



Acordo de "paz definitiva" assinado em Maputo a 6 de agosto de 2019

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Phd Project

Forgotten and Reconciled?
Macúa Stories of War and Peace in
Nampula/Mozambique (1992-2019)

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Funded by University of Konstanz (since 2024)

Gerda Henkel Stiftung (2020-2023)

DAAD (2019-2020)

Abstract:

Within the framework of transitional justice (TJ) research, this interdisciplinary dissertation examines how post-conflict societies in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Mozambique, deal with their violent past. The focus is on the Mozambican civil war (1977-1992) and the subsequent peace and reconciliation process from the perspective of the historically marginalized Muslim ethnic group, the Macúa (Nampula Province). Taking up the 'local turn' in TJ research, the dissertation focuses on the largely unexplored narratives of the Macúa about the civil war and the subsequent reconciliation process.

Based on oral history interviews and anthropological methods, the dissertation reconstructs local Macúa knowledge about war and reconciliation in Nampula. The research period covers the civil war and extends to the end of the third and last peace agreement (2019). It focuses on the strategy of "forgetting," which was considered a path to successful reconciliation in Mozambique. However, the analysis shows that memories of the civil war persist to this day and influence contemporary events. Furthermore, the historical context before the civil war, especially the war of independence and the "socialist revolution" of the former independence movement FRELIMO, after independence, is included as a background for understanding the current conflict dynamics.

The dissertation makes an innovative contribution to a more comprehensive historiography of Mozambique by including the perspectives of marginalized populations and considering subaltern narratives. It also contributes to the debate on reconciliation in post-conflict societies by demonstrating that memories remain present and powerful despite officially mandated forgetting. The dissertation develops a multidimensional concept of reconciliation that takes into account the historical context of the War of Independence, the Civil War, and current social and political events, and offers a critical reflection on the paradigms and attributes associated with reconciliation. Overall, the dissertation provides a comprehensive insight into the complex dynamics of memory, reconciliation, and social division in Mozambique.

Biography:

Magdalena Freischlad, M.A., studied history and politics in Berlin and Paris. During her studies she focused on decolonization processes in Africa, especially the Algerian War of Independence. After graduation, she worked as a research assistant at the German Bundestag (2014-2015), as the executive director of an NGO (2015-2016), and as a project manager and coordinator at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (2016-2017), focusing on religion, religious freedom, and development cooperation.

In 2018 she started her dissertation project: "Local Knowledge of Reconciliation. Narratives of the Mozambican Civil War of the Macúá (1992-2019)." In 2018, she completed a six-month research stay in Portugal at the Universidade de Lisboa. From 2019 to 2021, she will complete a DAAD-funded 14-month research stay in Mozambique. From 2020 to 2023, she received a scholarship from the Gerda Henkel Foundation to complete her doctorate. Since 2024, she has received a research fellowship from the University of Konstanz.

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