

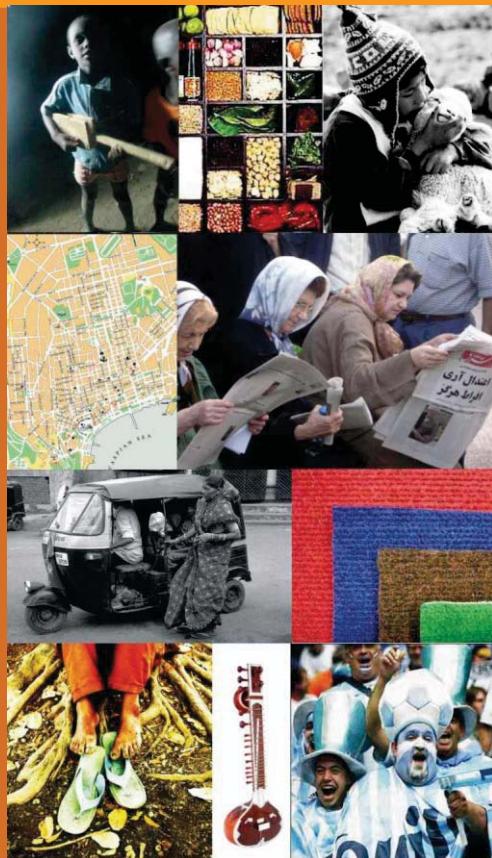
# GLOBAL SOUTH

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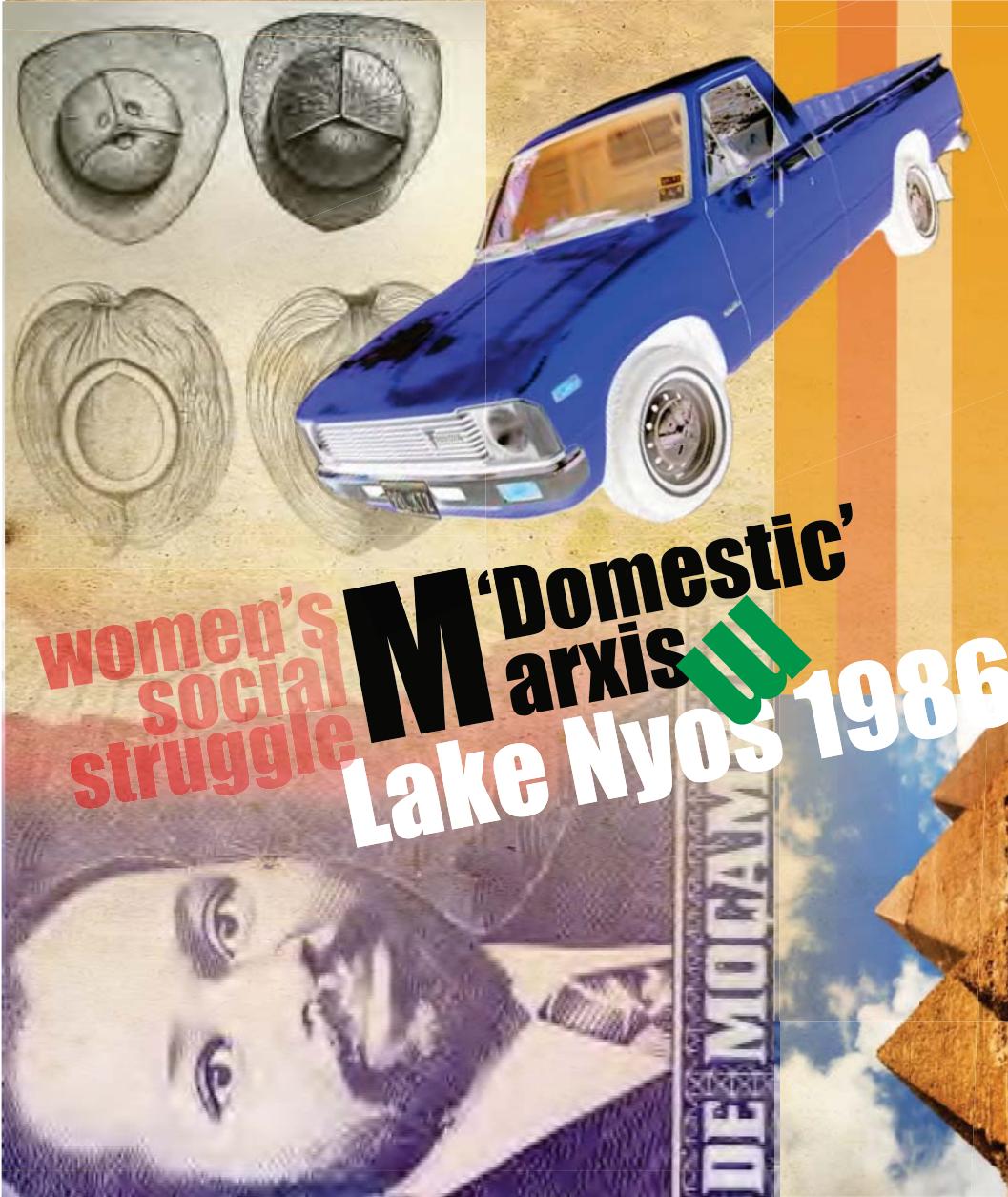
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# E

# ditorial

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At a time when former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak is fighting his deteriorating health in prison, after facing a life-sentence on 2 June 2012, the Egyptian nation continues to wait with bated breath for the final outcome of the last round of presidential elections. As the long wait nears its end many are looking at it as the fitting event to mark the first anniversary of the Arab spring. The crowd at the Tahrir Square which brought down Hosni Mubarak a year ago has reason to rejoice as Egypt's wait to tread the long unfamiliar path of democracy gets shorter by the day. It is interesting to reflect that even a year after the 'revolutionary romance', Arab countries continue to occupy headlines, quite consistently. For some, the Egyptian elections mark the coming of a full circle for the Arab spring; others are apprehensive of what the future has in store.

If expectation matches outcome then the Muslim Brotherhood or the *Ikhwan* promises to take charge of a new Egypt later this month. However at the same time Mohammad Morsi and his party will have a tight rope to walk. Power comes with its share of responsibility. After six long decades of hard fight the *Ikhwan* will carry the onus to prove the worth of Islamic governance. Besides they will also have to address the escalating economic and social problems of the country. No governance can prove its viability if it does not take into account the problems of its minorities. In Egypt the forthcoming government will have to reach some understanding with the Christian Copts along with other minority sections of the population. Added to this is the issue of taking care of the legacies of the Nasser-Sadat-Mubarak regimes – in the form of business houses and a well-entrenched bureaucracy. Above and beyond the stated, there will be the negotiation of effective power and control between the forthcoming government and the Egyptian army – the latter calling the shots at the moment.

Those dismissive of the Arab Spring will cry hoarse that the greatest darkness lies under the lamp. Tunisia which sparked this multi-national revolutionary upsurge still has to come into terms with its newly established democratic regime. Some of the key issues demanding immediate attention from the Ennahda government, led by the victorious Ennahda Islamist Party, are the country's nearly decimated economy

and the non-existent justice system.

While the revolution has been the most significant for the Tunisians, its end has brought to the fore multiple divergences and interests within the socio-political structure. A clear opposition to the anti-Ben Ali regime secured for the Ennahda the whole-hearted support of the Tunisian masses who nurtured a simple agenda – reward a party with no connections to the previous regime. Surprisingly the 'Islamist' tag was never the deciding factor. But the coming of an Islamist party to power was bound to stir uneasiness among some, and so it has.

The left and the secular parties started raising questions on the role of Islam and Shariah law in Tunisia and the larger implications it would have on issues of women's rights and personal freedom. The issue of laïcité – separation of religion and politics – is gaining strength with every passing day. While the Ennahda repeatedly reassured its population that none of their freedoms will be curbed, the left-wing and secular parties are not resting easy.

At another level some are tempted to argue, not unreasonably, that there is more at play than religion alone. Recalling the nature and composition of the political rallies that preceded the election, one can argue that political differences in Tunisia – the land of origin of the Arab Spring – has a more distinct class character than religious colour. This was most obvious in Tunis, where the final political rallies comprised the working class in the outskirts of the city under the Ennahda; while the elite and the secular went for the moderate parties of northern Tunis.

There is also the usually overlooked aspect of the MENA states, or for that matter the entire gamut of Arab nations – their essentially heterogeneous nature. The repeated use of the term 'Arab world' over the last few years has been based on an over-simplification – all Arabs look the same, sound the same, and copy each other's actions. The revolution has dramatically exposed the essential heterogeneity among the MENA states – their necessarily distinctive political and social landscapes. Thus an Egypt and a Tunisia differ from each other in terms of politics and national administration, once the lid of the revolution is blown off.

Arab Spring or not, countries of the MENA are charting out new paths, and shaping their own destinies on the basis of their immediate environment and contingencies. It would be a terrible oversimplification to fit all these into a broad idea of an 'Arab Spring'. At the same time it will be an injustice to these countries if they are studied leaving aside their local contexts, political aspirations, deeply entrenched political and social legacies and above all the aspirations of the classes who have always been at the centre of this change. The revolution has taught us much, broken many misconceptions and thrown up multiple issues – but they remain unresolved. In locating the answers will the legacy of the revolution be carried ahead.

Being a religion of global significance Islam has, over the centuries, come to influence the society and culture not only in its immediate neighbourhood, but even beyond. Such influences are not limited to religion, but rather spill over to actions which constitute our culture and daily life. One of the contributions in this issue discusses the influence of Islam on national attires in the Central Asian countries. The author argues that though the use of head-dresses was common among women in the Central Asian countries, with the coming of Islam in the region, head-dresses acquired a religious colour where influences were clearly discerned from Persia and Arabia. Details of the terminologies used to describe head-dresses offer interesting insights regarding the influence of Arabic in this region, which arrived with Islam. The author further argues that in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, head-dresses among women in many Central Asian countries were indicative of their social, marital and financial status. However in recent times, head-dresses are considered to

be more of a hindrance than a facilitator in upholding the individuality of woman, as a result of which many women in modern day Central Asia prefer European style attires and refuse to include head-dresses as a part of it.

Religious institutions have been instrumental in playing a variety of beneficial roles in many societies. These range from philanthropy to education to development of backward classes. In the article on a natural calamity at the Lake Nyos in north-western Cameroon, the author examines similar role played by the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and its ecumenical partners in extending help and support in the disaster. In course of the article it is argued that inspite of its limited resources and management constraints the PCC played a significant part in providing relief to those affected by the disaster. The article provides a detailed description of the efforts undertaken by the PCC to evacuate survivors from the disaster area to hospitals and camps, providing those affected with food, clothing, medicine and cooking utensils. The narrative also provides statistical estimates of the number of deaths and survivors from the incident, together with the various expenses incurred during the rescue operation.

The third article is centered on the life and activities of Samora Machel – who is considered a central figure in the history of the freedom movement of Mozambique. The struggle against Portuguese occupation is also linked inextricably to the history of the FRELIMO (Mozambique Liberation Front). The author here traces the ideological dilemmas of the FRELIMO between 'anti-colonial nationalism' and 'Marxism-Leninism'. The article also traces the relationship of Samora Machel with various groups, such as the Muslims, who too participated in the anti-Portuguese struggle. Alongside is discussed the various debates which were raised within the FRELIMO at various points of the freedom struggle, with regard to the ideological inclinations of the organization which chose to swing between a Marxist-Leninist and an anti-colonial agenda from time to time.

The issue of women's rights forms the focus of the last article which engages with the diverse experiences of rural women in Brazil and South Africa. The piece discusses in detail the Inter-State Movement of Babassu Coconut Breakers (*Movimento Interestadual de Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu - MIQCB*), in Maranhão, and the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) in KwaZulu-Natal. Both these movements had their roles in providing a platform for women in these areas to improve their social conditions. At the same time it provided the impetus to rural women to fight for their rights by forming organisations in various parts of the country to counter similar problems of employment, health, social status among else. Their conflicts, discussed in the piece, range from fighting male co-workers, illegal occupants, bandits, foremen and landlords. Together with these domestic violence and health concerns also formed major issues in these movements.

Last year in October 2011 we had shared with you all some of the interesting experiences and deep insights gained by the participants to the Visual Methodologies Workshop held in Cairo in collaboration with SEPHIS, in the pages of a special issue of this magazine. In the current issue in the *Across the South* section we bring you an account of one such experience by a participant at the workshop – Musiwaro Ndakaripa. He recounts his experiences in the workshop sessions together with the critical knowledge he gained in terms of the skills required in handling a variety of visual sources.

In the *Reviews* section Estella Musiwa reviews a collection of articles on gender and rural development in the global south. The volume offers a comparative framework capturing the experiences of rural women in different geographical settings across Africa, South Asia, South East Asia, Oceania and Latin America.

**Kashshaf Ghani**

# The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and the Management of the Lake Nyos Gas Disaster of 1986

The occurrence of the Lake Nyos disaster in August 1986 provoked a widespread desire at the national and international levels to support the survivors and to effectively resettle them in new sites. This consciousness prompted the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and its ecumenical partners to raise and commit material and financial resources to the management of the disaster. The question considered here is whether the PCC succeeded in its mission to transform the lives of Nyos disaster survivors. This paper discusses PCC's involvement in responding to the immediate problems of the Nyos disaster survivors and in providing the required facilities in the resettlement sites. It argues that in spite of the meager traces of mismanagement, the PCC played a non-negligible role in meeting the immediate and long-term needs of the Nyos disaster survivors.



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## Introduction

On 21 August 1986, Lake Nyos,<sup>1</sup> located in Menchum Division in North-West Cameroon, released carbon dioxide which devastated three villages (Nyos, Chah and Su-Bum), killing at least 1,700 people and displacing some 10,000 survivors.<sup>2</sup> The foregoing scenario makes clear that managing the disaster was going to be an uphill task. Even more disturbing is the fact that it was probably the worst natural calamity ever to strike Cameroon. Apart from the need to quickly bury the decomposing bodies and prevent the outbreak of an epidemic, there was also the responsibility of evacuating the 10,000 survivors to temporary resettlement sites.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the immediate needs of these displaced people also had to be promptly met. Officials in Wum (seat of Menchum Division) and Yaounde (capital of Cameroon) became aware of the dimensions of the tragedy two days after the incident.

The president of Cameroon, Paul Biya, after visiting the affected region pleaded for international assistance in these words: 'We need international assistance to cope with this situation. We need tents, blankets and drugs'.<sup>4</sup> As governments and organisations from across the world began responding favorably to Biya's request, a national disaster committee was quickly set up. Headed by Jean Marcel Mengueme, the committee was to set immediate and long-term priorities as well as receive and manage emergency supplies.<sup>5</sup> Similar committees were created at the provincial and divisional levels. It was in this context that the PCC, in collaboration with its ecumenical partners, became involved in the management of the Nyos disaster. The authorities of the Menchum-Boyo Presbytery<sup>6</sup> of the PCC informed the Synod Office about the disaster. This facilitated mobilisation of funds and emergency supplies at national and international levels. In October 1986, the Synod Office set up the Protestant Nyos Relief Action Committee (PNRAC) to explore the means through which the church could better involve itself in rehabilitating the survivors.<sup>7</sup> It was under the aegis of this committee that the PCC joined the Government of Cameroon in supplying immediate needs to displaced families in temporary camps and in constructing permanent resettlement camps in the sites identified by the government. Unfortunately, PCC's efforts were marred by cases of mismanagement. However, the church, in spite of misuse of resources, still played a significant role in the management of the disaster. These events drew my interest in the Nyos disaster and prompted this study. Its objective is to give a detail history of how the PCC assisted these displaced persons.

