

Muslim Memories of the Liberation War in Cabo Delgado

LIAZZAT J.K. BONATE
Seoul National University

... numerous reputedly historical events were never anyone's memory.¹

The transition from socialism to the neo-liberal model after the end of the civil war in Mozambique prompted a public debate about the meaning and memories of the liberation struggle. While the Frelimo party has been re-assessing and reaffirming its 'ownership' over the collective memory of the nation-state, whose foundational myth is based on the independence struggle, the professional historians, veterans and disenfranchised groups have been attempting to insert their own insights and memories into that debate.

This article addresses memories of the liberation war by the ordinary Muslims, including male and female guerrilla fighters and political prisoners interviewed in the Paquitequete neighbourhood of Pemba City, Cabo Delgado province, which was one of the pivotal regions of the war. Through their stories the article attempts to give voice to marginalized groups and bring the agency of the forgotten into the public and ongoing contemporary debate in order to re-inscribe them into the national narratives of the independence struggle.

Introduction

The experiences of the liberation war (1964-1974) of the so-called 'ordinary' people, of those who were neither political nor military leaders, have rarely been addressed in the historiography of Mozambique, except perhaps for the Makonde in Mueda plateau, usually hailed as principal foot soldiers, actors and heroes of the independence war.² In addition, Muslims are also largely absent from the literature despite constituting a sizeable portion of the population of Cabo Delgado and Niassa regions, the epicentres of the liberation war, and being long-term historical and often quite intimate neighbours of the Makonde. Their contributions are usually omitted from Mozambican and Frelimo grand narratives of the nationalist struggle; hardly any Muslim is mentioned on national commemorative occasions, and there are no visible Muslim public figures celebrated as liberation heroes.

I addressed some of these issues in my previous research based on Portuguese colonial archival sources, especially those of the PIDE³ and SCCIM,⁴ which, contrary to contemporary amnesia, revealed that Muslim support of the liberation struggle in

1 P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 497.

2 See H. G. West, *Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2005); P. Israel, "The Formulaic Revolution: Song and the "Popular Memory" of the Liberation Struggle," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, L (1), 197 (2010), 181-216.

3 Acronym for *Policia Internacional de Defesa do Estado* (International Police for the Defence of the State).

4 Acronym for *Serviços de Centralização e Coordenação de Informação de Moçambique* (Services for Centralization and Coordination of Information in Mozambique), an intelligence and secret service branch;

northern Mozambique was widespread and that Islamic religious and cultural networks played important roles in popular mobilization.⁵ The colonial regime began taking notice of these activities in the late 1950s, and in 1960 it gave a free reign to PIDE and DGS⁶ to harass everyone who was suspected of even sympathising with the idea of independence. Along with the Makonde, Muslims were especially targeted because of their long-term and deep historical kinship, religious and cultural ties to Muslims in Tanganyika (and Zanzibar) from where the liberation struggle was launched.

The Portuguese sources, however, focused on traditional authorities, such as *regulos* (traditional chiefs), *apia-mwene* (women chiefs) and the religious establishment, to a greater degree than on ordinary Muslims, such as the rank-and-file guerrilla fighters. The sources could not easily access information on the guerrilla fighters although PIDE obtained some data from arrests and tortures. At the same time, Portuguese officials believed that people joining the guerrillas were not able to maintain their religious or cultural distinctiveness because of the supposedly secularizing and 'detribalizing' stance of the leftist-inclined Frelimo leadership. Guerrilla fighters thus were assumed to have become detached from their religious identity and 'traditional' culture.

By combining two overlooked topics in the historiography of Mozambique – the participation in the liberation struggle of the non-elite people and followers of Islamic faith – **this article focuses on memories of the rank-and-file Muslims in order to give them a voice and an opportunity to remember and recount their own experiences.** This might help to overcome historians' neglect of their agency and the marginalisation of their contributions by the post-colonial political leadership to some extent, and challenge how the category of the liberation or nationalist fighter has been constituted in both the historiography and the official nationalist narratives of the independence struggle of Mozambique.

The article is based on interviews conducted in Paquitequete *bairro* (ward) of Pemba city, Cabo Delgado Province in December of 2007. I chose Paquitequete because it is a quintessentially Muslim *bairro* both in historical and contemporary terms. It has an overwhelmingly Muslim majority population (estimated at about 98%), and Islam was present in what is today Pemba city long before the Portuguese built their village in the nineteenth century.⁷ Thus I expected Paquitequete to offer first-hand evidence and empirical data for the participation of the Muslims in the liberation war, in particular as guerrilla fighters.

History and Memory of the Liberation Struggle

My fieldwork was part of the research project on the History of the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa (1960-1994) under the SADC Secretariat directed by General

5 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Muslims and the Liberation Struggle in Northern Mozambique' in H. Sapire & C. Saunders, eds., *The Struggle for Southern Africa: New Local and Global Perspectives* (University of Cape Town Press, 2013), 58-75; L. J. K. Bonate, 'Governance of Islam in Colonial Mozambique' in M. Maussen, V. Bader & A. Moors, eds., *Colonial and Post-Colonial Governance of Islam* (Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 29-48; L. J. K. Bonate, 'Muslims of Northern Mozambique and the Liberation Movements', *Social Dynamics*, 35, 2 (September 2009), 280-294; L. J. K. Bonate, 'Traditions and Transitions: Islam and Chiefship in Northern Mozambique, ca. 1850-1974' (PhD Diss., University of Cape Town, 2007).

6 Acronym for *Direcção Geral de Segurança* (General Directorate for Security).

7 Pemba was built upon an old Swahili settlement. See E. Medeiros, *História de Cabo Delgado e do Niassa (c. 1836-1929)* (Maputo: Central Impressora, 1997), 61; L. J. K. Bonate, 'L'Agence des musulmans d'Afrique. Les transformations de l'islam à Pemba au Mozambique.' *Afrique Contemporaine*, 231 (2009), 63.

Hashim Mbita of Tanzania. In Mozambique it was coordinated by the Director of the Mozambique Historical Archives, Professor Joel das Neves Tembe. The archives hold the life histories of liberation struggle veterans, both civilian and military, which were collected by recording and videotaping their interviews in order to preserve their memories.⁸

The project stemmed from the preoccupation of the region's statesmen, mostly comprised of former veterans of the independence struggle including the Frelimo government in Mozambique, along with the fact that many veterans were getting too old or dying and their memories were at risk of being lost forever. The other preoccupation was with the growing number of competing narratives in the form of memoirs and autobiographies that are being continuously released into the public sphere. In Mozambique, these are written by people of various persuasions, mostly by veterans but also by family members of those who were considered at one time 'enemies of the state' and 'traitors', like Barnabé Lucas Ncomo, Uria Simango's son.⁹ One of the goals of the project then was to confront, undermine and possibly silence alternative narratives of the past that challenge state power that legitimates itself through a particular version of the collective memory of the liberation struggle.

João Paulo Borges Coelho maintains that because Frelimo has not made its archives available to the public, despite the legal time lapse, the history of the liberation struggle has not yet been written but rather kept as a 'simplistic fable' in oral form. This fact, he argues, enables the veterans to write and publish their memoirs in a way that tends to reinforce Frelimo's vision of the independence struggle.¹⁰ But the proliferation of memoirs seems to result from the end of the civil war in 1992, and consequent democratization of the public sphere, which opened up opportunities for the varying claims and contests over the past. On the other hand, the release of the memoirs also seems to reflect the responses of Frelimo's transition from the revolutionary socialism of the liberation struggle era to a neo-liberal model. This transition prompted acute social inequalities and a sense of rupture in the collective and individual identities of the nation and its citizens. As M. Anne Pitcher observes, the current official discourse centres on constructing 'a new national identity around the main constructs of neo-liberalism' with 'organized forgetting' of the socialist past by the government, which is contested by the insistence on 'remembering' it by others.¹¹ To some, the legitimacy of Frelimo as the 'founding father of the nation' became suspect due to its alleged betrayal of the promise of the liberation struggle to build an egalitarian society. Thus veterans' resort to memories was meant to reaffirm their own heroic nationalist identity linked to the leadership of Frelimo, whose past and present are undergoing public scrutiny and re-assessment.

'The mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society', emphasised Maurice Halbwachs; memory is provisional and is defined by its present uses, and it is continually reproduced because through it 'a sense of identity is perpetuated'.¹² Memory 'for both individuals and groups is the process by which people construct

8 I am deeply grateful to Hashim Mbita Project and especially to Professor Tembe for this opportunity.

9 B. L. Ncomo, *Uria Simango: Um Homem, Uma Causa* (2nd ed., Maputo: Edições Novafrica, 2004).

10 J. P. Borges Coelho, 'Abrir a Fábula. Questões da política do passado em Moçambique', unpublished paper presented at Coimbra University, on June 1, 2011.

11 M. A. Pitcher, 'Forgetting from Above and Memory from Below: Strategies of Limitation and Struggling in Postsocialist Mozambique', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 76, 1 (2006), 88-112.

