter de Sousa e Prado Lacerda, was the one who administered her land. He was a prolific writer of several books about life in Zambezia (de Lacerda, 1925, 1939, 1944b, 1944a). He claimed to be one of the last *prazo* holders in Mozambique (de Lacerda, 1944a). The Carungo was indeed one of the last remaining *prazos*, after they were systematically incorporated into chartered companies. It remained in the family's possession until after independence, when all private property was nationalized. Gavicho's wife, the original owner, is conspicuously absent from his narrative, especially in the later writings, when they had presumably separated.

I have divided the informants for D. Amalia's life story and the social context of *prazo* Carungo into two groups: those who spoke from her husband's perspective and those from her mother's perspective. And since she lived mostly in Quelimane and Gavicho in Inhassunge, the site extended to both locations.

D. Amália, "wife" of Gavicho

Though this title may seem to reinforce the narrative of D. Amália as merely the wife of Gavicho, the intention is not to reify this status in terms that denote other than standard marital unity, reflecting how they were thought about and related in the field. This has no implications nor inquires about whether this status was civilly registered

or not. As it becomes clear further in the text, it also does not presuppose a hierarchical and patriarchal, or even racial superiority of her white husband, since in the next section she is described as the daughter not of her "Indo-Portuguese" father, but rather her "black" mother.

In 2014, when I was preparing to continue my fieldwork from the initial 2009 venture and searching for potential families whose stories I could explore, I heard from my uncle, where I stayed during my fieldwork, of a young woman. She collected personal family heirlooms and searched the archives to "reconstruct" her family history and reclaim heritage property. Once I arrived in Quelimane, I found out that this woman was none other than Francisco Gavicho Salter de Sousa do Prado de Lacerda's great-granddaughter. Gavicho de Lacerda figured prominently in my own grandfather's stories.

I relied somewhat on an uncle, my mother's sister's husband, in whose house I stayed during my fieldwork, to get to know "who is who" and where to find them. At his urging, I met Gavicho's great-granddaughter at the Quelimane airport, where she had a small store selling products derived from moringa[76] and other "typical" Zambezian products. These ranged from packs of rice to bracelets and keychains made locally. The store bench was made from the trunk of a Coconut tree. She was proud of her Zambezian heritage and thought that Zambezia and its products were not advertised enough. She claimed that both foreign and non-Zambezian Mozambican visitors took to her concept and flocked to the store to buy *sura* rolls[77] and *patanikwas*.[78]

In front of the store, she had a long banner promoting the family heritage, in which her male forefathers figure prominently. A poster with similar information about the family and the Prazo Carungo history featured in a site created to promote the business

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[76] Moringa is a plant of the genus *Moringaceae*. It grows fast and has multiple uses, including healing properties.

[77] *Sura* is fermented coconut serum that serves as the leavener in preparing the rolls. It can also be consumed as an alcoholic beverage.

[78] Caramelized coconut bars.

she was setting up. The poster on the site featured pictures of her great-grandfather, grandfather, and father. It featured scenes of life in the *prazo* taken from her private collection, some of which were also made public through Gavicho's works. It also featured pictures of her paternal grandmother and her mother, both of whom were Portuguese. The banner in front of the store did feature a picture of her great grandmother Amália.

Photos courtesy of M. P. do Prado e Lacerda

Figure 18. Pictures of Gavicho de Lacerda and D. Amália Pinto used on their great-granddaughter's promotional banner

Both in the banner and the site, Gavicho is named owner of the *prazo* and responsible for elevating it to its greatness. This narrative is likely based on Gavicho's own pride in his accomplishments with the land, as he describes in one of his works, *Cartas da Zambézia: Assuntos Coloniais* (Letters from Zambezia: Colonial Issues).

> The prazo Carungo, of which we are a lessee, is one of the smallest in
> Zambezia […]. It has three agriculture stations […] with about 83,000
> palm trees, half of which were in production and 20,000 in nurseries for
> new plantations. The nature of the land, which is very low, as the entire
> great Zambezi delta, makes it so that all other attempts at a diverse
> plantation that we have experimented with, such as coffee, rubber, sisal,
> etc., have been unsuccessful. (de Lacerda, 1939, p. 15)

Gavicho goes on to list the diverse crops and fruit trees the land can produce. He also mentions that his productivity guaranteed the extension of his lease for 15 more years. He produced more than 1,200 hectares by his calculations, which he was not bound to "by the primitive contract" (ibid.). His great-granddaughter said numerous times that she had been inspired by his resilience and tirelessness.

She joyfully agreed to meet me, and was happy to share with me her family history. We met at least three times and chatted subsequently over the phone or when meeting casually on the streets in Quelimane. We also visited Inhassunge and the *prazo* on two occasions. It was not possible to access the *prazo* in a car. We had to take a ferry during high tide (see Figure 19) and rent a bike on the other side.

Photo by the author

Figure 19. The ferry crossing to Inhassunge

In our first meeting, she explained that the *prazos* were like the contemporary DUAT,[79] "one can own it so long as one develops it." She further explained that

> Developing the land now is a way to honor my great-grandfather and my
> father, who both worked the same land, and through whose loving
> memories I came to love the land even without knowing it.

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[79] Direito do Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra (DUAT) in Portuguese is a document granted by the Mozambican state that grants the right to the "use and advancement" of land. One of the heritages left from the socialist era, land in Mozambique is not a commodity that can be bought or sold. Instead holders of the title are given the right to use the land, if they develop it. Infrastructures created on the land are proprietary, and grant access to the land for an undetermined period (Boletim da República, 1997).

She was born in Beira shortly after independence, the last child of Gavicho's first grandson. The family moved to Portugal without her ever having been to the property. But she heard about it incessantly from her parents and elder brothers. She saw the photographs, and she read her great-grandfather's memoires.

The first homage she paid was celebrating in Carungo, at the location of the main house of the former *prazo*, the 140th birthday of Gavicho de Lacerda. To that effect, she designed a slightly different poster promoting the event and uploaded it to a different site, intended to inaugurate the Gavicho de Lacerda Foundation. In this poster, like in the previous one, she gives a summary bio of the great-grandfather, including that he was

> Buried by his will in the Land that he dedicated 50 years of a life of Love and Labor, and that destiny wished that it would be baptized as Vila Gavicho,[80] perpetuating for all eternity his passage through this special place, where he will always sow PEACE and PROSPERITY.

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[80] *Vila* in this case means villa, and not town, but it also signifies the area where the villa is located.

Source: http://fundacaogavichodelacerda.org/

Figure 20. Poster of Gavicho's 140 years celebration

The poster (see Figure 20) refers to Gavicho as the last lessee of the "extinct *prazos*." It uses an excerpt from the *Letters from Zambezia*, albeit a different edition from the one referred to above, where Gavicho expresses his wish that "our children come to follow, later, our steps and finish our work ideal to plant all the land conducive to being [planted]." This passage sounded to my informant as a calling, as her descendant, to work on the land. She planned to plant rice and moringa. She was, in fact, known in town as Ms. Moringa. An architect by training, she intended to rebuild some of the old buildings on the property. She would start with the chapel; the last building Gavicho erected just before he died.

She found further legitimacy for her "mission" in the way the local population received her. "They call me *filha do dono* (owner's daughter)," she told me excitedly. This reinforced her belief that if she was so well treated, her great-grandfather and father must have done things well. I inferred that she was aware of the colonial enterprise's repressive nature but perceived her ancestors not to have been the worst of it. "Until I came, some of the youth in Carungo thought Gavicho was a myth," she added.

At my insistence, she talks to me briefly about her great-grandmother. "She was the daughter of a Goanese," she tells me when I enquire about her origins. "She was the one who inherited the land from her father." However, neither she nor any of my informants provided me a reason for why Gavicho was considered the lessee and not her. A possible reason is given by José Negrão, who says that Gavicho might have taken advantage of the fact that at a certain point Portuguese legislation forbade marriage between Portuguese men and native women, after which all property reverted to Portuguese hands (2006).

Our first conversation at the airport was cut short by her need to attend to some customers. We agreed to meet a few days later and cross to Carungo together so I could see for myself the property, or what was left of it. On the way to Prazo Carungo, we passed several bridges made of coconut trunks. To cross the bridges, we had to dismount our bikes and cross on foot (see Figure 21).

Photo by author

Figure 21. The bike ride to Carungo

Zambezia had one of the world's most expansive coconut tree plantations. Presently, a Lethal Yellowing disease (Dollet et al., 2009) is devastating the trees, and only base trunks remain where once healthy trees had stood along the road as far as the eye could see. It is an eerie, apocalyptic sight. This was one reason Ms. Moringa was trying to cultivate moringa instead of coconut. She also found strong symbolic similarities between both cultures. She told me of descriptions she found on the

Internet that referred to both plants as "Miracle Trees" with immense health benefits, and usable in their entirety.

As we crossed an invisible border, my driver said "Vila Irene" and not "Vila Gavicho." When I asked what the difference between the two was, he said there was none. "It was two names for the same thing." Irene, I found out, was the second wife of Ms. Moringa's grandfather. The first wife was her paternal grandmother, who died of childbirth complications a few days after her father's birth. She talks very tenderly of her grandmother.

> My father used to say to my mother that she resembled his mother. He
> had this belief from pictures that were left of her.

Ms. Moringa shared pictures with me at a later encounter, and some of these she put up on her posters. There is one on the porch of Vila Gavicho taken in 1924, and another one of her paternal grandmother feeding a calf. "It shows how kind and goodhearted she was," Ms. Moringa said, stroking the picture and smiling lovingly.

My driver was the grandson of one of Gavicho's "captains." Captains organized the population for plantation, the clearing of the fields, and roads. I later met with the grandson of one of the plantation foremen at the suggestion of Ms. Moringa. They are some of the people she has been learning from about the place's history and complementing what she heard in Portugal from her parents, siblings, and other relatives.

According to the driver, there were no people in Carungo before Gavicho.

> People started coming with Gavicho. New people came during the war
> from nearby Chinde and Mopeia. The houses on the property served as
> accommodation centers for the refugees.

"The war destroyed the properties," he added. He was referring to the post-independence war. The refugees would have caused destruction to the houses because the actual war never reached the Carungo. In a later meeting with Ms. Moringa at a

restaurant in Quelimane, I learned that soldiers were stationed in the main house, and there was talk of strange and ghostly things that scared even the strongest soldier. Ms. Moringa remembers a news broadcast in 1985 in Portugal, where they showed the house, still standing and transformed into "Frelimo's military headquarters" in the area.

Presently, there is a separation between the two populations, the original and the refugees.

> The older population, Vila Gavicho's workers, and their descendants reside at Carungo I, outside the former *prazo*'s border. There is where they have their personal property. Carungo II is where the actual property is located, and where refugees and their descendants reside. When they heard that the 'owner' was coming, they feared that they would be expelled.

"Before the war," the driver explained, "only the guards lived at the property." The foreman's grandson, with whom Ms. Moringa asked me to talk, confirmed as much to me. He also explained that "in Inhassunge there were originally three *régulos*. A new one was appointed for the Carungo II for the new population."

We first stopped at a house where Ms. Moringa had overnighted when she initially came to the property to greet the owners. We then went to the first infrastructure of the property. It used to be the bakery. Only partial walls were standing. Ms. Moringa explained how the bricks had the initials of her great-grandfather engraved on them, and showed me one. Then, in the middle of a great clearing, there stood the once majestic Vila Gavicho (refer back to Figure 2).

It was but a shadow of the original construction (see Figure 22). There was nothing to evoke the greatness it once radiated, as shown in the pictures featured on Ms. Moringa's promotional posters. There was nothing left of the porch where her grandmother and mother had posed smiling. Or the stairs where her grandmother fed the calf and her father posed on his motorbike, pictures dated from 1955. Nor the

covered veranda where her father and grandfather sat together on reclining chairs, in a picture dated from 1961. It certainly did not resemble the picture of the house at the beginning of the twentieth century or the painting done by one of Ms. Moringa's sisters-in-law, which hangs prominently at her mother's house in Portugal.

Photo courtesy of M. P. do Prado e Lacerda

Figure 22. The original Vila Gavicho circa 1905

That day Ms. Moringa was there to put a newspaper clipping at her grandfather's grave. It was a clipping from the principal national newspaper, and it promoted her project to revitalize the old *prazo*. Her great-grandfather and grandfather's graves lie in front of what used to be the chapel built by Gavicho. There had been a termite mound inside of the chapel when Ms. Moringa first came to the property. She posted a picture of it on the project site. She later told me that "people in the area think that termites only build where there are 'good vibrations.'" Despite this, she had the mound cleaned. By the time we visited the chapel a mass had already been held there.

The grave was of symbolic importance to Ms. Moringa. She claimed that

> It was from where my great-grandfather looked over the property. The
> first thing my mother asked after I first visited the property was if great-
> grandfather's and grandfather's graves were well taken care of.

Before leaving, we attended a mass in a local church built out of perishable materials
at Carungo II, where the "original" population lives. We also passed by the house of
one of the old "captains" so he could confirm some of the details Ms. Moringa had
told me. He told me that "Gavicho used to work for António Maria Pinto, this is how
he met and fell in love with the 'owner's daughter.'" This was a description I would
hear repeatedly, one that does not feature in the literature.

Although Ms. Moringa made only peripheral mention of her great-grandmother, D.
Amália, women feature prominently in her memories. She speaks kindly and with
admiration of her Portuguese-born paternal grandmother and mother. She tells me that
her father kept a book of his mother's drawings and letters from her to his father.

> She was a teacher, which was not normal [at that time]. She was
> incredibly independent. In the 1920s, there was a revolution in fashion.
> She was an artist; her drawings were reminiscent of [those from] Coco
> Chanel. She drew and sewed her own clothes.

Ms. Moringa's mother was no less of a hero to her. She had gone to Zumbo at the age
of 18, a region described by Allen and Barbara Isaacman (2010) as the Mozambican
"transfrontier."

> Her brothers had a shop there. My father worked there in the
> administration. My mother's brothers were against the wedding, so was
> her father. He wrote a letter from Portugal forbidding the wedding. She
> went to pray at the church and went ahead with the wedding. It was an
> act of courage. She wanted to be a nun and ended up having seven
> children.

They were married in Zumbo, but took pictures dressed as bride and groom at the Prazo Carungo. Some of the pictures Ms. Moringa used on her promotional posters. Her mother kept the picture of the actual wedding in her private albums. She is the custodian of the family memories, which includes pictures of D. Amália.

In April 2014, during one of my multiple visits to the archives in Portugal, I visited Ms. Moringa's mother. I spent one day with her and one of her brothers. We looked over the family albums as they reminisced about Mozambique and the *prazo*. This stay complemented some of Ms. Moringas accounts, both visually and with further details about the life of D. Amália.