## The PCC's Mobilisation and Provision of Emergency Supplies

As noted earlier, the most immediate concern around the Nyos disaster was to bury the decomposing bodies and to evacuate the survivors to the various temporary disaster camps identified by the government. When news of the disaster reached Wum on 22 August 1986, some members of the Presbyterian Church, led by the chairman of the MBP, Daniel Gouh Muaikei, visited the area to assist in burying over 1,700 victims. This was dictated by the fear that contamination from decomposing human and animal corpses would trigger an epidemic. As reported by Muaikei, the PCC's rescue team buried more than 176 bodies in Chah, Nyos and Su-Bum. The latter's report summarised the emergency operation in these words:

I was accompanied by two security officers and a person from Modele [...]. Casualties were laying [sic] here and there, both human beings and animals were already decomposing and some in lock up houses. We buried 98 dead bodies, witnessed the burial of 18 corpses, and later counted 50 dead bodies which were not buried on that day. By Sunday evening, we had given our last respect to 176 casualties before our departure for Wum.<sup>8</sup>

The PCC also streamed its efforts toward the evacuation of survivors from the disaster area to hospitals and temporary camps. This was after the leader of the military relief team, Major Victor Ngengue, called attention to the heightened need to keep survivors out of the disaster area. The Moderator of the PCC, Rt. Rev. Henry Awasom, dispatched some church vehicles from Bamenda to ease the exercise. The trucks moaned up and down the rain-sodden paths, transporting evacuees and their possessions to Wum and Nkambe, where doctors, social workers and other resources were available. Within the first week of the disaster, over 10,000 survivors were evacuated to camps in Wum, Esu, Kumfutu, Mmen and Kimbi.<sup>9</sup> The PCC then directed its efforts toward meeting the immediate spiritual and material needs of the

survivors in these camps. This was pursued by the mobilisation of Christians to make financial and other material donations. The pastors of the PCC constantly visited the camps and prayed for the survivors. Chaplaincy work in camps also involved the distribution of Christian literature. Furthermore, evangelisation was extended to the administration of baptism and Holy Communion to confessing victims.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from evangelical work, the PCC offered emergency supplies. In this direction, the Naikom Parish in Wum donated various foodstuffs to survivors in the camp and hospital in Wum. The supplies increased when the moderator's representative for the North West, Rev. Dr. D.S. Gana, visited Wum alongside Rev. Achowah Omenei.



Partial View of Lake Nyos by 1986

They came with two trucks loaded with foodstuffs, clothing, drugs and kitchen tools donated by North West PCC Christians. The emergency supplies were evaluated at CFA 500.000 francs. In a similar manner, representatives of the Mezam Christian Women Fellowship (CWF), Pefok Angela and Abam Beatrice, arrived in the Esu camp on 29 August 1986 with bags of corn and clothing evaluated at CFA 250.000 francs.<sup>11</sup> As the authorities of the PCC in Wum and Bamenda tried to care for the Nyos disaster survivors, the Synod Office of the Church held a meeting on 25 August.

Consequently, the large sum of CFA 1.500.000 francs was released to boost emergency supplies. It was against this backdrop that the moderator, Rt. Rev. Henry Awasom, arrived in Wum on 29 August with two trucks loaded with assorted food items, clothing and pots. The moderator distributed these supplies to victims in the camps. While in Kimbi, the moderator was joined by twelve pastors from Bafut Presbytery led by the Presbyterian secretary, Rev. Chebe Edison; they came with similar supplies.<sup>12</sup> After acquainting himself with the scale of the disaster and the type of immediate and long-term assistance required, Moderator Awasom addressed a letter to PCC's international ecumenical partners (Basel Mission, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wurttemberg, and Bread for the World), asking for financial and material assistance. Similarly, the MBP pleaded with its ecumenical partner, Goppingen Deanery, to assist in the management of the disaster. The positive response from these partners gave PCC's involvement in relief efforts a new dimension. Indeed, the PCC assumed the role of managing all emergency supplies made available by its partners. The supplies included tents, drugs, food, shoes, blankets and kitchen tools. The Goppingen Deanery's reaction to PCC's appeal for assistance was outstanding.

After receiving the shocking news of the disaster, the Goppingen Deanery members – from the dean to the Christians, through the parishes – joined the Government of Cameroon and other segments of the international community in providing immediate aid to the survivors. Through Rev. Gerhard Vohringer, the Deanery wrote a letter to the Synod Office of the PCC in which condolence to the survivors was expressed. According to Vohringer, the united people of God have to express their unity in trying times, such as the Lake Nyos gas disaster. This was a letter of concern and love for an ecumenical partner in a difficult situation. The Goppingen Deanery expressed its willingness to assist the survivors of the disaster in these emotional words:

Dear friends, we shall not leave you alone in your tribulation. We shall include you in our prayers more

than once. We will try to help and if there is anything you think we could contribute, let us know. We are willing to assist the survivors materially and financially just as other Christians around the whole world are.<sup>13</sup>

The authorities of the Deanery mobilised the entire Christian community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wurttemberg and collected material and financial donations. In January 1987, the ecumenical department of the Goppingen Deanery, in collaboration with Bread for the World, dispatched a team of three persons to Cameroon. Comprised of Ursula Vohringer and Rose Marie, under Gerhard Vohringer's leadership, the team visited the affected villages and the various resettlement camps. In all these places, they provided material assistance to the survivors. This aid was estimated to be CFA 2.500.000 francs. Generally, the visit was aimed at surveying how the Goppingen Deanery could further assist the survivors. During an evaluation meeting with the authorities of the PCC, Gerhard Vohringer promised further support in these words:

To the survivors of this disaster, I say as I did when I visited the camps, the assistance our Deanery has already given is not very great but just a taste of greater things to come; you need more comfort. You can be rest assured that our Deanery and the host of our ecumenical friends are taking your plight seriously and are doing everything to better your future. May the day soon come – and come it will – that you will be talking of your house and not of your tents, and of your home and not of your camp. If the Lord spared you on that dreadful night of 21 August 1986, there is little doubt that your temporary needs will be fully met.<sup>14</sup>

Generally, the PCC shared the grief and stress of the survivors of the Nyos disaster by providing them emergency supplies. When the Government of Cameroon identified the seven resettlement sites, the PCC extended its assistance to the construction of camps. This new phase of PCC's involvement was intended to enable the survivors move from tents in temporary camps to permanent homes in the new camps. Thus, a large amount of money to finance new houses, schools, church buildings and other infrastructure was required. It was against this backdrop that the PCC in collaboration with the Executive Board of the Federation of

Evangelical Churches and Missions in Cameroon created the PNRAC on 3 October 1986. It was charged with the co-ordination of PCC's assistance to the survivors. The thirteen-person committee had Rev. J.C. Kangsen as chairman, while Rev. Elias Cheng was its secretary. Generally, the committee comprised pastors, educationists, health experts, and builders. Apart from following up on all developments relating to the PCC's participation in relief operations, the committee was expected to communicate to the Synod Office the precise areas in which the church would be active in rehabilitation work. The PNRAC facilitated the intervention of PCC's ecumenical partners in the management of the disaster. The assistance provided by the PCC and its partners towards rehabilitation was managed and executed by this committee.<sup>15</sup>

### Construction of Resettlement Camps

The PNRAC held its first meeting on 15 October 1986 to explore how the PCC was to be involved in the construction of resettlement camps. The committee was poised to replace the hopelessness of these survivors with achievable possibilities. After a long discussion, the committee resolved that homes, schools, health centres and churches should be constructed in the camps by the PCC. While the Synod Office raised funds for these projects, the MBP authorities, in collaboration with the PNRAC, initiated a



Survivors visited in Wum Central Hospital by Rev. Gerhard Vohringer

church house project in the Kumfutu camp. The CFA 800.000 francs required for the project was made available by the Presbytery Committee of the MBP. Christian youths were mobilised to mould blocks for the building. In April 1987, the church was inaugurated by the chairman of the PNRAC, Rev. J. C. Kangsen.<sup>16</sup> It was aimed at discounting outdoor sermons in the Kumfutu camp.

In March 1987, the PNRAC forwarded a report to the Synod Office clearly indicating the mission of the church in the different camps. For the Esu camp, the construction of a primary school and a multi-purpose hall were earmarked as priority projects. A multi-purpose hall was also earmarked in the Kumfutu camp, while ten houses were to be constructed in the Buabua camp. Apart from requesting funds for these projects, the committee requested for a vehicle to facilitate the transportation of workers and building materials. The request came just when PCC's ecumenical partners abroad had started allotting large sums of money for the disaster. The Goppingen Deanery donated CFA 3 million francs between March and June 1986.<sup>17</sup>

Within this same period, the Goppingen Deanery worked in collaboration with Bread for the World and donated a Toyota Hilux car to facilitate the management of the disaster.<sup>18</sup> The Basel Mission and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wurttemberg also made financial donations through the Synod Office amounting to CFA 11 million francs.<sup>19</sup> The money and vehicle were placed under the jurisdiction of the PNRAC. In order to make the influence of the PCC felt, Revs. Kangsen and Cheng Elias were given membership into the Lake Nyos Divisional Committee (LNDC) that was set up to look into resettlement issues. Thus, the PNRAC, as well as the authorities of MBP, had to work in partnership with the LNDC, since it was the only channel through which PCC's aid could reach the displaced persons.

Vehicle and money now available, the PNRAC embarked on its rehabilitation project in the different resettlement camps. In Esu, a community primary school was erected and pan-roofed; it was equipped with benches, tables and chairs; CFA 1.560.000 francs were invested in the project.<sup>20</sup> The building was inaugurated on 4 August 1987 and handed to the disaster survivors by the moderator of the PCC, Rev. Henry Awasom. The new structure was intended to offer the inhabitants of the Esu settlement a shelter for all social, cultural, religious and political activities that were not possible in tents and in open air. As emphasised by Rev. Awasom during the inaugural ceremony, the building was only a modest contribution of the PCC and related organisations abroad, to make life happier for the survivors.

The PNRAC also focussed its efforts on constructing a primary school in the Esu resettlement site. The project was the product of a visit paid there by a Basel Mission team led by its Africa secretary. During the visit, the Fon of Esu expressed the need for a school to be constructed for children of the Nyos disaster survivors. Before leaving Cameroon, the team left behind CFA 2.500.000 francs for the PNRAC to construct the school buildings. The team promised to donate more money for the project as need arose. In September 1987, the buildings were completed and the new school was started.

The PNRAC constructed a multi-purpose community hall in the Kumfutu camp, costing close to CFA 1.500.000 francs. Unskilled labour for the erection of the building was largely provided by Presbyterian Christians in the area. Their massive participation was dictated, among other factors, by the desire to make their involvement felt in the rehabilitation program. The hall was officially inaugurated and handed over to the survivors by the moderator of the PCC, Rt. Rev. Henry Awasom, on 4 August 1987.<sup>21</sup> During the inaugural ceremony, the beneficiaries applauded the efforts of the PCC and received the building gladly. The applause from the survivors did not, however, stop them from pleading for further assistance from the PCC. The Moderator responded to this appeal by emphasising that the PCC and her foreign partners would multiply their support to them.

The construction of an Arabic primary school for the children of the Fulani survivors resettled in the Kumfutu camp emanated, partly, from the aforementioned promise. The inauguration of the school in January 1988 by the chairman of the PNRAC, Rev. Kangsen, was immediately interpreted by the government officials as evidence that the PCC's rehabilitation efforts did not only target Presbyterians.

An opportunity was therefore provided for these displaced children to pursue their studies.<sup>22</sup>

When the Government of Cameroon identified Buabua as one of the biggest resettlement camps in 1988, the PCC, through the PNRAC, explored domains in which it could be involved in the rehabilitation program. During a field trip, the chairman of the PNRAC, Kangsen, died after being knocked down by a vehicle. Although Rev. David Tende was appointed by the moderator as the new chairman, the PCC's

rehabilitation efforts, especially in the Buabua camp, became marred by greed and mismanagement. When work started in the Buabua camp, the vehicle donated by the Goppingen Deanery and Bread for the World transported the building materials to the construction sites. But due to mismanagement, the first three houses collapsed. This was due to poor planning and a wind disaster.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the PNRAC began construction in the monsoon. Consequently, the work had to be started all over again. This time, the PNRAC successfully completed seven buildings. By the end of 1988, a church was constructed to serve Presbyterian Christians in the camp. In spite of the poor planning, the PCC successfully resettled a good number of survivors.

Notwithstanding these traces of positive involvement, it is worth mentioning that the management of over CFA 12.000.000 francs for rehabilitation work in Buabua was not devoid of mismanagement. The sole financial report forwarded by Rev. Tende to the Synod Office exposes that only CFA 8.123.940 francs was used in the rehabilitation work in the Buabua camp. The construction of only seven houses instead of the earmarked ten houses accords credibility to the mismanagement allegations. The Kangsen's era was therefore mismanagement free while that of Tende was not. The transparency and proper management that characterised Kangsen's era were now things of the past.<sup>24</sup>

Rehabilitation work in Buabua was marked by complaints from workers at the project sites for non-payment of wages. In a letter to the financial secretary of the PCC after the termination of the Nyos project, Samuel Muyo Ngwa complained about the non-payment of his labour charges of CFA 325.500 francs. The letter also showed how Tende's tenure was a complete deviation from that of Kangsen. As he puts it:

I have the honour to write and complain about the non-payment of the sum of 325.500 CFA being total money due to be paid to me for work done by me in the Nyos project. I am a builder by profession and since the inception of this project, under the leadership of the late Rt. Rev. Kangsen [...] I have all along acted as foreman for the building team. In his time, I had no problem with the payment of money for various construction works. Rev. D.N. Tende took over in 1998 and since then we have had lots of problems as concerns payment to the extent that the project has ended with him still owing me the sum of 325.500 francs. His complaint each time was that the projects account is empty but that money will come. In the end, he left telling me that there is no money.<sup>25</sup>

As earlier mentioned, the CFA 12.000.000 francs allotted for work in Buabua was never exhausted. This therefore makes it difficult for us to understand why Rev. Tende failed to pay Samuel Muyo Ngwa and many other workers under the pretext that the projects' accounts were empty. What is even more disturbing is the fact that all attempts by Ngwa to collect this money failed. Reacting to the above letter, the financial secretary of the PCC, H.N. Agboraw told Ngwa that only Tende could solve his problem. He wrote:

[...]. As we are not in possession of any contract linking you with the Lake Nyos project, we are not of much help to you in this case. We believe Rev. Tende with whom you were dealing will supply you a satisfactory answer. Your letter to us was copied to him and we are sending him a copy of this letter so that he can act and inform us in due course.<sup>26</sup>

It is difficult to state the number of workers who suffered in the hands of Rev. Tende. But one of the carpenters whom we contacted revealed that most of the workers were not paid during Tende's tenure. Besides, the absence of statements of accounts on how the building projects were executed rendered our investigations difficult. Whatever the case, it is undeniable that Rev. Tende did not pay most of the workers. During an interview with him, he admitted the allegations and further explained that he injected the money into other projects.<sup>27</sup> This sustains the allegation that part of the money for the Lake Nyos disaster was swindled.

The non-payment of workers' wages was as disturbing and controversial as the story of the earlier mentioned vehicle. The Synod Executive Committee of the PCC sold the vehicle to Rev. Tende in 1994 for his private use. After buying the vehicle at the cost of CFA 830.000 francs, Rev. Tende permanently placed it to on the Wum-Bamenda road as a transport vehicle.<sup>28</sup> The authorities of MBP only became aware of the sale of the vehicle when they saw it transporting passengers. Their reaction was negative. It is however important to question why the Synod Committee Executive, headed by Moderator Awasom, had to sell the vehicle without informing the authorities of MBP and the donors. Faced with this

situation, the officials of MBP said that the moderator was doing joint transport business with Rev. Tende for their egoistic reasons.<sup>29</sup> This provoked the moderator to react.

In his letter of 31 May 1995, addressed to Rev. Tende, Moderator Henry Awasom did not only frown at Tende's attitude but also instructed him to take the vehicle out of Wum in these words:

[...]. What we got to know is that this vehicle is running on the Wum-Bamenda road as a transport vehicle. Those who were interested to have it, together with members of Wum Presbytery, have built up the story that you are doing joint transport business with the moderator of the PCC, who decided to give you the car for such a selfish motive. That does not hurt the moderator, of course, but what is wrong in it is that you also know very well that you are using this vehicle entirely for private transport and at the same time you apply [sic] for official car allowance to be paid to you. This is exactly the point at which Synod Committee Exco members frowned. In addition, Exco advised that in your own interest and to save the moderator's name and image from being dragged into mud, you are advised to withdraw the use of that vehicle on the Bamenda-Wum road with immediate effect.<sup>30</sup>

This was certainly not the best way to solve the problem. All the efforts of the moderator were now geared towards taking the vehicle out of Wum. Unfortunately, Rev. Tende did not act as requested by the moderator. Worse still, the authorities of MBP addressed an even more disturbing letter to the moderator. The signatories of this letter expressed their worries in these words:

We wish to draw your attention to the issue of the sale of the Lake Nyos vehicle of this Presbytery, which has since remained a running sore [sic] and a source of discontent among the Christians and the general public alike. In fact, we feel really hurt by this act. Our reasons are simple and stem from the fact that the origin of this vehicle was in sympathy with the 1986 Lake Nyos disaster experienced directly by this Presbytery. When the program for Lake Nyos folded up and the need to sell the vehicle arose, we as the Presbytery which already suffered this disaster, was never consulted let alone informed [...] In the light of all this, we plead in the name of humanity and as a matter of redress, that the proceeds arising from the sale of this vehicle be sent back to the Presbytery.<sup>31</sup>

The above letter did not only anger the moderator but pushed him to take the bull by the horns. On 18 September 1995, he wrote two letters, one to Rev. Tende and the other to the chairman and secretary of MBP. Rt. Rev. Awasom, in his rather long correspondence to Tende, accused him of disrespecting him. He pointed out that the sale of the vehicle and its use for business activities had provoked the officials of MBP to slander his person and office. He reminded Tende of his lack of respect towards the Synod Committee Executive.

