

STEPS TOWARD CONFLICT PREVENTION PROJECT

Case Study

Mungoi Community Chidenguele, Mozambique

Tarah Farman
with Ezequiel Marcos Nhantumbo and Egidio Vaz
August 2005

This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each case represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

These documents do not represent a final product of the project. While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project's findings cannot be made from a single case.

CDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time, experience and insights for these reports, and for their willingness to share their experiences.

Not all the documents written for any project have been made public. When people in the area where a report has been done have asked us to protect their anonymity and security, in deference to them and communities involved, we keep those documents private.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Historical Background to the Case.....	2
<i>Phase I</i>	
<i>Phase II</i>	
The War in Chidenguele, Gaza Province.....	3
The Mungoi Story.....	4
<i>Methodology/Process</i>	
The Protection by the Spirit of Mungoi.....	5
<i>Kidnapping</i>	
<i>Our meeting with Mungoi</i>	
<i>Mungoi and Frelimo</i>	
Challenges to the Story.....	12
<i>Collaborators</i>	
<i>Significance of Location</i>	
Frelimo- Political Environment in Gaza.....	13
<i>Soldier Recruitment and Conscription</i>	
Leadership.....	15
Supernatural Powers/ Spiritual Life.....	16
Analysis and	
Conclusion.....	19
<i>A word on peace and reconciliation in Mozambique</i>	
References	

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank everyone who was so generous in sharing their personal stories, which sometimes brought up painful memories, their knowledge and analysis. Almost every person we spoke with thanked us for coming to listen and learn from the people of Mozambique. They began by saying, “*There is a lot to tell...*”

We would like to acknowledge the following organizations which donated staff time in setting up this case study and in interviews, CARE, CEDE (Centro De Estudos De Democracia E Desenvolvimento), CMM (Christian Council Mozambique), Eduardo Mondlane University, JustaPaz, Mozambique Initiative, PROPAZ, Red Cross, Save the Children, and World Vision.

Also a special thank you to Azrios our most excellent driver and companion for many of the interviews, and to the Nhantumbo family (Alfredo, Lydia, Marcela, Leopolina, Lulu, and Eza) who welcomed us into their lives and allowed us to stay at their homestead in Matandare.

Introduction

This case study explores how the Mungoi family provided an area of protection to civilians around Chidenguele and other places in Gaza Province from the violent conflict between the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR, later Renamo) forces and the Mozambique Armed Forces (FAM) during a period of war in Mozambique. It was developed as part of The Steps Toward Conflict Prevention Project (STEPS), directed by the CDA Collaborative Learning Projects in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It is one in a series of case studies undertaken by STEPS to look at communities around the world that have developed strategies to disengage from the violent conflicts that surround them. STEPS is undertaking a review of these experiences in order to a) see if there are any elements that are common to all the prevention experiences that enable us to understand better what constitutes an effective prevention strategy and b) look for ways that international development and humanitarian assistance can support, or promote, prevention strategies.

The Mungoi homestead near Chidenguele has been described as an “island of peace” but also an “island of rest and commerce, an island of food and water” during a time of destruction and suffering for the people of Mozambique. We first learned about Mungoi from Carolyn Nordstrom’s book, *A Different Kind of War Story*. She writes, “The spirit Mungoi, angered by the war, not only protected the people who lived and traveled in his area from violence, he ensured that people kidnapped by Renamo were returned to their families. His area grew famous as a zone where people with violent intentions could not enter: it was an oasis in a sea of war.”

The Mungoi homestead offered an area of protection from the warring parties. Here people were able to sustain a primary school and agricultural crops at a time this type of infrastructure was considered a strategic target by the warring parties throughout the country. Also, anyone properly claiming to be Mungoi, or under the protection of Mungoi, would either not be kidnapped by Renamo forces, or when discovered would be returned safely. Anyone could approach Mungoi on behalf of a kidnapped relative and ask him to intercede with Renamo to have them be escorted back safely to the Mungoi homestead.

We wanted to talk with people in the community and in Mozambique understand how this particular community was able to function in the midst of war. How they were able to, and to what extent were they successful, at negotiating with both Renamo and Frelimo when others were not.

Historical Background to the Case

Mozambique has experienced many periods of conflict throughout its pre-colonial history, under Portuguese influence, liberation and up to when the first multi-party elections were held in 1994. This case study refers to a period in the late 1980s to early 90s of violent conflict specifically effecting Gaza Province. The main armed actors were the Mozambique Armed Forces (FAM) which was the conscription-based army of Frelimo (Mozambique Liberation Front) and the Mozambique National Resistance Army (MNR, later Renamo).

There is continued debate by academics and within the current political parties of Renamo and Frelimo as to the extent of external and internal support for MNR. The conflict is described by some as a civil war and by others as a war of destabilization fueled by other countries. We do not try to resolve this issue, but relate a few key elements of history and background to help contextualize and place this case.

The war in Mozambique can be divided into two phases. The first is when the formation of Renamo was initiated and maintained by Rhodesia (1977-78) and then later grew with support from Apartheid South Africa. The second phase begins after this outside support of Renamo was officially terminated when South Africa and Mozambique sign the Nkomati Accord in 1984. Both phases are characterized by increased frequency of assaults on civilians and attacks targeting infrastructure and functions of governance.

Phase I

The Frelimo government came to power in 1975 after more than a decade of fighting against Portuguese colonial rule. Frelimo was then considered politically Marxist-Leninist and was supported by the Soviet Bloc and China. It was viewed as a threat by neighbors, Rhodesia and South Africa, and also the U.S. and NATO allies.