12 M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Lewis A. Coser ed. and trans. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 47, 51.

personal narratives supportive of integrated and efficacious identities in the present'.¹³ In Wulf Kansteiner's words,

Attempts at historicizing memory ... indicate that our crises of memory are concomitant with crises of identity. Memory is valorised where identity is problematised. The focus on identity highlights the political and psychological use-value of collective memories.¹⁴

The 'simplistic oral fable' that Borges Coelho refers to is the collective memory of the liberation struggle, which became the foundational myth of the independent nation-state of Mozambique. As Frelimo led the struggle to independence, it was credited with founding of the nation and thus 'given' the 'ownership' of that memory. The Frelimo version of that past is a 'selective tradition', represented and reproduced in its leaders' speeches and various public documents, as well as on annual national commemorations of the important dates of the struggle.

Halbwachs has defined collective memory as the active past that forms current identities. It is continually reshaped by the social context into which it is received.¹⁵ Collective memory is mediated through a set of narratives about the past that 'provide a matrix for individual identities and shape and sustain collective identities'.¹⁶ The collective memory is not one memory; rather, there are as many memories as there are social and political groups and individuals that could offer testimonies or use memory for political or other ends. But when it comes to the foundational narrative of the nation-state, its general outline is usually shared, appropriated and internalized by the majority of the citizens through a tacit consensus that goes with adopting a national collective identity, despite the existence of internal differences and divisions along ethnic, religious and other lines, and varying versions of the same narrative.

The narrative necessarily contains a selective dimension of the past and of real historical events, such as specific dates, settings, actions, places and names of people, which involves inclusion, exclusion, remembering and forgetting. When one version of the narrative is 'officialised' or made 'hegemonic' by the state, then the state takes 'over its emplotment and imposes a canonical narrative by means of intimidation or seduction, fear or flattery...' thus, 'stripping the social actors of their original power to recount their actions by themselves'.¹⁷ This kind of narrative shapes the speaking and thinking of individuals to such a degree that they can be viewed as 'co-authors' when reflecting on the past.¹⁸ Even the counter-hegemonic discourse is structured by that narrative.¹⁹

Collective memory is also mediated by symbolic and mnemonic cultural practices, such as commemorations, monuments, museums, and archives, as Pierre Nora

13 C. P. Boyd, 'The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 617 (May 2008), 133-148, 134.

14 W. Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies', *History and Theory*, 41, 2 (May 2002), 179-197, 184.

15 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

16 Boyd, 'The Politics of History', 134.

17 Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*: 448.

18 A. V. Wertsch, 'Collective Memory and Narrative Templates', *Social Research*, 75, 1 (Spring, 2008), 133-156.

19 R. Roberts, 'History and Memory: The Power of Statist Narratives', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 33, 3 (2000), 514.

describes in *Lieux de Mémoire*, which are manipulated by public authority.²⁰ Nora effectively demonstrates that memory is one of the mobilizing forces in the modern nation-state:

Commemoration is a calculated strategy for stabilizing collective memories that are otherwise protean and provisional. In its monuments and shrines, it locates memorable places of the landscape of memory. It anchors the past in the present, creating an illusion that time is made to stand still.²¹

In the case of Mozambique, and as Borges Coelho points out, the hegemonic narrative is also constituted by the set of events and related dates, punctuating the calendar as national holidays; by places which recently have been rebuilt and re-imagined as sacred landscapes for pilgrimage, where annual commemorations take place; and by names of those celebrated as national heroes. The general outline of the narrative is as follows: the struggle begins in 1960 with the Mueda massacre, which establishes the Makonde as the initiators; the unification of the three Mozambican liberation movements into the name of Frelimo in 1962 with Eduardo Mondlane as the leader; the beginning of the liberation war with the 'first shot' by Alberto Chipande (who is also a Makonde) in 1964 in Chai, Cabo Delgado; the 2nd Congress of Frelimo on July 20-25, 1968 in Madjedje, Niassa, which tackled the internal strife and initiated purging of the 'traitors'; the assassination of Eduardo Mondlane on 3 February 1969, after which Samora Machel became the head of the movement in 1970, and with whom the movement took a more populist and Marxist revolutionary form; operation Gordian Knot by Kaulza de Arriaga in 1970; Antonio de Spínola nominated Vice-Chief of the Major Estate of the Armed Forces of Portugal on January 17, 1974 and the fall of the *New State* through military and popular uprising on April 25, 1974; September 7, 1974, the signing of the Lusaka Accord, and establishing of the transitional government; and finally, the proclamation of the independence on July 25, 1975 with Machel hoisting the new flag and becoming the first president of the independent nation-state. One of the main emotive characteristics of the narrative is about shared suffering of the hardships imposed by the colonial regime and the deprivations of war and the sacrifices of the heroic youth for the sake of the nation during that war.

The liberation war and the struggle constitute a real past and history; nobody disputes that. The disagreements arise from the selection of the elements of emplotment, about which people, places and events are deemed to be important enough to be remembered at the expense of others to be silenced and forgotten, as well as which elements should be enshrined in the 'hegemonic' narrative, because there is a hierarchy of the elements in terms of their value, and therefore their public or state recognition and celebration. The marginalized or forgotten individuals and groups repeatedly try to inscribe their memories into the canonised narrative as long as there are opportunities to do so. As Paul Ricoeur has emphasised: 'The major fact made apparent by the comparison between history's project of truth and memory's aim of faithfulness is that the small miracle of recognition has no equivalent in history...'²²

20 P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Lieux de Mémoire*', *Representations*, (Spring, 1989), 7-24.

21 P. Hutton, 'Recent Scholarship on Memory and History', *The History Teacher*, 33, 4 (Aug., 2000), 537.

22 Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 497.

And, contrary to Borges Coelho's view that the narrative of the liberation struggle is beginning to age or disappear with the death of the testimonies (i.e., veterans), the nationalist statist myth of origin normally tends to remain perpetually relevant as long as there is a nation-state with its citizens keeping the narrative alive.

Frelimo is currently under stress not only to reassert its identity as the 'founder of the nation' and reaffirm its 'ownership' over the collective memory of the independence struggle, but also to rebuild that memory to suit the new context. That conclusion was probably drawn largely from its experiences of the democratic elections after the end of the civil war, which forced the party to realize that its historical credentials could not guarantee popular vote. While in the first elections it won almost everywhere except for traditional Renamo strongholds, in the second one it lost in some unexpected regions, including historically Muslim areas of northern Mozambique like Nacala, Angoche and Mozambique Island. Moreover, there are rumours that it was going to lose in Mocimboa da Praia as well if it was not for some urgent last minute repairing and concessions. Mocimboa da Praia is also a historical Muslim coastal region, but it was one of the key Frelimo bases during the independence war and, later, of the liberated zones. A considerable number of veterans reside there. In the third elections, a new opposition party dominated by young professionals and descendants of the former 'enemies of the state' emerged and posed formidable challenges to Frelimo (and to Renamo too). While Frelimo responded to these new political actors and to dissidents within its own ranks with anger, sabotage, intimidations and concessions, it also seems to have embarked upon reviewing its past and remaking its present identity.

Among other things, it seems to be gradually gaining consciousness that the new 'official' version of the collective memory has to be more inclusive than the earlier reductionist one, which focused on excluding people branded as 'enemies', 'collaborators of the colonial regime', 'obscurantist', the religious, merchants and small capitalists, etc., from the nascent nation-state and its foundational narrative. In line with this, the party, through the *Ministério de Antigos Combatentes* (The Ministry of Old Veterans, as opposed to the 'new veterans' resulting from the recent civil war between Frelimo and Renamo, 1976-1992), has recently commissioned Mozambican historians to write an official history of the liberation war and encouraged them to collect veterans' memories through projects like the Hashim Mbita one. It is true that this project did not seem to be an oral history from the 'bottom up', which seeks to recover memories of forgotten, marginalized or disenfranchised groups or individuals. Rather it had intention to 'build' an archival collection of the liberation struggle in general, and it privileged to a certain extent those who played the leading roles.²³ Truth be told, many veterans, even those who had important positions during the independence struggle, did feel marginalized and forgotten by the party and the nation. They made their feelings unreservedly clear during the interviews. But the fact that the project also accommodated proposals, such as mine, that did not squarely fit into the official Frelimo narrative, is indicative of a change in attitude of the party leadership.

23 In a sense similar to the concerns of the early practitioners of oral history in the USA in mid-1950s, as described by E. D. Swain, 'Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary role in the Twenty-First Century', *The American Archivist*, 66, 1 (Spring-Summer, 2003), 140-41.