Rev. Tende's reaction to the moderator's letter was immediate. On 25 September 1995, he went to Wum

and withdrew the vehicle. In his letter to the moderator, Rev. Tende apologised for all the insults and disregard incurred by Rev. Awasom.<sup>32</sup> But this was not the end of the matter. The moderator needed to explain to the officials of MBP why the vehicle had been sold. In short, he needed to reply to the letter he received from the Presbytery dated 13 August 1995.

Responding to this letter on 18 September 1995, the moderator did not only accuse the authorities of misappropriating funds for the Nyos disaster, but also explained why the car



Survivors visited in Wum Central Hospital by Rev. Gerhard Vohringen

was sold without the knowledge of the Presbytery. He declared that:

May be I should thank you for having written rather than continuing to spread the 'Good news of a corrupt and business minded Moderator of this church' [...]. I also know who are behind the scandalous accusations against me. These are those who failed and who have shamelessly cheated that Presbytery over the years in many ways. The only way to cover their disgrace and shame is to transfer their

frustrated aggression in blackmail [...]. The car was not a gift to the Presbytery or to PCC, but part of the Nyos project [...]. It does not matter how much you might blame me, but the decision to dispense of or with that vehicle was administratively taken to save the church from excessive expenditure though nobody even told us the Presbytery of Wum would have been capable to buy and run it.<sup>33</sup>

With this letter the moderator successfully buried what we can term ‘The Nyos Vehicle Affair’.

However, the authorities of MBP remained unsatisfied with the controversial end of the car affair. It is worth mentioning that this vehicle which was donated for the Nyos project was sold and the money ended at the Synod Office. It would have better served to promote evangelisation and church work in the resettlement camps constructed for the survivors. Therefore, the decision taken by the Synod Committee Executive of the PCC to sell the Nyos car and use the money for another purpose should not be saluted. This is true because it was not a property of the PCC. The vehicle was for the survivors.

## Conclusion

The Lake Nyos gas disaster of 1986 claimed over 1,700 lives and displaced over 10,000 people. When the Government of Cameroon embarked on a rehabilitation programme, the PCC mobilised material and financial resources and became closely involved in the management of the disaster. Apart from burying decomposing bodies, the PCC transported some of the survivors to resettlement camps. In these camps, the emergency spiritual and material needs of the survivors were met. In October 1986, the PNRAC was set up to coordinate the church’s activities in the Esu, Kumfutu and Buabua resettlement camps identified by the government. They constructed schools, churches, multipurpose halls and living houses in these camps.

In general, the PCC succeeded in its mission to improve the lives of Nyos disaster survivors. But in the process, very little was done to supervise the persons who managed the funds and executed the projects. In retrospect, the PCC’s involvement in the management of the Nyos disaster seems to have been a good opportunity for individuals to reap material and financial benefits. The beginning was void of mismanagement, a time when Rev. Kangsen was the chair of the PNRAC. But when Rev. Tende was appointed to lead the rehabilitation efforts after Kangsen’s death in 1988, the mismanagement of funds became rampant. Cases of misappropriation witnessed under Rev. Tende’s tenure as chairman of the PNRAC adversely impacted the pace at which donors ameliorated the sufferings of the survivors. Nonetheless, the material endowments made by the PCC and its partners solved the immediate problems of the people. To add, the houses which were built continue to serve as shelter.

- 1 Lake Nyos lies within the Oku Volcanic Field, near the northern boundary of the Cameroon Volcanic Line, a zone of volcanoes and other tectonic activity that extends southwest to the Mt. Cameroon stratovolcano. The field consists of volcanic maars and basaltic scoria cones. The lake is believed to have formed in an eruption about 400 years ago, and is 1,800m (5,900ft) across and 208m (682 ft) deep.
- 2 J. Smolowe, ‘The Lake of Death’, *News Week*, No. 66, 8 September 1986, p. 6.
- 3 For a full discussion of the role of the Government of Cameroon and the international community in the management of the Nyos Disaster, see M. Ngangwa, ‘National and International Community in the Management of the Lake Nyos Gas Disaster 1986-2005’, Maitrise Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2008.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 N. Cooper, ‘Cameroon’s Valley of Death’, *News Week*, No. 66, 8 September 1986, p. 19; MBPAW, Minutes of PNRAC Meeting Held on 12 January 1987.
- 6 It is worth highlighting that Lake Nyos is located in Menchum-Boyo Presbytery. The Presbytery is one of the twenty three presbyteries of the PCC.
- 7 MBPAW, Moderator Henry Anyi Awasom’s letter to the members of the PNRAC, dated 9 October 1986. The PNRAC was the product of the meeting held between the PCC and FEMEC, chaired by Rev. Henry Awasom who doubled as PCC’s moderator and FEMEC’s president. It was resolved during the meeting that the PCC was to manage the resources made available by FEMEC for the

disaster.

- 8 MBPAW, Muaikei Daniel Gouh's report on the Nyos Gas Disaster to the moderator of the PCC, dated 17 September 1986.
- 9 Ibid. It should be noted that a majority of the survivors was evacuated to the temporary camps by the administrative authorities of Menchum Division.
- 10 Interview with John Mundi Boja, Modele, 18 November 2010. Boja was a member of the PNRAC.
- 11 Information on these emergency supplies has been drawn from the Report of Rev. Elias Cheng, 'Relating to the Role of the PCC in the Management of the Lake Nyos Gas Disaster', 27 January 1987.
- 12 MBPAW, Ibid.
- 13 MBPAW, Gerhard Vohringer's letter on the Lake Nyos Gas Disaster to the secretary of Wum District, Rev. E.N.G.Cheng, 29 August 1986.
- 14 Cited in MBPAW, Report of Rev. Elias Cheng 'Relating to the Role of the PCC in the Management of the Lake Nyos Gas Disaster', 27 January 1987.
- 15 MBPAW, Moderator Henry Anyi Awasom's letter to the members of the PNRAC, dated 9 October 1986; MBPAW, minutes of PNRAC meeting held in Wum on 15 October 1986.
- 16 MBPAW, minutes of PNRAC meeting held in Wum on 27 August 1987.
- 17 PCAB, File No. 3435, letter by Rev. Elias Cheng, 1987.
- 18 MBPAW, minutes of PNRAC meeting, June 1987.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 MBPAW, Letter of Rev. J.C. Kangsen 'Relating to the Esu School', addressed to the financial secretary of the Basel Mission, 5 October 1987.
- 21 MBPAW, speech by Moderator Henry Awasom Presented on the occasion of the handing over of Esu Community Hall to Nyos Survivors on 4 August 1987.
- 22 Interview with John Mundi Boja.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 These allegations were raised by some insiders, namely John Mundi Boja and Abraham Dinga Abang. They exposed how Rev. Tende almost sidelined other members of the PNRAC and single-handedly executed the projects. For them, the Kangsen era was void of such irregularities and un-Christian behaviour.
- 25 MBPAW, letter of Samuel Muyo Ngwa, 11 July 1994.
- 26 MBPAW, letter of H.N. Agboraw, 20 July 1994.
- 27 Interview with Rev. Tende.
- 28 Ibid; MBPAW, letter of moderator Henry Awasom, 31 May 1995. The amount at which the vehicle was sold was disclosed to the researcher by Rev. Tende and not by Awasom's letter.
- 29 MBPAW, letter of Moderator Henry Awasum, 18 September 1995.
- 30 MBPAW, letter of Moderator Henry Awasum, 31 May 1995.
- 31 MBPAW, letter of Emmanuel Formou-Kum and Rev. Reuben Mbuat, 13 August 1995.
- 32 MBPAW, letter of Rev. David Tende, 28 September 1995.
- 33 MBPAW, letter of Moderator Henry Awasum, 31 May 1995.

# On Women's Head-dresses in Central Asian Countries in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century

National attires are an important aspect in the study of ethnography of any country. It constitutes a crucial dimension of cultural self-expression and individuality. These days the choice and necessity of an individual decides the type of attire to be worn. However in ancient times the national character was the primary factor behind choosing attires. It reflected the social, economic, cultural and spiritual life of a commune. Attires were perceived not just as clothes but rather were reflective of a person's status in the society. It sent out useful information about the individual, his social and marital status. Attires changed depending on whether a person was single or married. This change in attire was done through a public ritual. Such ritual especially among women was done when their domestic status changed. Among the attires made for Turkish women head-dress (many of the hats were from Persia) was an important element. In fact head-dress expressed nationality more clearly than any other garments. This was important for Turkish women as it upheld their personality. Even to this day one can find, in remote places of Uzbekistan, old forms of head-dress worn differently. But the trend is disappearing with time. The primary reason behind this disappearance is the belief that wearing head-dress signified belonging to a particular religion. Together with this women today also feel that wearing head-dress makes them lose their individuality. The purpose of the article therefore is to review the history, important features and traditions of women's head-dress in the Central Asian regions.



Umida Abdullaeva

## Headdress and Faith

In ancient times women in Central Asia were not allowed to step out of their homes without a head-dress. They also had to keep short hair. However such norms were not applicable to unmarried women. This tradition was not connected to religion, but instead reflected the cultural, national characteristics and aesthetic tastes of the people.

Omonulla Madaev while associating head-dresses with folklore said, 'Head-dresses were of great importance to the Turkic people, as they were regarded as the sole border between the human being and the sky. On the subject of interpretation of the sky and the space, Turkic people had their own idiosyncrasies. For them they were like an unknown world, an alien power. We know them as the outer space, which we interpret as a macrocosmos and any individual who creates this wide world in himself we call microcosmos'.

National head-dresses similar to national costumes symbolised the culture, aesthetics and nationality of the people. In ancient times it was believed that changes in patterns of design and dress-making brought misfortune to an individual. Head-dresses also express traditional, religious and regional peculiarities, along with the social and moral condition of their owners. According to Sukhareva, the head-dresses of the people of Central Asia regardless of their nationality, Uzbek, Tajik, Kara-kalpak, Kazakh, Arabian, Kirghiz and local Jewish people, had similar features. Women were distinguished by their age, wealth and social status according to their head-dresses. In Central Asia wearing head-dresses among women was considered as a special kind of celebration which had its own peculiarities. This was done in steps. As the women's personal life and social status changed so did the patterns and types of head-dresses. This was conducted when girls got married; secondly, when they gave birth to their first child; and thirdly, when the first child or grandson was circumcised.<sup>1</sup> As a result of such events in the life of a woman, her head-dress also changed from time to time.

Due to Central Asia's hot and arid summer and cold winter, head-dresses were tailored to suit the climate of the region. The Director of the Department of Medical Preparation of Uzbek National University named in honour of Mirzo Ulugbek – Rano Rustamova – gave an interview about the importance of wearing a head-dress. According to her,

Regular wearing of head-dresses by the Central Asian women can be explained because of sharp changes in the climate of the region. It is a known fact that the brain is the most important part of a human body. Therefore, protecting the brain during the cold winter and the hot summer days by wearing head-dresses is essential. The reason for that is cold may lead the brain to become inflamed, which may lead to a break in metabolism. The most dangerous ailment from cold is meningitis. The hot period of summer in Central Asia is dangerous due to its extreme high temperature and direct sunlight. If the head is not protected by a head-dress on such hot days, the epiphyte glands of the head can be damaged which may lead to various skin diseases. The rays of the sun do not contain ultra-violet rays, so they are useful until 11 o'clock in the morning. But after 11 a.m. they are harmful because they damage the brain and the skin of the face.

## Function, Names and Shapes of Head-Dresses

Besides being an important element of the cultural heritage and well-being of the people, head-dresses formed close links with religion. Since the spread of Islam in Central Asia, the appearance and function of head-dresses has changed. A head-dress named as 'turban' got more function. According to the information gained from local people, in order to indicate the word 'challa' the word 'salla' (turban) was used. 'Turban' and 'salla' are synonymous, but the name 'salla' is used to indicate men's head-dress. Salla was a monotone or striped fabric, seven to fifteen metres long, and usually wrapped layer after layer on 'kuloh' or 'doppi', the former being cone-shaped and the latter rounded skullcap worn by men. Salla was mostly white. In most cases a long white cloth could be used as a dressing when somebody was hurt or wounded and also as a shroud for wrapping a dead man. The social status of the owner of *salla* could be learned from its size and the quality.

Woman's headdress consisted of three parts: A cap worn from inside, which hung down near the waist; a triangular shaped small 'rumol' (shawl) to cover head and throat, which was tied under the

throat; a large ‘rumol’ (shawl) or ‘chalma’ (turban) to cover the garments mentioned above. The word ‘rumol’ originated from the words ‘ruy’ – face and ‘mol’ –to wipe, thus meaning a face wiping cloth.

A *chalma* (turban) can be found in different shapes and appearances in various regions. The main difference between them was only in the ways of using the cloth to wrap the head. In some places a *chalma* (turban) was a large square cloth. In other places it was of a long-cut white cloth. Women’s and men’s *chalmas* (turbans) were distinguished by the styles of wrapping. Traditionally the fabric covered the head and was tied around a neck. In Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent women wore long *chalmas* (turbans). A turban of a square form was seen mostly among Kara-Kalpak and Turkmens.

Women’s *chalmas* (turbans) were of different kinds: From simple to complex, from ornamented, with complicated patterns, to the ones called ‘Sheep’s horns’. In the beginning of the twentieth century women wore long cylindrical shaped *chalmas* (turbans) in Bukhara.<sup>2</sup> The Kirghiz people called a turban ‘kulokh [kaljok]’ and the northerners called it ‘eletchek [eletfek]’. The term ‘eletchek [eletfek]’ was also common among Kazakh women.

The second part of the ancient head-dress was a piece of cloth tied up under the chin, which could be seen in most regions, for example in Samarkand. It was a large fabric covering the head hung down till the waist. A part of this fabric covering the face of a woman was specifically cut out so that the face remained open. Such head-dress covering the body, sometimes even hanged down till the woman’s heels. It was often seen among Kara-Kalpak and Kazakh women. This head-dress was named ‘kimishe [kimefe]’. The third part of a woman’s head-dress was a skullcap. There are two types of skullcaps in Central Asia belonging to a young girl and an older woman.

Woman’s skullcap was connected with a knapsack, full of holes at the bottom, hanging down till the waist and named ‘chochkop[tfotfkop]’. It meant: ‘A sack for hair’. This sack was called ‘kaltapushak [kalta pufak]’ and meant ‘a short sack’ in Bukhara.<sup>3</sup> In this sack were put two plaits which indicated that the woman was married. In ancient times a woman’s marital status could be distinguished by plaits. Unmarried girls plaited their hair very thinly. Women who already reached their marrying age and those who did not have children, made one big plait on their head. Women’s head-dresses were long and their plaited hair was placed through the hole in order to indicate their marital status. hair was placed through the hole in order to indicate their marital status.

In Central Asia, a girl’s skull-cap was replaced by woman’s one in different times and for various reasons – after giving birth to the first child. But in Samarkand and Bukhara girls replaced it even after getting married. Though, most of all ‘girl’s skull-cap’ was changed with the ‘woman’s skull-cap’ after the rite, *nikah*, which means wedding in Islam.

Researches interpret this rite differently. Sometimes untied hair signified a girl being free. On the other hand placing their hair into the ‘chochkop [tfotfkop]’ symbolised their engagement. However O. Sukhareva, a researcher, rejected these claims by saying that, ‘A sack for hair’ was a special shield for protecting married women from stranger’s eyes.<sup>4</sup> Turkic people considered that hair had to be taken care of, since the eyes of a stranger were considered to be connected with black magic. So there was a common belief among the people of the Central Asia that keeping hair uncovered was dangerous for ones family and future life. Interestingly, when the local Jews saw a barren woman, they said that she had walked without her head-dress, showing her hair.