D. Amália died impoverished, according to both Ms. Moringa and her mother. After Gavicho divorced D. Amália he married a cousin of hers, Maria Emília do Rosário Dias. One of D. Amalia's granddaughters and Gavicho's grandson, whom I interviewed later, confirmed the story. According to Negrão this person was an old employee of a relative of Gavicho (2006, p. 48). She could have been both, but she is remembered by their descendants solely for being D. Amália's relative.

Similarly, Ms. Moringa remembers her great-grandfather as dedicated and hardworking. Hers and Gavicho's narrative mentions how he made the Prazo Carungo a productive enterprise. Negrão states something different. He claims that neither Gavicho nor his father-in-law António Pinto ever made much of the *prazo* (Negrão, 2006). Hence, multiple contradictions arise between memories of those who knew and guard the family history of D. Amália and her property, and written descriptions. Memories from different sources seem to present a consistently similar picture, starkly dissimilar to what has been written.

The written text then becomes quite selective and misleading, for example, in the way Gavicho quietly writes his first wife, D. Amália, out of his books. Or, in the way Negrão and Capela reduce her to an illegitimate daughter of a native woman—grossly underestimating how both mother and daughter were connected and related to the Quelimane elite, as becomes evident from the memories of their "native" relatives. In

doing so, both authors present a distinctly partial, prejudicial, and racist colonial understanding of events and relationships.

D. Amália, daughter of D. Ernestina

I had an initial interview with one of D. Amália's granddaughters in 2009. She used to visit my late grandfather and called him uncle. Together they remembered their shared family routes and the times when he worked at the *prazo*. Many of my relatives encouraged me to interview her because she was both a descendant of *donas* and Gavicho. When I wanted to resume our talks in 2014, it proved more difficult. By the time we met, I had already interviewed everyone I had planned about her family and her grandmother. Still, the remaining time I spent with her added more detail to the persona that was D. Amália. In early 2020 I received news that she had passed away on New Year's Eve, aged 90.

She kept several pictures of the different family members, both old and more recent. She also had the coat of arms to the Prado e Lacerda family carved in wood (see Figure 23). She spoke proudly of her "blue blood."

Photo by the author

Figure 23. Coat of arms carved in wood

D. Amália's granddaughter was a short elderly lady, seemingly fragile in her slow walk and, at times, shaky hand. However, she was of feisty and strong temperament and very quick with a word. I met her twice in her annex, located behind her daughter's house, in Quelimane. On a separate occasion, I drove with her around Quelimane, and she showed me where the properties of the *donas* used to be. She was the daughter of Ms. Moringa's grandfather with a black woman native to Inhassunge whom he never married, but with whom he fathered two children, including my informant. According to the widow of my informant's brother, whom I had interviewed previously, they were not the only ones fathered out of wedlock. In fact, "all children from black mothers were born first, before father married the white

women," my elderly informant told me. The children from these latter women were referred to as "the children of the white mother."

D. Amália, her full name D. Amália de Menezes Soares Pinto, lived in Quelimane with D. Maria Peixe, one of the most prominent *donas* in Zambezia. According to D. Amália's granddaughter, "D. Maria Peixe was a cousin to D. Amália's father António Maria Pinto." She is mentioned by both José Capela and José Negrão (2006), and is credited with being the last *dona* of Zambezia. There is a picture of her in the Natural History Museum in Maputo claiming as much, as well as in a Portuguese Military Magazine (Cruz, 2008).

A grandson of Gavicho, son of an illegitimate daughter and D. Amália's cousin, had another opinion of who the last *dona* was. He considered D. Alzira Maria de Arroches Valadas Branquinho the last *dona*. She was the great aunt of author Maria Sorensen, who dedicated her book about D. Theodora to D. Alzira, as follows:

> This book was written in honor of my great-aunt […]. Her death, in 1990, did not mean simply a profound pain for the grieving family but constituted one of the last blows to a dying society. She was one of the last living and acting witnesses of a class and culture in extinction in Zambezia—that of the Donas of the Prazos (Sorensen, 1998, n. p.).

My informant mentions several *donas*, D. Etelvina, among them, who were known to everyone as D. Chipiri. She was married to the director of Companhia do Boror. She is the protagonist of *40 Graus à Sombra*, where she allegedly poisons her husband. D. Chipiri was mentioned by all informants in Quelimane, and Mwene Raia in Macuse. Another *dona* mentioned by my informants was D. Ana Pimenta, who took many native children as godchildren to educate them in the European ways.

The *donas,* according to Capela, did not constitute a social class (Capela, 1995). However, the description given by my informant's brother's widow, with whom D. Amália spent her last days, seems to suggest otherwise. In her words, "the *mistas* (mestizo women) owned Quelimane," suggesting that they constituted a separate class

with prestige and capital. From D. Amália's life history, one can infer that this capital was often more social and cultural than material.

The consideration of class often works toward silencing gender, as well as "race." As Julie Bettie puts it, "In much leftist analysis women are assumed to be without class, as these theorists often seem unable to see the category 'working class' unless it is market male and white" (Bettie, 2000, p. 3). A bias that helps erase both white women and women of color from class analysis. Marxists, she adds, were slow "to recognize sex-segregated […] occupations as working class and to explore the ways gender shapes class formation" (ibid., footnote 2). Similarly, indigenous formations such as the *vanyai* or the *chikunda* are perceived as ethnic rather than class identities. Female groupings such as the *nyakoda* are accorded neither.

Bettie offers an alternative form of perceiving class to the classic Marxist political class consciousness, which is more inclusive and focuses instead on cultural identifiers. She proposes that class should be seen as a performative act. In this sense, a class would emerge as "displays of cultural capital that are consequences of class location or habitus" (Bettie, 2000, p. 29 footnote 29).

D. Amália, a rightful member of this "class," lived alternatively between Quelimane and Carungo. It was in Quelimane that D. Amália met Gavicho. According to her granddaughter, "he arrived in Mozambique at the age of 17." The foreword of his book *Cartas da Zambézia* states that he left Portugal at the age of 19 (de Lacerda, 1939), whereas José Capela writes that he was 20 years old (Capela, 1995). Some literature states that Gavicho arrived in Quelimane with João de Azevedo Coutinho, his godfather, at his wedding with D. Amália, and eventually became governor of Zambezia (Capela, 1995; Negrão, 2006).

My informant went on to tell me that "he was a journalist and went first to Maganja da Costa, before coming to Quelimane." An alternative version I heard from his grandson

was that "he was the regal emissary of the pacification campaigns."[81] Several sources, including Gavicho himself, confirm that he participated in the Báruè and Maganja da Costa campaigns (Capela, 1995; de Lacerda, 1944a; Isaacman, 1975; Negrão, 2006).

In the literature, the campaigns were successful. Gavicho's grandson, however, claimed "he came to Quelimane because 'the Maganjas' took over Maganja and formed the 'Maganja Government.'" I assumed he meant the Military Republic of Maganja da Costa. This would contradict most of the literature, which maintains that the republic had been installed much earlier and was defeated precisely during these campaigns (Capela, 1995; Newitt, 1995; Pelissier, 1994).

A cable in the magazine *Portugal em Moçambique* describes how João d'Azevedo Coutinho led 6000 men who had been attacked but were then defended by *sipais* from the then-*prazos* of "Macuzi, Lycungo, Nameduro, Boror, and Tire." They formed auxiliary forces to the original group (*Portugal em Africa: revista scientifica*, 1898). Gavicho de Lacerda describes the outcome of the campaigns as having left the Lomwe people strictly dedicated to agriculture. In his words, "the sword dominated the rebel gentile and submitted him to our sovereignty" (de Lacerda, 1925, p. 156). [82]

D. Amália's granddaughter continued,

> My grandparents only moved to Carungo when my great-grandfather
> António Pinto died. They had 10 children and would often visit Portugal.
> Not all children would survive into adulthood. Those who lived were
> sent to Portugal to study.

My informant mentions four surviving children by name, a girl, and three boys. One of whom was her father. A fourth boy died on the way to treatment in Portugal. "He had a disease that affected his lungs." The father would not allow him to be treated

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[81] The pacification campaigns where a direct result of the Berlin Conference of 1885, which established "the ground rules for the partition of Africa", and "agreed that 'pacification' and effective control were the minimum requirements for international recognition of colonial holdings" (Isaacman, 1975, p. 42)-

[82] For additional references on the pacification campaigns, see also Pélissier (1994, 2004).

traditionally, I am told. José Negrão mentions four children as if these were the only ones the couple had.

On the separation, my informant comments that

> Following one of these trips to Portugal, Gavicho and D. Amália separated. At this point D. Amália went to leave with her mother, D. Ernestina de Menezes Soares, who lived in a house owned by a César Napoleão.

According to the *Lourenço Marques Directory* (Anuário de Lourenço Marques, 1921, p. 375), a César Augusto Napoleão do Rosário was both Secretary at the Administration of the Council of Quelimane and a proprietor. My informant grew up with her great-grandmother and grandmother in this house. Her brother and other siblings from black mothers also lived with them temporarily. César Napoleão's house is the house she remembers the most, although she also recalls moving around often. When I asked her why they moved around and why they lived in a rented house, she replied that

> We had to leave this house because the owner wanted to sell it to the Company Madal, or because he just needed it. I am not sure why we moved around to leased houses when we had our own property.

According to her, she was too young to remember all the details. She guessed that perhaps the owners increased the rent or Gavicho, who sustained both his mother-in-law and former wife, could not afford the rents.

D. Amália did not get along with her mother well. They fought often, and D. Amália would leave and move in with D. Peixe. For this reason, my informant had a stronger bond with her great-grandmother than she did with her grandmother. She expresses this bond by using the same name as the great-grandmother, Ernestina, despite their names not being the same.

The young Ernestina assured me that Gavicho paid for all his mother-in-law's expenses until she died in 1943.

> He paid for the rents; he paid for everything. One time the *copra* did not have [a good] price; he asked his mother-in-law to go there [to Carungo]. She went. Grandma Amália stayed in Quelimane in Aunt Peixe's home.

D. Amália died at the age of 84 in the house of young Ernestina's brother. Despite the general acknowledgment that she had died impoverished, her brother's widow also assured me that Gavicho supported her until her death.

The young Ernestina proceeded to tell me about the origins of the elder Ernestina. She was born in Marromeu, across from Luabo in what is now Sofala province. Young Ernestina does not provide details of how her great-grandmother met and married her husband. She says that "he was a *caneco*," the vernacular term used for Christian men of Indian ancestry. According to her, "he was the one who founded the Prazo Carungo."[83] D. Ernestina the elder had been a proprietor herself, and came from an already renowned family before marrying António Maria Pinto. "She owned cattle and went around in a rickshaw in Chirangano," my informant tells me. Chirangano, also spelled in the literature as Chiringona (Bordalo, 1859), was owned by D. Ernestina's father, Amaro Francisco de Menezes Soares'. This was one of the smaller *prazos* around the city of Quelimane, not visible on Figure 24 below.

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[83] In a conversation with historian Eugénia Rodrigues she mentioned that the land was previously leased to the Dominican order. There was no memory of their presence in Inhassunge, however Negrão (Negrão, 2006, p. 47) does note that it comes from the division of the *prazo* Inhassunge into four smaller *prazos*: Inhassunge, Carungo, Pepino and Quelimane do Sal, under direct control of the government. On the other hand, a listing of *prazos* in mid-19 century indicated that a D. Anna Feliciana Cardozo da Gama, resident in Mozambique Island owned the Carungo and had inherited it in 1843 (Bordalo, 1859), some 20 years before D. Amália inherited it from her father.

Source: based on Vail and White (1980, p. 179)

Figure 24. Map of prazos

Young Ernestina tells me that "[the elder] Ernestina's father was a Portuguese man called Meneses de Sousa." D. Ernestina's surname, Menezes Soares, says otherwise. According to Gavicho's grandson, D. Ernestina's father was, in fact, also a Goanese man, just like her husband. This is a possible testament to the fact that the notion of 'Portuguese' was diluted, including Goanese men in the Portuguese category, because they were Christian. It is also a preference by descendants to trace their lineage to Portugal, rather than India, a legacy of the colonial racial divisions and hierarchies.

"At that time, it was easy even for natives to acquire land," my informant continued. "The government sold them to people who wanted to develop them," she added. "The business was *copra*, so they planted coconut trees." Like my great aunt's sister-in-law and her husband, other informants also confirmed that wealth was based on coconut plantations, to which natives also had access.

> The owners were called aFumo. They had property, coconuts,
> *machamba*; they had people who worked for them. They were respected
> in their area; no one touched them. They did not ask for favors from
> anyone; others asked favors from them. They did charity. [And] their
> spouses were just as powerful.

This privilege disappeared in the early twentieth century with the lessee Companies, and increased indigenous population discrimination policies.

The younger Ernestina has an interesting way of presenting her timeline. She says her grandfather died "before the colonial time." She then talked of Cape Verdeans, Santomeans, and Guineans who, at one time "during the colonial time," were in the Carungo. "It was a drought year." The younger Ernestina described the Santomean women in the following way: "The Santomean women were terrible. They did business [were traders], always carried switchblades in their pockets." I infer that "colonial time" refers to the period when the state took over tax collection. I also find interesting the mention of people from other colonies. People from other colonies were often deported from one colony to another as punishment for petty crimes, vagrancy, and political opposition (Coates, 2013). The exiled were known throughout the Portuguese empire as *desterrados*.

About her great grandmother's stay in Carungo, young Ernestina recalls that

> Grandmother Ernestina was held in high esteem in Carungo. She and her
> husband had promoted the education of the indigenous people of the
> area. They taught [native children] to read and write on banana leaves
> with duck feathers.

Despite promoting education, the elder Ernestina did not herself know how to read and write. However, her daughter Amália did. "In those times, the girl was [raised] only for things of the house," young Ernestina tells me. "Only later were they allowed to study." This was echoed by other people I interviewed as well. For example, the grandson of Gavicho's foreman, introduced to me by Ms. Moringa, credits his

grandfather with pressuring a school for the indigenous children in the Carungo area. He also mentions that "there were few girls in the first schools." However, he credits Gavicho and not his father-in-law for introducing the first schools in the *prazo.*

Young Ernestina equated her great-grandfather to a Chefe de Posto (Head of the Administrative Post) because he collected taxes. In my interview with the grandson of Gavicho's foreman, he mentioned that

> There was a woman in Inhassunge who was connected to the
> administration, D. Angélica. She also collected taxes and delivered them
> to the administration. To this day, there is a bus stop after her name,
> right before Prazo Carungo.

The only registry of a *dona* called Angélica I found was that of D. Rosaura Angélica Rodrigues, owner of Prazo Tangalane (Bordalo, 1859). She inherited it in its "second life" in 1819. Tangalane eventually got absorbed by the Madal Company, and no living descendants of D. Angélica were known in the area.