Borges Coelho states that the inaccessibility of the Frelimo archives to professional historians has deprived the public of fuller and more accurate accounts of the past than what the 'simplistic oral fable' or the memoirs of the veterans permit. He stresses the importance of the archives and believes in the ability of professional historians to write an 'objective' and complex narrative of the past, while criticizing internal inconsistencies and biases of the veteran's memoirs. His stance echoes the classical view that history as a field of social inquiry that documents and preserves the knowledge of the past was launched in order to displace the unreliable and fallible individual memory.²⁴ Archives were thereafter given a greater legitimacy at the expense of memory in the historian's 'project of truth'. Borges Coelho's complaint about veterans' tendentious and flawed memory being 'legitimated by fixing it in writing' could be construed as an irritation with the fact that they are becoming somewhat similar to the archival material or might be perceived as evidence. As Ricoeur has put it so poetically, 'I was there – entrusted in this way to another's credibility, testimony transmits to history the energy of declarative memory. But the living word of witness, transmuted into writing, melts away into the mass of archival documents.'²⁵

Reinhart Kössler discusses similar perceptions of history in Namibia and points out that

All such claims and concerns rely on a conception of 'history' that is, more often than not in a naïve way, 'positivist' or objectivist, based on the belief that facts have to be established and will then certainly speak for themselves (and thereby, most definitely, for the concerns of one's own reference group). Such historical conceptions are put forward with conviction that the ensuing controversies over 'history' occasionally become acrimonious.²⁶

History is concerned with a 'sequence of events' and with 'transformation'.²⁷ It stands for 'a system of critical inquiry bound by rules that govern the use of evidence and argumentation', and a historian abides by

the principle of disciplinary autonomy – that is, he or she is professionally obligated to put distance between the object of study and his or her own subjectivity and to resist the temptation to view circumstances in essentialist and deterministic terms.²⁸

However, as a disciplined discourse in a Foucauldian sense, it is also a 'form of social memory' that 'provides a "genealogy of the present" and thus is susceptible to change over time.'²⁹ And, as the case of Zimbabwe demonstrates, history is not

24 S. F. Zamponi, 'Of Storytellers and Master Narratives: Modernity, Memory, and History in Fascist Italy'. *Social Science History*, 22, 4 (Winter, 1998), 421.

25 Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*: 497.

26 R. Kössler, 'Facing a Fragmented Past: Memory, Culture and Politics in Namibia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33, 2 (June, 2007), 363.

27 Kössler, 'Facing a Fragmented Past': 364.

28 Boyd, 'The Politics of History and Memory': 135.

29 *Ibid.*, 134.

innocent or impartial, and it is not guarded against the impact and play of power.³⁰ History is a

selective representation of the past, a narrativised interpretation of the events. History does not merely reproduce facts; rather, it constructs their meaning by framing them within a cultural tradition that is intersubjectively shared. History resorts to discursive forms that are in themselves carriers of ideological and political implications.³¹

Thus the denial of access to the Frelimo archives should not preclude historians from writing meaningful accounts of the past, and the analysis of the veterans' memoirs as well as of other representations and narratives of individual and collective memories could serve as important tool for that undertaking.

Oral History and Subjectivity

As I wanted to establish the historical fact of Muslim participation in the liberation war, my fieldwork aim was to identify, and if possible to interview them. Thus, although my approach was that of memory, the actual goal was that of oral history. The oral history method emerged out of necessity to give voice to and reflect the experiences of marginalized, silenced, or ordinary people and groups who were absent from the prevailing meta-narratives of history concerned with big men and political institutions.³² And this was precisely what I had in mind as the purpose of my research. For that reason I decided to reproduce some of the life histories of the people I interviewed in abridged form in this paper.

Oral history envisioned establishing a connection between personal memory, narratives obtained through interviews and larger social, cultural and political formations. In its foundational phase, oral history practitioners took the interviews as historical narrative and 'as a text that can be read in a straightforward way, as a kind of window into temporal consciousness'.³³ The ensuing critique about the unreliability of individual memory and its subjectivity by traditional historians did not offer alternative avenues for tackling the difficulty of bringing the forgotten or disenfranchised actors into history. But the questioning of prevalent historical methods and disciplinary knowledge by the post-structuralists as part of 'the linguistic turn' in social sciences and humanities caused a review of academic history as a discipline with claims of 'objectivity' and 'the truth'.³⁴ Afterwards, oral historians gradually came to refine their methods and approaches, which enabled them to take the subjectivity of the individual and the oral narrative obtained through interview to be analysed in tandem with life circumstances of the interviewed person, his or her relationship with the interviewer, the effect on him/her of the interviewer and of the presumed

30 T. Ranger, 'Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 2 (June, 2004), 215-234; N. Kriger, 'From Patriotic Memories to 'Patriotic History' in Zimbabwe, 1990-2005', *Third World Quarterly*, 27, 6 (2006), 1151-1169.

31 Zamponi, 'Of Storytellers and Master Narratives', 418.

32 See S. Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann; Oxford: James Currey; Nairobi: E.A.E.P; Dar Es Salaam: Mkuki Na Nyota, 1997).

33 G. M. White, 'Memories and Subjectivities', *Ethos*, 28, 4 (December 2008), 495.

34 A. Green, 'Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates', *Oral History*, 32, 2 (Autumn 2004), 35.

audience.³⁵ The guidelines to overcome the biases and unreliability of memory and the subjective nature of the narrative now included a combined reading of the memories together with other historical sources. Alessandro Portelli has pointed out that ‘the peculiarities of oral history’ – orality, narrative form, subjectivity, the ‘different credibility’ of memory, and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee – ‘should be considered as strengths rather than weaknesses.’³⁶

The stress on subjectivity has shown that individual memories and particular ways of discursive structuring of individual experiences are influenced by dominant histories, and by public culture and ideology, which can be also revealed ‘in the silences, discrepancies and idiosyncrasies of personal testimony.’³⁷

Subjectivity of memory provided clues not only about the meanings of historical experience, but also about the relationship between past and present, between memory and personal identity, and between individual and collective memory.³⁸

My field research was exploratory and short-term, and the number of people interviewed and the length of the interviews were quite limited. I was not sure what to expect from interviews and wondered whether they should be confined to religious leaders and Muslim *regulos*, whose great numbers are indicated in the Portuguese sources, or whether it would be possible to talk to actual former fighters who maintained their religious identity throughout the war and beyond. But even this limited fieldwork produced interesting results and showed a great promise for the future research opportunities. It was possible to identify and talk to some of the actual Muslim fighters, including Muslim women fighters. It also revealed that there were Muslims who occupied important leadership positions during the war as military commanders and political commissars, such as Adinane Rashide, Dale Abdurrahmane, Alberto Velho, Alberto Gimo, Timamo Mussanja, Swalehe Assumane, Saide Assumane, and Ms Zamuzamu, to mention only a few. Many of them also occupied key posts after independence as district administrators and military officers.

The people to be interviewed were not selected randomly solely on the basis of their religious identity but from among the members of the official liberation war veterans’ association (*Associação dos Antigos Combatentes*). This association is comprised of former guerrilla fighters as well as political prisoners. The latter did not partake in the war as such but were imprisoned by the Portuguese regime and accused of providing support to Frelimo. Their ranks swelled steadily in the 1960s and continued to grow until the end of colonialism in 1974 when the residents of Pemba (then Porto Amélia) along with the rest of the northern part of the country were subjected to extraordinary persecutions by the Portuguese secret service police (PIDE and DGS). The persecutions were not only due to their links to Tanganyika either as migrant labourers, like the Makonde or through Muslim religious and cultural connections, but also because the region became the hub of the war. Thus, the veterans’

35 A. Thomson, ‘Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History’, *The Oral History Review*, 34, 1 (Winter-Spring, 2007), 52-54.

36 Cited in Thomson, ‘Four Paradigm Transformations’, 55

37 *Ibid.*, White, ‘Histories and Subjectivities’, 494.

38 Thomson, ‘Four Paradigm Transformations’, 54.

stories shed light on both personal experiences of those who left their homes and joined the guerrilla ranks as soldiers, nurses and support personnel, and those who stayed behind.

The other reason for the exploratory nature and brevity of the interviews was the veterans' reluctance to talk. I was mindful of the fact that I was representing Frelimo through the Hashim Mbita project and expected such a refusal. Nevertheless, I followed the required protocol in hopes of obtaining the collaboration of the local population. Upon my arrival in Pemba, the provincial government was contacted and the purpose of the research was explained. This was followed by a briefing with the head of the Paquitequete ward and its traditional leader, the *regulo*. Then, the head of the *Associação dos Antigos Combatentes* of Paquitequete was contacted. However, he refused to cooperate until permission was obtained from the provincial sector of the Association. Even then most of the veterans were not cooperative. After I contacted the head of the city division of the Association, who made phone calls to the members of the Paquitequete branch, the problem still persisted. Only when a senior member of the provincial Association was dispatched and held a meeting to persuade the veterans did some finally agree, but many were reluctant to give interviews and others refused completely. Even those who agreed often spoke only when I asked questions, otherwise maintaining a strategic silence.

Besides the problem of my hypothetical association with Frelimo, the refusal and reluctance were also due to the fact that former male guerrilla fighters were active members of the Frelimo party and still considered themselves 'soldiers' who could speak only when their superiors authorized them to do so. On the other hand, they maintained that the liberation struggle was not only their personal stories, but also that of the whole country and most importantly of the 'government' and of the 'Frelimo party'. This apprehension and silence, the fear or unwillingness to challenge the hegemonic canon as well as Frelimo's 'ownership' of that narrative suggested that they were inculcated in military discipline and party loyalty through the experiences of war to a greater degree than others, which could be explained by the fact that most of them, especially the rank-and-file, were teenagers when they joined the war. Because of that, they were probably some of the major victims as well as perpetrators of violence during the liberation war and after independence.³⁹ As many of them entered a military career afterwards, their exposure to war and violence also continued throughout the period of the sixteen-year civil war. Perhaps the accumulated trauma also influenced their decision not to speak or tell as little as possible.