The newly independent government administered a number of changes. Frelimo abolished “traditional leadership” which it viewed as having collaborated with colonial powers. Communal villages and “Dynamising Committees” were established, further changing the power structures within villages. Schools and hospitals were nationalized. Members of Frelimo were not allowed to belong to a church. The Roman Catholic Church was specifically targeted because of its perceived close ties to the former colonial powers. In the areas we visited, a Catholic Church was found next to each city hall.

In 1976, Frelimo closed Mozambique’s borders to Rhodesia and later allowed the Rhodesian resistance organization ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) to operate from bases within Mozambique. At the same time, the ANC (African National Congress) was also allowed to

operate in the south against South Africa. Rhodesia in turn initiated the formation of MNR within Mozambique.

Most of the battles during this phase took place within the North and Central Provinces where Renamo consolidated its power base. Some attribute the greater support for Renamo in the Northern and Central Provinces to the strategy of aligning with traditional *régulos* (traditional chiefs of various authority), and/or *n'anga* (healer-diviners) against Frelimo which was trying to move people into communal villages. Others say Renamo only gained power through intimidation and conscription. Frelimo also used intimidation and conscription to form its army.

In 1980, when Rhodesia became the Independent Republic of Zimbabwe, with Robert Mugabe then leader of ZANU as president, Zimbabwean support to Renamo ended. Funding, arms, and leadership of Renamo transferred to South Africa.

Phase II

In 1984, under pressure from political changes internationally, and within Mozambique and South Africa, the "Nkomati Accord" was signed. Under this treaty, Mozambique and South Africa agreed to not give material aid to opposition movements in each other's countries. Mozambique kept their promise and closed the ANC bases. South Africa unofficially continued their support of Renamo, eventually publicly admitting to breaking the treaty. Renamo also received financial support from right-wing movements in the USA, West Germany and Portugal. Renamo moved its headquarters to Malawi.

After the agreement, and the loss of external support, it became necessary for Renamo to obtain provisions from civilians within Mozambique, sometimes through support of civilians, but often by force. There was pressure to conserve ammunition and to capture supplies and weapons. South Africa advised Renamo to focus their strategy on destabilizing the country by increasing the frequency and brutality of attacks on civilians and infrastructure. "[Renamo] became particularly well-known for mutilating civilians, including children, by cutting off ears, noses, lips and sexual organs. These tactics were part of a standard terrorist strategy intended to advertise the rebels' strength, to weaken symbolically the authority of the government and to undermine the rural production systems on which Mozambique depended. A central aim was to destroy transport links, health clinics, schools, and all other infrastructure that represented social security and government provision."(Accord, 1998)

The War in Chidenguele, Gaza Province

While Gaza Province was affected throughout the war, much of the fighting and massacres occurred during the second phase. Every person we spoke with had been touched by the war in some way. People reported that either they or a family member had been kidnapped; that a family member had been killed or never returned; that they had lost goods or property or that they had to move their family from their homesteads due to the war. There are still visible and apparent signs of the war. Inside some people's houses the ceilings show signs of fire damage they say are from attacks during the war. Concentrations of shops in small villages, some burned, remain empty. People explained that the area has not recovered economically to the point where

they can support the number of shops they had before the war. Also, people will not reopen a shop, or take down a building where the spirits of the previous owners may still be present.

The Mungoi homestead is located between Chidenguele and Ngunzene. Chidenguele is the more established village now and is right off the national highway. It is north of Xai-Xai, the provincial capital of Gaza. It is on the coast with some beaches on the Indian Ocean, some lagoons and some hilly areas. During the war people hid in the lagoons and a Frelimo base was located on the most prominent hill.

It is a rural area where most people rely on agriculture to make their living. In addition to the effects of war, frequent drought has significantly reduced crop productivity and greatly lowered the standard of living in Gaza. In general, the south of the country experiences more droughts and floods than the north. However, people we spoke with characterize the area as relatively rich in land and food resources. One woman said, “with a little hard work you can live and have your family here.”

When we asked people what was special about this place most said that the people were known for their hospitality. Many were also proud to say Eduardo Mondlane, founder of Frelimo, Samora Machel the first Prime Minister, and Joaquim Chissano the first President, were born and educated in Gaza. Historically, people in the South had somewhat better access to education. Under Portuguese rule they had the option to become “assimilados” which required people to renounce their tribal culture in exchange for basic education and access to better jobs.

The Mungoi Story

A number of people in Mozambique have heard about the Mungoi family, and in particular how the Mungoi Spirit, though the use of supernatural powers acted to “protect” civilians. Many people we spoke with had heard stories that Mungoi had successfully negotiated the return of kidnapped civilians from Renamo strongholds. Previous to the war the Mungoi Family was not known as an especially strong family. During his lifetime, Mungoi was not known as a “Strongman”, or a person people would go to with problems, but he was known as a strong and able hunter. His mother was known as very powerful traditional healer, people say it is from her that he derives his power now as a spirit.

Methodology/Process

We spoke with people in Bahule, Chidenguele, Chizavane, Chonguene, Madender, Manjakaze, Ngunzene, Xai Xai and at a market in Zandamela, Inhambane Province. It has been reported that Mungoi was active in many more villages, including Chibuto, Macupalane, Matsuetela, Nhancale, N’Kadine, and others. Prior to visiting Gaza we spent time in Maputo meeting with staff of international and local NGOs, church leaders, government officials, media, and professors at Eduardo Mondlane University.

People were very open about sharing their stories about Mozambique and their families. In Gaza, people’s body language perceptively changed when they recognized they could speak with us in

Chopé and again when Ezequiel introduced himself during the traditional greeting because they recognized his family name as being local to the area.