Taxation is a recurring theme. The elements of the elite were systematically associated with the responsibility for collecting them. Its repressive nature, especially in the late colonial period, created significant resistance (Vail & White, 1983; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999), which was taken together with the forced labor in the anti-colonial discourses. Taxation, while not initiated, was refined by the colonial authorities. Previously, chiefs of African empires taxed their subjects in kind, as did *prazo* owners. They also accepted work as payment, and many people presented themselves voluntarily as laborers. Companies and the colonial administration introduced conscripted forced labor (Bertelsen, 2016; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999) with little or no respect for social and political hierarchies. This reduced the autonomy of ruling families considerably.

As younger Ernestina continues her narration, she explains that D. Amália moved in temporarily with her son in the Carungo when her mother died. but she did not get along with her daughter-in-law Irene, her son's second wife. It was then that her eldest

grandson came to take her to live with him, as she had done with him when he was younger. The most striking aspect of her trajectory is that being a *dona* and being connected to the network of *donas* was not enough to make her worth more than a few lines in two books. Even these few lines presumably only exist because she features in the administrative registries. As memories of her land, descendants, and associates endure, these are but snippets barely enough to sow an intelligible idea of who this woman might have been. The same cannot be said of her husband. which begs the question of how someone who owed at least part of their prominence to D. Amália managed to stay in the annals of history while she did not?

This male-centric history, concerned with the great feats of Gavicho's participation in the pacification campaigns—whether casting him critically or heroically—misses out on the small individual dynamics. The same is valid for trusting only official wedding and inheritance registrars. To be fair, registrars and administrative documents are essential. But as can be seen from above, they should not be trusted above individual accounts because they tell only part of the story. In this case, they tell of archives that functioned according to racial stratifications, thus virtually ignoring those it did not deem proper citizens. These erasures included children born out of wedlock, even if the father was a (white or equivalent) registrable citizen. Their children's illegitimate status meant that their fathers were not named due to Catholic-inspired laws and morals. Their mothers were also of no consequence, in particular if they were equally non-registerable citizens.

D. Amália may not have even had the few lines she was afforded if her father had not registered her for her wedding. Women like her remain anonymous, among the other natives. Even as colonial legislation had once conferred advantages on them with foreign male settlers, later segregationist legislation that had once worked in their favor rendered their prominence only an unexpected exotic curiosity. Conversely, from the native point of view, they, like their foreign husbands and fathers, remained fitting with existing cosmologies, to which they were naturally incorporated and naturalized.
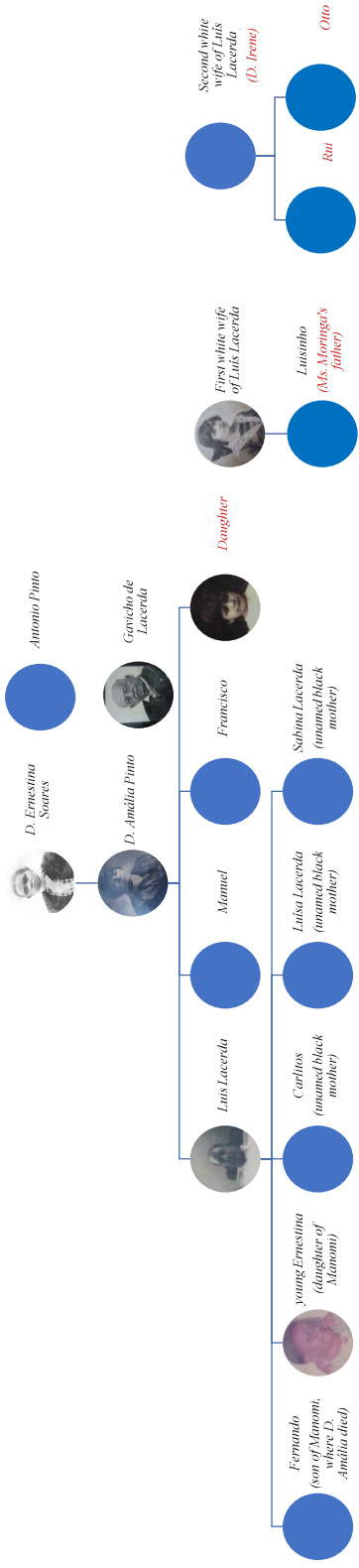
Pictures provided courtesy of C. Barros and M. P. do Prado e Lacerda

Diagram 3. D. Amália Pinto's genealogy as described by her granddaughter-in-law, with whom she spent her last days (names in red provided by other informants),

Nunu Ancha and *Nyakoda* Marieta and the site of Boror and the lessee Companies

When I first started contacting family and friends in Quelimane about referring to me women who were knowledgeable about past women of power and authority, one of the women mentioned was one of Régulo Voabil's daughters. As mentioned before, he was a *régulo* from Macuse, where Boror had its headquarters, and was known by several people in Quelimane. I was unsure which past prominent woman was featured in this family, but I trusted that there would be at least one. Through her and other informants, I learned that like in Maganja da Costa, the first *régulo* had gotten his position through his mother-in-law. I also learned of the *régulo*'s niece, who took her deceased mother's role, as his counselor. I also met the daughter of Mwene Raia, an assistant to Régulo Voabil, and who now served as the new *mwene*. Queens born into ruling families did not come as a surprise. What surprised me were the *nyakoda*, women regarded as powerful, while subaltern towards the larger state or polity. Even more surprising was discovering in the literature that these women, though not part of the elite through birth, had been a recurring presence and as central in governing structures as the mothers, sisters, and wives of rulers.

As discussed above, while the literature highlights their subaltern slave status, my informants highlight their mediator and inspirational characteristics. Together with elite Muslim women, these women may be the most underestimated and misunderstood actors in current historiography. As Liazzat Bonate showcases in her analysis of Nunu Fatima Binti Zakaria's letters, these women had privileged access and interaction with the colonial authorities (Bonate, 2018), even within their official invisibility and continued historical neglect. Most historians have looked at subaltern categories from the perspective of resistance, whether peasants (Vail & White, 1983) or former warrior slaves (Capela, 2006; Isaacman 1972). Looking at the *nyakoda* from their location within the ruling hegemony illustrates how even postcolonial texts have cast the indigenous as a homogeneous mass with similar interests and fates. While *régulos* and other traditional leaders were cast as collaborators with the colonial

regime, the stories told by my informants show how they were not necessarily voluntary collaborators then, nor are they now—i.e. their privilege and elite status had their limits. The *nyakoda* also serves an enduring social function that has hitherto not been fully described.

Nunu Ancha and the ruling alliances

I met with Régulo Voabil's daughter several times in her apartment in Quelimane. She was happy to share her family history but was unsure if she could help me. She had moved from Macuse to Quelimane to study when she was young and did not feel that she knew enough of the area. We agreed that she would tell me about her family, as she recalled it, and then we would travel together to Macuse and she would introduce me to people who knew more about the area. We went at least three times to Macuse.

My informant started her family history by telling me that her grandfather had been the first *régulo*.

> He was not originally from Macuse, but was one of the smartest among the men, and so the government determined that he would be *régulo*. It was not through an election.

By saying this, she implicitly compared with the current practice, where communities are consulted to choose some of their community leaders. *Régulos* and *amwene* are usually chosen within families that have provided leaders of the same rank before. Communities sometimes contest the choice and ask for another person to be chosen within the same lineage.

When I probed about the women of power in the family or region, she talked about her grandmother, the *régulo*'s wife.

> She was a farmer. They lived from agriculture. Married women had to work on the *machamba* for sustenance. They were forced to work for their subsistence and the excess they sold to the colonial government."

She continued by recalling that

> The *cabo de terra* would call on the women and attribute them a patch of
> land for them to work. They would determine how much they needed to
> produce; otherwise, there would be "heavy sanctions." They would also
> determine the kind of work they needed to do. Even the lazy ones had to
> do it. The husbands did not work the land; they did other work.

According to her, they worked at Sena Sugar. I take this to be a mistake, since Sena
Sugar had its headquarters in Marromeu. Her own father worked for Boror as a tailor.
Many other men of the community worked at Boror.

"The women would never say that the land was hers," my informant continued.

> They said that the *machamba* belonged to the government. During
> harvest, they [the women] would go with the supervisor to see how
> many sacks they managed [to fill]. They [the supervisors] would tell how
> much was for sustenance and how much for the government.

As we progressed in our conversation, I realized that my informant's grandmother was
not just any farmer. She was the daughter of the local *samasoa*. Mwene Raia told me
that her name was Laudina. Her grandfather's story sounded eerily similar to Régulo
Bala's, in Maganja da Costa, where the first *régulo* was also married to a local leader's
daughter, from whom they derived legitimacy.

Voabil's daughter went on to describe the choice of her father to be a *régulo*.

> He was considered for his intelligence. He knew how to deal with his
> superiors, how to deliver messages [from them]. He had vision. He
> expressed himself well. He was even nominated a member of the
> Legislative Council of Zambezia, and contributed to the Province of
> Mozambique reports to Portugal.

This means that, despite being the firstborn, he still had to possess certain qualities to
fulfill the post of *régulo*.

On the trip we made to her father's house in Macuse, she showed me a series of photographs. Most of the ones that remained—not destroyed by the children or lost during the war—were from a trip the *régulo* made to Coimbra as part of the Council. On the same Council were *régulos* from other parts of the country. Régulo Machatine from Inhambane and Régulo Megama from Porto Amélia, now Pemba. She recalls that "for a long time I thought they were even related to me because I used to call them 'uncle.' Only later I figured out it was only a respectful way I was taught of addressing them."

The first Régulo Voabil had four wives; her father was the first wife's son. The second Régulo Voabil also had multiple wives, a fact, according to her, that makes keeping memories of the family difficult. "Where there are many siblings, there are rivalries. No one keeps history."

Diagram 4. The first Régulo Voabil's descendants, according to his granddaughter

- 1st *Régulo* Voabil
  - First wife
    Laudina
    Daughter of the local *Samaxoa*
    - Son
      2nd *Régulo* Voabil
    - Daughter
      - Daughter
        Nunu Ancha, counselor
      - Daughter
      - Son
        Current *Régulo*
  - Second wife
    - Son
    - Daughter
    - Daughter
    - Daughter
  - Third wife
    - Son
    - Son
  - Fourth wife
    - Daughter
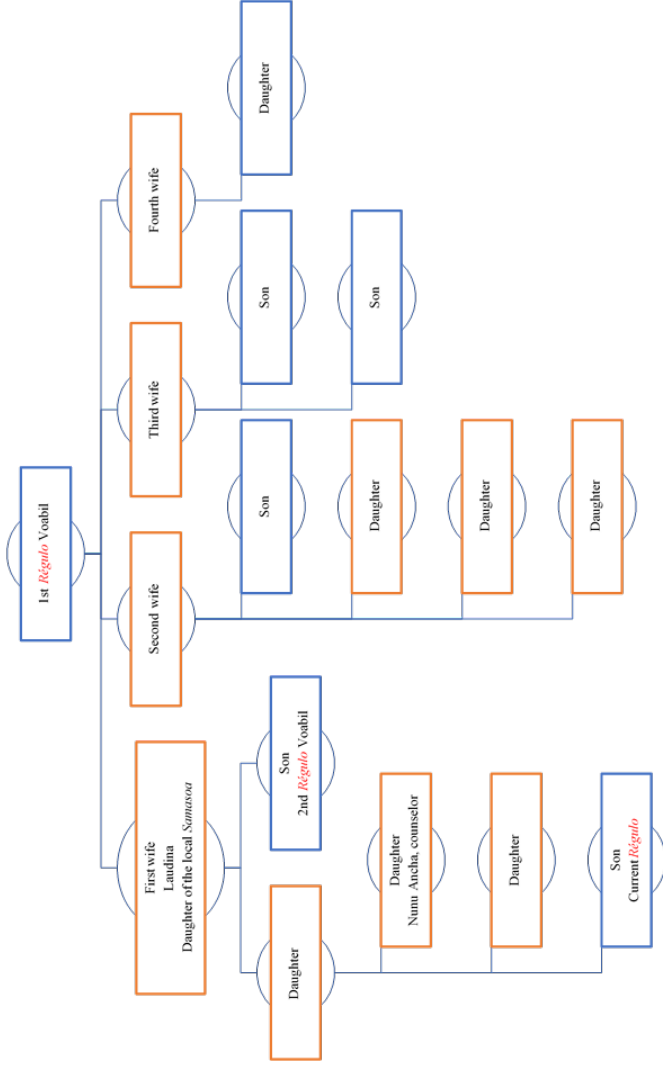
Although the colonial authorities had acknowledged only the sons of rulers, in a clear patrilineal logic of inheritance, after independence the ruling families of matrilineal tradition reverted to choosing among the sons of the deceased rulers' sisters. This means that only descendants of the *samasoa's* daughters could be chosen to rule despite the *régulos'* many wives and children. However, the daughter of this *samasoa* only had a daughter and a son. For this reason, as I found out from Mwene Raia that there is a lineage crisis. The current *régulo*, the second Régulo Voabil's sororal nephew, is old and sickly, and none of his sisters produced any potential heirs. According to Voabil's daughter, "one died young, and the other did not have children."

I probed my informant about her mother. She told me she was from Island of Ionge, and was the daughter of a *régulo* too, Régulo Fijamo. This means that my informant was the granddaughter of *régulos* on both sides. Her father was a cousin on her mother's maternal line. She thinks that he might have been persuaded to marry his cousin's daughter. In some matrilineal contexts, there is a preference for marrying cross cousins (Geffray, 2000).

My informant's mother was her father's second wife. "But in reality, she would have been the first," she explained.

When he went to ask her in marriage, she was still a child. She could not be *lobolada* (be offered a bride price).[84] So he offered *lobolo* to another woman, who became his de facto first wife. In this region, *lobolo* was called *pethe*, which means 'ring' in eChuwabu. A woman would be offered a ring, and her family 'a little change.'[85] The first wife usually went with the husband's relatives to 'bring' subsequent wives. Wives had to get along. They lived in the same village; there was respect.

She proceeded to detail all descendants of her father and his three wives.

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[84] *Lobolada* means a woman who is offered a bride price. In this case, she used the word *lobolo* with a Portuguese contraction. *Lobolo* is a practice common in patrilineal contexts.

[85] The expression my informant used was "*um trocadozinho*," which literally means "small change". I took it to mean that it differs from current *lobolo* exchanges, which are in large amounts.