Women’s head-dresses were varied in its use and forms depending on the regions. All parts of head-dresses were not worn always. Kara-Kalpak and some of Turkmen women wore head-dresses which were in the form of ‘chalmas’, but they did not wear a skullcap. In Kazakhstan, in mountainous part of Tajikistan and Afghanistan, women put on only skull-caps, without ‘chalmas’. After the October revolution only old women wore skullcaps. Furthermore ‘chalmas’ were worn only when going outside. Yet, a ‘chalma’ in the past was never taken off even after the chalma’s owner had died.

### Women’s Freedom is Not Restricted by Head-dresses

A.K. Pisarchik mentioned in his speech that ‘women’s turban originated and spread among the Turkic people’. V.N. Beliser confirmed that a head-dress, namely a ‘chalma’ migrated to Europe from Central Asia. Zaharjevskaya provides evidence that a turban had been sent to Europe, especially to France for

the first time by Sultan Saladin as a gift to Henry de Champagne in 1192, and after that French women started wearing long sleeved dresses and using Chinese headscarves.<sup>5</sup> But V.N. Beliser was mistaken in considering that head-dress served as a means of covering face among women in Islam. A turban was actually a head-dress of Turkic women who did not cover their faces.<sup>6</sup>

Hamidhon Islomiy, a scientist who studies Navoiy's poems, commented,

The customs of Turkic women who wear head-dresses differ from Arab and Persian women. The main distinguishing feature between them seems keeping their faces open. If we take a closer look at the wall paintings and miniatures from the Middle Ages discovered in the region, we clearly witness that women were illustrated with open faces. Wearing head-dresses in this way was a peculiarity of women only in this region which revealed their freedom.

There is some information that covering faces by women in the East began from the fifteenth century in Central Asia.<sup>7</sup> It is also assumed that women of the region did not cover their faces until then. In order to cover their faces, women used 'chachvon [tfatfvan]', 'chasmband' and 'chachvon' – which meant a ribbon for covering the eyes.<sup>8</sup> It was a covering woven from hair of horses and was worn on the head under the 'paranji [paran3a]', a yashmak. This word taken from the Persian word 'faraji' [fara3i], which means 'a dress or a shirt'. Faraji [fara3i] originated in Egypt and it meant a shirt for men and a dress for women in the Eastern countries. In the sixteenth century, under the rule of Sheybani Khan, and in India under the rule of Babur, scientists, aristocrats, religious leaders and civil servants wore such dresses. Afterwards people began using yashmaks to cover women's bodies.

There were different designs and colours of yashmaks in Central Asia. Light-red and pink yashmaks were put on by young girls; dark-red and red yashmaks were for girls who were grown up enough to be married; the yashmaks with patterns and embroideries were for young brides; green, beige and yellow yashmaks were for women of mid-age; dark-brown and dark-green yashmaks were for old women and white yashmaks were for women who had a certain religious status in the society. Married women wore yashmaks with long and narrow sleeves sewed together. However unmarried women put them on with sleeves sewed apart, since the sleeves were separate from each other.

## Conclusion

In ancient times head-dresses were worn not only for protecting women from the looks of strangers but also for highlighting a woman's importance and beauty. The difference between the dresses of a girl and a woman furthered the appearance of new customs and traditions. Researchers are now looking into the benefits of these adornments besides their grace, as they are considered useful for women's health. It has other uses too. Nowadays, in Uzbekistan women and young girls commonly suffer from scoliosis which was uncommon among people in the past. The causes of this illness is believed to be due to not wearing head-dresses since they are made from long fabric and were rather heavy which meant women had to keep their back straight. As a result women had more beautiful figures and did not have any back problems.

In the sixteenth century, head-dresses became a fashionable accessory for European women. Although in Italy, untied hair among girls was a common sight, women covered their hair with light headscarves. Old women covered their heads with shawls designed with various protective symbols. In France women could not go out without their hair being covered.

Nowadays the significance of head-dresses is losing its meaning concurrently with the changes in economic and social spheres of life in Uzbekistan. Modernisation and ignorance of old customs and traditions in national attires are believed to be the primary cause for this. Today head-dresses are being worn by middle-aged women and only few girls, mostly in cities and other regions of Uzbekistan. The reason for this is believed to be that wearing headdresses is considered a sign of devotion to their religion. It means that a woman who puts on a head-dress is usually looked at being as a representative of Islam and the women who prefer European style clothes dislike it. This way women are divided into two groups, those wearing dresses of European style and those wearing wide, broad and long dresses with shawls on their heads. However all the women cover their heads only when they go to the mourning ceremony. After the funeral they revert to their earlier style of clothing. As a result of our own

observations we came to a conclusion that wearing head-dresses not only served as a means of religious symbolism but head-dresses also protected the beauty as well as kept metabolism functional.

The variety and distinction in women's attire led to the birth of different handicrafts linked with the appearance of new customs and styles in people's lives. Focusing on the differentiations of distinctive features of head-dresses we can observe that they also reflect geographical peculiarities of regions. For instance, head-dresses of people living in the northern regions of Uzbekistan have their own specifications which differ from those that are accepted in the southern and southeast regions. In addition to what was mentioned above about the importance of head-dresses to health I can also say that wearing it benefits blood circulation.

Head-dresses enriched by the signs of modern life can show up not only as something of ethnic origin, but as a useful tool for a healthy commune as well. Wearing a head-dress must not only be an expression of ideas, but should also be seen as an important element in national adorning.

- 1 O. Sukhareva, "The Ancient Features in the Structures of the Central Asia Peoples' Head-Dresses", Ethnography Collection of Central Asia, 1954, pp. 299-318.
- 2 A turban is a head-dress of women. Though its name was changed in different regions the functions were not changed.
- 3 Woman's hat with a quite long sack on the back side of it. Through this sack the hair was plaited in two plaits as it was customary for women.
- 4 Sukhareva, "The Ancient Features", p. 306.
- 5 R.V. Zakharjevskaya, *The History of a Suit*, Ripl Klassik, Moscow, 2006.
- 6 Sukhareva, "The Ancient Features", p. 310.
- 7 [tfatfvan] - [tafmband] (distorted Persian [tfe fm] [bend] – bandage for eyes) – right-triangle dense net of the hair of horses covering a woman's face. It was made only from black hair of horses. A yashmak was put on the tfatfvan].
- 8 Zakharjevskaya, "The History of a Suit", p. 82.

# A 'Domestic' Marxism? Samora Machel and the Creation of the People in Mozambique\*

As the 'father of the nation' Samora Machel (1933-1986) represents a keystone in the history of FRELIMO (Mozambique Liberation Front). From the start of the armed struggle against the Portuguese presence (1964) until independence (25 June 1975), the debates at the heart of FRELIMO reflected the dilemma of 'anti-colonial nationalism' versus 'Marxism-Leninism'. This article reconstructs these debates and analyses the contemporary representations and narratives surrounding the 'mythical' figure of Samora Machel.



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## Samora Machel and the ‘People’

The first time I ‘saw’ and ‘heard’ Samora Machel was in 1996 when I arrived in the south of Mozambique to carry out fieldwork. My aim, initially, was to point out the influence of Portuguese ‘culture’ on the contemporary identity dilemmas of that country. For six months I came into contact with a generation of people who had lived through the time of change, from natives (*indígenas*) to *assimilados* – two categories that the colonial legal system had helped create. One of my objectives, however, was to understand the contemporary consequences of the so-called Native Statute (*Estatuto dos Indígenas*).<sup>1</sup> It was precisely in this period of my fieldwork that a number of public events were commemorating the tenth death anniversary of Samora Machel. Nelson Mandela was invited by Joaquim Chissano, Samora Machel’s successor, to pay homage to a person who had fought alongside him against the apartheid regime and was a staunch ally of the South African people. At the Eduardo Mondlane University, intellectuals and leaders of the FRELIMO gathered to commemorate the ‘father of the nation’. Mozambique television presented at that time a documentary under the eloquent title of *Samora and the People*, which began with an effusive speech by Samora Machel, given around 1980, during the period of the so-called political and organisational offensive. The images shown during that broadcast made such an impact on me that a few days later, I went to the Mozambique TV station (TVM) to get a copy of the documentary. The words of Samora were pronounced with histrionics and dramatics. This, without doubt, was what some analysts later described as Samora’s ‘style’, ‘essence’, and ‘charismatic shine’.<sup>2</sup>

In 1970, following the assassination of Eduardo Mondlane in 1969, the central committee of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) appointed Samora Machel as its successor. In his capacity as President of the FRELIMO and of independent Mozambique, Samora – as he was informally called by the Mozambicans – played a central role in the construction of a narrative of ‘unity’ for the nation. Since the beginning of the armed struggle in 1964 against the occupation of Portugal, until the country gained independence on 25 June 1975, the debates at the heart of the FRELIMO addressed the dilemma of ‘anti-colonial nationalism’ versus ‘socialism’. Focussing on the relationship between the two, this article outlines some of the milestones of this debate and their implications for the construction of a national imagination for post-colonial Mozambique.

Samora Machel was killed in 1986 when the official airplane he was traveling in crashed in Mbuzini, in an attack that the historical records show was planned by the apartheid regime in South Africa.<sup>3</sup> But even today, he is both an object of admiration and a source of political disputes and disagreements. After his tragic disappearance, narratives about him have inextricably entwined ‘myth’ and ‘history’. This entwining has produced a tangle of versions and counter-versions, in which multiple voices have converged in search of an imagined community; the genealogy of the nation is still the object of various disputes.

## The Formation of FRELIMO

A more-or-less consecrated historiography explains the formation of the FRELIMO based on the union in exile of three groups of Mozambicans (UDENAMO, MANU and UNAMI). On 25 June 1962, the three groups reunited in Dar es-Salam and agreed to form the Mozambique Liberation Front, making preparations for a program of action to be implemented in the following month.<sup>4</sup> The process through which the FRELIMO went from being a nationalist front to a ‘Marxist-Leninist’ party is explained in detail in a study by Sonia Kruks.<sup>5</sup> Her argument seeks to demonstrate, among other issues, that the adoption of the ‘Marxist-Leninist’ postulates obeyed an intrinsic process linked to the singularity and specific characteristics of the national liberation struggle. In other words, despite the fact that these assumptions were explained and systematically formulated at the third FRELIMO Congress in 1977, there already existed a ‘tacit Marxism’ that could be detected after 1968. Kruks’ conclusions contested the ‘anti-communist’ arguments conveyed by the Portuguese colonial administration during the New State dictatorship, which explained the FRELIMO’s ‘Marxist option’ in terms of a simple condition of dependence on the Soviet Union or China.<sup>6</sup>

One symptom indicating that the FRELIMO orientation would embrace, sooner or later, the

theoretical ‘Marxism-Leninism’ assumptions, can be traced to a famous interview that Aquino of Bragança<sup>7</sup> conducted with Eduardo Mondlane in 1969, shortly before his assassination. During the interview, the founder of the FRELIMO admitted there was no alternative but to adopt ‘Marxism-Leninism’.<sup>8</sup> After Mondlane’s assassination, the direction of the FRELIMO underwent a process of radical change. A range of problems arising from the racial issue came up for discussion within the organisation, such as the criterion of belonging and loyalty to the group. Followers of Mondlane’s legacy rejected this criterion, arguing for its politically reactionary nature. Meanwhile, the group close to Uria Simango mistrusted the white minority who took part in the anti-colonial struggle alongside the FRELIMO. Finally, in May 1970, during a central committee meeting, Simango was expelled – and later faced the firing squad – under the accusation of being connected with the Lázaro Nkavandame secessionist conspiracy. Mondlane’s successor would be a young, active militant who had played an important role in military command: Samora Machel.

As custodian of this challenge, Machel was instituted as the new spokesman for the nation, shown to be an enthusiastic formulator of a ‘domestic Marxism’, adapted to the unique characteristics of the Mozambican experience. In this formulation, one of the main concerns of the new spokesman for the nation was education, production and the breeding of a Mozambican ‘new man’. It was, in fact, in the field of education that the great ideological battles of independent Mozambique were played out.

### The New Man

In Mozambique, the genealogy of the notion of ‘new man’ goes back to the period of the armed struggle; it sought to impose itself through the canonical texts of the struggle. In a sense, the struggle between the ‘new’ and the ‘old’ order is the key to understanding the idea of the new man. In a recent work, José Luis Cabaço defends the proposal that the experimental laboratory of the new man was the same training fields that the FRELIMO had in Nachingwea, which he visited in 1974. It was there in the early days of the armed struggle, that the military preparation was complemented by an ideology that disseminated new values for the construction of a ‘just, compassionate, selfless, cohesive, socially-disciplined’ society ‘with an economic vision founded on the principle of self-sufficiency and essentially dependent on its own forces and the creative imagination of man’.<sup>9</sup>

In December 1977, Sérgio Vieira, a member of the FRELIMO central committee, delivered a speech at the second Conference of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which was published in the following year in the Mozambican magazine *Tempo* under the title ‘O homem novo é um processo’ (The New Man is a Process). ‘The revolution succeeds or fails according to whether the new man emerges or fails to emerge’, Vieira said at the beginning of his speech.<sup>10</sup> The construction of the new man becomes, decisively, a mobilising device, a forceful idea, a fundamental objective to be reached.

According to Sérgio Vieira, the first time Samora Machel systematically addressed the idea of the new man in a centralised, systematic way was in a speech given at the second Conference of the Department of Education and Culture in Tunduru. On that occasion he affirmed the need to ‘educate man to win the war, create a new society and develop the fatherland’, and ‘after showing us the harm, whether from traditional education or from colonial education, to explain the educational goals that we want to achieve, according to the new society for which we are fighting’.<sup>11</sup>

### The Creation of the ‘People’

The construction of the Mozambique nation as a homogenous entity can only be understood through the logic of confronting another entity that presents itself as equally homogenous: the Portuguese nation and its intended overseas provinces. The much desired death of the ‘tribe’ was brought about, then, not so much out of a desire for unity but a means of revolting against the colonial heritage. As per this logic, the nation would be as in the imagination of its spokesperson: Compact, singular, unified. However, even with the content reversed, this Unitarianism would still reproduce the same assimilationist and intolerant grammar, due to the cultural peculiarities conveyed by the Portuguese colonial discourse. In effect, as stated by Michel Cahen, ‘tradition, not only in terms of unity of the State but of its *unicity* (i.e.,

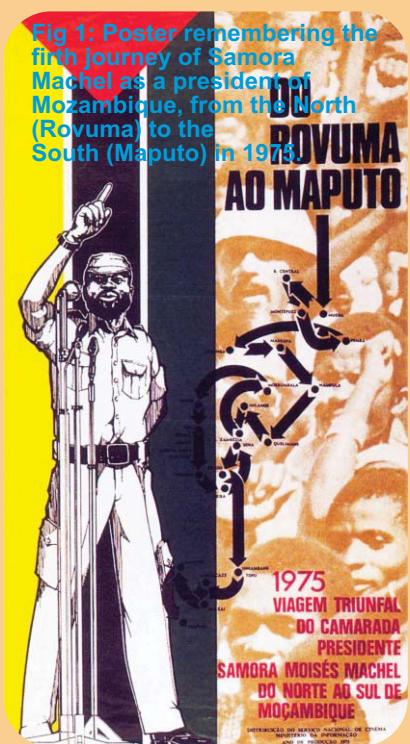
its compulsory homogeneity), come not from June 25, 1975, but from its own colonial structures'.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the problems of the post-war period would be directly linked to those structures. Following this route, in search of assimilationist homologies between one period and another, Peter Fry states that from a structural point of view, there would be little difference between an authoritarian capitalist state ruled by a small group of 'enlightened' and 'assimilated' Portuguese bloc, and an authoritarian socialist state ruled by a party that is equally small and enlightened.<sup>13</sup> Hence if during the colonial period the so-called *indigenas* (natives) were – according to the categorisations of colonial administration – to abandon their manners and customs to become *assimilados*, in the independent period, the 'population' was to abandon 'obscurantism' to become citizens of the Mozambican nation.

The struggle for unity was a central aspect in the construction of the new society and the education of the new man. The recipient and beneficiary of this process would be a homogeneous entity, the people, whose common experience of exploitation was born during colonialism. In this process, unity must eclipse and neutralise any particularistic, localist and tribalist aspirations.<sup>14</sup>

Samora Machel speaks in the name of the people and at the same time, in his powerful histrionic speech, he created it, by a kind of alchemy in which the heterogeneous becomes homogeneous: One people, one nation, one culture, from Rovuma to Maputo, as embodied in the recurrent geographic metaphor of national unity, repeated countless times. ‘It is we who have this privilege to decide about millions and millions of Mozambicans’, speaking in 1977, to a vast audience of students and teachers, ‘What we want is what everyone wants. What we say here will mean the acceptance of the entire population, from Rovuma to Maputo. At this meeting we will say: “it is not what I want, it is not what you want, but it is what we all want”’<sup>15</sup>

## A 'Domestic' Marxism?

Behind the notion of the new man lies the idea of human nature and society that is, undoubtedly, based on some elementary principles established by Marx and Engels from the second half of the nineteenth century. In its appropriation by the FRELIMO leaders, it took the form of an authentic revolutionary jargon. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that when Samora Machel was questioned about his appropriation of these principles, and their relevance to Mozambican society, his response was to emphasise that the theory, in the case of the FRELIMO, had emerged from the colonial experience and 'revolutionary practice'.