When talking with people, we asked first about their war-time experiences and responses to violence. This allowed them to bring up any examples of different forms of protection. If they didn't mention anything in particular, we then asked about areas which offered more protection or were considered "more safe". If they answered, an army base, more established cities, or the "Grace of God," without mentioning the Mungoi Spirit we then asked about supernatural protection directly.

Many people local to Chidenguele, Manjakaze and places in-between brought up the protection of Mungoi without direct questioning. The conversations which required follow-up questions to bring up Mungoi were with 1) government administrators, 2) a group of elders that had gathered before a church service and were split on whether Mungoi was helpful, a collaborator or a false spirit, and 3) members of a powerful family (with ties to the current Frelimo government) who chose not to believe or accept Mungoi protection. These will be discussed in the section on "Challenges to the Story."

Local staff we spoke with at field offices of international NGOs did not know about the Spirit of Mungoi. However, these staff members were not from the local area, and neither they nor their organizations had been active in the area during the war time. There were two exceptions. At one organization we had an engaging and friendly conversation with the local director and a staff member with the surname Mungoi. The director was as glad for this opportunity to learn as we were. At another, local staff from Maputo and we heard another piece of the story from one of their older drivers who is from Chidenguele.

Protection by the Spirit of Mungoi

We were told the following story by Armando Mungoi the younger son of the Mungoi. He is currently a shopkeeper in Chidenguele. He went to Maputo for higher education, and then worked in a cement factory, but during the war was called back by the Spirit of his father to Chidenguele. We heard that the reason he doesn't live at the homestead is because of a family disagreement. This is the most comprehensive and chronological telling of how the Spirit of Mungoi became active against the war¹. Much of the story was repeated in part by others.

"My father's spirit helped many people here. We witnessed many massacres in Madender and Matimbine perpetrated by the Matsangas². The Matsangas came to our home soon before the massacre, and they looted the house. My father's spirit began to think about all that had happened and got angry. I am sure my father's spirit does work. The Spirit's power comes from my father's mother. Twice, the spirit complained to the rebels. The Spirit told the rebels that if they had to be at

¹ This and other conversations were done through translation. This is a summary of the story that emerged in that conversation. Any awkwardness in voice is due to

² People in and around Chidenguele would sometimes refer to MNR and Renamo soldiers as "Matsangas" a word derived from the name of their first leader, the Rhodesian agent Andre Matsangaissa.

war they should fight against the Frelimo soldiers, because this is what war is all about and not to attack and kill civilians.

When the rebels attacked the Mungoi community, they kidnapped many people and took them to their stronghold. My father's spirit appeared in one of the kidnapped women before the rebels and told to them to release the kidnapped people. The rebels did not want to do what the Spirit was saying until the Spirit also appeared in one of the rebel's commanders known as, 'The Major'.

The rebels were impressed because their commander had changed his behavior showing he was possessed. Soon after the Spirit disappeared from the commander they asked him where he had been. They told him what the Spirit had said and asked their commander what to do. He then decided to release the kidnapped people back to the Mungoi area. The woman who had been possessed by the Spirit was asked by another woman whether they would find problems (with the Frelimo soldiers), on their way back to the Mungoi community. The woman who had been possessed asked them to follow her and said, 'I know the way and everything will be fine'.

When they arrived back to the Mungoi homestead, the medium exercised so that the Spirit could appear. Then the Spirit said to the rebel commander, 'You wanted to burn my home and all my belongings, and my children. Here you are and I would be happy to see that happen now as you promised. I tell you I will not burn because I died and I cannot die twice, and also I command you to destroy my tomb.' The commander looked down at the spirit and said, 'I would like to have a way to know who your people are who are at the bases so that anytime I can release them.'"

The Spirit told the Renamo commander that he could know who was Mungoi because they would be able to recite the family genealogy some generations back. Armando went on to say,

"In the war time, people would come to our homestead and report the rebels had kidnapped people. I would walk towards the rebels to rescue the people, or if they were too far away, I would take a car and tie a white flag to it. If they saw me they would stop and the commander would come to me and ask, 'What wrong have we done?' Then I would respond by saying I just need my people back, my father's Spirit has sent me here. Sometimes the people had been looted or had their money taken by the rebels and then they would return back to the Mungoi community.

We had a lot of people who were released from the strongholds and sent to the Mungoi area. When the Mozambique government learned of this, my father's Spirit asked the local leadership to call the Governor to participate in a big party, because the Mungoi wanted to communicate that the Spirit was getting ready to

go to \ war. This happened and it is from this time that Frelimo officially was made aware that the Mungoi Spirit was fighting to protect the population.”

In a separate conversation, the current President of Chidenguele (a traditional leadership position in the community, not an elected position) recalled that when Mungoi decided to take an active role against the armed combatants the Spirit called the local traditional authorities to the Mungoi homestead. “[The Spirit] saw it wasn’t possible to fight alone. He needed to let the local authorities and the local administrator know. And the Spirit invited them to his home. I was there. The Spirit said, ‘I want to begin fighting. They [Renamo] are saying they are against community living, but now we realize they are burning shops, schools and people’s properties. So I’m telling you I sent word to the Renamo soldiers. I told them they are not allowed to take civilians especially from this area. I told them, don’t come to Chidenguele.’”