The problem of the experience of violence and trauma is also applicable to the case of the political prisoners in general, but Muslims in particular. While they were victims of unspeakable torture by PIDE and DGS, they were discouraged by Frelimo to talk about it after the independence.⁴⁰ Harry G. West points out that 'even those former political prisoners who had remained in prison until the end of the inde-

39 For a discussion of the post-independence violence, see V. Igreja, 'Frelimo's Political Ruling through Violence and Memory in Postcolonial Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Historical Studies*, 36, 4 (Dec., 2010), 781-799; T. H. Henriksen, *Mozambique's War of Independence, 1964-1974* (Westport, Connecticut and London, England: Greenwood Press, 1983); J. M. Cabrita, *Mozambique: The Tortuous Road to Democracy* (Hampshire and New York, Palgrave, 2000).

40 H. G. West, 'Voices Twice Silenced: Betrayal and Mourning at Colonialism's End in Mozambique', *Anthropological Theory*, 3, 3 (2003), 343-365.

pendence war were treated with suspicion by the post-independence Frelimo state.⁴¹ They were denied a place in the history of the independence war and even erased altogether from 'Frelimo's triumphant historical portrait'.⁴²

The second phase of violence and persecution came with Frelimo in 1977 when the party adopted Marxism and 'scientific socialism' and sought to eliminate a wide variety of social practices and beliefs deemed 'obscurantist', 'backward' and thus contrary to the modernist revolutionary norms, which included Islam. The former Muslim political prisoners, who were left to manage the religious life of the communities when the younger generation became career military and party cadres, were primary victims of state persecution. I provided some examples of this violence in my earlier research.⁴³ It can also be traced from the interviews reproduced below, but I would like to cite a case from an interview that pertains to the introduction of primary education after the independence:

That time when Frelimo decided to introduce schooling from the age of 7, there was a meeting here with Guebuza, Pachinuapa and the administrator of Nacala who used to burn books of the children in *madradas*.⁴⁴ This administrator said that praying, fasting and attending *madrassa* were detrimental to children, and that we, Muslims did not let them go to school. Pachinuapa added: 'when children go to school while fasting, they do not study, they just sleep'. They concluded that children who follow Islam fail at school [and decided to take actions forbidding Islamic practices and the *Qur'anic* school]. I said to them at that meeting that there were a lot of children who failed even though they were not Muslims. My children, who I had been raising as Muslims, none of them have failed since they started going to school. We Muslims know the importance of school, now our children can become even ministers if they study well. Failing at school has nothing to do with Islam, on the contrary memorizing the *Qur'an* helps them to have better memory, focus and concentration, and vice-versa, studying at school helps learning the *Qur'an*.⁴⁵

To top all that, after the reinstatement of religion in 1982, Frelimo gave the leadership of the first national Islamic umbrella organization, called *Conselho Islâmico de Moçambique* (Islamic Council of Mozambique, CISLAMO), not to Sufi-based northern Muslims, who thought they sacrificed so much for the nation and rightfully deserved it, but to an Islamist Abubacar Ismael 'Mangira', known as a *Wahhabi*, from southern Mozambique and of Indian descent. Subsequently, Mangira tried not only to consistently downplay the religious identity of the northerners before the Frelimo government, but also kept portraying them as former collaborators of the colonial regime.⁴⁶

A somewhat unexpected group of people that the Veteran's Association brought to the fore in Paquitequete were Muslim women. I was surprised to find out that there

41 West, 'Voices Twice Silenced', 354.

42 *Ibid.*, 356.

43 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Muslim Religious Leadership in Post-Colonial Mozambique', *South African Historical Journal*, 60, 4 (2008), 637-654.

44 Arabic, the *Qur'anic* schools.

45 Interview with AD (former political prisoner from Cabo Delgado), June 13, 2007, Maputo.

46 Bonate, 'Muslim Religious Leadership': 645.

were a lot of Muslim women who took part in the struggle as well as the war, especially as guerrilla fighters. This is certainly something that has never been mentioned in any literature or documents of any sort, or even in daily conversations in Mozambique. But the fact is that the first *Destacamentos Femininos* (Female Detachments) were formed by Frelimo in 1967 by women from the provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa.⁴⁷ Most of them were post-pubescent teenage girls, the *mwari/mwali*, similar to those analysed by West in the case of the Makonde girls.⁴⁸ Girls at this age enjoyed certain autonomy from family elders ‘without moving directly into new relationships of dependence upon husbands.’⁴⁹ Stephanie Urdag, Signe Arnfred and Harry West highlight that the ideological basis for having girls in war was due to Frelimo’s ideal of the ‘new woman’ emancipated from ‘traditional’ oppression and exploitations, which supposedly could be moulded with relative ease from this age group.⁵⁰ The contradiction with this stated goal was the related expectation that women would become masculinised and desexualized fighters to ‘serve the cause’ equal to their male counterparts; the reality was that although many girls carried out direct combat, more often than not they were also expected to take over more the ‘traditional’ female roles dealing with farming, cooking, fetching water, nursing the wounded or the children born to combatants or belonging to the communities of the liberated zones, and so forth.⁵¹ Tazreena Sajjad draws attention to this situation:

Once in the frontlines of war, these women guerrillas face the unique situation of negotiating two aspects of their social identities – that of the guerrilla fighter and the other of the nurturer; their responsibilities therefore are defined in the intersecting realm between the ‘defender’ and ‘aggressor’, and the ‘mother’ and ‘woman’.⁵²

This contradiction precluded women from partaking in actual decision making or having a palpable influence or power during the struggle/war as well after the independence, even if as guerrilla fighters they had benefitted from some kind of autonomy from family or communal patriarchal control during the war. Sajjad maintains that the public sphere after the war tends to narrow and ‘squeeze’ out women, and they are forced into a situation whereby their identities often have to be renegotiated in conformity with the societal expectations of gender roles.⁵³

Women were relegated or chose to go back into the family and private sphere in case of the Muslim women after the war because Frelimo failed to fulfil the promises made to female guerrilla fighters during the war; and as in the case the Makonde

47 Following the 1966 Frelimo Central Committee decision that women should receive political and military training. S. Urdag, “Preconditions for Victory” Women’s Liberation in Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, *A Journal of Opinion*, 8, 1 (Spring, 1978), 27.

48 H. G. West, ‘Girls with Guns: Narrating the Experiences of War of Frelimo’s “Female Detachment”’, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 72, 4, (October, 2000), 180-194.

49 West, ‘Girls with Guns’, 184.

50 Urdag, “Preconditions for Victory”; West, ‘Girls with Guns’; S. Arnfred, ‘Women in Mozambique: Gender Struggle and Gender Politics’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 14 (September, 1988), 5-16.

51 West, ‘Girls with Guns’; T. Sajjad, ‘Women Guerrillas: Marching towards True Freedom? An Analysis of Women’s Experiences in the Frontlines of Guerrilla Warfare and in the Post-War Period’, *Agenda*, 59 (2004), 9.

52 Sajjad, ‘Women Guerrillas’, 6.

53 *Ibid.*, 10.

women examined by West they were not transformed into party cadres nor offered jobs due to their lack of formal Portuguese schooling.⁵⁴ As the interviewed women indicated themselves:

I and some other women did not study, that's why we could not have any expectations to become ministers or stay in office like secretaries. But we are free, the independence is here.

We were happy that the war ended. For ten years we were suffering and living under bombardments.... During the war there were promises that we would be considered after the independence, that we would have houses, cars, good conditions and so on. But until now this promise has not been realized, but we always had this expectation and hope.⁵⁵

Many former women guerrilla fighters or DFs (from *Destacamento Feminino*) as they are affectionately known, were compelled to work after independence at OMM (*Organização da Mulher Moçambicana*, Mozambique Women's Organisation).⁵⁶ But this organisation largely served as a vehicle for the dissemination of party directions and not as a means of 'participation' in the exercise of power: therefore, some women, like the one whose life history is reproduced below, abandoned it and settled into married life instead.

Fieldwork and Narratives

Returning to my fieldwork, in the end, only fifteen members of the Association were interviewed. Most of the interviews were in Portuguese, some were in KiMwani and Emakhuwa (the language of the Macua people).⁵⁷ They all identified themselves as born and practicing Muslims. Six were former political prisoners and nine were former guerrilla fighters. Among the latter, five were women. One woman and two men held some kind of lower-ranking leadership positions during the war. While political prisoners affirmed that they never stopped practicing Islam, the former fighters described their religious life as suspended during the war and resumed once it ended. Except for one man, everyone declared themselves members of the Qadiriyya Sufi Order.

In terms of ethnic composition, four female and three male fighters self-identified as Mwani (speakers of KiMwani from coastal Cabo Delgado), while one woman said she was a Yao and one man was born to a Yao father and a Makua mother. These two were a married couple with roots in Niassa province who fought there and moved to Pemba in the 1980s. Among the six political prisoners, three claimed to be Makua, two Mwani and one as half-Makua and half-Ronga, with parents from Mozambique Island and Lourenço Marques (now Maputo city).

All the former fighters, except for one woman, had received their military training in the main Frelimo rear base across the Tunduru River border in Tanganyika

54 West, 'Girls with Guns', 189.

55 Interview with DZ, December 27, 2007, Pemba City.

56 This organization was also founded by the Frelimo in 1972.

57 I would like to thank Mr. José Domingane for his invaluable assistance during the fieldwork as facilitator, guide and interpreter.

(Tanzania from 1964) called Nachingwea. Among the political prisoners, four were imprisoned at Ibo fort, one at PIDE headquarters in Porto Amélia and one at Machava prison in Lourenço Marques.