Diagram 5. The second Régulo Voabil's descendants, according to his daughter
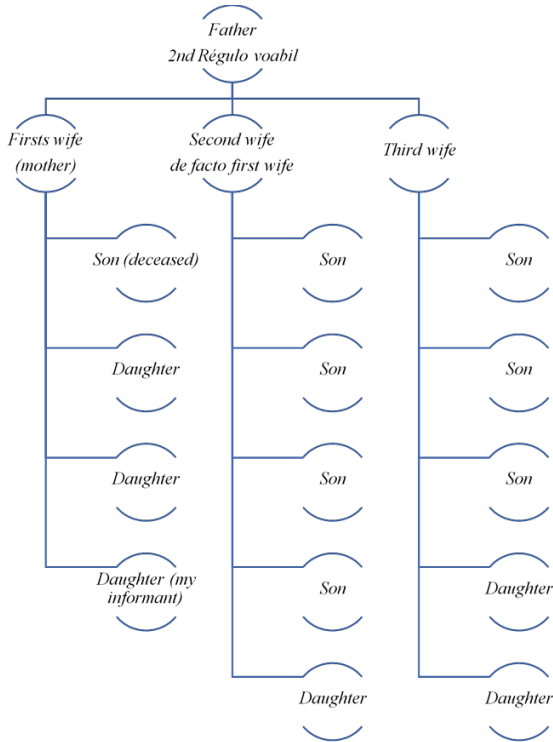
During our conversation, and after much insistence, she revealed that the most memorable woman to her was her cousin Ancha, whom she described in the following terms:

> She did not have children. Traditionally, women without children are weird, in the sense that they offend those who have [children]. This one was a mother to all. When she died, she was buried at the mosque.

Ancha was her father's 'whole' sister's daughter. She was married to a *shehe*; hence she was called Nunu Ancha. While the other wives and daughters of the *régulos* were *anyanye*. She was very respected by my informant's father, who would consult her not as a niece but as a sister. "He would call his niece to counsel even on social problems," his daughter tells me. "Social problems" is often used as a euphemism for household

problems, including between husband and wife. Usually, counsel about these issues would not fall upon a junior relative, such as a niece. It would be more suitable to discuss it with his sister, but his niece served as a surrogate since his sister was deceased.

This counsel did not include management of social issues among the population ruled by the *régulo*. Other men and women provided this kind of counsel. From the *secretários* and Mwene Raia, whom I would interview later, I learned the name of one of Régulo Voabil's counselors, who was called Mud'are. He was one of his mother's, Nyanye Laudina's relatives. In Quelimane, however, my elderly friend and my great aunt's sister-in-law used the term *mud'are* to denominate household slaves.

As my informant recalled, in Macuse

> Other women were consulted for administrative issues. These were highly respected. However, they were not leaders. In traditional leadership, relatives could not meddle in administrative issues. Only *cabos* [*de terra*] could assist and counsel the *régulo*. Not the wife, not the son, not the nephew.

"Everything was controlled by the state. There was much discipline," she continued. I understood administrative issues to relate to taxation and production.

Mwene Raia later explained that the term used to refer to the *régulo's* counselors was *namalaga*. According to her and the *secretário* who sat in on the interview, these could be either male or female. And all leaders had several of them. They remember by name as Dalvina and Atália,

> [These were] older women with proven good behavior, dynamism, and good at transmitting the *regedor's* (*régulo's*) messages. The *namalaga* coordinated the *anyakoda*.

Part of the colonial state's imposed discipline included a strict separation of groups, Voabil's daughter continued.

There were the *indígenas* (indigenous people), the *assimilados*
(assimilated people), and the *brancos* (white people). The *régulo's*
family and native nurses, for example, were considered *assimilados*.
They were among the most renowned families among the native
population.

This description is similar to that given about colonial time *régulos*' status in Maganja
da Costa.

On our first visit to Macuse my informant showed me the several spaces that had been
visible over-imposed histories. The Clube Copacabana (see Figure 28) was the club
where the *assimilados* gathered. They would invite musicians from Quelimane. "There
were *quermesses* (kermis), balls, contests," my informant recalled. "It was a way for
folk to entertain themselves." Now the building serves as the local headquarters of the
Frelimo Party.

Photo by author

Figure 25. Former Clube Copacabana, current Frelimo Party headquarters, Macuse

The church (see Figure 29), which still has beautiful tiles on its walls, served as the soldiers' residence during the post-independence war.

Photo by the author

Figure 26. Church in Macuse

The Boror headquarters now house a school run by the Danish NGO ADPP, and a health center. My informant also showed me a hall that used to be for the *brancos*. It is located closer to the former Boror headquarters. During the war, it was used by

military officials. The building now lies empty and seems like it has been unused for a while. The walls were covered with washed-out slogans from the post-independence socialist era (see Figure 30). On one of the walls, I could faintly see the words "*4º Congresso.*" This is a reference to the most renowned congress of the Frelimo Party, which occurred in 1983, and which attempted to revert the country's economic situation that had been aggravated by the internal war.

The state and washed-out history on the buildings' walls are markers of the past, which showcase the change of actors and local appropriation of new signifiers. The several empty buildings and rumors of impending revival of the port of Macuse by a new private enterprise seem to be finally dislodging the last languishing threads of an idealistic, but violently imposed, egalitarianism (Bertensen in: Rio et al., 2017).

Photo by author

Figure 27. Wall with washed-out socialist slogans

In Régulo Voabil's residence, in Macuse, an old portrait of Queen Elizabeth II in her youth hang on the wall, signaling yet another former global connection of this remote coastal town (see Figure 31).

Photo by the author

Figure 28. Portrait of a young Queen Elizabeth II, in the house of Régulo Voabil, Macuse

This was not the only connection. The *régulo's* daughter told me of beautiful residences where the Swiss and French workers lived. She also showed me the grave

of Conde Estuque, who managed the Company until his suicide, allegedly in connection with the infamous Guerra do Mulimao (War of the German). Conde Estuque was the name given locally to Swiss national Joseph Émile Stucky de Quay, Count Stucky de Quay, the owner and founder of Boror (Mourier-Genoud & Cahen, 2013).

The grave was neglected and ultimately abandoned (see Figure 32). "The grave is chained, as punishment," she had told me when I first interviewed her in her home in Quelimane, before our visit to Macuse.

Photo by the author

Figure 29. Grave of Count Stucky, Macuse

According to my informant, the only institution that she remembered as being run exclusively by women was the Mwali. "They talked about menstruation, not to go around with men, not to ride bicycles not to lose [your] virginity, not to show off your breasts," my informant detailed. These rituals are no longer practiced in the area. According to her, there are no longer "old women" in Macuse who know about these rituals, "they all died." Again, this narrative resembles what I heard about *mwali* in Maganja da Costa. Like my translator in Maganja da Costa, Régulo Voabil's daughter also did not participate in the rituals. Neither did the current Mwene Raia. In the case of Régulo Voabil's daughters, these were practices considered inappropriate for their status. In the case of Mwene Raia, her mother forbade her from taking part, as she feared that she could die.

Nyakoda Marieta and the daughters of suffering

I first heard about the *aNyakoda* as prominent women from the two *secretários*, introduced by Régulo Voabil's daughter in my first trip to Macuse. One of them was the First Secretary of the Frelimo Party circle in the area. The other was a Second Echelon Community Leader, the equivalent to a *mwene*. It was a warm January day with intermittent showers. We sat and talked on the veranda of the *régulo's* house, where I would also interview Mwene Raia one year later.

The first *secretário* was more chatty than the second echelon community leader, highlighting a double hierarchy of rank and the party-state over community leadership. In a state where the ruling party has efficient control over the state apparatus, their local representatives hold seniority. However, individuals related or linked to local ruling families have a better chance of becoming representatives of the party, thus providing a less contentious relationship between the two ruling systems. This was the case with that first *secretário*, who claimed to be *família* (family/related) to both Régulo Voabil and Mwene Raia.

This interaction between state/political and community/traditional leaderships is an excellent example of how communities adapt and redeploy meaning into new, even imposed categories, always guaranteeing some continuity. As discussed previously, continuity and adaptation are perceptible in changes in rank and nomenclature that predate the colonial administration (West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999). The Portuguese colonial system left an imprint on the local administrative logics in each region, even as across the country, names became uniform. The current Mozambican government now uses the same strategy. As a result, reinstituted community leaderships follow local adapted, precolonial administrative logics, incorporating nomenclature changes and additional leadership ranks. This often leads to different leaders performing similar tasks.

According to these two informants,

> *Anyakoda* were an aggregation of women that worked in collaboration with the village leaders. They would meet with the leaders to plan the supervision of the work at the *machambas*. [For example], what was every working woman doing?

Overseeing the work of the *anyakoda* was a myriad of other leaders. These included the *mwene* and the *régulo*, also called *regedor* (the one who rules), and a monitor. They would certify the work the *anyakoda* did. The monitor would determine the area that each woman should work. Together with the *regedor*, he would measure the area with a rope. The monitor oversaw who was successful in their production. I understood this monitor to be the supervisor mentioned by Régulo Voabil's daughter.

After our talk, I asked the *secretários* if they could introduce me to descendants of *anyakoda*. We drove to Mwene Raia's area. The party *secretário* explained that we were obliged to greet her, as it would have been disrespectful to conduct any work in the area without informing her first. She also knew where to find the women we were seeking.

We then drove to the house of a neighborhood chief, who also happened to be a woman, and asked her if she could help us meet descendants of *anyakoda*. We sat at the doorsteps of the neighborhood chief's house. The conversation was held in *eChuwabu*, and the *mwene* and the other leaders helped with the translation.

The daughters of the *anyakoda* confirmed that in this area, men did not have *machambas*.

> The women would receive a can with rice to sow. They would also receive bags to fill after the expected yield. If they did not complete the yield, they were sanctioned. They would be tied up and taken to "the District" (District Administration) to justify why they did not fill all the bags. Sometimes, the colonial authorities would go to the women's house to see if she had hidden some of the rice. Alternatively, they would break into her relatives' houses and request that they pay for the missing rice. If they did not find anything and she did not have any property to sell, she had to return the can of rice she had previously received. The ones who managed to fill the bags were entitled to a subsidy. The head of the group, a leader under the *mwene*, had to be present during the women's payment. Currently, this level of leadership exists as a third echelon leader.

The daughters explained the *anyakoda* were a "driving force." "They would enter the *machambas* and say:

> Produce, produce, otherwise you know [what will happen]. *Kalimany, kalimany munatabue*.[86] They would meet with the women, stimulate production. Through that, they would prevent future hardship while increasing the production. The hardship was the consequences they would face for not meeting the production goals.

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[86] Repeated for emphasis.

According to the daughters, the "government" selected the *anyakoda*. "They would sit the women down and select. The *régulo* was the one who selected." Being *nyakoda* was a lifetime appointment. She would only be substituted upon her death. They were chosen in a ceremony where the population contributed with food. "One *escudo* (old Portuguese currency), one can of rice,"[87] the daughters told me. This meant that those who could not contribute in-kind would need to bring money. The *anyakoda* would cook for the leaders. They would also snatch hens from the population.

As mentioned previously, many songs were composed to describe the hardships of the "rice system." Songs are still used today to register meaningful events and situations. Previously, I presented a song that illustrates the use of the grotesque and the obscene as a mode of power, critique, and resistance (Mbembe, 1992b; Vail & White, 1978, 1983). One of the other three songs that the daughters of the *anyakoda* sang while we were together was about female leadership today. The song about female leadership they claimed to have composed "in the year Guebuza took the *pasta* and Luisa Diogo stepped up as prime minister," they told me. Armando Emílio Guebuza was president of Mozambique from 2005 to 2015. Luisa Diogo was prime minister from 2004—still under the previous president—until 2010.

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[87] By this they meant that those who could not bring in kind, would need to bring money.

Table 3. Female leadership song

eChwabu	Portuguese	English
Mwana onotonga **Andumua awale anloga** **Bela muiana** **Kanuoda otonga**	As pessoas idóneas Diziam que as mulheres não têm poder de mandar Hoje olhamos atrás e estamos a ver mulheres a dirigir	Trustworthy persons Say that women do not have the power to command Today we look back and see women leading

The contrast between this song and the one about Nyakoda Marieta shows that they can vary from descriptive to metaphorical, but they always require more than linguistic translation. They require a more profound translation of the mood and intent, and in-depth contextual knowledge, as the following song shows.

Table 4. Song of suffering under the colonial forced labor

eChuwabu	Portuguese	English
Nodoa, nodoa **Nindua mwano mwanama** **Nigodoa kaniela**	Vamos, vamos Vamos na boca das feras Quando vamos não regressamos	Let's go, let's go Let's go to the mouth of the beasts When we go, we will not return

All three songs showcase how songs serve as both mnemonics and an archive. Like Vail and White's work on songs of resistance, the one above alludes to "the destructive impact of the companies' demand for labor," (Vail & White, 1983, p. 895). However, my informants seemed to prefer to work under the company rather than under the colonial "government." In the "time of rice," under direct administration, which they claimed to be the hardest,

> They would go from house to house. We almost did not sleep. At Boror we went to work and come back. We suffered less. With the "government," a new authority came, the Chefe de Posto. The "government" lured the women away from producing for Boror and begin to produce for them. They were asked about their most relevant produce. The women would take bananas, cassava, potato, peanut, and expose their produce. Since they had to pay tax to Boror, they thought it would be better to work for the "government."

My informants explained changes that occurred in the production system and among governing authorities. With the introduction of direct administration, a new colonial leadership was introduced, the Chefe de Posto. He became a new intermediary between the natives and the colony, further distancing the colonial government from its native subjects. This was the post to which young Ernestina equated her grandfather Gavicho. Like other remaining *prazo* holders, he must have had to receive the taxes collected by his native leaders and surrender them to the colonial administration.

The system also changed from work in a more extensive plantation to a smaller, individual plot, the *machamba*.

> The women, before they went to the *machamba*, they went to the plantation. Before the [colonial] "government," there was the company. The "government" created the *machambas*.

Again, several leaders oversaw the production of the workforce in the *machambas*. Among them the *capitão* (captain), *sepanda,* and *mucata. I* did not find references to

sepanda in the literature, but there are several references to the others. Vail and White's (1978) work on plantation protests suggests that a *capitão* was in charge of potentially male workers, doing heavier work. *aMucata* are found in the works of José Capela (2010) and Eugénia Rodrigues (2008). They place them under the *anyakoda*, in charge of smaller groups of women (slaves), in the context of the *prazos*. António Rita-Ferreira (1982) mentions them in the context of the *aringa* in Maganja da Costa. According to him, the *aringa* was organized in several *ensacas* (groups), led by a *cazembe*, elected by his subaltern officers, the *mucata*.

The daughters could not tell me precisely what the distinction was among them. I suspect this was because other leaders, such as the *nyakoda*, mediated the relationship between the producing women and those supervising the production. They did tell me that each *nyakoda* had a corresponding *mwene*, quite similar to the Makhuwa *mwene* and their *apia-mwene*.