People also reported that the Spirit used various supernatural means against the soldiers. When Renamo tried to steal goods from the Mungoi homestead the Spirit inflicted them with blindness and caused them lose their way. Then the Spirit caused them to fall asleep and allowed Frelimo soldiers to find them and set upon them. The Spirit later explained to Frelimo soldiers that if they tried to steal from the Mungoi family, the same would happen to them. A number of people also told stories of the Spirit setting bees against Renamo soldiers who either stole from Mungoi or who kidnapped Mungoi people. A few people reported the use of darkness, lights and mysterious sounds. Sometimes the spirit appeared “in a white suit and very tall so that nobody could see his head.” Other times he is described as appearing with a top hat or holding an old hunting rifle.

A Christian woman from Rukwini area who had been kidnapped and held in a Renamo stronghold told of the following incidents. “There was a day he appeared in the rebel’s stronghold and the rebels tried to shoot him on several occasions and he made water come out of the guns, and later he brought darkness in the area so that we could not see each other. The rebels handed over all their weapons and stopped fighting. Another time they tried to kill civilians using a long knife and the Spirit caused their hands to dry up. Mungoi was such a good guy. When people were released they were taken by the Spirit to his home. He would care for those whose homes were far from the Mungoi area, find clothing and heal them from diseases they had and then would request his own spirit to accompany them back to their original areas.” We were told by a number of people that the belief was, and still is, that even once you leave the area of Chidenguele, Mungoi’s power to protect you continues. This is different from the prevailing view in Mozambique that the power of a chief or “strong man” is from his ancestors and is rooted in the land he is from, and that it this power would not be recognized nor could it transfer to another place.

When people in Chidenguele area were asked why they still hid in the bush or in the lagoons even though they believed they were protected, they responded with, “Oh my child you have but one life to live and you just never know.” I asked one woman why she stayed in Chidenguele when the rest of her family moved to Xai-Xai after their store was looted. She answered, “I wanted to watch over and protect our home and go to our farms but whenever we heard shooting we would run away for the noise but not because we were afraid we would be taken. We knew we were part of the protected community.”

Manjakaze is a larger town a few hours drive from Chidenguele. Some people there also considered themselves to be under the Mungoi Spirit's protection. Some also believed that another spirit, Thovela was working with Mungoi in this town. In Manjakaze is one of only two memorial sites we heard of honoring people who died during the war. I asked people if they still considered themselves protected after the August 10 massacre. A woman replied, "The Spirit protected this area too. Even the time Renamo came and took many heads of cattle. They had to return them. This area was protected for sure, but the rebels that came that day didn't know. The Spirit would warn us so we could go to a secure place. The Spirit did not stay in the same place all the time. The Spirit worked as a visiting spirit. Perhaps when this area was destroyed the Spirit was someplace else that day. He was based in Chidenguele and Majaplane (sp?). In those areas Renamo did not think of causing problems, but here was a bit far for the Spirit. So here people would run and inform the Spirit of an attack and then the Spirit would run and follow the Renamo soldiers. This is how things worked in Manjakaze."

Kidnapping

A woman who had been kidnapped and held in a Renamo stronghold for over a year told us there were three ways the Spirit would appear to the Renamo soldiers, 1) by possessing a civilian woman that was kidnapped either on the way to or after arriving in the stronghold, 2) by possessing a soldier on the way to the stronghold, or if that failed to be convincing, then 3) the Spirit would appear in one of the rebel leadership, even the commander.

To prove that you were one of Mungoi's people you could recite the genealogy of the Spirit going back about three generations on both the mother's and father's side. A traditional leader said, "Protection was for the people, for the community. The rebels would come but were unable to take people provided they were able to say the family tree. It was for anyone in the area." If you were not of the Mungoi family, but had asked for protection from the Spirit you would be told the genealogy. In a meeting with the Spirit of Mungoi, we were also given this information and told that we could ask people for it to verify if they were Mungoi, and as the Spirit said, "To know if they are telling the truth."

As the war continued, and soldiers were increasingly responsible for obtaining their own supplies, it became more important to "prove" you were protected by Mungoi. A woman who had been kidnapped from Manjakaze said determination of who was "protected" was made after kidnapping and before arriving to the stronghold. She said the Renamo soldiers would ask, "Who are the guys coming from the Spirit's place?" and those people would be taken back to the Spirit's area. She explained, "There were different groups working for Renamo, some for destruction or sabotage and some for kidnapping. Gomes [Renamo Commander] was a very good guy. He would release people coming from the Spirit. Because of the different activities of these troops, sabotage troops would find and kill the groups released by the kidnap troops. This is when the spirit got angry and reinforced his plan to fight against the rebels."

The fact that people were escorted back was emphasized in the many stories we heard of people being returned. A former Frelimo soldier who now works at with a local NGO in Maputo along with many former Renamo soldiers said, "My colleagues are ex-combatants. When we work in

the bush we always end up sitting around the fire at night and chat about battles and war times. They say they always escorted people back.”

We asked about how the Mungoi homestead could provide for the growing number of people staying there and if they provided food and supplies to the rebels that were escorting people back. Because they were not under immediate threat of attack they were able to continue farming some. But most people in the area depend not only on their farms but also on supplies such as rice and clothing from larger towns such as Manjakaze and Xai-Xai. This was a problem as most truck convoys were ambushed. People said, “Whenever people were escorted back by Renamo, and since Mungoi homestead was now a big community, they had to prepare food. Sometimes Renamo would have to also come back with the food they stole and they would let them eat there but sometimes they would prepare to go back to the stronghold and not have enough food so Mungoi would give them one whole chicken for 15-30 guys. Take this as your food. And one bottle of wine and they would get them completely drunk and by that single chicken they were well fed. Still, sometimes Renamo soldiers hid stolen goods. If they did this [the Spirit] would put them going in circles.”