The interviewed individuals were requested to talk about their memories and experiences of the liberation war, starting from the time they first heard about the independence struggle and ending with the declaration of the independence. They were also asked whether they had any particular expectations or hopes for the post-colonial period and whether these were realized or not. The other questions were about their motives or causes for joining the guerrilla and the kind of operations and battles they undertook. The former political prisoners were asked to relate their experiences of mobilization, popular participation and of imprisonment and release. And everyone was encouraged to talk about the role of Islam in his or her lives.

Male Fighters

Among the four interviewed former male guerrilla fighters, only one, whose life history is reproduced below, had left a military career after independence and had no formal employment since. Although it was not mentioned, the reason for that seems to have been his lack of formal education. The other three had at least three or four levels of Portuguese schooling upon independence and continued to serve as soldiers and, later, officers in the army. They attended more classes and had additional training after the independence. These three men took part in the civil war against Renamo and were demobilized in the late 1980s or 1990s.

All men portrayed themselves as committed members of the Frelimo party. Their narratives were personal but reflected awareness of the official party discourse reproduced through known clichés and by mention of important battles, Frelimo party congresses and the names of political figures. They were cautious not to question the government's decisions and policies, although they did not appear to have reaped any significant material benefits as veterans (though they do receive meagre state pensions as liberation veterans since 1988). This was particularly poignant with the two interviews that took place in veteran's homes that were self-built using precarious materials and reflected a desolate poverty. One veteran had a severely ill daughter who did not seem to have received any adequate medical assistance for the lack of money.

Notwithstanding their long-term allegiance to Frelimo, all the men were proud of their Muslim identity and heritage and underlined the importance of religion in their lives. They mentioned widespread Muslim popular support of the liberation struggle in Cabo Delgado (and in case of the veteran from Niassa, also in that region) and cited the names of guerrilla commanders and political commissars who were Muslim. They also brought up the names of *shaykhs* and Muslim *regulos* and *apiya-mwene* who supported the liberation struggle and whose names feature in the PIDE and SCCIM archival documents as well.

All four of the interviewed men had joined the liberation movement in their teens and because of the persuasion from the Frelimo commanders and political commissaries who were Muslims from Cabo Delgado or Niassa. Before joining Frelimo, many of these leaders used to be *regulos* and *cabos* [a lesser traditional chief subordinate to a *regulo*] themselves. For example, Adinane Rashide, the Chairman and later Commissar of the Mocimboa da Praia District, and Alberto Gimo were former *cabos*, while Timamo Mussanja, the Frelimo Commander and Political Commissar, was a

nephew and heir of the *regulo* Mussanja of Metuge, jailed by PIDE for his support of the liberation struggle.

The interview with EV was conducted in KiMwani:

I was born in Mocimboa da Praia in 1949 in the time when the colonizers had already been well settled and their control was intense. I am a Muslim and in my family everybody is a born Muslim and Mwani. I studied Islam a lot and at this moment I am a *mwalimu* [Qur'anic school teacher]. My father was also a *mwalimu* of a *madrassa*. I started attending a *madrassa* when I was nine, which I frequented for a total of five years. I concluded *Djuzuamma* and continued studying. I did not go to a Portuguese school, but during our training in Nachingwea I attended classes in Portuguese because we used to study there.

I joined the liberation war when I was sixteen. The elders thought of creating a front against the colonizers. And then, groups of people began to organize themselves with the aim of liberating our land and our people. Their first actions were to destroy bridges and explode the Portuguese cars. The elders told us to go to war, to go to live in the *mato* [wilderness] called Moia between Mocimboa da Praia and Mueda plateau. The Commander Adinane Rashide, chairman of the District came and told us that the Frelimo guerrilla was going to invade Mocimboa da Praia shortly. He said the war does not choose [whom to kill], so if people stayed, they might get killed. Both the Mozambican residents and the colonizers were expected to be overpowered by Frelimo forces. Because of this warning, the majority of the Mocimboa da Praia inhabitants decided to leave and move to that *mato*. So everyone from the District and neighbouring villages and settlements moved into Moia.

I received my first task there as a militiaman. We did not have weapons, only *azagaias* [small spears], and our task was to control the movement of the colonizers. When we saw them coming, we would run to Moia and warn the population and the guerrilla. Our task was to catch at least one colonizer with our *azagaias* right away. After that, the guerrilla began to choose the youth of fifteen and older to join the troops. My friends and I were selected and taken to a place called Mauta in Tanganyika. This was a transit place; we stayed there because Nachingwea training centre was full, and so we had to wait our turn. From there we went to Mtwara, Lindi and finally to Nachingwea, where we met people who were concluding their training. We were next in line. I don't remember the exact date when we arrived there because I don't know how to read or write. The only thing I remember is that we were greeted by Commander Filipe Samuel Magaia who was readying himself for a combat in Niassa where there were a lot of Portuguese troops. He was going to fight there. As we were very young, Comrade Magaia told us: 'wait for me here, I'll go to fight in Niassa and when I am back, I will talk with you.' Unfortunately, my dream of conversing with him was not realized, because when Magaia went to Niassa, traitors in the *mato* killed him. At the base, upon hearing this sad news, everyone was stunned. We mourned his death.

I was trained with my friends in Nachingwea by our Chinese instructors. After training, we waited for our turn to go to the interior of Mozambique

to fight the colonizers. Led by Commander Cristiano Mutemba, we left Nachingwea. Our unit was a special company with the task of confronting the Portuguese wherever we encountered their resistance. With Chairman Cristiano Pires Mavala we went to a *mato* and built a base called 'João Belo'. Our first combat was in Nambude Mission where a very strong Portuguese military detachment was stationed. We fought hard and overpowered them. We assaulted them and snatched their weaponry, including heavy artillery, and took a lot of other things. When we were retreating, more Portuguese emerged. It was a place where they always managed to recuperate their forces, so we had to fight a much greater number of their troops. It was a very difficult battle, but we won and even captured their commander, named Fernando. We recovered a lot of weaponry and other things. That battle was meant to show that the Mozambican people were ready to liberate their land and to free themselves from oppression.

Then there was a place called Namele. We fought a lot there. It was a very fierce and bloody battle and numerous comrades perished. Because of that some people began saying that Frelimo would not last long due to heavy losses. But, thank God, our people were united and organized and stayed put, [we] never retreated and reached independence. The result of the war was that our people became free, we won our independence and now we are facing a new battle to organize ourselves to end poverty [the Frelimo government's official slogan in recent years has been to eradicate poverty in Mozambique]. This is the beginning of a different, new era. All I am saying is that now we have to prevail in a new and different phase of our lives.

It was impossible for us to practice religion during the war. But when the liberated zones began to emerge, when our people were freed, Muslims began praying and holding *mawlid* [devotional ritual associated with the Prophet Muhammad's birthday and Sufi Orders]. The Frelimo did not forbid that. In Nachingwea, Comrade Eduardo Mondlane gave orientations that some food should not be forced upon Muslims. He said that Muslims should eat what they preferred, and their way of life and religion should be respected, because it was their right. Even after President Mondlane died, nobody imposed food on anyone, but we had to eat some forbidden things because of the scarcity of food during the war.

I was at the Central base in Cabo Delgado when the independence was proclaimed. That was the day of great celebration. When the Frelimo flag was hoisted people danced and partied well into the night.

I abandoned the military life after the war and went to live with my family in Mocimboa da Praia. I dedicated myself to religion and became a *mwalimu*. But I have never separated from my comrades in arms. We always get together and stay in touch.

After some time the government forbade religion. In Mocimboa da Praia, some *mwalimu* were arrested because they had *madrasas* and taught Islam to children. Thank God that did not eliminate Islam. But I personally did not suffer much [from the prohibition of religion].⁵⁸

58 Interview with EV, December 30, 2007, Pemba City.

Female Fighters

Of the five interviewed women, two were reluctant to talk; they avoided some questions and generally appeared to be apprehensive or cautious. Three others were more willing to talk, and had a relatively relaxed demeanour during the interviews. One of them worked as a nurse in a bush hospital, the other worked in a guerrilla nursery after being severely wounded. The third woman had only been a guerrilla fighter.

Three out of five of the women stated that they became fighters as a result abduction by Frelimo, while two others ran away from their homes, one from Niassa to Malawi and the other from Palma to Tanzania, with the stated purpose of joining the guerrilla. One of these two women followed the example of her older sibling, and the other woman wanted to work in the health sector, to become a nurse. Although the latter was married, she did not hesitate to abandon her husband who did not share her career aspirations or the desire for independence. After joining the guerrilla, one woman was stationed at the Tunduru border in a diplomatic and logistics mission, and the other was a nurse in a bush hospital. The remaining three were incorporated into the *Destacamento Feminino* after training at Nachingwea.

None of the interviewed women continued in the military or held political positions after the independence, except for two who worked briefly for the OMM. The nurse was the only one who was employed in the formal sector; she had worked at Pemba hospital's obstetrics department and later as a pharmacist until she was retired. Other women said they have been housewives since independence and worked on the family farm.