Table 5. List of aNyakoda in Macuse and corresponding Mwene, circa 1950s

Nyakoda	Mwene
Laudina, followed by Nestavida when Laudina married Mwene Raia and became a *mussano*	Mwene Raia
Regina	Mwene Massavara
Lidia	Mwene Mulevala
<u>Marieta</u>	Mwene Mussariua
Malequina	Mwene Munigua

The "government" came after the Guerra do Mulimao (War of the German/First World War), the daughters told me. They could not say the precise year because they are illiterate, they said. Moreover, they were not yet alive; they heard about it from their mothers. The Guerra do Mulimao is a recurrent theme among my informants in Quelimane and Macuse. Events seem to be conflated, joining global and local events in bizarre ways.

> They came all the way to Namacurra, Cogodane. They came to imprison Conde Estuque because he owed [them]. They burned everything, killed many people. He [Conde Estuque] got scared and killed himself.

Conde Estuque's near mythological aura provides an opportunity once again to explore the contradictions between the text and the field. According to his grave, he lived between 1869 and 1927. Allegedly, his son Georges wrote *memoires* on the origins, creation, and development of the Boror Company (Bertelsen, 2015).[88] An alternative version states that Joseph and Georges were brothers (Pelissier in: Bach, 1990, p. 80; Linder et al., 2001, p. 255; Pelissier, 1994, p. 108). According to historical texts, the company was created in 1897 through an association with a company called Eigenmann & Pereira (Mourier-Genoud & Cahen, 2013; Pelissier, 1994). In the grave, it says that it was created one year later, in 1898.

According to my informants in Macuse—Régulo Voabil's daughter, the daughters of the *anyakoda*, and even my elderly friend in Quelimane—Count Stucky killed himself (or was killed) due to something related to Guerra do Mulimao (War of the German). However, his grave shows that he died in 1927, nine years after the end of the war. In 1926, a *coup d'état* put an end to the first republic in Portugal. One of the immediate consequences was the abolition of the Chartered and lessee companies (Chilundo et al., 1999). This could be a reason why Conde Estuque took his own life. It does not

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[88] An alternative version states that the company was rather formed by two French-Swiss brothers from Marseille, Joseph and Georges (Pelissier in: Bach, 1990, p. 80).

explain why his death remains associated with Guerra do Mulimao. Yet strangely, given the changes that occurred globally after the war, including the dissolution of empires, the creation of new nation-states, and other political restructurings, perhaps this explains a lot, highlighting the futility and fallibility of periodization. It further supports historian Reinhart Kosellek's theory of multiple temporalities, by which "historical time is not linear and homogeneous but complex and multilayered accounts for the futility of all efforts to freeze history in order to delimit and define breaks, discontinuities, time spans, beginnings, and endings" (Jordheim, 2012, p. 170).

"*El re ge, mwana ré*,"[89] forms of reshaping the past

Above, I use women's life histories to describe their localized social, political, and historical context, as recalled by their descendants. The result is a narrative that shows how a coeval historical timeline impacted each location differently, creating distinct *locales*, social systems with divergent historical references. These life histories shed light on the mis- and underrepresentation of prominent social and political female actors by focusing on localized cosmological understandings of power embedded in the narratives. I further discuss how these female life histories inform women's representation within their social and political contexts. In line with feminist studies, I find that these life histories highlight women's agency, diversity, and intersectionality.

Contrary to feminist approaches, instead of engaging with the power structures to which they are subjected, I use their histories to understand how they are inserted in and use hegemonic structures to exercise power over others. The result is an established presence of women within hegemonic spheres, and their agency and intersectionality. It provides avenues to understand how and which women accessed and exercised power, and when this was gendered.

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[89] "There was once the son of a king", in eChuwabu, is the usual beginning of children's tales, equivalent to "Once upon a time", in English.

The different versions of the life histories of the selected women of power and authority are further evidence of tensions between scholarly text and the memory of these women and the context in which they lived. Historical text is usually valued over individual memory due to the latter's perceived lack of accuracy and reliability. Some of the tensions presented above challenge accepted historical facts. Additionally, there are omissions and neglected individuals, and their role in the social, economic, and political social organization. By focusing on these neglected individuals', in this case women's micro-histories and agency, it is possible to see how the practices and structures introduced exogenously—by colonial and postcolonial states alike—adapt to existing cosmologies (Eriksen, 2006). Sahlins termed these structures of conjuncture—i.e., "the practical realisation of the cultural categories in a specific historical context, as expressed in the interested action of the historic agents, including the microsociology of their interaction" (Sahlins, 1985, p. xiv).

The details that challenge the historical texts are not in themselves bearers of alternative truth. They are a product of snippets of memories, highly edited, with their omissions and selective narratives. No narrative is without its agenda. The colonial narrative focuses on the agents and actors that allowed for the success of the colonial enterprise. This tends to cast resistance as the villain of its narrative. On the other hand, postcolonial historiography seizes this resistance precisely and centralizes it as its main narrative. Feminist historiography focuses on evidencing female subalternity and subjection or, conversely, female agency within patriarchal structures.

In these scholarship agendas, women in or with access to native (or emancipated) power structures end up invisible at every instance. The colonial text privileges those with direct interaction with the colonial structures—for example, *donas, sinharas,* or natives—within a directly influenced ethos. Yet, it has a limited view or interest in the actual native perspective.

The postcolonial text, especially the revolutionary and anti-colonialist, does see the native. Still, in its quest to celebrate anti-colonial resistance's heroism, it either ignores or vilifies structures that it perceives to have collaborated with the colonial

enterprise—as with the narrative around the *régulos*—in the aftermath of the independence. Alternatively, it highlights the actions of individuals who actively resisted the violent and oppressive structures of the colonial venture. Female resistance, if any, is then engulfed within the collective resistance effort.

Feminist scholarship, particularly in its postcolonial Africanist feminist text, favors denouncing the colonial enterprise's contributions to the patriarchal structures that survived into the postcolony, like the role and influence of organized religion. Otherwise they focus on the agency that has contributed to the change in gender relations, e.g., resistance to patriarchal rules, thus ignoring women who do not participate in this resistance, like elite wives or the *anyakoda* control of the other women.

I also have a personal agenda to reconcile women's central place in my memories and their lesser prominence in the historical texts. This agenda and the personal interests of my informants often did not align. The people and events they preferred to talk about were not those in which I was interested. The resulting text of our interaction is a product of a reconstruction that better fits my narrative and interests, and not necessarily those of the informants.

This tension between my interest and the informant's narratives still allowed me to expose fascinating aspects of the native authoritative female's perspective. A more localized look into personal memories highlighted the universality of colonial violence. It also highlighted the difference in localized references, despite attempted homogenization of administrative structures. A *longue durée* look into the social categories mentioned in the scholarly texts and how they are understood locally helps map a different perspective of meaning creation and adaptability to changing administrative contexts.

From the different narratives of Rainha Bala, I learned that she had a good heart and listened to her population, apparently essential features of rulers. Also, she was feisty and challenged a sitting male *régulo* for her title, even at the cost of her own life—the interpretation of her death centers around the intermingling of the supernatural and

natural worlds, and are both intimately related to power. Her great-grandmother, from whose lineage she descends—and from whom the name of the area derives—was a queen who had to give up her rule in favor of her son-in-law. This example showcases the ways colonial institutions interfered with local leaderships and a concrete example of reducing women's authority.

Rainha Bala's contested rulership further exemplifies that this historical reduction of female authority did not eliminate the spaces for women to contest power. Importantly, it exemplifies the non-gendered nature of her position, considering that the name derives from a woman, but the position has been occupied both by men and women. The original queen still determines the lineage, even though Rainha Bala implicated her father—the son of the son-in-law and the eldest daughter of the original queen—in her claim to power.

At the site of Rainha Bala there are no buildings, no pictures, no songs. Memories are in words. The identity of the *anyaringa* remains present. There are generational tensions, tensions with modernity, tensions with the postcolonial state. Through the informants' words and interests at this site, I learn about the importance of dance. Even without witnessing any performance, it is possible to feel the anguish and disempowerment over emptying another site of power. Yet, it is possible to imagine that, like with other external pressures, dances continue to be a part of power "conceptual categories with which the modern world(s) is continually imagined and revised" (Kaspin in: Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993, p. 35).

D. Amália's life history is one of empowerment through marriage and filiation. Instead of reducing her to Gavicho's "wife," the narrative should reflect that he was the one empowered by his marriage to her. And instead of being known as the daughter of Antonio Pinto, the narrative should also reflect that she was the daughter of D. Ernestina de Menezes Soares, daughter of the owner of Prazo Chirangano. From her father's side, she was related to D. Maria Eugenia Peixe, a *dona* whose properties later became part of Societé du Madal. The details of *donas'* lives are scant, and what is portrayed in the scholarship—like in Negrão's masterpiece about the agrarian family

in the Zambezi delta (Negrão, 2006)—is not entirely correct. Despite her affluent background, D. Ernestina's connection to Prazo Chirangano, or the fact that she was part of the *donas* network in Quelimane, she is portrayed only as a black/native woman. Despite records in archives, D. Ernestina's and D. Amália's land ownership is minimized and thought inconsequential. Furthermore, while erroneously ignoring D. Ernestina's Goanese ancestry, she is further anonymized as an unnamed and powerless native.

The texts also overlook the *anunu*, elite Muslim women of "Zambezia." Equivalent in prestige to the *anyanye*, and hence the *donas*, they are generally absent in Mozambican historiography—except in the works of Liazzat Bonate (2018). Nunu Ancha's history exemplifies the importance of collective leadership, domestically and communally. She was important enough to be buried on the mosque's grounds. She also served as a surrogate to her deceased mother, counseling her uncle, Régulo Voabil. Men and women served as counselors, with age being an essential factor. Rulers generally had their sisters or other female relatives as their co-rulers. All these forms of collective leadership are still practiced today in one form or another in and beyond "Zambezia."

Finally, the *anyakoda* are perhaps the least understood of the power categories. They had a recurring role as organizers of female labor. While the literature focuses on their subalternity, my informants highlighted their leadership and communicators skills. They are present in the overall governance of most social and political organization of the Zambezi—the *karanga,* the *prazos*, and the companies. In those societies, they retained their name. In the postcolonial reality, they retain their functionality in political rather than economic mobilization. The purposeful empowerment of an organizer of the subaltern sheds light on the complex interaction with hegemony. Even when complying with hegemony, the *anyakoda* still yielded authority. In the eyes of the subaltern, they were powerful. From the elite's perspective, they were an essential member. Overall, the female elite in the societies of "Zambezia" included the ruling lineage's members, those marrying into the elite (economic and political), and those organizing labor (and now politics).

Work with memory can only take us so far. Knowing that these women existed and held sway in their societies reinforces the need to explore further the power categories associated with them. Lack of understanding of the deep meanings of continuous categories of power, even those affected by historical discontinuities, continues to obscure present knowledge about how power is viewed and performed in the societies of "Zambezia," particularly how women articulate them. The above ethnographic exercise gives us insights into how to access these deep cosmological reflections, free from colonial history's overbearingness. The continuities, despite constant disruptions, highlight which meanings hold the most substantial value. In what follows, I discuss the implications of these findings in the epistemological discussions of power in postcolonial and feminist scholarship, particularly in African feminist scholarship, and the relations of power between existing hegemonic and emerging anti-hegemonic scholarship, in particular in African scholarship.

4 The emancipation of the colony

To close the discussions above, I present how the ethnographic work has contributed to a critical reading of the existing literature on women of power in historical records and representation of "Zambezia," and the possibilities it opens for a decolonial scholarship. As I have made clear in the above sections, I argue for a demystification and de-regionalization of "Zambezia" as a coherent space. Instead, each of the ethnographic sites in this allegedly unified region emerges as a separate *locale*, which relates differently in terms of time-space references. To decolonize the concept of a unified "Zambezia," I have proposed eclipsing colonialism as the unifying historical influence. Further, I engage and position the discussions within the broader African feminist and postcolonial scholarship concerned with the decolonization of representations of Africa, its peoples, and social and political structures. In what follows, I divide the discussion into four parts of two contributions. One contributes to the concepts of power and gender within the postcolonial and African feminist epistemological discussions. The second contributes to discussions about Africa's hegemonic epistemological representations and the responsibility to disrupt them.

Power within the confines of the postcolonial and feminist theories within Africanist contexts

Discussions about power are the center of interest in both feminist and postcolonial scholarship. This thesis engages with discussions in both these scholarships, and how they have engaged with the concept of power. It also discusses how definitions of power have evolved to reflect the study of African societies' social realities. I have privileged a systemic and internal—meaning from within a social and political system—view of power, understanding that it is not controlled or monopolized by a hierarchy but instead distributed and collaborative. In my analysis, I argue that exclusive focus on the perceived apex of systems has contributed to neglecting or misunderstanding the role of complementary power holders, among them women.

Postcolonial and feminist literature engaging with decolonizing theory and epistemology focus on continued systemic injustices established by the "colonial matrices of power that underpinned 'global coloniality'" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020, p. 210). These include global capitalism and the continued extractivist nature between postcolonial spaces and former colonial powers—a relationship euphemistically called the Global North and South divide (Litonjua, 2012; Mimiko, 2012). For feminists, colonialism—and its successor global capitalism—have meant that multiple inequalities related to "race, sex, family, knowledge structures, able-ness, etc." (Tamale, 2020, p. 29) need to be actively combated or corrected (see also Okech, 2020).

In this thesis, I have aimed to disrupt the power of such knowledge structure that holds historical representations of "Zambezia," which perpetuates an idea of a region centered around colonial chronology, exceptional design, and hierarchy setting. My ethnographic material challenges existing notions of historical time related to this space, women in different social and political hierarchies, how power is perceived, and when and how power relates to gender. Most of all, it puts colonialism in context as one crucial but not unique hegemonic system. While precolonial African empires, the colonial and postcolonial regimes represent the apex systems, the dimensions of cosmological hegemonies that I am concerned with are those sustained across all of them. They represent the adaptation and reproduction of hierarchies and power dynamics within multiple, often coercive overarching ruling regimes.