Those we spoke with who told of being helped by Mungoi or told of others being helped by Mungoi said that people thanked the Spirit and the Mungoi family out of gratitude. A woman who was kidnapped and held four months in Guambene and Matsekhenya said, “One day a rebel commander requested everyone to come together and said ‘you are free to go home.’ But this happened because the Mungoi Spirit appeared in one of the rebel commanders. There were those which were considered the Mungoi’s but this time he released everyone. I returned to the Mungoi community. We thanked him not because we were compelled to do so, and he also said to us that he knew we suffered a lot, and hence he did not want us to pay him for the service done.”

Anyone could come to seek help from Mungoi for assistance. For example, a number of people told us the following scenario: if you had a relative kidnapped you could go to Mungoi and tell the Spirit the name of your relative. The Spirit would write down the name of your relative. Immediately your relative would be released and the commanders would have the relative escorted home. This would be communicated by the Spirit through a woman in the stronghold or through possession of a Renamo soldier.

You did not need to be native Mozambican to ask for assistance. We were told by different people both in Chidenguele and in Maputo about an Indian shopkeeper from Chibute who came and asked for help because his wife had been kidnapped. The story is that he was so thankful for having her returned safely that he stayed at the homestead and built a roundhouse for the Spirit.

One woman reported, “In 1994 many people and local leadership and the government were mobilized to go to Mungoi and express gratitude for the good work he did in conflict prevention and resolution. Today we still see people go to Mungoi to be healed from various diseases.”

Our meeting with Mungoi

When we met with Armando Mungoi and he told us about how his father's Spirit began to work against the war he insisted it would be best for us to meet with the Mungoi Spirit.

As we all piled into the truck an older woman joined us. I assumed she was also part of the family and needed a ride. As we had not had lunch or refreshment during the interview I opened a water bottle to pass around the truck which she eagerly shared with us. The Mungoi Family homestead is about a 20 minute drive over established dirt roads from the center of Chidenguele. Driving to the homestead we passed a group of buildings that were pointed out to us as the school that had remained open during the war. Along the way we continued to ask Armando about the proper way to greet the Mungoi Spirit.

As we turned into the homestead, we stopped at the first house. There were a few young men sitting there and noted the two "Vote Frelimo" posters posted. At this point, Armando got out of the truck saying he was to stop here, "for some family reasons" and asked us to go on to the homestead.

When we arrived it appeared the family was preparing a meal. The women greeted the woman who arrived with us with "jokes" about this not being the correct day or time for the Spirit to work. I wanted to let them know that we were in no hurry and could come again another day, but we had not been greeted yet and so had to sit still under a tree and not speak or make eye contact. Eventually we were greeted and invited to take off our shoes and enter Mungoi's house. This roundhouse was quite large compared to others we visited. It was also uniquely finished inside with a whitewash.

The woman who had ridden with us turned out to be the medium for the Spirit. She went through the ritual to call the Spirit upon her. A small boy, who is Mungoi's namesake, was imitating her movements as the spirit possessed her. During the ritual, Mungoi's daughter and son assisted by dressing the medium in white cloth and a man's black top hat. The medium's voice changed.

The Mungoi Spirit circled around us twice then sat on a large chair facing us with his son on his right and daughter on his left. Ezequiel, Azrios, and I sat across from them. As we sat down his daughter brought out a small wood table and set out a vase of silk flowers and a packet of cigarettes. Other family members sat behind us finishing their meal.

On the wall behind the Spirit was a cross done in ceramic tiles. Protruding from the wall on either side were plaster hands. There were two "Vote Frelimo" Posters posted on either side of the cross and between the plaster hands.

The family members greeted the Mungoi Spirit individually with brisk rhythmic hand claps and they announced our presence and the purpose of our visit. The Mungoi Spirit greeted us in the traditional way and then asked his son to bring him his hunting gun. It was then our turn to explain our purpose in meeting with him.

Mungoi told the same story as his son Armando had related to us with two additions. He said that one day he had gone hunting and realized upon his return that the rebels had come, looted everything and kidnapped his granddaughter. His mother's spirit was very angry and appeared to

him. The Spirit told us his full name and his matrilineal lineage two generations back just as people during the war time were told in order to “prove” they were one of “his people”. He told us it was good we came to speak with him first. That as we went forward with our interviews we could ask other people to recite the genealogy and in this way know who was telling the truth. Mungoi also told us of being present and persuasive in Rome for the Peace Accords negotiations.

At one point Mungoi asked his son to show us his tomb so that we could see that his body was not there and that what he was telling us was true. We observed his empty tomb and then the family grave plots. The son told us that they had many people staying at the homestead during the war. Some would stay waiting for relatives to be returned (from being kidnapped). Some stayed at the homestead after being escorted back by Renamo soldiers to wait to be reunited with their families later. Others stayed for the protection offered.

We thanked Mungoi and the family for their time. We had been told by a former Renamo Soldier we met in Maputo that it would be appropriate to present Mungoi with gifts of 1 liter Rum and 5 liters wine. These were recognized as familiar gifts and accepted. The medium “exercised” again and then we gave her a ride back to Chidenguele as she had more work to do elsewhere that night.

A man with the surname Mungoi, but whose family had moved 30 km from the Mungoi homestead to Matabere (sp?) before the war told us, “My father used to leave his ID on the table so [Renamo soldiers] would see he is Mungoi. We had cars and goods, but they never bothered anything. He never locked the doors, so that they would not blow the doors open.” He also had a female relative abducted by Renamo. When it was learned that she was Mungoi she was escorted home unharmed.