All the women eventually got married and had children, including the nurse who remarried after the independence. In contrast to the official Frelimo stance on marriage between the fighters and pregnancy during the war, as discussed by Harry West,⁵⁹ two of the interviewed women had married their commanding superiors during the war, including political commissars, who were also Muslims. They had three wedding ceremonies: one was called a 'ceremony of the banner', which took place during the war under the Frelimo banner. They became pregnant and gave birth while at war. Their second wedding was an Islamic marriage ceremony called locally either *nikahi* (from Arabic, *nikah*) or *chuo* in Kiswahili, which was performed after the war in their own communities with their families present. The third ceremony was a civil registration, which took place years later.

The interview of the woman named AB, who was a guerrilla fighter during the war, is reproduced below. She was born in 1952 in the District of Macomia, according to her ID card, though she herself was not sure about the exact date of her birth. The interview was mostly in Portuguese with some portions in KiMwani:

I won't be able to tell you everything [i.e., it's too much to tell all]. But I won't lie. I'll tell you the truth. I was born in Chai in Quiteraje. I studied very little, I can't lie; I only know the alphabet. I didn't go to a [Christian] mission school. Long ago the *moja-moja* [i.e., the Muslims] did not want that thing of the mission. There were [mission schools] in Mueda and up to Muatide. People of our religion did not like to study [in the mission

59 West, 'Girls with Guns': 190.

schools], they mostly attended *madrassa*. They used to say: ‘you will eat pork there, you will die there’. So, we believed those words.

All my family, we are all Mwani, and everyone was and still is Muslim. My grandfather even had a mosque. Had, no, he still has it. He was a great man, was a great *shaykh mwalimu*. My maternal grandfather was a *capi-tamoro* [captain-mor, a traditional chief appointed as part of the Portuguese administration before the beginning of the twentieth century]. He was *capi-tamoro* of Quiteraje. His name was Mussa Muissana, and he ruled everywhere in that region. He was a Muslim [too].

The one who owned a mosque and was a *mwalimu* was my paternal grandfather. Most of the people of Paquitequete in old times used to study in our land with my grandfather, there in Mguani [the name of the settlement]. He was very well known. And also my brother-in-law was a great *mwalimu*. He studied in Zanzibar. He died very old; if he were alive he would have told you the stories of the old times. He narrated them very well. My father used to go to Tanganyika a lot [i.e., the family had links to Tanganyika and Zanzibar].

Both my grandfather and my brother-in-law were very famous; everybody knew them. About my grandfather, you can ask any *monhé* [i.e., a Muslim of Indian or Pakistani origin] in Mucojo and Quiteraje, the entire world knew him. He was always asked to lead the [religious] ceremonies; funerals of even Indians were done only with his or my brother-in-law’s presence.

I was the most loved and spoiled child in my family. So, even though the *madrassa* was in my house, I would play instead of studying. The *madrassa* was there, so I did not worry about it and often shunned it because it was something that was there right in my house. I can’t say that I studied a lot but I am a hundred percent Mwani [i.e., therefore a Muslim and bound to attend *madrassa*]. I left it in 1970 when I was captured, but [after the war and] up until now, I have been studying in a *madrassa*. In 1970, my mother and I went to our *machamba* [land plot for family agriculture,] in the *mato* and we were captured. As I spent a lot of time in the *mato* afterwards, I forgot what I had learnt in the *madrassa*, but I still know a little...

My grandfathers and the family as a whole, we are all members of a *dikiri* [i.e., Sufi Order]. Even today, I sing *qasida* [devotional songs about the Prophet Muhammad] and *dikiri* [liturgical songs of Sufi Orders], and when I sing the earth trembles. I am always invited to sing with my group of *dikiri* women. You can ask anybody here, I am well known for my singing. When there is a gathering, there is no movement [i.e., nothing happens] without me. I sang in a *dikiri* since my childhood; when there was a burial, it was us who sang *dikiri*, and went to cemetery singing. I don’t remember whether we were of the Qadiriyya or Shadhuliyya back then, but here in the city we belong to the Qadiriyya, we follow Shaykh Abdul Qader.

I was still a little girl when I went with my mother to our *machamba*, and we were captured. We were captured at 2 p.m. and we left right away. There was our uncle [who was] the 1st Secretary of the party [i.e., the Frelimo party, probably in a district after the independence], Mr. Suaib Assane, who is also dead now. He had captured us; he knew all the ways

in and out of the *mato*. As compared to us and many other Mwanis who entered the war because of being captured, he and my other uncle Mussa Mbarco entered the Frelimo by choice. They decided by themselves and ran away to Tanzania with the purpose of joining the Frelimo; they had *kadi* [i.e., Frelimo membership card].

My grandfather looked for us everywhere. He never got tired of looking for us; he went to Fortaleza [Ibo Fort prison] every day. He did not go all the way to Lourenço Marques, but to Ibo he went every day, and he died because of the beatings he took from the Portuguese. My maternal grandmother was later imprisoned by the Portuguese because of us. She was imprisoned and taken to Ibo because we joined Frelimo. The Portuguese took her because her daughter and granddaughter were with the 'turros' [a derogatory term used by the Portuguese to designate the liberation fighters]. The war in Quiteraje was really bad. One day, we entered Quiteraje at night and went to eat there at her place. The next morning she was imprisoned. They beat her a lot, and she was very sick for many years afterwards until she died. It was because of the family, because she had family in the *mato*, she had 'tur-ras' in her family. During the war, when I heard about it, I always thought 'if I get any PIDE, if I meet any PIDE, I will cook them and eat them!' I really hated them. I often cried when I thought how my grandmother was tortured. During the transition period, before the Portuguese left, we went to Fortaleza at Ibo with President Samora Machel. We cried when we entered there; the President Samora also cried. Mozambicans suffered a lot there; they endured a lot of torture.

My mother and I were captured at the time of Lazaro Nkavandame, when there was a true war. I was just a child, and they sent me to the *Destacamento Feminino*. My mother was left along the way in a settlement called Itamanda. She was too old so they left her there. There she worked with the local population by clearing the fields and growing something to give to eat to soldiers [guerrilla fighters]; they called it '*ntchango-ntchango*'.

The war was a war. We were at the *Destacamento Feminino*. *Destacamento* was on the one side, and the rest of the fighters on the other. When we were to leave [the base], when we were sent to some village to collect food, when we were hungry, I don't know whether we can call that a 'combat' or something else... but we left and we used to sleep somewhere in the wilderness a little bit far from the settlements, in the *mato*. First I was at a base called 'Beira', then at another one called 'Maputo', and then I was taken to Nachingwea, where I received military training. I trained there for a whole year without interruption. When I came back, I was stationed at a centre called Nacherudo. There our enemies were lions and leopards. It was a big *mato*, even men, big men, let them forgive me for telling this, but even big men fled from there. There was a lot of suffering there. Sometimes we spent three days without water so we peed and drank our urine. If we encountered a lion, we were dead; it would devour us.

Our boss, her name was Dona Minga; she was the head of the *Destacamento Feminino* after Josina Machel died. She was a very thin lady from Tete. We would go to combat to ask for salt from the owners, and we marched, and we caught bullets and died just like that. Who was meant to

die, died. Even me, I have a scar here [where] the bullet broke my leg; it entered here and left on the other side. There was no lack of suffering in war. But what really frightened us were snakes; they would roll on a branch of a tree looking like leaves. It was all suffering in the war. Even now, when I talk about it, I tremble. Some nights I wake up shouting: 'don't kill me!' I still have dreams about the war. We say thanks to God that we survived.

I was appointed as a second sergeant in Nacherudo, I worked for security there. Being a second sergeant did not mean that I held a military rank or that this title had any particular significance. It was just work. I was given a uniform and I gave orders. When a group of us left the base, I was leading that group. In Nacherudo we started training at 2 a.m., and some girls did not want to get up; they would claim they were sick. I used to say: 'wake up! If it was a mealtime, you would wake up fast!' When big chiefs came, we would go to fetch water in a well, and do other things like that. I wasn't a real commander. It was just a job. I just worked for our Mozambique. That's it.

There were a lot of ambushes. There was a salt factory in a place called Ulu. We craved salt. We could have some food because we worked in the fields, but we lacked salt. So when we went there for salt, we ambushed for 10 or 30 minutes. We could be killed or captured, but we went there. Sometimes during the ambush, we captured Portuguese soldiers. There were a lot of Portuguese there who came to fight from Mocimboa, Quiteraje and Macomia. We had men among us in the *Destacamento*; not many, but we had some men among us. They went with us to fight, they were in the front of the unit and women followed them. They engaged in fight first, and then us. But men never tried to have sex with girls. The girls were too young and the conditions were too harsh. We had no time for that nonsense. If a man was caught doing that, he could be put to death by shooting or imprisoned for fomenting corruption among fighters.