**Fig 1: Poster remembering the first journey of Samora Machel as a president of Mozambique, from the North (Rovuma) to the South (Maputo) in 1975.**

For many intellectual foreigners fascinated with the possibility of building socialism in a remote African country, this reply does nothing more than feed an imagination, the context of which was, without doubt, more global. The possibility of a ‘domestic Marxism’, to use an expression coined by Iain Christie himself, questioning preconceived certainties and ideas of those who had learned a Marxism sitting in libraries.<sup>16</sup>

Based on this concept it is relevant to turn to the idea of *praxis*. The theory, in this case, is born out of a 'revolutionary practice' founded on and the actual experience of class struggle. This issue was taken to its extreme: Man is not only a product, he is also a producer of his own history under certain conditions. Thus, determinism exists in a complex form alongside political voluntarism, the basis of which is the revolutionary experience itself.

The process of construction of the new man would, without doubt, be tortuous and complex. The school would fulfill the role of, in the words of Samora Machel, a 'center for combat and production of the new mentality, the new man', which would also require the introduction of an ideological struggle against embezzlement and corruption, emerging from the 'old man'.<sup>17</sup> The result of this struggle was the theory of the internal enemy.<sup>18</sup>

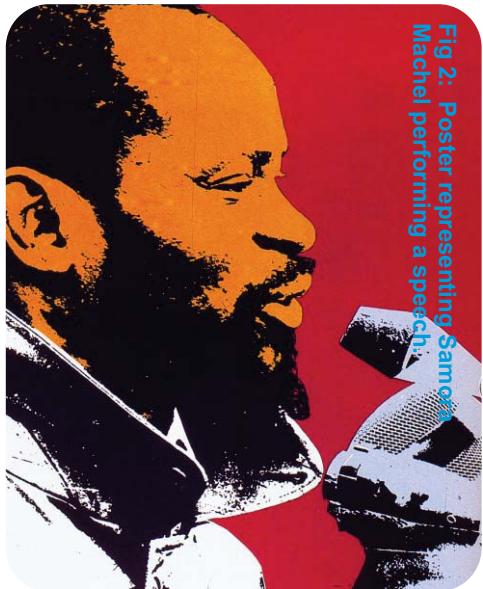


Fig 2: Poster representing Samora Machel performing a speech.

The group that supposedly conveyed the mentality of enemy aroused a need to re-educate them, in other words, weeding out the relics of colonial times from their thinking. In a pedagogical way Samora Machel made use of surgical metaphors: 'Relics!' he cried, in a famous speech in 1977, directed towards education workers. 'The head has become a base for the enemy', 'we need a surgeon to open it up and scrape it out to remove the cysts that have become incrusted there. Relics!'<sup>19</sup> With its goal of imposing an authentic moralising pedagogical campaign, the FRELIMO propaganda got as far as idealising and popularising a cartoon, whose character, Xiconhoca, embodied all the qualities that defined the enemy. Xiconhoca represented the paradigm of the lazy individual, individualist, drunk, corrupt and exploiting, establishing him, therefore, as the opposite of the new man.<sup>20</sup>

This construction of the internal enemy has to do with the civil war which began in 1977. It is not possible to allude to the history of the FRELIMO without mentioning its political counterpart:

The Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO). This group emerged in 1976 from a counter-revolutionary initiative in a neighbouring country, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), which was governed at that time by a white minority. According to William Minter,<sup>21</sup> it has been confirmed that the MNR (Mozambique National Resistance, as the RENAMO was originally known) was founded by Rhodesian Central Intelligence. When Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, the RENAMO received support from South Africa and from then, this small group became a powerful military machine. What started as a war of destabilisation became one of the bloodiest civil wars in Africa.<sup>22</sup> Once again, the FRELIMO had to reinforce its discourse of national unity, particularly when the RENAMO tried to politically clean up its international image of 'armed bandits', as they were known, using a politically ethnicist language in its claims. In fact, the main support base of the RENAMO consisted of peoples of the *Shona* language groups, and the *Ndau* subgroup, located in the center of the country.<sup>23</sup> The negotiations for a peace agreement between the FRELIMO and the RENAMO began in 1990 with the Rome talks and continued till 1992, when Joaquim Chissano (president of the FRELIMO and, at the time, also president of the country) and Afonso Dhlakama (president of the RENAMO) finally signed the General Peace Agreement. In the first stage of this negotiation, the mediation of the Vatican was important, with the Santo Egídio Community and the Italian government acting as intermediaries; in the second stage, this process was mediated by the United Nations.<sup>24</sup>

As time went on, the revolutionary enthusiasm lost momentum. In the eve of the peaceful period, as a document published by the Ministry of Education in 1991 suggests, the National Education System sought not to educate the new man, but simply to 'Contribute to the education for the Mozambican Man, with a patriotic, scientifically qualified, professional, technically qualified and culturally free conscience'.<sup>25</sup> Forty years after the idea of new man began to appear in Samora Machel's speeches and those of other important members of the FRELIMO, we can see the facts more clearly, and in a less impassioned way. The contemporary analyst will, no doubt, find himself at an advantage after those years of revolutionary effervescence. At that time, the slogans seemed to create a reality that was impossible to doubt.<sup>26</sup> The enthusiasm to create a new society dispelled any doubt as to the feasibility of that revolutionary optimism. Today, the term new man sounds a little old-fashioned, not so much for the salvationist messianic visions or the moralist remarks it evokes, but because Mozambican society has shown itself to be more complex. This society has witnessed the gradual disintegration of that phraseology, which seems to have become a worn out copy of itself.

Many non-Mozambican intellectuals and militants were enthusiastic about the changes that were being generated in Mozambique. Militants from the most diverse origins – Sweden, Canada, the United States, Italy – were excited to see an African leader like Samora Machel speaking with such unusual emphasis about the need for a new man. Some Italian collaborators in the field of education sought to

analyse this process by introducing categories derived from the thinking of Antonio Gramsci.<sup>27</sup> All of them fulfilled the significant role of divulging the Mozambican experience in their respective countries. Meanwhile, Canadians founded the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Portugal's African Colonies (TCLPAC), later the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa (TCLSAC), which coordinated the anti-apartheid movement. One of the most important intellectuals and activists in this group was John Saul, who was also a friend of Samora Machel.<sup>28</sup>

A few months before the death of Samora Machel, Mozambique began negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, from which it received a loan of forty-five million dollars at the beginning of 1985.<sup>29</sup> At the fifth Congress of July 1989 (i.e., several months before the fall of the Berlin wall) the FRELIMO abandoned 'Marxism'. From the 1990s onwards, the country went through some fundamental changes: The end of civil war, the introduction of multi-party democracy, and socio-economic reforms. Meanwhile, faced with uncertainties in the present, Machel's image was evoked as a guarantee of security. But this often took the form of a mythical narration, which served to emphasise his sagacity, his eloquence, and his courage when faced with external or internal enemies and, of course, his rhetorical strength.

### Narratives of Unity

During my many trips to Mozambique – between 1996 and 2009 – I heard numerous and varied narratives about Samora Machel. It would be useful to take all of them as a single narrative involving different versions; that is, as a sum total of its transformations which, in turn, goes beyond the substantial content of individual 'stories' to become a logical operator of a recurring theme: The unity of the nation. We are not talking here about determining the supposedly authentic or false nature of one or other narrative about Samora, but rather, to inquire how a particular national imagination is updated and re-enacted through retelling these narratives of remembrance and forgetfulness. Perhaps one of the most revealing sets – which illustrate the complex nature of the relationship between Samora and the people – is what I gathered in the north of the country during a field trip aimed at examining the relationship between the state and the Muslim communities of the province of Nampula and the Island of Mozambique.

It was around 1975 that Samora Machel – then recently elected president – traveled to the North of the country on his first official visit. On the Island of Mozambique, Samora insisted on addressing Muslims and going into the central mosque. This act was prominent in the memory of many Muslims, producing a type of incident-metaphor which, in the future, would feed a set of narratives about the relationship between Samora and the Muslims in the North.

In these narratives, Samora reportedly flouted a sacred rule for the Muslims: On entering the central mosque on the Island of Mozambique, he did not remove his shoes before entering the inner sanctum. However, in the various interviews that I conducted with different Muslims, the versions of the incident were as varied as they were contradictory. Some people appeared uneasy about commenting on the subject. The absence of a clear, convincing version of the episode shows the tension between Samora Machel – spokesman for the young Mozambican nation – and the Muslim communities. Thus, Samora's attitude was used as a pretext for considering the process by which misconceptions and compatibilities are constructed, and for considering the dynamics of attribution of multiple meanings to this figure.

The narratives about the episode at the mosque can be classified into three groups. The first is that of scandal and indignation. Muslims – mainly of Makua ethnic background, followers of some of the branches of the brotherhoods in the north of the country – had no qualms about revealing their



Fig.3: 'President Samora: the People of Mozambique greets you on your 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday 25 September 1983', Poster.

bitterness about this supposedly contemptuous attitude of the first president of the country. The second group, which we could characterise as diplomatic, recognises the seriousness of the misconduct but seeks to mitigate the incident by postulating that none of Samora Machel's advisers warned him about the etiquette for entering the mosque. This reaction seeks to absolve Samora of any blame, placing the entire weight of responsibility on his advisers and close companions. The narrative group is simply one of denial: An outright refusal to recognise the incident, going so far as to state that it never existed.

There is also another set of narratives that illustrates the relationship between Samora Machel and Muslims, which were told much later. This concerned the famous meeting of December 1982 between the FRELIMO administration and the Mozambican state, and the representatives of the country's main religious groups. This time it was not a question of suspicion, rumour or distrust. On the contrary, it was a moment when the nation-state, after years of implementing an anti-religious policy based on 'Marxist-Leninist' ideals, was seeking to build a relationship of cooperation with the various religious communities in the name of 'love for the fatherland' and national unity.

This was when the above mentioned Political Organizational Offensive, which began in 1980, prompted far-reaching debates in the FRELIMO party about the future direction of the country. Against what Samora called the internal enemy, a profound moralisation would need to be imposed at the heart of the government and, above all, strong control over provincial administrations. One of the recurring slogans was 'organisation', and it was precisely this aspect that Samora Machel complained about to the main representatives of the religious communities of the country. With equal vehemence, he called for the need to strengthen national unity among all Mozambicans: 'Mozambicans of all beliefs [...] This Nation is common patrimony [...]. The Nation is identified by its symbols. From the historical perspective, from the cultural perspective, from the perspective of Nation there are no Catholics, there are no Muslims, there are no Protestants, there are no atheists – there are just patriotic or unpatriotic Mozambicans'.<sup>30</sup>

That meeting was attended by, in addition to other Muslim leaders, the founder of the Islamic Council of Mozambique, Abubacar Ismail Manshira,<sup>31</sup> known as Maulana Abubacar. In his speech to the president of Mozambique, Maulana Abubacar outlined a description of the motives which, until then, had hampered an organisation that was representative of Muslims 'in the view of the government, or in the view of the international religious organisations'.<sup>32</sup> He then went on to attribute these difficulties to the colonial period, which tolerated the Muslim brotherhoods – symbols, in Maulana Abubacar's view, of a backward Islam – but which hindered the creation of an organisation that included all the Muslims of Mozambique. In the second part of his speech, Maulana used an unmistakable Samorian language, in a clear attempt to gain the sympathy of Samora or at least, his approval. Muslims, said Maulana, 'always recite a verse of the Prophet Mohamed, which says: "To love the fatherland is part of belief"'.<sup>33</sup> From then on, the doors were opened to the existence of a moral compatibility, by which it was possible to detect the unmistakable components of the new man, outlined countless times in Samora's discourse.<sup>34</sup>

Maulana Abubacar, without doubt, knew how to please Samora. In the north of Mozambique – in the province of Nampula – I had the opportunity to obtain a riveting narrative about this speech. It did not substantially contradict the speech published by the FRELIMO propaganda, but added a reaction of admiration that Samora Machel supposedly had had after hearing the Muslim leader. The narrative was recounted to me by one of the provincial chiefs of the Islamic Council in Nampula: 'He [Samora] liked Maulana Abubacar's presentation a lot. In that meeting, Maulana gave a speech on Islamic ideology, incorporating the themes that at that time, constituted the FRELIMO's motto: *Unity, Work and Vigilance*. FRELIMO insisted on this slogan so that people could become organised. Then Maulana Abubacar took these themes up again, and presented them using the Koran and the Hadiths. Samora was very pleased, and saw a certain affinity between the official policy and Islamic philosophy. From that date on he [Samora] sympathised greatly with the Islamic Council of Mozambique, and since then, the government demonstrated more tolerance to the Council'.<sup>35</sup>

In the context of a multilingual, plurireligious and pluriethnic country, these memories – and narratives of 'unity' – have a particular force. Benedict Anderson has emphasised that for the nation to exist as an imagined community, it is necessary for the 'real' memory to be substituted by a mythical one, i.e. of national identity. In other words, the emergence of a new national consciousness requires a

new form of amnesia. The war between the FRELIMO and the RENAMO, and such violent 'revolutionary' measures as the implantation of Operation Production and the construction of Reeducation Centers, fall within this logic of remembrance/forgetting. On this premise of national imagination, the civil war took place between 'brothers' who considered each other enemies. That is why the perpetual invocation – and evocation – of the figure of Samora Machel contributed to the creation and recreation of the illusion of brotherhood and a renewal of the reassuring myth of fratricide.

In the 1990s, Mozambique reformulated its economic policy under the auspices of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.<sup>37</sup> The new generations and urban elites from the south of the country – employees, intellectuals, businessmen, and traders – did not appear to be concerned about this new direction. However – in the words of Iraê Lundin<sup>38</sup> – the FRELIMO party remains polarised between the 'old' members of the Republic Assembly and the 'new' technocrats of the government. Despite the vagaries of local politics, the figure of Samora Machel continues to be reinvented by spokespersons of the nation, through great national rituals, cult celebrations of the martyrs of the fatherland and, above all, by the murmurs that echo through the *cidade baixa* (the downtown of Maputo): 'In the times of Samora we did not have corruption like we do today'; 'if Samora had been alive, there would not be so much delinquency in Mozambique'; 'Samora always said "goats eat where they are tied up", so then, we must put an end to "goatism" (*cabritismo*) in politics' (i.e., corruption). Without doubt, these narratives serve to remind that despite everything there is only one 'people', one nation, all Mozambicans.

However, the imagined community continues to require the juxtaposition of these memories – and illusions of unity – with others' forgetfulness, as this is the condition of existence that the whole nation – unconsciously, as Anderson would say – is demanding for itself.

\* This article owes a great deal to many people in Mozambique and Brazil for providing me friendship and assistance. But above all, I am indebted to Peter Fry for his support and intellectual generosity. Of course, I alone am responsible for the ideas and arguments expressed here.

1 Even though the legal division 'natives' (indígenas) and 'assimilados' had begun to be incorporated in the 1899 *Labor Code*, it was only in 1926 that the *Native Statute* took on its final form, until it was abolished in 1961.

2 See, in particular, C. Serra, *Novos combates pela mentalidade sociológica*, Livraria Universitária-Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo, 1997, pp. 39-44.

3 For more details see Barry Munslow, 'Mozambique and the Death of Samora', *Third World Quarterly*, 10, 1, 1988, pp. 23-36.

4 E. Mondlane, *Lutar por Moçambique*, Livraria Sá da Costa Editora, Lisboa, 1976, p. 128.

5 Sonia Kruks, 'From Nationalism to Marxism: The Ideological History of Frelimo, 1962-1977', in I. L. Markovitz (ed.) *Studies in Power and Class in Africa*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1987.

6 For more details about this see also Jacques Depelchin, 'African Anthropology and History in the Light of the History of Frelimo', *Contemporary Marxism*, 7, 1983, pp. 69-88.

7 Aquino de Bragança was a journalist, a FRELIMO historic militant and private adviser to Samora Machel, who was killed, along with the president of Mozambique, in the aforementioned 'accident'.