He also told us that people still respect the power of Mungoi today and continue to be grateful to the Mungoi family. During the war, he was a Frelimo soldier and was not at the Mungoi homestead, but people have thanked him for helping their families during the war. One time it even helped him get out of a speeding ticket.

Mungoi and Frelimo

There were fewer stories told of direct intervention by the Spirit with Frelimo soldiers. One man said, “Mungoi could manage to have the army and rebels meet without fighting.” He told this story, “[Mungoi] wears a white suit and appears in a woman. One day the Spirit arrested many rebels and asked them to put all weapons aside and enter his house. He then asked somebody to call the Frelimo soldiers and when they arrived they opened fire for quite a long period but surprisingly through the powers of Mungoi, no one was injured, because the spirit could hold a cow’s tail and wave it in the direction of the bullets serving as a bullet proof.”

A former Frelimo soldier said, “Yes, some have suspicions [of spirit collaborating with Renamo] but when the Spirit brought kidnapped people back someone came to Frelimo and let them know the rebels were around.” If the Frelimo soldiers wanted to meet with the Spirit to seek protection for themselves or their relatives, they had the choice of either leaving their weapons and going to the homestead, or keeping their weapons and meeting with the Spirit outside the boundaries of

Mungoi's homestead. This same soldier said they preferred to keep their weapons and not enter the homestead, because they respected the Spirit's power. Another former Frelimo soldier explained that the spirit sometimes helped Frelimo soldiers with information such as "go this way and you will see the paths the rebels use and their weapons will not work." Others explained that this only occurred when the rebels had broken the "agreement" with Mungoi by kidnapping or stealing from the homestead.

A woman in Madandare explained the lack of support in Gaza for the Renamo political party, "This is the punishment he³ is receiving from Mozambique. There are places where he receives not a single vote. We are causing no harm to him or his people, but when it comes to elections we want only one party – Frelimo. Sometimes he doesn't understand why Renamo doesn't receive a vote. If you hadn't killed civilians maybe they would vote for you, if you kidnapped without killing maybe they would vote for you. But Renamo slaughtered so many and people lost their trust in them, so they are always defeated. There is still pain in the hearts of the people."

Challenges to the Story

Some people we spoke with chose not to seek the protection of Mungoi. These fell into three categories.

1. Individuals and families who moved to other towns/cities
2. Individuals and families who chose to follow the church/ God's protection instead
3. Individuals and families who chose not to believe.

1. It was difficult to continue living in the villages as people were under constant threat of a surprise attack from Renamo soldiers. Some would try to maintain their farms or prepare meals during the day in case they needed to take them to their hiding places in the lagoons at night. But then there came a time the soldiers started kidnapping, looting, and killing during the daytime too. Many people described this time as "living like animals". As one man described, "It was difficult to get food. The shops were burned and it was hard to live in that time. We lived like wildlife in the bushes. During that time you couldn't tell who's who. It could be your son who's working for the rebels." As described earlier, even those who believed they were under Mungoi's protection would run and hide if they thought the rebels were coming thus disrupting their ability to grow and prepare food.

Many of those who did report leaving did so after having a close family member kidnapped or killed. Those that left had to have means to leave, and even then it was a dangerous choice because convoys along the roads were also targets of frequent attacks. When they got to the cities of Xai-Xai or Maputo, they lived with extended family or in warehouses or makeshift shelters. People say that one-half to two-thirds have returned, but it is hard to know if this estimate includes those that may never return.

³ Afonso Dhlakama, current head of Renamo

Once they arrived to the relative safety of the cities they were still under threat from the war, “even around Maputo within 50km from the city you could hear shooting in the suburbs. During the day people would move close to cities to find security.”

2. A local elder and pastor said, “You want me to respond as a pastor. God was our protector. We abandoned the Spirit Mungoi. God knew we would not have time to plow the land so there was no rain. So you may ask, ‘how did we survive in the bush?’ Mostly because we believed God was protecting us.” After this man’s family homestead was attacked and they lost homes and many cattle he spent the next five years in Xai-Xai where he believed the army would protect them better.

Church meetings did not stop because of the war, and some give credit to both the Spirit and the church, “Peace came about because of the Spirit and because of prayers and fasts. I am from the Apostolic Church; even now I go to this church.” “People went to church every Sunday. The church didn’t encourage people to get help from the spirits. They said for us to use our own weapons, the Bible and prayer.”

3. Some of those we spoke with who said they did not believe or chose not to seek protection from the Spirit said that people were required to give goods and services in thanks for the protection and safe return of loved ones. One elder explained, “A man went to seek protection from Mungoi and the next day the rebels killed his wife. I called my people together and told them that Mungoi doesn’t win. Now we have come to peace and those that accepted Mungoi’s protection are asked by the family now to contribute 50,000 meticaais to the Mungoi Spirit. But here, because we were not a part of that no one was touched. Now we thank God because we relied on our daily prayers.”

Significance of Location – Protection by FAM Base

Gaza is considered the best corridor from the coast to the interior and also the best place for rest, food and water. The Portuguese would return time and again to Gaza and established the ports and infrastructure to facilitate trade with Rhodesia and South Africa along these lines. As one professor explained, “If I had to walk, this would be the natural valley I would take. The two sides were not interested in fighting in that area.” He said that armies historically would leave this corridor open as a well-supplied path of retreat. He surmised that the two sides were not interested in fighting in this area.