Before the war ended, Commandant Chipande came here and our unit accompanied him. We went to Chai; there were two Chais here, one a village in Macomia and the other a base in the *mato*. I stayed in the one in the *mato* until the independence. Afterwards, I went to Montepuez and then to Nampula. I was still in the military and lived in the barracks. Then my family started coming there to see me. My mother would not stop crying for me to come home, and my grandparents were ill because of torture and Portuguese beatings. I missed them all, and was always worried about them. One day I asked my father: 'please do something so I could go home'. My father was a *shaykh*, he wrote a *hiriz* [an Islamic talisman with *Qur'anic* inscriptions] and made a *dua* [Ar., prayer], saying: '*chonde, chonde, ya arabi munizimungo, ya arabi kisimana, ya arabi, ya arabi, ya arabi*'. That *Ya Arabi* was a great person, so God responded to the prayer. Within a week, I was sent back home to work here in Cabo Delgado. First I was sent to Macomia; afterwards I received a document dispatching me to Quiteraje where I worked a lot. We mainly worked for the party [i.e., Frelimo]. I was sent to a village there to work for the party and later for the OMM. When big bosses visited the area I had to accompany them to places and also for meetings and *comicios* [public meetings]. I realized this job was not advantageous for me at all. So when my husband suggested moving here, to Pemba, I agreed at once.

I met my husband after the war, he was a driver. As I was a *mwenye* [i.e., a Muslim from the coast] and he was a *mwenye*, we married according to our custom. As I left for war very young, I was treated like a child by my family and my husband and I had to go through ceremonies of a Muslim girl. First, I was secluded with *msiro* on my body, then we performed *chuo* [Swahili, Islamic wedding] and then we stayed together; until today we are still together.

When I came back, I asked the elders to reconvert me to Islam because I ate a lot of illicit things during the war, such as rats, snakes, monkeys, insects, pork, everything. There was a great starvation; you couldn't choose what to eat. The elders said: 'you cannot reconvert because you were born Muslim. Let us give you *ncombe* [traditional remedy] to have a purification bath. We will make a *du'a* for you and you will be Muslim again.' This was a necessary thing for me to do because I ate so many impure things during the war. Afterwards, I resumed my religious life.

But I never stopped feeling I was a DF, I am a soldier. You can never leave DF. If something happens in the ward, if there is a danger, if the bosses wake me up at night, I will fulfil my duty as a soldier. I am a soldier. I will be a soldier until I die. I was never demobilized; I fought and worked as a soldier.

I am old now, but even today they [i.e., the Frelimo administration] still call me to sweep the streets. I am tired and old, so I don't know why they still call me to do those things. I was always considered a soldier, but at the end they [i.e., the government] did not give me any value, they did not pay my retirement subsidy for a long time. It was difficult to make them pay me, but at the end they started paying.

Interviewer: Why was it so hard to get your pension?

Because before there was a war, but after the war, everyone was for himself and everyone fought for his own food [i.e., for his/her share of money, etc.]. War is war, and food is food. We fought in order to free this country, to get its independence, but to eat today is difficult. *Alham dulillah, nushukuru*, we are free now, I am grateful that we have independence and I am in good health. Life is normal but the goods, a decent housing and a stable life are not accessible to us. I still do not have a stabilized life.

My children help me, but I also have my own pension now. It might be only a small amount, but it is my money, and I can help my children too.⁶⁰

Political Prisoners

Former political prisoners were the most controversial and ambiguous group among the interviewed, both in terms of how they depicted popular support and mobilization for the independence struggle, and in terms of the reasons for their own imprisonment by PIDE. While some thought that they did do something to deserve it—for example by disseminating independence ideology, mobilizing people, providing ma-

60 Interview with AB, December 27, 2007, Pemba City.

terial support to the guerrilla with provisions and by selling *kadi*—others stated that there was no real basis for their imprisonment.

Although all the interviewed people were members of the Association, not everyone received a pension from the government. While some were receiving a pension for being imprisoned for two or three months, others were still waiting for payment despite spending several years in the most notorious PIDE prisons. One of the reasons for this seems to be related to their discontentment with the government policies after the independence, which prompted some to lend support to and even join Renamo during the civil war. They were quickly disillusioned and returned repentant, but they lost credibility in Frelimo's eyes, which seems to have punished them by withholding their pensions.

Their memories were filled with pain, hardship, suffering, extreme violence and fear:

One day, when prisoners were on the beach of the Ibo fort, they used to be taken there to go to toilet and wash themselves every day, when they started running away, dispersing into the water, a prison guard named Bakar, he is still alive in Palma, shot into the air to call attention of other guards, who started shooting everyone. The next day, there were hundreds of corpses floating in the water. Many people died.

At Ibo, on a daily basis, at least seven or eight people used to be killed. Some people believed that the Portuguese agents had remuneration for every African they arrested or killed. That's why they were so zealous, indiscriminate and cruel.⁶¹

Here is the story of YN, who was interviewed in Portuguese with some parts in Kimwani:

I was born in Pemba-Metuge, in the Namate village in 1930. All my family members are Mwani and Muslims. I started studying in a *madrassa* when I was seven in Metuge with *mwalimu* Jamal Yahia. He was from Metuge but studied earlier with *shaykhs* in Lindi, Tanganyika. He was a member of the Qadiriyya *dikiri*. I also belong to the Qadiriyya. I studied in a *madrassa* for three years until I was eleven when I began learning the jewellery business in Porto Amélia. I was an apprentice for eleven years and became a *fundi* [Swahili, a master] when I was twenty-two. My parents paid for my apprenticeship. Then I married and built this house and bought some things to start my own business.

My father was a *regulo* of Metuge. In old times, the Portuguese used to give to *regulos* a cane and a rifle [as the symbols of their power]. In 1958, he went to his *machamba* and someone stole his rifle. He did not go to the police or inform the Portuguese. When the Portuguese found out, he was arrested and sent to prison for three years in Montepuez and Quissanga. After completing his sentence he was released but the government never gave him his post back. In 1967 he was arrested again, this time by PIDE who

61 Interview with BA, December 27, 2007, Pemba City.

accused him of selling land and his rifle as well to Frelimo. But he never had anything to do with Frelimo. He died in prison.

I heard about the independence struggle in 1958 from people who came from Mocimboa da Praia. They said that we should take back our land and expel the colonizers. The guerrilla were already cutting telephone cords and blowing up the roads, but that was before they went into the *mato*. *Shaykhs* from Mocimboa da Praia and Tanganyika began appearing here in Porto Amélia. I remember *shaykh* Fazila Yussufu and other *shaykhs* who came from Tanganyika; I think they were from Lindi. They had pupils here before 1950 and used to spend a lot of time in Mozambique. But the Portuguese government forbade them to cross the border after that, so they came clandestinely.

They performed secret *mshafu* [oath-taking on the *Qur'an*] during *dhikr* [Sufi rituals]; not during the *juma* prayers, that was too dangerous because a lot of strange people came for *juma*. They did this [i.e., *mshafu*] in mosques but in secret. People from the *dikiri* knew each other very well and had trust in each other. These *shaykhs* used to say: 'let's make a *du'a* for our land and our people to be free like in Tanganyika, to have our independence'. My master [the one who taught him the jewellery business] was an important *shaykh* also who knew all about those meeting and he used to explain things to us [his apprentices].

My brother-in-law, Commander Adinane Rashide, used to be a *cabo* in Mocimboa da Praia. But he fled and joined Frelimo in Tanganyika. One day he took all the people of Mocimboa da Praia to a *mato*, saying, 'in a week, the guerrilla will come here to fight for this land'. He left this house to me and said: 'buy this house, after the independence I will be someone' [i.e., I will be someone important and will buy another house]. I bought it because he was my brother-in-law and because of our friendship. And then the war started. That was in 1964. The PIDE began imprisoning everyone they deemed suspicious, especially the *regulos*. They said the *regulos* were selling the land to Frelimo. Even here in Paquitequete, the PIDE took the *regulo* N'Tondo and locked him up at Ibo fort and later in Machava prison. He returned after many years, after the independence. He was very sick and died soon. Other *regulos*, such as of Murrébuè and Gingone, died in Machava.

I started collaborating with Frelimo by selling *kadi* in 1960. I used to get them in Mocimboa da Praia and sell for 60 Escudos and then send money to the guerrilla. In 1969, the PIDE arrested me with *kadi* in my possession when I went to my friend's house and started showing the *kadi* in his veranda to the people who came to buy them. I haven't noticed a PIDE agent among them; he had followed me to that house. He communicated the DGS and then six agents came after me, including the chief Morreira, Almeida, Magro, Monteiro and two others I had not met before and did not know. They took me and two of my comrades, who are now dead. When we arrived [to the headquarters of DGS], they started beating us, all of them, kicking and beating us. I passed out. Then they started writing a process against me. They asked me: 'so, what do you think? Do you know what Nachingwea is?' I did not know, but you couldn't say 'no' to PIDE, they would start torturing again. So I said 'yes, I know'.

Then they asked me if I knew Mr. Adinane [Adinane Rashide]. I said I knew him but I did not say that I got *kadis* from him. I said I received *kadis* from someone who came from Tanganyika. The Portuguese hated Adinane, because he betrayed their trust. He was a *cabo* who joined the Frelimo and led all the people from Mocimboa da Praia into the *mato*. The PIDE used to say, 'if someone brings Adinane's head, a big reward will be given.'

Then one of the PIDE agents said to me 'read this!' But I did not know how to read or write. They said: 'you know how to read, don't lie to us! You had Frelimo papers on you when we arrested you and now you say you can't read?!' From then they started changing their interrogation [tactics], asking me: 'Do you know Alberto Gimo?' I said: 'No'. The chief Morreira asked: 'Are you aware where are you?' I said: 'Yes, I am at DGS'. Then he said: 'Would you like to go to cemetery directly or to hospital?' Then he started closing the curtains on the windows, saying: 'So, you don't know Alberto Gimo, the *cabo* from here, from Paquitequete?' I said: 'Yes, I am from Paquitequete but I don't know who Alberto Gimo is'. There were six agents in the room; one of them hit me so hard that I fell on the floor. Then, they started kicking me like I was a football, beating me from this side and that side, and then they broke my teeth which flew out of my mouth; my whole body was swollen and there was blood everywhere.