8 Cited by I. Christie, *Samora: uma biografia*, Nadjira, Maputo, 1996, p. 190.

9 José Luis Cabaço, 'Moçambique: identidades, colonialismo e libertação', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis,

SAMORA VIVE  
EM CADA UM  
DE NÓS



19 DE OUTUBRO

Fig 4: "Samora live in each one of us", Poster (1987).

University of São Paulo, 2007, p. 412.

10 Sergio Vieira, 'O homem novo é um processo', *Tempo*, 398, 1978, p. 27.

11 S. Machel, *Educar o homem para vencer a guerra, criar uma sociedade nova e desenvolver a patria*, Coleção Palavras de Ordem. Departamento de Trabalho ideológico, Frelimo, Maputo, 1978, p. 8.

12 M. Cahen, *La nationalisation du monde. Europe, Afrique: l'identité dans la démocratie*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1999, p. 86.

13 Peter Fry, 'Cultures of Difference: The Aftermath of Portuguese and British Colonial Policies in Southern Africa', *Social Anthropology*, 8, 2, 2000, pp. 117-143.

14 Vieira, *Ibid.* p. 34.

15 S. Machel, *Estudemos e façamos dos nossos conhecimentos um instrumento de libertação do povo*, Colección Palavras de Ordem. Departamento de Trabalho Ideológico-Frelimo, Maputo, 1977, p. 3.

16 I. Christie, *Samora: uma biografia*, *Ibid.* p. 188.

17 Samora Machel, 'A escola é uma base científica', *Tempo*, 549, 1983, p. 38.

18 S. Machel, *Educar o homem para vencer a guerra...* *Ibid.*, p. 20.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

20 See Lars Buur, 'Xiconhoca: Mozambique's Ubiquitous Post-Independence Traitor', in S. Thiranagama and T. Kelly (eds.), *Traitors, Suspicion, Intimacy and the Ethics of State-Building*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2010, pp. 24-47.

21 W. Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique*, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1994, p. 7.

22 C. Geffray, *A cause des armes au Moçambique: anthropologie d'une guerre civile*, Karthala, Paris, 1990; S. Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos. An Anthropology of the Social Condition in War*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2008.

23 Otto Roesch has shown that RENAMO had no support in the South of the country. See O. Roesch 'Renamo and the Peasantry in the Southern Mozambique: A View from Gaza Province', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 26, 2, 1992, pp. 462-484.

24 On the development of the peace process and subsequent implementation of a multiparty democratic system, see the book *Moçambique: eleições, democracia e desenvolvimento*, Patrocínio Editorial/Embaixada do Reino dos Países Baixos, Maputo, 1995, p. 672.

25 Ministério da Educação, *Balanço da introdução do sistema nacional de educação*, Direcção de Planificação, Maputo, 1991, p. 3.

26 The groundbreaking book by Michel Cahen, published in 1987 is perhaps an exception in this regard. On the eve of Mozambique openly recognising its entry into the market economy, the author was able to show that, indeed, the 'socialist' nature of the FRELIMO regime was more ideological than real. Despite Samora Machel's great 'rupturist' speeches the structural continuity with the colonial period was outstanding, especially with regard to the relations with South Africa. See M. Cahen, *Mozambique: la révolution implosée*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1987, p. 105.

27 See L. Gasperini 'Il sistema educativo in Mozambico: l'uomo nuovo come obiettivo', *Politica Internazionale*, 10, 1980, pp. 57-63.

28 See J. Saul, 'Remembering Samora Machel', *Southern Africa Report*, 2, 3, 1986, pp. 3-5.

29 M. Cahen, *Mozambique: la révolution implosée*, *Ibid.*, p. 132.

30 S. Machel, *Consolidemos aquilo que nos une. Reunião da direcção do Partido e do Estado com os representantes das confissões religiosas, 14 a 17 de dezembro*, 1982, Instituto Nacional do Livro e do Disco, Maputo, 1983, p. 20.

31 Born in Inhambane, Maulana Abubacar studied for eleven years in South Arabia graduating in Islamic (Sharia) law from the Islamic University of Medina.

32 S. Machel, *Consolidemos aquilo que nos une...* *Ibid.*, p. 25.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Personal interview with Habibo, member of the *Islamic Council of Mozambique*, Nampula,

24/07/2003.

**36** Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 2006.

**37** See M. L. Bowen, 'Beyond Reform: Adjustment and Political Power in Contemporary Mozambique', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30, 2, 1992, pp. 255-279.

**38** I. Lundin, 'Partidos políticos: a leitura da vertente étnico-regional no processo democrático', in Brazão Mazula (ed.) *Moçambique: eleições, democracia e desenvolvimento*, p. 440.

# Rural Women and Social Struggles in Brazil and South Africa \*

This article discusses the experiences of rural women in Brazil and South Africa, specifically in the state of Maranhão and province of KwaZulu-Natal. It deals with the historical and social conditions that permitted the constitution of the Inter-State Movement of Babassu Coconut Breakers (*Movimento Interestadual de Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu - MIQCB*), in Maranhão, and the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) in KwaZulu-Natal. These movements comprise women's organisations in the countryside that fight for public policies to improve their social conditions. The article considers agrarian issues, models and mechanisms of exclusion, and the social organisation of gender relations in the lives of rural Brazilian and South African women.



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## Introduction

'I am rural; I am poor; I am black, and, of course, I am a woman', affirmed Sizani Ngubane, one of the founders of the Rural Women's Movement (RWM), which was formed in South Africa in collaboration with more than five hundred women's community organisations. It acquired official recognition in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Although there are thousands of kilometers of Sizani land, similar echoes can be heard from afar: 'Our challenge is immense. Firstly because we are poor; secondly, we are women; thirdly we are black. There is still a fence that prevents people like us from getting to a better place', affirms Maria de Jesus Bringelo, one of the founders of the Inter-State Movement of Babassu Coconut Breakers (*Movimento Interestadual das Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu - MIQCB*), an organisation which evolved out of women's associations, production cooperatives and other institutions.<sup>2</sup>

The RWM and MIQCB demonstrate that rural women in organised movements constitute a reality in various countries and particularly for those with experiences of colonisation. From places marked by different histories – Brazil and South Africa for example – similar organisations have been created. Rural Brazilian and South African women have faced similar obstacles and provided different or similar answers to them. Their respective countries, and particularly the regions where their movements are active (Maranhão and KwaZulu-Natal), usually appear at the bottom of lists which index human development.

The historic configuration of the two countries introduces the possibility of comparing the experiences of individuals that live in these two contexts. After all, there are two conditions for establishing comparisons: Similarity between facts observed and dissimilarity in the environments in which they are produced.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the proposal is to enter the universe experienced by rural Brazilian and South African women and through a comparison between Maranhão and KwaZulu-Natal, approach the specifics of their experiences. This will demonstrate the ways in which these women deal with confrontations, leading to the constitution of social movements committed to grappling with contemporary agendas.

This article considers rural women's long-term experiences, which in the Maranhão case involves the period in which the military dictatorship came into force in the country (1964), passing through the re-democratisation process, marked by the end of repression and political openness (1985), and arriving at the present day. In the South African case, the section for analysis considers the institution of apartheid (1948), materialised in laws and regulations for social control. The South African experience is considered at a time in which the country was experiencing apartheid, as well as during the advent of the democratic process and establishment of non-racial democracy, called the 'rainbow nation', in 1994.

The analysis is based on both oral and written sources and a vast bibliography on Brazil and South Africa. Among the oral sources, informal conversations held with babassu coconut breakers in Maranhão and rural women in KwaZulu-Natal, and semi-structured interviews held in the two contexts are highlighted. This material made the compilation of data on the political mobilisation of rural women on both sides of the Atlantic possible and promoted an understanding of the multiple experiences of these women. The written document comprises reports, letters, emails and government documents. For Maranhão, access was gained to documents at the MIQCB and Association for Settlement Areas in the State of Maranhão (*Associação em Áreas de Assentamento do Estado do Maranhão - ASSEMA*). In the case of KwaZulu Natal, the documents were found at the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository and comprise government records, land commission legislation, reports of meetings between local community chiefs (Bantus) and government members, and advertisements to buy and sell land.

Among the points for comparison, particular emphasis will be given to economic and political relations, which had an impact on the Brazilian and South African rural environment, and the forms of mobilisation of rural women in social movements in both countries. Firstly, a panorama of the conflicts in the rural environments of Maranhão and KwaZulu-Natal, and the disputes that these actions produced between rural workers, are framed, highlighting in particular, gender, ethnic-racial and social issues faced by women, from the second half of the twentieth century up to the present day. Secondly, the constitution of social movements by rural women in Maranhão and KwaZulu-Natal is discussed. The demands of these women and the characteristics of their movements are highlighted.

## Rural Women's Experiences in Maranhão and KwaZulu-Natal

There is an economy based on babassu<sup>4</sup> in Maranhão, in which the main subjects involved are rural women. There are approximately 400,000 families living from this extractivist economy today. Babassu extractivism, together with agriculture (mainly the production of rice, manioc and corn) is a practice which characterises the rural environment of Maranhão, throughout the twentieth century. Historically speaking, breaking babassu coconuts is mainly carried out by women but men also break and commercialise the product, depending on the period and region. However, some records suggest that coconuts were more frequently broken by men.<sup>5</sup> Agricultural work, commonly, is attributed to men; however, in practice, women also carry out this activity.

Babassu was considered the 'brown gold' and the 'Eldorado of Maranhão' during the 1960s. Problems of access to land intensified in the state during this same period, resulting from various factors, including the migration process to Maranhão which reached its height in the period from 1950 to 1960. However, land-related conflicts intensified with the introduction of the Sarney Land Law (*Lei Sarney de Terras - N° 2.979/ 17-07-1969*),<sup>6</sup> which supported the privatisation of state land and encouraged the expansion of farming and industrialised agriculture projects. This excluded rural families from access to land and their principal resource – the babassu palm. Projects to introduce monocultures were intensively developed in Maranhão subsequent to this law, following a strong agrarian concentration process, which gave rise to land ownership related conflicts between the 'former occupants', who were mainly Afro descendants and 'indigenous peoples', and the aforementioned owners.

Historically, the land issue has been a problem that has affected, and continues to affect, the lives of the Zulus in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal. In fact 'the loss of land ownership' was 'the fundamental basis for the colonial regime and apartheid in South Africa'.<sup>7</sup> Separation and inequality dominated South African experience as the white colonists who took control of the country in the middle of the seventeenth century sought to subjugate the native inhabitants.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, European colonisation in South Africa, which was started by the Dutch during the seventeenth century and intensified by the British during the eighteenth century, consolidated at the start of the nineteenth century, causing conflicts related to land and other natural resources.<sup>9</sup>



The apartheid regime (1948-1994)<sup>10</sup> further intensified the earlier racist biases through laws which regulated one of the most violent and repressive systems in contemporary world history.<sup>11</sup> The plans for agrarian reform in South Africa, under this regime, excluded the different non-white South African communities. For the Zulus, the impact was the loss of ownership of their homelands and daily violence which resulted from this exclusion. Apart from the legacy introduced by the Natives Land Act (1913) and other legislative measures, the Group Areas Act (1950) established the spatial segregation of races in residential areas. 'Ethnic districts' or 'bantustans'<sup>12</sup> were constructed.

Official documentation shows that removal of black communities from their ancestral lands<sup>13</sup> was common during the period. As some documents indicate, the terms used by the rulers varied from 'remove' and 'eliminate' to 'renew' and 'black spots in the country's arable areas':

The Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner:  
Natal (Bantu Areas),  
Pietermaritzburg

REMOVAL OF BLACK SPOTS: REMAINDER OF 'THE SWAMP' NO. 5741 AND REMAINDER OF

## LARANCE

1. The Farmers' Associations of the Underberg district have expressed their concern at the Department's failure to eliminate these 'black spots'.
2. My file (15) N2/10/3/6 [...] was returned to you on 15 October 1971 as it appeared that these properties have been expropriated and that it is now necessary for you to allocate acceptable compensatory land for the former landowner, and indicate an area where the other Bantu residents may be settled. Information at my disposal indicates that approximately 100 families are involved. [...]

## ELIMINATION OF BLACK SPOTS

At a meeting held on 30 June 1959, your request for recommendations for compensating land was discussed. Members pointed out that land in the vicinity of the Trust Farm Franchay West had in the past been offered to the Native Trust, but had not been taken up.

Therefore, it can be observed that historically, state economic policies directed towards the Brazilian and South African countryside, guided by economists, businessmen and rulers, were accompanied by a symbolic obliteration of individuals from the countryside.

Brazil experienced military repression, which was enacted through a coup which began in 1964 and ended in 1985; this was a time of political openness or the so called re-democratisation of the country. The military regime was characterised by the absence of a direct and secret vote to elect representatives, the army generals' hegemony in the presidency, and persecution and political repression of those who opposed the regime.<sup>14</sup> In rural areas, a popular uprising spread with growing violence and there was complete lack of citizenship. The government was unabashedly negligent of the population in the countryside, especially with respect to rural development policies; these spaces were seen as backward, incompetent, and as counterpoints to urban environment and progress.

In this context, women who were involved with babassu extraction and agriculture in Maranhão were directly involved in conflicts related to land ownership and preservation of babassu palms in the second half of the twentieth century. The demands made by the extractivist labour force encouraged the struggle for land in some locations.<sup>15</sup>

The historic process of struggle for access and the right to natural resources in Maranhão was represented by individuals who lived in the countryside in accordance with their own perspectives; in other words, time and history were re-written in their daily experiences. The coconut breakers' memories of conflicts with farmers and their employees capture the opposition between notions of 'the time of restricted coconuts' and the 'time of free coconuts'. The time of restricted coconuts refers to the period in which the families saw the land on which they lived being cordoned off, making the collection of babassu coconuts impossible. The time of free coconuts refers to the period prior to the conflicts when the coconuts were still accessible to the agro-extractivist workers and there was land for agricultural production.

The conflicts narrated by the coconut breakers are also markedly divided by gender relations: The women are the protagonists in struggles against men, the threat to the babassu and survival of the rural workers, which is almost always attributed to a male figure, either the farmer/illegal land occupier, or the bandit/foreman.

The coconut breakers' participation against attacks by farmers and/or illegal land occupiers contributed to them obtaining greater political-organisational activism in their villages.<sup>16</sup> This organisation took place around the late 1980s and early 1990s, a period of intense rural conflict in the state.

The MIQCB was formed out of discussions between associations, clubs for mothers at Catholic Churches, women's groups and cooperatives engaged in the struggle for free access to and preservation of the babassu, guarantee of land, public policies concerned with extractivism, family farming, and gender and ethnic-racial equality. The coconut breakers' current projects involve complete babassu processing. Under the *Free Babassu (Babaçu Livre)* umbrella, they produce soap, oils, charcoal, flour for cakes and porridge, recyclable packaging, and craftwork and jewelry through sustainable use of the

babassu palm.

It was also at the start of the 1980s, by mobilising women who had lost their 'ancestral' lands during apartheid, that the RWM was organised. The land exclusion process took place in a specific manner in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Demands for access to land and policies concerned with the sustainable use of natural resources constituted the main characteristics of these mobilisations. There were generalised uprisings against the system throughout South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s.

The rural conflicts intensified between 1970 and 1980, both in Maranhão and in KwaZulu-Natal, marked as they were by similar violence on both sides of the Atlantic. In these conflicts, where deaths, beatings and rapes were commonplace, the gender dimension of social relations appears to have had deep implications and meanings.

The exclusion of women from state plans for agrarian reform and their interfaces with customary practices produced a situation in which women were denied the right to land titles in both South Africa and Brazil. This situation was common in Maranhão until the 1990s. Meanwhile, in South Africa, even after the end of apartheid, these problems still remain. In some analyses, and reports produced by the RWM, it is possible to see attempts to exclude rural women from participating in South African councils; the texts focus on cases of expelling women from their land by their husbands/partners' relatives and the domestic violence suffered by some of them.<sup>17</sup>

Such questions of gender are fundamental to the MIQCB and RWM's agendas, such as the empowerment of women and their economic and political independence from relatives and husbands/partners, health concerns, and domestic violence. Domestic violence was common among the women of the MIQCB and RWM, carried out by their husbands/partners especially when they started to use public space and make formal claims for their rights. The interviews verify that the coconut breakers suffered from various types of violence when they started to take part in meetings of women's groups in Maranhão. South African women were also violated by their husbands and delegitimised in their communities when they began airing their opinions publically.

The feminisation of AIDS in South Africa has been a widely discussed problem. Another major problem, that has received less attention, is the expulsion of rural women from their homes, especially when their husbands pass away. In some cases they are forced to marry for a second time (often a brother-in-law) and this obligation often includes rape as an attempt to consummate a second marriage.