During the war there was a Frelimo base in Chidenguele. The soldiers stationed there were “recruited” primarily from the area and so knew who the traditional leaders were, and who was Mungoi. People in the area considered the base a form of protection, “This kind of protection was found at shops – some Frelimo soldiers still would run away from ambushes. We spent most time in hiding places near the lagoon.” Most often the base was mentioned second after either protection through prayer to God, protection from Mungoi, or a combination of these two beliefs.

In Manjakaze, there were also Frelimo soldiers stationed. People told us that they retreated along with the population at the time of the massacre because of the overwhelming numbers of Renamo soldiers that attacked that day.

A woman from Rukwini added, “We would find false Mungoi during that time. This created certain unhappiness to Mungoi who in turn punished them allowing the rebels to kill them. This behavior somehow weakened the Spirit of Mungoi and many people in that area.”

Another woman said, “In Manjacaze area there were three spirits, but they all worked alongside with the spirit of Mungoi.”

A man told us his grandmother died because his grandfather said he could not be ruled by a Spirit. The Thovela Spirit (who was one mentioned as working in Manjakaze) got angry and could not defend his grandmother. She was killed after the soldiers questioned her about her escaped husband.. This same man said, “Thovela is still alive in Chonguene. He still does miraculous things.”

Historically Chidenguele and Manjakaze are in the “border area” where the Changana people expanded into Chopé area. It was also reported to us that the Spirit worked through different mediums and in different ways in Manjakaze and in Chidenguele. It was suggested by one professor that Changana are still seen as “occupiers”. A professor at the university gave this example, “the Manjakaze administration wanted to celebrate the last king of . The local administrator commissioned a statue of the king for the invented celebration. The Chopé peasants all went by and ‘chopped’ or hit the statue with their shoes. The official story is the clay was not properly dried and they removed the statue. So the bust got busted!” When we were in Manjakaze we noted that there was a bust of this king up and we asked about the story. We were told that yes the first statue was not good and had been replaced, but that there had been no trouble with it.

We were not able to link any historically based conflict between Changana and Chopé to who was protected or why Mungoi operated in different ways in Chidenguele and other places such as Manjakaze.

Frelimo- Political Environment in Gaza

Currently there is significantly greater support for the Frelimo political party in Gaza Province. In the first multi-party elections in 1994 not one vote was reported as going to Renamo. Renamo has never been elected to any position in the Province and even campaigning there has been difficult. According to CEDE, there have been no reports of incidents of intimidation around elections. However, they voiced some concern that the lack of open democratic debate has the potential to result in eruptions of violence as this has occurred in other provinces where one party has greater presence than the other. On our visit to Manjakaze we noted that the Renamo headquarters is identified by signage. It was housed in a run-down building outside the center of town. There was no Renamo office in Chidenguele.

Gaza experienced two massacres by Renamo forces. Overall we heard from people that Renamo was more on the offensive in Gaza and Frelimo more on the defensive resulting in people ascribing their suffering during the war to Renamo.

Soldier Recruitment and Conscription

Frelimo soldiers either volunteered or were recruited or through conscription. Frelimo would approach the local leadership who would point out houses with young people in order to compile a list. Then Frelimo would send out a call to join the army. If the young men didn't join willingly they were rounded up and forced. Sometimes Frelimo would stop young boys on their way home from school and ask how old they were. Other times they would not be concerned with how old the boys were, but would round them up, securing them in a line with rope to prevent them from running away.

We were told that these "recruits" would then be taken straight to a waiting airplane which would take them to Northern Mozambique for training and service where there was not a chance of running away back to home.

One woman from Manjakaze explained the process differently, "Men were free to join. Frelimo would go and talk to family and they would submit the names to be recruited. The same happens today." She named some men who had enlisted the day before from Chidenguele. When asked about those that didn't want to join, she answered, "There is a process of joining the army, not forced. You find some isolated cases of some young people who do not want to join, but Frelimo did not force them to join."

Some of the men we spoke with shared stories of running away or attempting to run away in order to continue school. When Renamo started to target schools, students were organized into "protection groups" and given guns and training to defend against attack.

We were told that it was common in the south for Renamo soldiers to be "recruited", trained, and then to operate in the same area, "so they know who the chief is and share with commanders." This resulted in, "brothers killing each other; communities killing each other."

Mungoi as Collaborators?

Both armies were reportedly not supplied sufficiently. Especially in the later years, when Renamo did not have outside international assistance they had to rely on civilians and traders for their supplies, but the Frelimo soldiers were also underserved. One Frelimo soldier told us, "We would be sent on a mission that took two weeks of marching just to get to the mission." They would ration food, but often arrived to the fight weak from hunger.

A government official who works with media said, "Mungoi must have had linkages with commanders from both sides and must have been paying people off." He surmised, "The war was about power, commanders taking food and diverting food and selling it on the black market; especially after Machel Samora's death." He explained that due to the lack of food both Renamo

and Frelimo soldiers were looking for resources, so that providing food to soldiers was not so much a peace strategy as a survival or coping strategy.

Leadership

After Mozambique's anti-colonial war in 1974 Frelimo established itself as a socialist one-party state, outlawed other political parties, and the role of traditional authorities. These traditional leaders were seen as having been collaborators to the Portuguese colonial powers in part because of their role in assisting with tax collection.

During the civil war, some chiefs gained in importance again. As one man explained, "Leadership is not respected, the Power is respected. Especially a chief with supernatural powers" or one perceived as having "witchcraft" on their side. Some told us that all chiefs' powers are founded on the domination of supernatural power and that the basis of this power is in the land. A chief manages land and other resources in both material and spiritual terms.