"Zambezia's" historical portrayal is generally initiated with the arrival of the Portuguese and the encounter between peoples native and foreign. They (the Portuguese) hold the hegemony of the narrative or, at least, are accorded roles as the prime historical movers of it. The multiple chronicles and travelogues, and subsequently administrative edicts, establish the space, chronology, and nomenclature. The Portuguese *regard* is meticulously detailed and establishes canon, picked up, even if reluctantly by postcolonial scholars. The main reason is the physicality of the archives and, thereby, an ability to triangulate affirmations and establish facts. They still make it possible to advance differing intellectual agendas with the same facts. As,

for example, in understanding the *donas'* prominence as primarily related to Portuguese legislation favoring female land ownership (Capela, 1995), related to their native networks (Rodrigues, 2013), or matrilineal practices of the region (Newitt, 1973). While important, the above aspects are secondary to the *donas'* local cosmological placement. As shown from the ethnographic material, for the native populations the *dona* is understood as another iteration of the *anyanye*, who like her were also wives and daughters of wealthy and influential men. Though their material wealth might have been distinct, much of their demeanor was similar. As my material also shows, the practice of gifting land to wives was commonplace and not restricted to settler practices. This places less relevance on Portuguese administrative edicts and more on marital allegiances.

When considering marriage a vital power arena, the existing literature suggests similar iterations independent of lineage practice, namely among the wives and co-rulers within royal lineages. There are additional dimensions in royal marriages, i.e., kinship and spiritual connection to ancestors. Women often ruled in conjunction with their brothers or male relatives. Dynasties started with a male ruler and his sister, who would be the mother of the new "nation." In precolonial empires such as the Mwenemutapa, and polities such as the Maravi, these siblings were ritualistically married. Currently, siblings' co-rulership, without the ritual marriage, persists in the form of *apia-mwene* (female clan leader) and *mwene* (clan leader) among the Makhuwa.

In addition to marriage and ancestry, power is also intimately linked to performative and embodied symbols, such as clothes and jewelry. It is also linked to song and dance. It is principally linked to the supernatural, including sorcery and witchcraft, and to the ability to connect with ancestors. Sorcery and witchcraft—as they relate to power and governance—have been amply studied in Mozambique without focusing on potential gendered elements (e.g. West, 2005). Connections with ancestors and guardianship of peoples' origins have almost exclusively been linked to women (Arnfred, 1988; Bonate, 2006; Frobenius & Fox, 1966). Though the latter aspect has been used to showcase an arena of power for women, it has been less successful in

arguing for its relation to material rather than symbolic power. The main reason for this is that scholars see the spiritual and the material world as separate entities, whereas the peoples under their influence are not.

The above examples of locations and iterations of power evidence how focusing on apex systems, to the detriment of sub- or subordinate structures, may neglect valuable knowledge regarding systems of values and understandings of world-making. Both are relevant to understand where power resides, how it relates to gender, and when and how this relationship is relevant. By this, I mean that whereas colonial and postcolonial regimes—including regimes of knowledge—may have borrowed from colonial narrative and practice, the citizenry continues to bring forth values that transcend both regimes. In other words, colonial-inspired iterations survive in parallel with just-as-stubborn non-colonial ones. As argued above, cosmological understandings of power and authority—whether through royal bloodlines, marriage or labor organizing—have persisted, and adapted to each new conquering polity. This continuity is present whether a change in nomenclature occurred, as in the case of ruling titles, or not, as is the case of the *anyakoda*.

Postcolonial thought is deeply concerned with the imbrications of colonial power logics onto postcolonial realities. This is premised on the understanding that the non-realization of aspirations of the freedom and dignity of the postcolony derive from being continuously trapped in the "snares of the colonial matrix of power and the dictates of the rapacious global power" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, p. xi). The proposition to counter this entrapment is to equalize Southern and Northern epistemologies (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; de Sousa Santos & Meneses, 2010) or to develop new radical epistemologies to counter both Northern theory and undesirable Southern premises (Okech, 2020; Tamale, 2020).

Modernity and its discourses, particularly in African feminist thought, becomes both a fiend and an ally. Change is imagined only through resistance and challenge. The postcolonial intellectual challenges the clutches of Northern epistemic dictates, and reimagines concepts to understand and conceive his or her societies. Resistance is

analyzed from the oppressed postcolonial subjects' eyes, ensnared in a continuous cycle of "underdevelopment and epistemic violence" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, p. x). However, the process by which postcolonial elites supposedly reproduce colonial systems of power suggests less agency than the resisting populace. Hegemony, in thought and structures of power, is imagined almost exclusively regarding coloniality, though to be fair, feminist epistemologies are equally critical of precolonial and colonial patriarchy. Hence, I would argue that decentering colonialism would go a long way in unearthing the hegemonic values that sustain power in contemporary African societies' elite hierarchies. That does not diminish the importance of the continuous colonial matrix of power, especially at the global level. It would, however, explain endogenous resistance to change in power assemblages beyond the colonial matrix.

The status of women of power in the gender and feminist Africanist scholarship

African feminist scholarship has a strong tradition of critically interrogating power and hegemony. Such scholarships have focused on women's agency, intersectionality, and disruption of the concept of gender, and have promoted a radical political critique of patriarchy. Feminist activist scholars such as Amina Mama, Sylvia Tamale, or Awino Okech, speak to the problem of representation and the hegemony of Eurocentric epistemologies (Imam, 1999; Okech, 2020; Tamale, 2011, 2020). They revise central concepts such as woman, sexuality, and the intersections of gender. They follow in the footsteps of the works of Ifi Amadiume and Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, who initiated discussion of the universal relevance of gender in the study of African women and societies.

African feminists borrow from and add to diverse scholarly traditions such as Third World feminism's localized historical situatedness (Herr, 2014; Mohanty, 1988) and black feminism's intersectionality (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 2017; Nash, 2018). They are also influenced by subalternity studies' interrogation of the representation of the "Other," denouncing the privilege in academic knowledge production (Bahri, 2004;

Dutta & Pal, 2010) or strategic essentialism and group consciousness (Asher, 2017; Spivak, 1988). In doing so, I have privileged a radical agenda favoring an intersectional analysis of women aimed at disrupting patriarchal values and practices and its global capitalist enablers.

However, in their righteous quest for gender equity, they fall short of fully recognizing the empowering role of women's intersectional heterogeneity in African societies. As such, while recognizing that intersectionality is an essential aspect of distinguishing, for example, women of privilege from subaltern women, there is less understanding of the heterogeneity of privilege. As my ethnographic material suggests, hegemonic power institutions are composed of women with inherent privilege, acquired, and subaltern status. On the one hand, some literature on African politics recognizes African women's agency in politics (O'Barr, 1975; M. Williams, 2017). However, most focus on how states, particularly authoritarian, co-opt and use feminist machineries to retain their power, and in the process, disempower concepts like gender (Casimiro & Andrade, 2009; Lorch & Bunk, 2016). Others focus on resistance and the need to subvert patriarchal values and structures to achieve the desired equity (e.g. McFadden, 2007).

In all these views, feminist initiatives (co-opted or not) are intrinsically linked to modernist aspirations. Feminism purposefully intends to subvert patriarchal logics, which inhabit precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial political structures and relations alike. In this, it is sometimes at odds with postcolonial theory, whose main critique is how (Northern/Western) notions of modernity set the template for what it means to be modern, and how former imperial and colonial subjects permanently reside beyond it (Dussel et al., 2019; S. Hall, 1992). All the while, non-Western/Northern subjects experienced what Ndlovu-Gatsheni calls "the 'darker' manifestations of modernity," i.e., "the slave trade, mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism and apartheid" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, p. x).

Certainly, postcolonial feminists have been equally critical of non-Western/Northern women's representations (Bahri, 2004; Syed & Ali, 2011) and unsatisfied with the

conceptualizations and uses of gender to which they have been subjected (Apusigah, 2008; Mama, 2001; Oyěwùmí, 1998). Within their political project, African feminists (McFadden, 2007; Osha, 2006; Tamale, 2006) often advocate a Spivakian strategic essentialist approach, in the sense that in order to advance women's interests and the political pursuit of gender equality, it is necessary to understand them strategically as a unified group. Even if recognizing that women's experiences and realities are heterogeneous, there are contextual commonalities of oppression that unify them in a condition of subalternity (Asher, 2017; Spivak, 1988, 1993a). Spivak's Gramscian and Marxist influences are naturally concerned with the intersections of gender and class, and in the Indian context caste as well. In the African context, the important intersections have been gender, class, and race/ethnicity. Generally, however, the interest of intersectionality is focused on how intersections work towards oppression rather than privilege.

The Gramscian concept of hegemony, and even more so of Marxist false consciousness, have been discussed at length in their adequacy to understand the relationship between gender, power, and female agency (Jackson & Pearson, 2000; Kabeer, 1999; Kandiyoti, 1988). Overall, they have been used to explain how women negotiate power as constrained by structures of oppression, including patriarchy, alternatively, how colonialism or its successor global capitalism have created either new forms of oppression or unintended empowering opportunities. Yet, while white women's benefits and close relationship with colonial hierarchies, or upper-caste Indian women's continued privilege is well studied and documented, the same has not occurred with African women. Some attempts document historical female figures who either lost autonomy and power due to colonialism or exceptional characters who defied the odds of systemic misogyny. As a result, no narrative imagines types of African women who benefit from continued privilege. Elite studies are either genderless or overly male, mostly because women are seen as unrepresented in their areas of interest, including the political.

As my ethnographic material shows, there are multiple ways women have been participating in hegemonic social and political structures. As is exemplified by the life

histories of Rainha Bala, the networks of *donas* to which D. Amália and her mother D. Ernestina belonged, Régulo Voabil's surrogate sister and counselor Nunu Ancha, and labor organizer Nyakoda Marieta, presented in Part 3. Women's representations, which thus far have ignored these continued forms of participation, have failed to recognize how certain women are more likely to retain and even multiply their power, authority, or influence. Similarly, certain women are more likely to be vulnerable to oppression and other forms of inequality.

To be clear, this continued privilege can and does co-occur with opportunities to disrupt the status quo or increased oppression at the individual level. But looking at privileged locations helps, for example, to understand where their allegiance is likely to reside, and to understand why it may not extend to other women, or to predict whether opportunities appropriated by certain women are truly empowering or perhaps inevitable.

Epistemologies from across the "North-South," "West-Other" divide

The discussions of power in Africanist postcolonial scholarship are twofold. They relate to understanding where power lies, and how (and when) it is (or is not) related to gender. More importantly, Africanist scholarship has grappled with trying to counteract what it has perceived as injustices of representation, as well as the epistemological frames used to create such representations.

These discussions are inserted in the global discussions that challenge hegemonic epistemologies. They are also part of a long-standing history of transnational epistemological discussions about *negritude*, pan-Africanism, anti-colonial struggle, postcolonial nationalism, and emancipatory decoloniality. The cultural movement termed *negritude* by Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, and founded together with Senegalese and Guyanese poets and politicians Leopold Senghor and Léon-Gontran Damas, professed the idea of the existence of shared references and experiences that united black people around the world. Inspired by African American—then Negro—

Harlem's cultural renaissance, the *negritude* movement was from the onset international in nature (Bâ, 1973; Senghor, 1974). This, in turn, inspired the transcontinental nature of the anti-colonial struggle and solidarity of people of African descent on the continent and in the diaspora, advanced by the likes of W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Nkwame Nkrumah (Malisa & Nhengeze, 2018).

Like these movements that preceded it, postcolonial critique originated within literary discussions of discourse, narrative, and representation of colonized subjects within colonial literature. This critique was a natural match with the Marxist political projects embraced in many newly independent countries. Socialism had an appealing emancipatory discourse of equality that opposed the oppression and inequality of colonialism. Some of the independence leaders merged socialist ideals with African ideals. These included the concepts of *umoja* (unity), *ujamaa* (fraternity), and *ujima* (collective work), put forth by first Tanzanian president Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere in his oeuvre on African Socialism (Mohiddin, 1969; Nyerere, 1968). The equivalent concept of *ubuntu*—human interconnectedness—is currently linked to the African Renaissance movement (van Hensbroek, 2002).

The current focus of emancipatory decoloniality is a continuation of the earlier anti-colonial and postcolonial discussions. From the literary insights and political activism, the new epistemological discussions still revolve around three main themes: hegemonic modes of representation, epistemological hierarchies, and universal versus multiverse ontologies. Among the multiple proposals to counter these hegemonies, there is a continued interest in highlighting ontological diversity and alternative epistemologies. However, it is necessary to understand what qualifies as epistemology and how genuinely diverse ontologies continue to permeate these conversations.

For Walter Mignolo, epistemology includes "an analysis of power in its analysis of knowledge but also a set of normative criteria for judging various relationships between power and knowledge" (Alcoff, 2009, p. 80). He posits that decolonial projects should not "reclaim epistemology," which in its truth searching approach is "necessarily imperial, territorial, and denotative" (Alcoff, 2009, p. 98). Likewise, João

Arriscado Nunes considers that the call for alternative epistemologies fails to recognize that the notion of epistemology is in itself a Western construct (Nunes, 2009).

As an alternative, Mignolo suggests the use of gnoseology instead of epistemology, a notion that Linda Alcoff suggests is only viable if it is understood as including "the critical and normative dimensions that aim to improve our understanding of truth, as well as the more inclusive aims in regard to forms of knowing" (Alcoff, 2009, p. 98). Alcoff uses Édouard Glissant's concept of "diversality" to argue for the continued relevance of truth. Diversality here is understood as "an alternative model for conceptualizing subjectivity and knowledge that might make sense of the existence of many worlds as well as to make visible their interrelationality and connectedness" (ibid.).

I have not found in my material anything that justifies any claims for radical epistemological or ontological departures. When Rainha Bala claims to be the rightful ruler, she does so from a point of view of how succession should occur. Her death, explained as a supernatural occurrence, exposes her lineage's metaphysical relationship with the land they rule over. It also exposes the two planes in which challenging a ruler can happen and power can be harnessed. This metaphysical harnessing of power is also present in the tales of how *donas* resorted to *curandeiros* (healers) and practiced obscure rituals. Hierarchies of power, and the authority of lineage, wealth or the *anyakoda's* charisma were incorporated and accepted as part of the natural order of things. Individual and collective challenges to this order were possible, but any reordering of the material plane, however disruptive, was made sense of through existing notions of world order. All characters and what made them powerful were presented as matter-of-fact understandings of the functioning of power. The relay of these perceptions did not extend to an explanation for how this knowledge was produced and what it explained.

For this reason, I have preferred to use the concept of cosmology when referring to notions of world-making and functioning. Although there are ontological elements in

my informants' understanding of power, like David Graeber, I understand that the emerging world I was exposed to should be described as factual and existing, even when not fully understanding their workings. Recognizing that "radical alterity" does not need to be an alternative reality allows "the concepts that underlie it [to] 'unsettle' our own theoretical beliefs" (Graeber, 2015, p. 3). In this sense, all the interpretative elements of a purported alternative reality can be transposed to other alleged realities.