### Women in Movement: Rural Organisations in Brazil and South Africa and Networks

Insurrections, localised mobilisations or even social movements capable of furthering demands may arise during political and socio-cultural disputes, which involve the affirmation of identities, struggle for rights and inevitable social confrontations. This is certainly the case for the MIQCB and RWM, which would both crystallise as Brazilian and South African rural women's organisations during the 1990s, and become officially recognised in 2002 and 2003 respectively.



Related to political, economic, social and culture conjunctures towards the end of the twentieth century, the MIQCB and RWM emerged at a moment in which most rural sectors of Brazil and South Africa were focusing on new survival alternatives. Social, racial and gender questions, as well as environmental challenges, were discussed locally, nationally, and globally. Therefore, it could be said that the MIQCB constitutes a 'new social movement',<sup>18</sup> whose characteristics would be environmental and ecological defense, affirmation of ethnic identity and gender-



Rural area in KwaZulu-Natal

situation does not imply the absence of conflicts or misunderstandings within these organisations. The two groups cannot be seen as homogeneous spaces, as its women members occupy unequal positions within their organisations. The leaders are closer to national and international political networks, while others continue to be more connected to their local, rural communities, with few opportunities for action outside of these spaces.

The MIQCB and RWM leaders, principally the general coordinators, are more involved with the political questions which concern their organisations. No doubt, the role of these leaders is significant for Brazilian and South African women. However, generally speaking, the idea of leadership in the MIQCB is much more diffuse in collectivity than the RWM. The pre-eminence of leadership is pronounced among women in this movement. A leadership centered on the figure of the RWM general coordinator is indispensable while discussing the organisation's survival. The division/collectivisation in the initiatives and decisions proposed by the movement actors are seemingly more present among the MIQCB coconut breakers.

In this sense, although it is not possible to affirm a difference between the South African and Brazilian experience, this may be a cultural and political factor. Historically, the existence of a traditional leadership, generally represented by a male figure such as a king or local chief,<sup>19</sup> is common among South African rural communities. When women linked to the RWM started to make demands for a place in politics, the references that were available to them were related to this concrete experience of unity. Rural South African women started to demand active roles from local councils, at a time when they did not even have the power to participate, let alone make decisions. However, representation of these women continued to focus on individuals, commissions, councils, and government institutions.

Another possible explanation for this difference, in which the RWM takes on the logic of operating around a specific member, seems to be related to the movement's constitution. Contrary to the MIQCB, which was based on the everyday training of rural workers, their collective experiences of breaking babassu during the conflicts, the RWM was, at least apparently, solidified as an organisation from the beginning. This does not imply that the RWM is not the consequence of concrete experiences of struggles, mobilisations and resistance but that the foundation of this movement was much closer to external interferences and was of an institutionalised nature.

More markedly, the RWM was founded as a non-government organisation, influenced by actions from international agencies promoting projects concerned with social, ethnic and gender equality, sustainability, and citizenship. The RWM was formed by connecting to international development policies and has carried out projects which have been directly supported by US and European universities and institutions.<sup>20</sup> However, despite these differences, the MIQCB also has projects which

related demands. Not in dissonance, the RWM has been established as a non-profit making institution which has been active in nine districts of the province of KwaZulu-Natal. In the state of Maranhão, rural women started to define themselves as coconut breakers during the 1990s, creating a positive identity which, generally speaking, had not been the case.

The dynamics of organisations such as the MIQCB and RWM are related to the social networks in which their members are involved. Their participants' identities are activated during collective conflicts, in an area of common understanding.

However, the existence of a shared

are supported and financed by the European Union, Ministry of the Environment in Brazil (Ministério do Meio Ambiente), Bread for the World, ActionAid Brazil, the Department For International Development (DFID - UK), and War on Want, among others.

The consolidation of the MIQCB consists of an open critique of the predominantly male nature of the Rural Workers' Unions in which women were underrepresented. The unions were more open to participation of women at the start of the twenty-first century and became known as the Male and Female Rural Workers' Union. However, the coconut breakers' public accomplishments do not necessarily accompany any transformations in family relationships, the private domain.<sup>21</sup>

The MIQCB constitutes six regional offices, which are located in different Brazilian states. Three of these offices are based in the state of Maranhão, where approximately three hundred rural women are members.<sup>22</sup> Due to its extensive area of coverage, the MIQCB has an executive coordination department, audit committee and thematic commissions.

The first is formed by general coordination, vice-coordination and financial coordination departments, and general offices for training and communication. The thematic commissions are:

Infrastructure, income production, agrarian reform, technology for the sustainable use of babassu, organising the management process, political and financial sustainability, gender and ethnicity, qualifications and training, the free babassu law, child labour in babassu areas, communication and information, and public policies.

The RWM comprises approximately two thousand women in total, with only five hundred being active participants. Both

movements were projected beyond official geographical borders, thereby breaking regional and ethnic boundaries, and addressed from a rural space, based on gender, ethnic-racial and class-related criteria.

As can be observed, approximations between the dynamics of the MIQCB and RWM's actions<sup>23</sup> are evident. Social movements are hardly ever isolated, without any contact with other organisations. Relationships with the MIQCB and other organisations such as the Association for the Female Rural Workers' Movement (*Associação do Movimento de Trabalhadoras Rurais - AMTR*) and the Association in Settlement Areas in the State of Maranhão (*Associação em Áreas de Assentamento do Estado do Maranhão - ASSEMA*) can be clearly noted. The RWM is connected to the National Movement of Rural Women (NMRW) and the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA). It is interesting to note that the AMTR (in Brazil), NMRW, and AFRA (in South Africa) are organisations which were constituted before the MIQCB and RWM were formed and provided impetus for the creation of these two social movements to some extent.

The coconut breakers' relationship with political-institutional figures, such as local councilors (Maria Alaídes and Maria Nice, elected by the Workers' Party, for example), and the development of projects such as the Babassu Working Group (promoted by the Federal Government since 2002), with participation from MIQCB leaders, show that the coconut breakers are in constant negotiations with power structures, creating opportunities and benefitting from the access that is given to them.

South African rural women also establish relationships with their country's government, acting on local councils, committees and important departments in South Africa, such as the Department of Land Affairs. In written documentation about the RWM, it is possible to identify the strong relationship between the movement and the African National Congress (ANC), the South African political party of which the first president of South Africa (Nelson Mandela) was a member and is also linked to the current president (Jacob Zuma). This relationship with the ANC is generally denied or obliterated by the



Rural women dancing in RWM meeting

movement's leaders. So, if on the one hand, the coconut breakers emphasise the importance of support given by members of the Workers' Party (PT) during rural conflicts in Brazil, the RWM leaders tend to deny possible relations with political parties; this relationship appears to have been formed since the movement's conception, especially when the Women's League was founded, to strengthen demands made by women in the ANC during the country's political opening process.

### Concluding Considerations

If, during the military dictatorship, projects for the Brazilian agrarian sector benefitted the major landowners and excluded workers in the fields, the state denied women the right to land ownership during the political re-opening process in the 1980s and 1990s. Many women who are now organised in movements confirm that they have land deeds in their names today, previously issued only to rural men. Impingements of this type were already taking place towards the end of the 1980s when a very small number of women took part in unions as dependents of their husbands, since they were not allowed to have their own official membership cards.

In the case of South African rural women workers, including many of those who were active in the RWM, access to land was impeded by customary practices that reinforced patrilineal inheritance. Therefore, it was a double agrarian exclusion for these women. The issue of inheritance (right to land, goods and property) still constitutes a problem which is widely discussed during meetings between various African organisations.<sup>24</sup>

Conflicts, tension and negotiations on gender relations are certainly structural elements for constituting the MIQCB and RWM. It is not without reason that the coconut breakers and South African rural women's identities are directly related to multiple uses and gender confrontations, particularly in their relationships with their husbands and partners.

There are certainly other difficulties faced by these women that are related to poverty and basic subsistence needs. In KwaZulu-Natal the lack of fertile soil and water are the main problems that impede agricultural production and, therefore, the economic development of women in a rural environment. In Maranhão, although they do not have great difficulties for small-scale production, the deadlock is related to producing and commercialising products on a large scale, especially due to the lack of equipment compatible with the rural workers' reality, and the non-existence of authorisation for the sale of their products in a more profitable market. Nevertheless, considering the difficulties, these women have shown their capacity for strategising and organising around their interests. Indeed, they have done so with great daring, intelligence and creativity.

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- \* This article is based on doctoral research developed within the scope of the Ethnic and African Studies Multi-disciplinary Post-Graduation Program (Post-Afro) at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA/Brazil), with funding from SEPHIS through the *Stories of Women in the MIQCB and the RWM: Gender, Identities, and Agrarian Issues in Brazil and South Africa (1970-2003)* project.
- 1 For a panoramic overview of the RWM, see the organisation's site: <http://www.rwmsa.org/>, accessed on 1 June 2012
- 2 For an outline of the MIQCB's main agenda, see the movement's site: <http://www.miqcb.org.br/>, accessed on 1 June 2012
- 3 See Marc Bloch, *Pour une histoire comparée de sociétés européennes. Mélanges Historiques*, Paris, EHESS, t. 1, 1963. pp. 16-40.
- 4 Babassu is one of the most typical Brazilian palms. Babassu palms (*Orbignya phalerata*) in Maranhão cover a total of 10.3 million hectares and constitute secondary vegetation favoured by successive burning. Approximately sixty eight sub-products can be extracted from the babassu palm. Babassu breaking mainly focuses on commercialising the nuts, which are an important product in the cosmetic market and for soap industries.
- 5 For example, see S. F. Abreu, *O côco babassú e o problema do combustível*, Ministério da Agricultura, Indústria e Comércio/Estação Experimental de Combustíveis e Minérios, Rio de Janeiro,

1929; GRUPO DE ESTUDO DO BABAÇU, *Babaçu. Estudo Técnico Econômico. G.E.B. Relatório*, Ministério da Agricultura: CNEPA-SNPA, Rio de Janeiro, 1959.

6 Also called the ‘Sarney Land Law’. The ‘Sarney Group’, also called the ‘Sarney oligarchy’ or ‘Sarney dynasty’, came to political power in the state in 1966, the year in which José Sarney was elected governor of Maranhão. His relatives and allies occupy the main political positions in the state even today. See Wagner Costa, *Do Maranhão Novo ao Novo Tempo: a trajetória da oligarquia Sarney no Maranhão*, São Luís, mimeographed, 1998; and Fátima Gonçalves, *A Invenção do Maranhão Dinástico*, EDUFMA; PROIN-CS, São Luís, 2000.

7 See Andile Mngxitama, Fim do apartheid, mas não da pobreza, *Observatório da Cidadania*, 2002, p. 96, [http://www.socialwatch.org/es/informeImpreso/pdfs/africadosul2002\\_bra.pdf](http://www.socialwatch.org/es/informeImpreso/pdfs/africadosul2002_bra.pdf), accessed on 26 September 2010.

8 See Judith Stone, *When she was White: The True Story of a Family Divided by Race*, Miramax, 2007, p. 17.

9 See Len le Roux, ‘The Post-apartheid South African Military: Transforming with the Nation’, in Martin Rupiwa (ed.), *Evolutions & Revolutions. A Contemporary History of Militaries in Southern Africa*, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, 2005, pp. 235-268.

10 Although Apartheid only became structured as an official institution in the 1940s, the principal laws and codes characteristic of this system had already been present from the period 1910-20. See John Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy, The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982.

11 There were various laws which regulated the actions of South African individuals, all of them being on segregationist bases. For example, the Population Registration Act of 1950 classified the population as per racial groups. In 1960 the population came to be classified as white, coloured, Asian (mainly Indian) and black. This division is still present although the post-apartheid proposal is of non-racialised democracy.

12 See Klass de Jonge, *África do Sul: apartheid e resistência*, Cortez/EBOH, São Paulo, 1991, p. 12.

13 The homelands have a deeply symbolic meaning for rural communities in South Africa. For the Zulus they symbolise a relationship with their ancestors; sacred contact between the residents and their ancestors. Demands for land in the country were also based on the need to guarantee burials of their relatives and to visit the graves of those who had passed away.

14 See Denise Rolleberg, ‘Esquerdas revolucionárias e luta armada’, in Jorge Ferreira and Lucília Delgado (Eds.), *O Brasil Republicano – O tempo da ditadura*, Civilização Brasileira, Rio de Janeiro, 2003.

15 See Maristela Andrade; Luciene Figueiredo. *Na lei e na marra - A luta pelo livre acesso aos babaçuais*, Projeto Olhar Crítico, ActionAid do Brasil, São Luís, 2004.

16 This identity is not recognised in all of the locations that have babassu palms. The coconut breakers' new and positive identity emerged where conditions had been created for this development. See Alfredo Wagner de Almeida, *Quebradeiras de côco babaçu – identidade e mobilização: legislação específica e fontes documentais e arquivísticas (1915-1995)*, MIQCB, São Luís, 1995, p. 19.

17 See Sheila Meintjes, ‘Women's Struggle for Equality During South Africa's Transition to Democracy’, *Transformation*, v. 30, 1996, pp. 47-63; Cherryl Walker, *Land Reform and Gender in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), 98, October 1998; and Georgina Waylen, *What Can the South African Transition Tell us about Gender and Democratization?*, Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics, School of Politics at Queen's University, Belfast, September 2004, pp. 1-21.

18 See Eric Hobsbawm, *A era dos extremos*, Companhia das Letras, São Paulo, 1995, p. 406.

19 For the Zulus, the king generally symbolises power and unity. His importance remains significant in the current South African context.

20 For example the University of Michigan maintains collaborative projects with the RWM. During the period in which I was developing the first stage of field research in South Africa in 2009, the RWM received a group of visiting students from this university and organised a week of activities for them. This included a presentation of the movements' projects and visits to other partner institutions.

**21** See Marta Antunes, 'As guardiãs da floresta do babaçu e o tortuoso caminho do empoderamento', in Ellen Woortmann, Beatriz Heredia and Renata Menashe (Eds.), *Margarida Alves – Coletânea sobre estudos rurais e gênero*, MDA/PEPIGRE, Brasília, 2006, pp. 123-149.

**22** The MIQCB regional offices in Maranhão are concentrated in the Tocantina, Médio Mearim and Baixada Maranhense micro-regions.

**23** See Sidney Tarrow, *El poder en movimiento: los movimientos sociales, la acción colectiva y la política*, Alianza, Madrid, 1997; Sidney Tarrow, 'Mentalities, Political Cultures, and Collective Action Frame: Constructing Meanings through Action', in A. Morris and C. Mueller (Eds.), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992, pp. 174-204.

**24** See Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), *A place to Live: Women's Inheritance Rights in Africa*, 2005.

# The Visual Methodologies Workshop – Some Reflections of a Doctoral Participant

**Musiwaro Ndakaripa** grew up and studied in Zimbabwe. He received a B.A. Honours in History and an M.A. in African History in 2006 and 2008, respectively. His doctoral research, at the Department of History in University of Zimbabwe, focusses on belonging, citizenship and property rights of African migrants and their descendants in Zimbabwe. Email: [mndakaripa@gmail.com](mailto:mndakaripa@gmail.com)



## Musiwaro Ndakaripa

I am a doctoral student at the Department of History in the University of Zimbabwe. The title of my thesis is 'The Property Rights of African Migrants and their Descendants in Zimbabwe with Particular Reference to Makonde District, c. 1900-2010'. The objective of this study is to analyse the extent to which African migrants and their descendants from neighbouring African countries like Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique could own different forms of property like land, livestock and houses in Zimbabwe.

I was privileged to participate in a workshop titled 'Visual Methodologies Workshop: Beyond the Written towards the Sensory' which took place in Cairo, Egypt from 15 to 24 April 2011 in collaboration with SEPHIS. This workshop was a milestone in my understanding of visual methodologies, that I adopt in my Ph.D. research. From this workshop I gained interesting perspectives on the nature and use of visual sources. This was made possible through discussions with conveners, workshop participants from various academic disciplines like History, Anthropology, Ethnography, Heritage Studies and Law. Other participants from professions like urban planning enriched the workshop by sharing their experiences of using visual materials like photographs, videos, and films. What made the workshop unique was the fact that participants and conveners were drawn from different countries in Africa, South America and

Asia, regions with different visual cultures, ethics, and laws concerning the use of visual sources. I also acquired knowledge through readings and basic textbooks on visual methodologies made available to participants before and during the workshop. This exposure equipped me with a set of skills in using visual methodologies. For the purpose of this article, I will confine myself to talking about what I gained as a doctoral participant in the workshop.