Those who were taken by PIDE and DGS endured horrific torture. If they survived, it was by miracle. That place was meant for people to be killed. But God is great, so if someone's destiny was to die, they died, but some with a little bit more health than others, like me, survived and were released, so they could tell their stories like I am telling you now.... But DGS was no joke....

They released me after three months. I returned to my house in Pemba and continued working as a gold jeweller. I heard that an order arrived from Lourenço Marques saying that they [PIDE and DGS] should not take any more political prisoners. The order came when the DGS Inspector was on vacation for two months. I was lucky and was released due to that order. There was a new Inspector who replaced the old one; he released me. But when the old Inspector came back, PIDE continued arresting more people. The old Inspector was really bad. He was very mean, and he got even worse when he returned.

Upon my release, the PIDE agents told me not to get involved in any political activity, not to spread rumours or explain anything to other people and not to listen to those who came from outside. They said if they arrested me again I wouldn't be left alive. I was very sick in prison, but recovered one month following my release.

The situation in the city at that time was really difficult. People did not trust each other; all suspected each other of being PIDE spies. Frelimo people stopped coming in and the *shaykhs* did not talk about independence anymore. Some *shaykhs* were co-opted by the PIDE and worked as their right hand. I continued as a jeweller, [and] never sold *kadis* again. A lot of people from here left for war, others were imprisoned and died at the Ibo fort or Machava prison. Many people died in prison. There were a lot beatings and torturing there. Beating was the first thing they had in the mornings. Those

who returned, they returned by the grace of God, but many people died at Ibo. But thank God, the Frelimo government recognized their suffering and sacrifices and is paying them pensions.

When the Independence Day came, I was here. That was a great day of joy from Rovuma to Maputo! Men, women and children rejoiced; the joy was out of this world, an indescribable feeling! We suffered a lot because of PIDE and from the Portuguese troops. On the day of independence, first the guerrilla fighters entered the city and only after we heard on the radio that Marcelo Caetano was deposed and Spínola came to power. The DGS and PIDE agents began shaking out of fear; they were very frightened. The population went to attack them, but even then many people were still scared of them. Afterwards, when Frelimo came to power, the Portuguese troops began arresting the PIDE agents.

I joined Frelimo and worked in the *Grupos Dinamizadores* [Dynamising Groups]. I left that job only recently. I am retired now, but I am satisfied. My life is going on well, no problems.

When the government forbade religion after the independence, I was with the *Grupos Dinamizadores*, but I continued practicing my religion. In fact, I was the head of the Central mosque committee and a *naquibo* [the second in the hierarchy of a Sufi Order after the *khalifa*] of the Qadiriyya. At that time everyone contributed money for holding *ziara* [funeral rites or tomb visitation rituals associated with Sufi Orders]. One day, one of the members of *Grupos Dinamizadores* denounced our religious activities. Many *mwalimu* were detained together with children studying in their *madrasas*. The police came and confiscated food that was being stored for the upcoming *ziara*. I dug a hole and hid the rice, but everything else—the oil, money and everything was taken by the police. Parents of the arrested children went to the police station asking for their release. Between 4 to 6 p.m. the children were released to their parents, but *madrasa* were forbidden and the *mwalimu* continued in prison. All the people of this neighbourhood went to the provincial government office the next morning and finally the *mwalimu* were also released. As I was the head of the *Dinamizadores*, the PIC [Criminal Investigation Police] summoned me. They said: ‘You are the head of the *Dinamizadores*, why did you join the people of the Paquitequete to attack the government?’ I said I did not do anything. ‘But you did not condemn their actions.’ That was how it was. But then suddenly the government changed its mind and declared that religion was no longer forbidden.⁶²

The day the war ended was described by the interviewed people as a day of utter joy. A political prisoner at Ibo fort said,

that day we knew the PIDE was extinct. The Portuguese brigadier gave me the key and said: ‘you open the door [of the prison cell].’ I opened and understood that it was all over. PIDE was extinct; we were free to go home. Everyone could go to their own land, but there was no transportation. So peo-

62 Interview with YN, December 28, 2007, Pemba City.

ple languished there for months until they could leave. That day was a day of *mawlid* and I used to be imam of the mosque. So I asked the Portuguese officers to give me a lift back to Porto Amélia, asked them to take *shaykh* Mussa as well. He was sick because of torture. We came here and had *mawlid*. There was this [African] guy that worked for PIDE. His name was Nachude. When Frelimo came it made him dig a hole of three or four metres every day and close it at night. The next morning he would start to dig all over again. People used to come and make fun of him, asking: 'So where is your PIDE now?' One day he died. I think he hung himself. Many Portuguese left, but some had nowhere to go, so they committed suicide. There was this Portuguese guy who used to do business in fishing. He drove his car into the sea.⁶³

Another one mentioned that

Timamo Mussanja entered the city first with his people so we knew the Frelimo won. He died in Niassa later during the war against the Renamo. Then Frelimo came and gave us explanations, [and] had meetings with us.⁶⁴

Timamo Mussanja was the main figure of reference for many people remembering that day:

Timamo was the first to enter the city. It was about 9 p.m. when I left my work at João Ferreira dos Santos, everybody was saying: 'Timamo is here; the Frelimo fighters are here. Frelimo won!'⁶⁵

Conclusion

Personal life histories as memory narratives are not only about remembering the past but also reliving the past through the prism of the present. The present, or the post-independence period, for many of those who participated in the liberation struggle has been filled with disillusionment, unmet expectations and perceived devaluation of their experiences and personal sacrifices by Frelimo. Their discontent with this situation was expressed through silences, omissions, forgetting, refusals to speak, and in denying and downplaying the significance or meaning of their own experiences or contributions to the independence of the country. Thus, although EV portrays his post-colonial situation in terms of voluntary abdication from the military, it is clear that his education played a decisive role in his exclusion from the formal employment sector as well as the army. AB, who felt devalued after independence by being forced to work for OMM for free, which she characterized as a 'disadvantageous' job, and later by the party requirements 'to sweep the streets', came ultimately to downplay her participation in war and her contribution to independence by referring to her experience as 'just work'. She and another female former fighter felt that they were not demobilized for a long time and continued to work for the party for free because they were treated and felt themselves to still be soldiers and cadres of Frelimo, a po-

63 Interview with CM, December 30, 2007, Pemba City.

64 Interview with YB, December 28 and 29, 2007, Pemba City.

65 Interview with OX, December 27, 2007, Pemba City.

sition which obliged them to continue fulfilling instructions of the party. However, their expectations of developing from Female Detachments into real women cadres, as promised by Samora Machel, have never been realized.⁶⁶ Thus, AB depicted her abandonment of the OMM after marriage as a 'desertion'. The nurse, despite being the only woman who held formal employment, but who also had a very low level of formal education, mentioned that her salary had always been very low and described it as 'that of a servant'.

Similarly, many former political prisoners 'forgot' or 'omitted' their participation in the liberation struggle by describing imprisonment by PIDE as a 'mistake' or an arbitrary thing. They also tended to downplay Muslim support of Frelimo in general. And as a clear statement of their discontent, they joined the Renamo during the civil war.

Frelimo's change of heart after independence was related to the new context when it had to transform itself from a bush guerrilla movement into a state builder. As Signe Arnfred maintains, 'during the war, Frelimo stressed the need for daily collaboration with the people. Following independence, the priority was to extend the authority and control of the party and the state.'⁶⁷ Modernization, institutional control and technocratic necessities associated with this process resulted in the removal of those who could not speak Portuguese and did not have formal education from the vanguard roles into the virtual obscurity. What Arnfred observes with regard the changes in the situation of the female guerrilla fighters could be extended to everyone in a similar situation, including men: 'most of the guerrilla fighters had been illiterate peasants barely able to speak Portuguese. The female fighters were removed as representatives of the OMM and replaced by girls educated at mission schools, literate but without political fervour or experience.'⁶⁸

In this new context, guerrilla fighters and former political prisoners who completed at least two classes of the formal Portuguese schooling became party cadres, took government jobs or stayed in the military. But those who could neither write nor read in Portuguese, like EV, AB and virtually all the former political prisoners had no other options than to take up subsistence farming or take low-paying or symbolic jobs, like *Grupos Dinamizadores*, or return to the jobs they held before the war. Women were relegated to a domestic sphere and moved to live with their parents in villages until they married. Thus they could view their situation as unchanged or even having worsened. As can be gathered from the interviews, and as is amply documented in the Portuguese sources, the fact that Muslims fiercely resisted mission education during the colonial period was one of the reasons for their lack of Portuguese instruction.

Nevertheless, former liberation fighters did not view their experiences of war and independence itself negatively. In their understanding, even if they personally did not benefit from it much, independence 'was for the benefit of children', for them to study and have a brighter future than their parents had.

66 Urdang, "Preconditions for Victory": 28.

67 Arnfred, 'Women in Mozambique': 13.

68 *Ibid.*, 7.