Take the three recurrent elements of power of the ethnographic material, inherent, acquired and subaltern. Those who are powerful are recognized and distinguished between each other by the way they embody this power—through jewelry and clothes; the rituals they perform—like drumming and dancing; and relationship to the metaphysical—witchcraft and sorcery. These material, ritualistic, and spiritual dimensions that surround power holders can be found elsewhere, for example, in monarchies, including in Europe. In this sense, the epistemological discussion involves a translation and incorporation within an existing knowledge set. In this, the ethnographic account can respond to Western/Northern epistemological traditions' demands, even as it attempts to unsettle them. In this case, the decolonial project involves altering representations, correct inaccuracies, and offering alternative but transposable modes of explaining the world. It also works to de-exoticize and approximate, providing avenues and possibilities of viewing—in this case, African women and their societies decentered from colonialism—without denying the influence and impact of colonialism.

The ethnographic material also reveals that within colonial and postcolonial state structures, there were/are multiple hegemonies. Within transnational feminism, the term used is scattered hegemonies. This concept, developed as a critique of global feminism's relativism, includes different dimensions of hegemony, such as "global economic structures, patriarchal nationalisms, 'authentic' forms of traditions, local structures of domination, and legal-judicial oppression on multiple levels" (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994, p. 17). Although this approach focuses on power as oppression, its value is that it considers "multiple, overlapping, and discrete oppressions rather than constructs a theory of hegemonic oppression under a unified category of gender"

(ibid., pp. 17–18). Everywhere there is oppression, there is also privilege, which means that there should also be multiple, overlapping, and discrete levels of privilege in any given society.

These multiple and concomitant forms of hegemony have been called "pluralism" (e.g. Meneses, 2006), a concept criticized by Bernard Magubane and Archie Mafeje, for perpetuating an ideology of tribalism and tradition in explaining conflict and strife in Africa (Mafeje, 1971; Nyoka, 2019a). More recent iterations of the concept have suggested that in postcolonial societies some of the pluralism has blurred, incorporating a mixture of elements, such as in legal orders (de Sousa Santos & Trindade, 2003; Meneses, 2006). The idea that this heterogeneity creates conflict remains. So does the lingering suggestion that African societies coexist with heterogeneous but impermeable realities and logics. Hybridity is understood as the domination of one form of hegemony over another, even when some elements are incorporated.

The unresolved: social sciences on Africa or African social sciences?

We are left wondering what kind of representation is possible for African societies and in the Africanist scholarship? And can/should we talk about discrete forms of African social sciences? So far, decolonization discussions have provided different options for addressing African societies' misrepresentations of and challenging hegemonic epistemologies that have produced those misrepresentations. This continues to be an ongoing and unresolved discussion. Looking at "Zambezian" social realities from novel perspectives, namely an acceptance of hegemonic governance based on distributed collectivity and authoritative compliant subalternity, allows for opportunities to understand power, gender, and sociopolitical organization in Africa from an entirely new perspective.

As Graeber suggests, anthropology has the tools and interest in unsettling hegemonic ideas and representations. What it has lost, according to him, is the habit of debate,

allegedly because within the discipline, "we no longer share enough of a common ground even to agree on what there is to argue about" (Graeber, 2015, p. 1). While both the postcolonial and the ontological turn propose epistemological emancipation, often through radical ruptures, decolonial thought offers possibilities through epistemological expansion. For all its contributions, postcolonial thought continuously centers on colonialism, its legacy, and its effects. At the same time, ontologists' radical alterity at times suggests non-transposable boundaries between realities.

African social sciences continue to have a contentious relationship with anthropology for its colonial legacy and its role in "othering" and exoticizing non-European/Western/Northern peoples. Through Mafeje's enduring legacy, African scholars have become averse to the "'epistemology of alterity'—the 'othering' of Africa and Africans" (Adesina, 2008, p. 133; see also Afolayan, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b). Mafeje proposed instead "the advancement of scholarship grounded in the centering of African ontological experiences" (ibid.). This is necessary for the improvement and correction of representations about Africa and Africans. However, that is only sufficient if African Social Sciences are exclusively interested in dialoguing endogenously.

To contribute to the social sciences at large, one needs to reach beyond endogeny and use the platform to "saming," instead of "othering." By this, I mean a decolonial project that strives to include, not separate human experience, without exoticizing, essentializing, or relativizing. For example, it means that as much as modernity and colonialism are interconnected, modernity is ubiquitous worldwide, even if it means different things to different societies. Saurabh Dube and Ishita Banerjee-Dube, among others, argue that in the "discussion of subjects of modernity are key questions of heterogeneous yet coeval temporalities and overlapping but contending productions of space" (Dube and Banarjee-Dube, 2019, p. xiii). This is similar to what I found in the relation of "subjects of coloniality" among my informants. Rainha Bala's rulership is based on an ancestral, thus spiritual claim to the land. It also meant very concrete and material connections to the modern Mozambican state, as with her great-grandmother's forced abdication and grandfather's installation in relation to the

colonial state. Likewise, D. Amália's peers incorporated the outward mannerisms of what it meant to be modern, i.e., civilized. Yet, they never relinquished their mother tongue, nor supplemented their earthly material power through metaphysical invocations, like the ritual naked baths of D. Eugénia Peixe. Finally, the *anyakoda* have shown an ability to organize labor across different types of technology and labor output demands. To the assertion that there are multiple ways of being modern, I would contend that there are multiple ways of being "in modernity."

Of course, the question of modernity is more far-reaching than everyday sociality. It also relates to the production of a narrative and ways of defining the understanding of reality (Asher, 2013; Mignolo, 2007). A central argument in this discussion is that to expose the Eurocentric narrative of modernity, it is necessary to ground colonialism historically. I would argue that it is also necessary to historically decenter colonialism to understand colonized peoples' cosmologies better while avoiding the trap of uncritical precolonial nostalgia.

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Annex 1: Acronyms

ADPP –   Ajuda para o Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo (Development Aid
          from People to People), founder and member of the Federation for
          Associations connected to the International Humana People to People
          Movement, created in 1996.

DUAT –   Direito do Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra (Right of Use and
          Advancement Land), equivalent to a title deed.

FRELIMO – Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambican Liberation Front),
          anti-colonial liberation movement founded in 1962.

OMM –   Organização da Mulher Moçambicana (National Women's
          Organization), founded in 1973 as the female wing of the Mozambican
          liberation movement.

RENAMO – Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance),
          founded in 1975 with support of the Rhodesian white minority
          government, to fight the rise of a Marxist government in Mozambique.

UEM –   Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (Eduardo Mondlane University)

Annex 2: Glossary

When writing the thesis, I followed standardized orthographic rules for Mozambican national languages (Ngunga & Faquir, 2012) and European Portuguese (Cintra, 1971). The national languages used are Echuwabu (CHW), Emakhuwa (MKH), Cisena (SE), Cinyungwe (NYG) Chishona (SN), Cichewa/Cinyanja (NY). Some words have an undetermined original Bantu language. These have been classified being of generic Bantu language origin (BNT). Additionally, the text includes words in Portuguese based creole/pidgin (CPP), Swahili (SW), Indic languages (INC), Bahasa Melayu – Indonesian/Malaysian (MS), and Arabic (AR). Each term is translated into English with reference to the acronym identifying the original language.

A

Ajamia (AR) - Arabic script in indigenous languages.

Alula (CHW) – Dance performed by men, mentioned by informant in Maganja da Costa.

Amázia (PT) – Derogatory word for mistress, kept woman. Used for African women in relationships with European men, who were called *mozungo* OR *mzungo* (SE).

Aringa (BNT) – wooden stockade surrounding a settlement.

Anyaringa (BNT/CHW) – people of the *aringa*.

Armazém (PT) – The literal translation is warehouse. In this context it refers to a store for purchase of agricultural produce from farmers and sale of diverse products.

Assegurar a pasta (CPP) – (Temporarily) take the responsibility of a leadership position.

Assimilado (m.), *f. assimilada, pl. assimilados (PT)* – The literal translation is assimilated. In this context it refers to the distinction made by colonial authorities

between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Included in these were those indigenous people who were deemed to have assimilated proper European behaviour.

Avós (PT) – Means grandparents, but in this context, it refers to elderly women to who a person addresses respectfully as grandmother.

B

Baju (INC/MS) – Sewed overcoat with material typically imported from India. The term is used both in South and Southeast Asia.

Bantu (BNT) – The term means people. It also refers to the people and family of languages spoken by peoples in Central, Southern and Easter Africa.

Bilad al Sufala (AR) – The land of Sofala, the southernmost frontier visited by the Arab Omanites and Persian Sirafis in the coast of Africa.

Bororo (MKH/CHW) – Coastal region of Zambezia inhabited by the Lolo language speaking people.

Branco (m.), f. branca, pl. brancos (PT) – The literal translation is the colour white. In this context it means white people.

Butaca, pl. abutaca (SE/NYG) – Chikunda military groups or companies.

C

Cabo de terra, pl. cabos de terra (PT) – Land corporal part of the traditional leadership structures. They had as their main responsibility of assisting the *régulos*, who held the highest ranking among the gentilic (native) authorities. They were particularly important recruiters and manages of forced leborers.

Cafre, pl. cafres (PT) – Originating from the Arabic word *kafir*, which means unbeliever. This term came to encompass indigenous people who did not assimilate European behavior.

Canare, pl. Canares (PT) – Person of Goanese origin.

Caneco (m.), f. caneca, pl. canecos (PT) – Vernacular term used for Christian men of Indian ancestry, chiefly from Goa.

Capitão (PT) – Captain.

Capulana (BNT) – Coloured patterned cloth used by women for multiple purposes, including clothing, headcovers, bedcovers and carrying children.

Caranga (PT spelling) – SEE Karanga.

Cazembe (BNT) – Leader of the *chikunda ensaca.* It likely takes inspiration from the title of the eponymous title of the leader of the Lunda kingdom.

Chefe de Murda (PT) – Lowest rank among traditional leaderships. SEE ALSO *mwinha wa elabo.*

Chefe de Posto (PT) – Head of the Administrative Post.

Chemwali (NY) – Sisterly friend.

Chewa (people) OR Cichewa (language) (BNT) – People and language of Malawi. In Mozambique it is spoken around lake Malawi/Nyassa and Tete Province. The prefix Ci- means "language of." Other prefixes for Bantu languages include E-, Ki-, Shi-, Xi-. SEE ALSO Nyanja/Cinyanja.

Chikunda (SE/NYG) – Military slaves who assisted the *prazo* owners in hunting parties and in raids against local chieftaincies.

Chissumpe (NY) – Supreme divinity among the Maravi. Refers also to the prophet that spoke in its name, who is the spiritual head of the Marave and revered as the divinity.

Chuambo (CHW) – Wooden stockade with moat, surrounding the Portuguese settlement of Quelimane. Origin of the name given to the natives that sought refuge in this settlement.

Chuwabu (people) OR Echuwabu (language) (BNT) – People living, and language spoken in and around the city of Quelimane. Variants of the language are spoken in the following districts in Zambezia: Maganja da Costa, Namacurra, Mocuba, Mopeia, Morrumbala, Lugela, Inhassunge, and Milange.

Cipaio (PT spelling) – SEE *sipai*.

Circunscrição, pl. circunscrições (PT) – A second order administrative division, the circumscriptions were the way the districts were divided to form a territorial constituency, for administrative purposes.

Colono, pl. colonos (PT) – Settler.

Combinação (PT) – Petticoat.

Comissão (PT) – Commission.

Confusos (PT) – Troublemakers.

Coroa (PT) – Crown.

Cospe, inf. cuspir, v. (PT) – Spits (inf. to spit). SEE ALSO cuspo OR cuspe.

Curandeiro (m.), f. curandeira, pl. curandeiros (PT) – Traditional healer.

Curva (BNT) – Tribute offered to the Mwenemutapa by his vassals and visitors.

Cuspo OR cuspe, n. (PT) – spit.

D

Desgraça (PT) – Misery, misfortune.

Desterrado, pl. desterrados (PT) – exiled, person deported from one colony to another as punishment for petty crimes, vagrancy, or political opposition.

Dinamizadora, pl. dinamizadoras (PT) – Dinamizer, person who stimulates people to do something.

Dona, pl. donas (PT) – Female feudal landowners, circa sixteenth to eighteenth century. The term derives from the honorific title 'Don' used in the Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian medieval context. It was a title originally reserved for royalty, select nobles, and high ecclesiastic officials.

Dono, pl. donos (PT) – Owners, rulers of the land, those who determine the fate of others.

E

Eluga (CHW/MKH) – Male initiation rites.

Embusteiro (PT) – Impostor, characterization of the Maravi prophet Chissumpe by the Portuguese.

Emwali (CHW/MKH) – Female initiation rites.

Ensaca, pl. ensacas (PT) – Group of slaves. Term used for both female and male slaves.

Escudo (PT) – Old Portuguese currency.

Esposa (PT) – Wife. SEE also *mulher*.

Estado da Índia (PT) – State of India, the entity that administered the Portuguese possessions across the Indian Ocean, including those on the East African coast. It was founded in 1505 and oversaw the African territories until 1752.

Esteira, pl. esteiras (PT) – Straw mats women use to sit.

F

Família (PT) – The word means family, but colloquially is used to refer to someone who is a relative.

Filha do dono (PT) – Daughter of the owner.

Foreiro, pl. foreiros (PT) – Rent payer, usually for the use of a piece of land in a larger property.

Fumo OR fumu, pl. afumo OR afumu, f. fumu-acaze (BNT) – chief, king, f. woman chief.

G

Guerra do Mulimao (CPP) – War of the German, meaning WWI.

I

Indígena, pl. indígenas (PT) – Native people.

Inhahanda OR Nehanda – Title of second ritual wife of Mwenemutapa. Usually a female relative. SEE ALSO Mzarira/Mazvarira

Inscrição (PT) – Inscription, enrollment, or registration. Coloquially used to refer to household surveys.

Imposto de palhota (PT) – 'Hut tax' collected by the colonial administration, payable per household.

K

Kafir (AR) – Unbeliver, term used to refer to African populations who had not been converted to Islam. SEE ALSO cafre, pl. cafres.

Kalimany, kalimany munatabue (CHW) – Incentive expression used the *anyakoda* to stimulate other women to produce, meaning "go on, go on, or else you know."

Kalinde (CHW) – Term for paramount chief that preceded *samasoa* in Macuse area.

Karanga (SN) – Peoples of the Mwenemutapa kingdom, collectively known as Shona-karanga.

Karonga (NY) – Paramount chief of the Maravi.

L

Língua, pl. línguas (PT) – Means language, but in this context it refers to translators.

Lobolo OR lovolo (BNT) – Bride price, more common in patrilinear contexts. SEE ALSO *pethe.*

Lobolada (CPP) – A woman for whom bride price has been paid.

Lomwe (people) OR Elomwe (language) (BNT) – a variant of Makhuwa, people living in northern Zambezia, southern Nampula and Malawi.