When I started research work towards a Ph.D. in January 2010, I visited various institutions which had written

documents and photographs, like the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ), the Parliament of Zimbabwe, and Zimbabwe Papers. I also managed to access photographs from some individuals and private collections. I conducted preliminary fieldwork

and interviewed several informants. In doing this I encountered a corpus of images and photographs showing property owned by African migrants. I also used maps showing the boundaries of plots or farms owned by African migrants. Although the undergraduate courses in historical method that I attended were informative, they were introductory and did not give me enough skills to use visual sources for a doctoral thesis. This workshop trained me to effectively use visual materials and produce academically sound knowledge. The major areas that the workshop illuminated for me, and which will add value to my Ph.D. research, are (i) the sensory aspect of visual sources, (ii) critical skills in using visual sources, (iii) planning visual research, (iv) ethical considerations, (v) the importance of collaboration when using visual sources and (vi) referencing visual sources. What I write below is based mostly on what I learnt during the workshop. I shall, therefore, cite some key writings on visual methodologies that were given to participants at the workshop to support my narration.

I discovered that visual sources are unique because they arouse the visual senses of the researcher and the informants, much more than what is evoked by written sources. Visual sources add new dimensions to how researchers define ways of acquiring and representing knowledge, through a new focus on the image. To support my argument here I want to make a reference to Gillian Rose who has noted that the visual is the most fundamental of all the senses because seeing is the basic way in which most people come to know the world.<sup>1</sup> I discovered that the visual materials can offer new ways to understand life experiences as they have psychological implications.<sup>2</sup> Through visual sources the researcher can 'experience' what was felt by people who lived in the past as they engaged with their time. There are aspects of life which are not easy to explain or articulate in prose, but can be articulated and understood when reference is made to visuals. In my Ph.D. research, African migrants in Zimbabwe showed me photographs of the houses in which their grandparents lived, during the 1930s and 1940s, made of mud, wood and thatched roofs. However during the 1990s some of them lived in spacious houses with electricity, water supply and telephone connections. In this way the quality of houses and lives of African migrants in the 1930s and 1990s can be explained by analysing photographs. These photographs show minute details which can then be rendered in prose. This is possible because informants, through their emotional attachment to their images, can use their senses to articulate social and cultural details embedded in images. Herein rests the importance of visual methodologies. In my opinion visual methodology competes with, even goes beyond, other research methodologies like life history, micro-history, and participant observation, methods which have for long been praised for articulating people's personal experiences and psychologies.



The workshop equipped me with critical skills in using visual sources. We discussed, at length, the centrality of visual sources. As noted by other scholars like Mark Godfrey, we became aware that the visual can invoke memories about the past to remember characters and join events together.<sup>3</sup> At this workshop, however, I realised that images need to be treated with caution as they can be misinterpreted and given biased meanings by the informants, the researcher, and even by the readers of the final published work.

Participants were urged to critically consider their own ways of looking; in many cases they were biased because they were influenced by their historical, geographical, cultural and social backgrounds. In addition, I learnt that researchers should not only be concerned with how images look but also how they are received by people.<sup>4</sup> For my doctoral research it is my responsibility to interpret images by giving descriptions and explanations. It is important to stop the audience from making problematic conclusions.

While visual sources are embedded with details and useful in describing and analysing historical developments they are not wholly objective in their representations. This is because most visual sources are by nature silent and incapable of clarifying issues.<sup>5</sup> They need interpretations and texts to support them. In addition, the context in which the photograph was taken must be taken into consideration. The context in which a map was created must be explained. Such contextual information increases the readers' understanding of the argument being presented.

In analysing visual sources we debated factors that affect the interpretation and meaning of photographs. Various arguments from different scholars concerning interpretations and meanings of photographs were discussed. Some of the interesting arguments were those put forward by Gillian Rose. She made reference to auteur theory which argues that the most important aspect in understanding a visual image is what its maker intended to show.<sup>6</sup> However, she also noted a counter argument that since an image is always made and seen in relation to other images, it is this wider visual context which is more significant for what the image means than what the maker intended.<sup>7</sup> The counter argument shows that the context in which the image is made available to the public can determine its meaning. This undermines the argument that the maker of an image is solely central to its meaning.

One of the key issues I learnt from critical visual methodologies is that images can be given meanings by the technologies used to make them.<sup>8</sup> In the case of photographs, the kind of camera and films used can play a deciding role in which details remain visible or get obscured. This argument demystifies the belief that photographs simply record things the way they 'really' look; it complicates the truth-claim of the photographic image. This means that despite their sensory aspects visual sources are not immutable records of what really transpired. One must not be influenced by the quality of the

photographs to either underrate or overrate the quality of property owned by African migrants and their descendants.

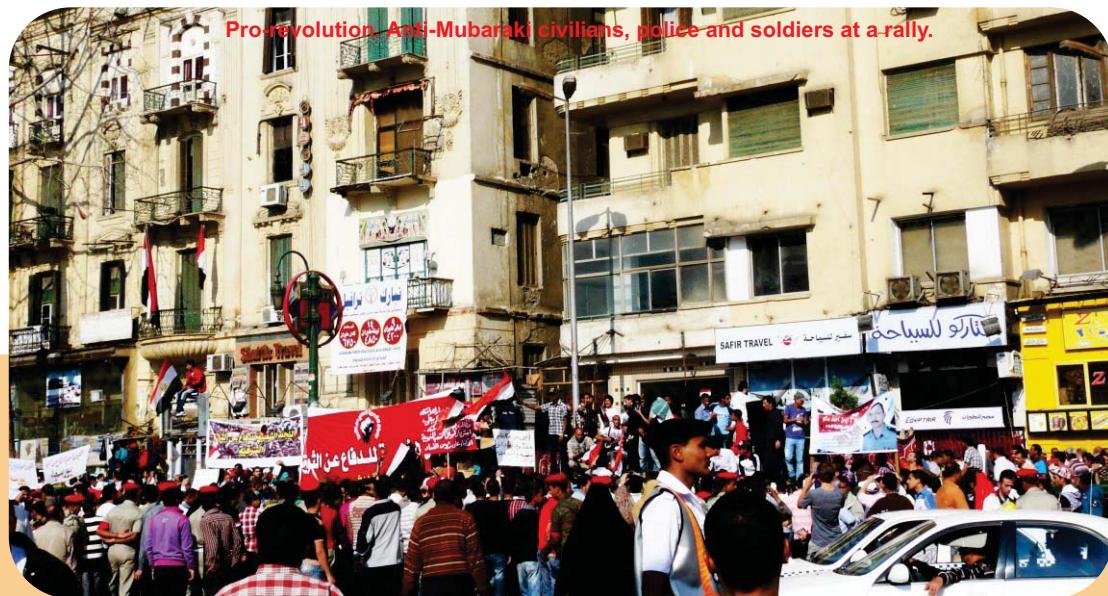
I also gained knowledge about planning visual fieldwork research. It was discussed that good planning was necessary for such projects to be successful. We were advised to seek permission from the relevant authorities as part of our planning before going out to take photographs and capture videos. We were also advised to conduct pre-fieldwork surveys to determine the potential of using visual methods in particular fieldwork contexts.<sup>9</sup> When



planning such fieldwork on visual research one needs to consider the appropriateness of visual methodologies. It was noted that not all research objectives can be accomplished through visual methodologies. This is because success in fieldwork can vary depending on the culture and attitudes of communities towards their images.

Like other research methodologies, researchers employing visual sources are also expected to consider research ethics. It was discussed that failure to observe certain ethics during fieldwork can do disservice to the researcher, his/her informants, and to the subjects in the images. We were urged to seek consent of institutions and individuals, before taking photographs or videos. For ethical purposes, participants were encouraged to be honest and explain their intentions to their subjects. Related to these ethical

considerations, as Sara Pink pointed out, is that researchers need to consider cultural or political reasons why some people may find it offensive or disturbing to be photographed or videoed.<sup>10</sup> We were advised against publishing or publicising



photographs or videos which put informants or subjects in the images into social and political disrepute.

To ensure success in using visual methodologies it is crucial to make informants partners in the project. This is more appropriate when one is working among people who are used to visual sources like photographs and videos. Through collaboration, informants can achieve their own social, economic or political objectives.<sup>11</sup> In ethical terms this is commendable as informants are rewarded by the project in some way, be it social or financial. Both the researcher and the informants have agency in collaborative research projects as they jointly own the visual materials.<sup>12</sup> In this the researcher and other collaborators need to agree on who will use the video or photographic materials and also the purposes to which they will be put. Collaboration is also one of the ways to avoid suspicion among informants about what the researcher wants to do with the visual sources.

I also learnt how to reference visual sources in my Ph.D. thesis. It was emphasised that like any other source, visual sources also need to be referenced properly.<sup>13</sup> For my research I am using photographs and maps. For photographs found in public institutions like archives, I need to record information like the name of the photographer, the date it was made, its current location and file number. For photographs in published works I need the name of author, title of the book/journal, date, volume number and place of publication, name of publishing company, year of publication and the page number on which the photograph is available. Maps also need to be similarly referenced. It was emphasised that if one needs to publish visual materials in her/his work s/he needs to obtain permission from the images' copyright holders for reproduction.<sup>14</sup>

Lastly, this workshop was very interesting because participants had the opportunity to visit places of historical, cultural and political significance in Cairo. These included the pyramids, the Nile, museums, cultural centres and Tahrir Square. I was fascinated by the rich historical and cultural heritage in the above places. Moreover, through these tours we had the opportunity to interact with Egyptians and this improved my understanding of their culture. This enabled me to reflect on the centrality of the visual in people's lives.

I will conclude by saying that the visual methodology workshop was very exciting and will remain a memorable engagement in my research career. It focussed on both the content of visual sources and the appropriate method for using them. The workshop, in its rigour and multi-disciplinary format, will undoubtedly add value to my Ph.D. thesis.

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- 1 Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Interpretation of Visual Materials*, SAGE, London, 2005, p. 8.
- 2 David MacDougall, 'The Visual in Anthropology' in (eds.) Marcus Banks and Howard Morphy, *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 222.
- 3 Mark Godfrey, 'The Artist as Historian', *October* 120, Spring 2007, p. 143.
- 4 Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, p. 10.
- 5 MacDougall, 'The Visual', p. 277.
- 6 Rose, *Visual Methodologies*.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid., p. 16.
- 9 Sara Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research*, SAGE, London, 2007, p. 47.
- 10 Ibid., p. 55.
- 11 Ibid., p. 57.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Rose, *Visual Methodologies*
- 14 Ibid., p. 32.

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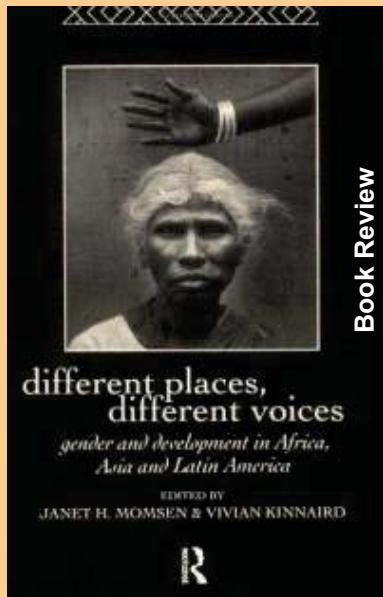


## Estella Musiwa

### ● Book Review

**Janet Henshall Momsen and Vivian Kinnaird (eds.)**  
***Different Places, Different Voices: Gender and Development in Africa, Asia and Latin America***  
**Routledge, New York and London, 1993.**  
**E- Library Edition, Taylor and Francis e- Library, 2003, pp. X + 344.**

This collection of essays is the first publication to bring together the *global south* under the theme of gender and rural development. It is an outcome of the 1992 International Geographical Union Study Group on Gender and Geography. Written by feminist geographers from the perspective of British colonial discourse, the volume provides a comparative analysis of the experiences of rural women and highlights relationships between women in different geographical settings. The volume is divided into five parts. Part one sets out the intellectual parameters within which the research is based, part two focuses on Africa, part three on South Asia, part four on South East Asia and Oceania, and part four on Latin America.



Book Review

In the introductory section of part two (Africa), Aryandofio- Schardorf notes how the International Women's Year (1975) ushered in winds of change that paved the way for the development of a paradigm that focussed on sustainable utilisation of resources through a gendered approach to development. Chapter Two on rural Ghanaian women highlights their alternative strategies to fuel shortage emanating from environmental degradation and male dominated development programmes. Similarly, Chapter Three focusses on resource depletion in Kenya and highlights the role of women in management and knowledge of community oriented forestry. Chapter Four focuses on women's problems of time-budgeting and

agricultural production in eastern Uganda. The observation is that women are preoccupied with numerous time demanding activities such as household work and cash crop production, so that there is little time for food production. Chapter Five pays attention to labour saving technologies in the Gambia, namely the grinding meal, but notes that this kind of technology saves energy but not time. Chapter Six shifts from rural to low- income urban women in Ibadan, Nigeria. The chapter takes note of spatial variation in contraceptive use among women as part of their new survival strategies. The unifying factors in section two are women's subordination and their initiatives to come up with survival strategies.

In part three (South East Asia), Raju introduces the section by highlighting, through the lens of gender, how the treatment of women has remained incidental, peripheral or subservient to that of men in the region. Chapter Seven, like Chapter Six focusses on fertility in Bangladesh, but goes beyond to identify differential norms at individual and community levels regarding fertility, mortality and health, and how they relate to family formation and activity patterns of a family at the household level. Men have an upper hand in decisions, and children are valued for their economic usefulness. Although Chapter Eight shifts from fertility, it engages with the household in India. Attention is on women's contribution to the income of households in India, and emphasises the importance of women's income in times of stress. The findings are that women earn more in cash and kind than men during seasonal stress. However, while farm work is complementary, off-farm work is an additional burden for women who end up doing more work than men. Chapter Nine also focuses on the household and agricultural production in India, and notes that there are more women in agriculture than men. In Chapter Ten the shift is from agricultural production to poverty alleviation programmes from the perspective of Indian women. It is noted that development programmes neglect women, and where applicable, women are co-opted in development programmes that involve traditional 'women's activities'. Chapters Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen focus on women in Sri Lanka. In Chapter Eleven, men in the Indian Plantation Society make the decisions, while women, as per cultural dictates, must do the work. Chapter Twelve shifts to the urban areas where women are disadvantaged because their housing requirements are overlooked. In Chapter Thirteen, women, like those in India are left out of the Integrated Rural Development Programme. This chapter differs from other chapters in that it identifies women's agency in their acceptance of the cultural division of labour alongside their household chores, even though that leaves them with little or no time for vocational training.

The papers in part four (South East Asia and Oceania) set out to challenge the traditional bifurcation between modernisation and traditional livelihoods. They note that traditional lifestyle is under threat. Chapter Fourteen takes note of women under wage employment in urban areas, but housed in raft houses just like male employees in Malaysia. Chapter Fifteen focusses on moral stigmatisation of women factory workers because of religion and culture and takes note of the way women have been commodified as sex objects in Malaysia. Chapter Sixteen pays attention to women's household contribution through agricultural and craftwork earnings in Western Samoa.

Part five is on rural-urban migration in Latin America. Chapter Seventeen focusses on women's concerted effort towards rural development in Bolivia. Women's groups provide for solidarity and there are NGOs that focus only on women in an effort to bring about equality between women and men. Chapter Eighteen on Bolivia analyses the household to spell out inequalities in power relations and access to resources, but goes on to identify individual roles to ascertain differences in material endowments within each household. Chapter Nineteen focusses on women's role in reproductive and productive activities in Colombia, and notes that their role in productive activities diminish as children grow older. Chapter Twenty on Colombia highlights gender roles in production and reproduction and notes that women are glad to be labour reserves for productive activities. Chapter Twenty One discusses peasant migration in the Peruvian Andes. Attention is paid to ways in which labour is organised in peasant households in order to depict the multiplicity of class relations. Individuals undertake different and gender specific production along with labour functions ranging from subsistence production to migratory wage labour. The author takes note of multi-class and gender differences within the same household. While some are petty commodity producers others are migrant wage labourers with women being more in the agricultural sector.

The volume makes a valuable contribution to literature on women and development. It covers a wide range of case studies that illuminate women's subordination and the feminisation of poverty in the global south. However, the volume considers 'gender' as the category of analysis but pays attention to women. The scholars could have strengthened their work by defining their perception of 'gender'. Does 'gender' signify only 'women'? Nonetheless the volume is valuable to policy makers as well as students interested in issues of women and development.



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