Lolo (people) or Elolo (language) (BNT) – a variant of Makhuwa, people living in the western districts of Zambezia, Morrumbala and Derre.

Luane (SE/CHW) – Manor, large residences where the *prazo* owners lived.

M

Machamba, pl. machambas (CPP) – *agrucultural plots.*

Machinde (SN) – *Shona-karanga princes. SEE Shoba-karanga.*

Mfumukazi OR *mafumukazi* (NY) – SEE fumo/fumo-acaze.

Mahindo (people) Emahindo (language) (BNT) – Related to the Makhuwa language, spoken mainly in the region of the former *prazo* Mahindo, in the outskirts of Quelimane.

Mainato (CPP) – Male domestic help. Word with origin in the Indic languages, meaning someone who washes clothes.

Makhuwa-Lomwe – SEE Lomwe.

Makhuwa (people) OR Emakhuwa (language) (BNT) – Most spoken language in Mozambique. Spoken in four provinces, Niassa, Cabo Delgado, Nampula with the variant Makhuwa-Lomwe spoken in Zambezia and Malawi. Echuwabu is also a more distant variant.

Makorekore (NY) – SEE *Shona-karanga.*

Makubare (CHW) – woven coconut tree leaves, used for roofing, among other things.

Maluata (CHW) – Money purse used around the waste.

Mambo (BNT) – Paramount chief, king.

Maravi – Polity that emerged around the sixteenth century from peoples who migrated from central Africa, in Luba country, todays Congo.

Mazambo (BNT) – *SEE Mambo.*

Mazarira OR Mazvarira – Title of first ritual wife of the Mwenemutapa, usually his enate sister. SEE ALSO Inhahanda/Nehanda.

Mazoma (CHW/MKH) – Drums.

Mfecane (BNT) – Great migration by Ngoni peoples, following the Zulu wars in the mid-1800s.

Mfumu (BNT) – SEE *fumo/fumu.*

Mistas (PT) – Woman of mixed parentage.

Mkazi (NY) – Woman.

Mlongo (NY) – Sister.

Mlongo msuweni (NY) – Cousin-sister, daughter of a parent's sibling.

Moleque, pl. moleques (PT) – Houseboy, servant.

Monitor de algodão (PT) – Cotton monitor, supervisor of cotton forced labor.

Mouro, pl. mouros (PT) – Moor, term the Portuguese used to refer to Arab people.

Mozungo OR mzungo, pl. azungo (SE) - Literally means "lord" in Cisena. Starting from the seventeenth century it was used to refer to the Afro-Asian-European men, as *dona* was used to refer to the women.

Mwadamwene mwanu (MKH) – Wife of a chief. SEEL ALSO *mussano.*

Mucata, pl. amucata (CHW) – subordinate to *nyakoda*, controlled smaller groups of slave women.

Mucheliwa (MKH) – Prisoner, name attributed to people who were imprisoned. SEE ALSO Preso.

Mud'are (CHW) – In Quelimane, known as slaves, who surrender themselves to service. In Macuse, name of a counsellor.

Mukaranga (SN/NYG) – Junior royal wife/lady in waiting among Shona-Karanga and vaNyungwe, also of royal blood. Carried out orders conveyed by chief wives through the senior lady in waiting. SEE ALSO Warango.

Mulata (PT) – Mulatto woman. SEE ALSO *mista*.

Mulher (PT) – Woman OR spouse.

Mulher Grande (PT) – Big woman, equivalent to big man, meaning dynastic queens, queen mothers, co-queens (sisters of kings).

Murmuchem (CPP) – Termite mound.

Mussano OR amussano (CHW) – Wife of a chief. SEE ALSO Mwadamwene mwanu.

Musarre, pl. Wasarre (NYG) – Daughters of the vaNyungwe king, also have the rank of junior wives, meaning that they subordinated to the main queen. SEE Warango.

Mussoco (BNT) – Head tax, payable by every adult.

Mutapa (SN) – Leader of the Mwenemutapa empire.

Muzobe (MKH) – Jump rope dance.

Mwala wa Sena (SE) – Door of the S. Marçal de Sena fort, the old capital of Rivers Cuama.

Mwali (NY) – (Uninitiated) maiden, also Maravi queen mother, co-ruler that gives legitimacy to the Karonga.

Mwene, pl. amwene (MKH/CHW) – Male clan co-leader among the Makhuwa. Leader subordinate to the régulo, in charge of several unrelated families, elsewhere.

Mwenemutapa – Important empire that developed to the south of the Zambezi river from the thirteenth century until the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries. At its height it stretched from the Zambezi to the Limpopo rivers, and from the Indian ocean to the

highlands of Zimbabwe. In the process it suffered several secessions, from which smaller kingdoms derived. SEE Quiteve AND Sedanda.

Mwini dziko (NY) – Owner of the land, original from the land.

Mwinha wa elabo (CHW) – Owner or ruler of the world/land, descendent of the area's founding elder. This rank was substituted by *chefe de murda*.

N

Nabuiza OR Nyazvidza – Wife of Mwenemutapa who lived at the court.

Namalaga, pl. anamalaga (CHW) – Counsellor, advisor.

Natural, pl. naturais (PT) – locally born children, with European fathers and native mothers.

Negrinha, pl. negrinhas (PT) – Black servant girl.

Nehanda (SN) – SEE Inhahanda.

Nemaunga – Quiteve queen.

Nhara, pl. nharas (CPP) – SEE *sinhara.*

*Nihimo (*MKH*)* – Ancestral clan among the Makhuwa.

Ningomanhe – Quiteve queen.

Nossa Senhora do Livramento (PT) – Our Lady of Deliverance, patron saint of Quelimane.

Nunu, pl. *anunu (MKW)* – Muslim equivalent to *nyanye*, wife of prominent Muslim man.

Nyakawa (CHW) – Previous denomination of *mwene*.

Nyakoda, pl. anyakoda (NY/CHW) – Organizer of female labor, long running category of female leadership, mentioned as part of the Maravi polity, the *prazo* system, and the chartered companies.

Nyakazoa (CHW) – Leadership rank that preceeded *samasoa*, to which others subordinated.

Nyanja (people) OR Cinyanja (language) – Language spoken in the provinces neighbouring Malawi (Tete, Niassa and Zambezia). There are several variants spoken in Mozambique: Cinyanja, Cicewa, Cingoni, Cimanganja. SEE ALSO Chewa/Cichewa.

Nyangu – Important woman in the Maravi polity, considered ritual mother of the Karonga.

Nyanye, pl. anyanye (CHW) – Wife of influential or wealthy man or leader.

Nyungwe (people) OR Cinyungwe (language) – Language spoken in Tete province and neighbouring countries (Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The language is related both to Cichewa and Cisena.

O

Ombreiro (PT) – Long sleeved bloused worn by the *donas*.

P

Pasta (PT) – Leadership position with responsibility.

Patanikwa (CHW) – Caramelized coconut bars, popular desert in Quelimane.

Pethe (CHW) – Ring, meaning engagement ring. Also stands for bride's wealth. SEE ALSO *lobolo*.

Pia-mwene, pl. apia-mwene (MKH) – Female clan co-leader among the Makhuwa. ALSO spelled pia-muene (PT).

População (PT) – People, community members led by traditional leaders.

Possibilidade (PT) – Means, meaning person with means.

Posto (PT) – Colloquial shorter version of Posto Administrativo, meaning Administrative Post.

Prazo, pl. prazos OR Prazos da Corôa (PT) – Land leased by the Portuguese Crown to settlers in the early colonial period, usually over three generations.

Prazeiros (PT) – Leasers of *prazos*.

Preso (PT) – Prisoner, name attributed to people who were imprisoned. SEE ALSO Mucheliwa (CHW).

Q

Quermesse, pl. quermesses (PT) – kirmess (also spelled kermesse or kermis), a word borrowed from the Dutch words "kerk" (church) and "mis" (mass). These are typically indoor events combining fairs and entertainment.

Quiteve – Kingdom originally part of the Mwenemutapa kingdom, then vassal kingdom, and finally seceded and became autonomous. SEE ALSO Sedanda.

R

Rainha (PT) – Queen, in Mozambique it is the term used for autonomous female leaders of different ranks. More rarely may also refer to women married to affluent men.

Ranho (PT) – Phlegm.

Regedor OR Régulo (PT) – Kinglet, small king. Paramount chief at the top of the traditional leadership hierarchy.

Regulado (PT) – Area oversaw by a *régulo*.

Rei (PT) – King.

Reino (PT) – Kingdom.

Reinol, pl. reinóis (PT) – Originally from the kingdom, meaning born in Portugal.

Rios de Cuama AND Rios de Sena – Previous name for roughly the region known as Zambezia today.

Rozwi (also spelled Rosvi) – Refers to the Rozwi-Changamire dynasty of the Mwenemutapa, funded circa 1684 and lasted until circa 1833/4.

S

Samasoa (CHW) – Paramount chief that preceded the *régulo*.

Secretário de Bairro, pl. secretários (PT) – Neighborhood secretary, title given to a community leader with responsibilities over a neighborhood. This figure emerged after independence, when the *regulados* were extinguished. They were a party-appointed position, as opposed to chosen from the local ruling families.

Sedanda – Kingdom originally part of the Mwenemutapa kingdom, then vassal kingdom, and finally seceded and became autonomous. SEE ALSO Quiteve.

Sena (people) OR Cisena (language) (BNT) – Language used by people in four provinces in Mozambique (Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia), Malawi and Zimbabwe. It cemented as a *lingua franca* when the Portuguese began using it. This was the preferred language spoken by the *donas*.

Sepanda (SE/CHW) – Leader in the hierarchy of slaves and forced laborers.

Shehe (AR) – Muslim cleric.

Shona (people) OR Cishona (language) (BNT) – Language spoken mainly in Zimbabwe, in Mozambique there are several variants, namely Utee, Hwesa, Barwe, Manyika, Ndau, Nyai, spoken in Sofala, Manica and Tete provinces.

Shona-Karanga (SN) – Collective population of the Mwnemutapa empire, known as Makorekore by the populations they dominated. SEE ALSO Karanga.

Sinhara, pl. sinharas (CPP) - pidgin term corrupted from the Portuguese senhora (madam), a way to refer to respectable women.

Sipai (BNT) – Term used for native soldiers both in India and Mozambique, from the Persian *sipahi*. Spelled *cipaio (pl. cipaios)* in Portuguese.

Siriri (MKH) – Dance danced exclusively by women.

Sura (CHW) – Fermented drink made of coconut serum that also serves as the leavener for bread.

Swahili (people) OR Kiswahili (language) (BNT) – Lingua franca spoken along the coast of Eastern Africa. Its southernmost variant, Kimwani, is spoken in Mozambique. The Portuguese expansion reduced considerably the number of speakers to the south of Nampula province.

T

Tarefas (PT) – roles.

Terras baixas (PT) – Shallow lands, believed to refer to the land of Sofala. SEE ALSO Bilad al Sufala.

Tonga (BNT) – People living in the border between Zambezia and Tete provinces. Variant of Cisena.

Tufo (MKH) – Dance performed by women, associated with Islamic celebrations. The name derives from Swahili *Dufu*, which is a large-diameter frame drum.

U

Ubuntu (BNT) – human interconnectedness, a tenet of the African Renaissance movement.

Umoja, Ujamaa, Ujima (SW) – Unity, fraternity, collective work. Tenets of African Socialism predicated by Tanzanian president Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere.

Undi – Branch of the Maravi empire, resulting from succession splits.

V

Vanyai (SN) – Slave warriors of the Mwenemutapa.

Vila (PT) – Villa, also (depending on the context) town or district center.

W

Wahosi (NYG) – First wife of vaNyngwe king (Mambo).

Wuabanda (NYG) – Older women of royal blood, lady in waiting to the Wahosi, among the vaNyungwe.

Warango (NYG) – SEE Mukaranga.

Y

Yao OR Yaao (people) AND Ciyao OR Ciyaao (language) – People living and language spoken primordially in northern Mozambican province of Niassa, also in Malawi and southern Tanzania.

Z

Zimbaoe OR Zimbabwe (SN) – Court of the Mwenemutapa and chief wives of the Shona-Karanga. Also stone walls that surrounded the court.

Zinj OR Zanj (AR) – Term used by Arab geographers to refer to the south eastern coast of Africa and its dark skinned people.

Annex 3: Ethical considerations regarding the memory of historical actors

One of the primary responsibilities of a researcher is to protect the identity of their informants. By engaging in a historical ethnography, this exercise is less straightforward than one could anticipate. I have anonymized my sources by identifying them only through their relationship to the composite portraits of the women the monograph describes. However, it is impossible to change/rename the geographies they are attached to, as being concrete about localities and family kinship groups is essential to the dissertation's linkages and arguments. I must also name the composite women by their actual names, as they are historical figures. Although I attempted to anonymize my sources to the extent possible, the historical figures' naming makes it possible to identify their relatives, who were my sources. Thus, my informants' only protection is if I do not indicate who specifically said what about the composite women.

A few informants can be identified, not by name but by positions, as is the case with Mwene Raia and Régulo Bala. In the transcripts of some of the dialogues, I identify Mwene Raia. Furthermore, one chapter about Rainha Bala is the description given by Régulo Bala. Their particular positions strengthen the thesis arguments. Additionally, as I am not writing about politically volatile issues, there was a need to balance the dangers of people being identified and the objective of substantializing and demonstrating localized political cosmologies, so far not described or analyzed.

When I started the project in 2013, the system of ethical clearance was not yet in place. Therefore I did not go through this process. Moreover, ethical clearance for this kind of research is not mandatory in Mozambique. In keeping with my research experience in Mozambique, I explained the research purpose to all informants and taped only a few interviews where I had permission. I also requested permission to take photos of the pictures and places they showed to me. In some of the interviews, the informants were clear about issues they did not wish to see reproduced in the monograph. Those issues were excluded per their own request.

Additionally, there is the necessary care for the reputation of the subjects of the study. The biographical text needs to consider the potential impact on the reputations of all mentioned, both living and dead (Belliotti, 2011; Marquis, 1985). The question of what constitutes harm or wrong to the reputation is entirely moral. There are competing positions on whether a person and their interests can truly be harmed posthumously. One position contends that what qualifies as harm while a person is alive, such as undermining their achievements, should also be assumed to cause harm posthumously. The alternative position contends that people cannot be harmed after death because they do not retain their interests posthumously (Belliotti, 2011; Callahan, 1987; Levenbook, 1984).

In the present monograph, I employ Belliotti's modest thesis approach to posthumous wrongs, through which I bestow the living with the custody of the interests of the dead. As I am not aware of the dead's specific wishes and interests, only their living custodians, represented by my informants, can judge the fairness and truthfulness of my interpretation and reconstitution of the dead's biographies.

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