Even though traditional leaders were outlawed during war times their power was recognized both by communities and by the warring parties. "In Gaza Province traditional leaders date back from the old kingdoms before the Portuguese. During the war they made agreements to work together." a man explained, "Traditional chiefdoms have the authority of the court but are not recognized by the Frelimo government." Communities obeyed their traditional chiefs, "[My] family was a strong family that was representative of colonials but still respected." It is said that, some chiefs aligned themselves with Renamo as a way to regain their power. In parts of Mozambique, mainly in the North, entire villages and communities allied with Renamo. In Gaza we did not hear reports of chiefs aligning with one or the other, but that some chiefs made compromises to work together to protect their communities.

Traditional leaders are mentioned as mediators of conflict by the largest number of those interviewed. This has been constant whether they were "officially" recognized by either the colonial government or the Frelimo government. There have always been "strong families" that people respect and go to with problems. Although everyone knew who the traditional leaders and families have been locally and would seek their guidance, decisions about where and when to hide, and whether to move, rely on the church, or seek the protection of Mungoi were made by individual family groups.

Examples given of the types of problems people would go to a traditional leader before the police were, in the case of a land dispute, a marital dispute, or stolen livestock. People said that they would only go to the police or local authorities in criminal cases or "when you don't know who did it." However, they noted that once you get the authorities involved, "you cannot take it back" and "you cannot forgive." These same examples were given by farmers, women, government officials, former soldiers, and traditional leaders.

An elder explained, "A community leader is a person who knows everyone and individual families. In our tradition, if he speaks they respect him and his views and so things go well". In one region a community leader may cover community issues and the traditional leader uphold rituals and beliefs. In Gaza it is typically the same person.

Currently, when Frelimo government officials from Provincial Governors, who are elected, to District Administrators, who are appointed, to officials on tours promoting polio vaccinations are seen addressing communities they do so with a traditional leader at their side. A staff member of a local NGO working on democracy issues said, “Renamo had power with the traditional authorities historically. If you look now, Frelimo has that power. Renamo can see that wherever the President or the District Administrator goes they are accompanied by the traditional chief.”

There is now a legislated process by which traditional leaders are officially recognized by the government. However, spiritual leaders such as Mungoi are not recognized as “legitimate” under this system.

Supernatural Powers/ Spiritual Life

People spoke openly about supernatural powers and spiritual life in Mozambique. These “traditional beliefs” live alongside church-based religions and modern medicine.

For example, mainline churches instruct people to pray versus independent churches which also give a tangible lesson, for example, they will say pray and also drink of this water. One man explained, “I go to church but also live in the traditional way. I tell people who don’t believe, that maybe not one hundred percent of what you hear is true. But growing up in environment where you know people who can do this (referring to witchdoctors power to heal) it is hard to not believe.”

A staff member at the Red Cross office in Maputo said that doctors will advise patients to also get help from witchcraft along with taking prescribed medicines.

People believe individual power is attached to the land, and often point to a particular tree that hold the power of their ancestors. One person suggested that “if Mungoi left the land where he is from, his power would be diminished.” A man explained, “If you leave your area, even if you are a chief in one place and go to another you are just a ‘newcomer’.”

Currently, children who are in the cities, or who’s family had to move during the war are told they are obligated to go back to the land. People explained that, “protecting an area is protecting one’s self” In the city around the university you still see small plots of plantings from people’s home areas.

During the war both Frelimo and Renamo soldiers reportedly would go to purveyors of witchcraft to get protected with “medicines” to become “bulletproof” Sometimes they would receive protection in return for agreeing to not attack an area. A famous example of this is in Gorongosa where a powerful traditional healer treated soldiers from both sides in return for protection of his village. Especially in the South, soldiers were recruited, trained and served in the same area so they knew who the chiefs and traditional healers were.

A traditional leader said that both soldiers and traditional leaders would go to Mungoi for protection. However the government did discourage them from seeking this protection because, “they wanted the government to hold its own responsibility.”

High-Contact Culture

Umbantu: “I am when we are”

People in Mozambique have a culture of hospitality described as, “ready and willing to provide water and food for whomever.” People say that, “receiving guests is one of the blessings.” But during the war they would hide that they had provided any aid to either side for fear of retribution. While these values may have played some role in how people received soldiers, it was described to us as, “hospitality changed to a matter of survival.” As one former soldier explained, “you cannot dismiss the pressure of someone with a gun.”

A person’s sense of self is defined by their relationships; by their family. When young men, boys were kidnapped to become Renamo soldiers, they were often given drugs and then forced to turn around and kill their own families. In this way they were first made to kill their own sense of self.

Some of this has changed as more people have moved to the cities. People now think in terms of saving enough to plan ahead and so will say they do not have enough to share. “Even a family member may ask once or twice, but the third time . . .”

Other examples of responses to violence

Zembeze Province

People tell that in Zembeze Province in North Mozambique there was a place of water scarcity where Renamo and Frelimo soldiers agreed not to attack around a well. They would even meet and converse around the well. What began as a practical solution because both had to survive became a small area of peace. This is in great contrast to other areas where private wells were often ringed with landmines.

Cabo Delgado, Naparama

In Cabo Delgado, the northernmost province, there was a group of independent soldiers that defended themselves and people with them against attacks using traditional weapons and supernatural protection. There are a number of tales told about their leader and the group’s ability to win against the odds. It is said the members of this group had to follow strict guidelines to keep themselves “pure”. They developed a following until their leader died in 1990 in Mocuba district Zembeze Province.

Analysis and Conclusions

A few things stood out as we contemplated what we heard from people in this community. What continued to strike us most powerfully was the contrast of what we heard occurred in this community compared to others and the scope of who it was able to affect.

There were political reasons for people in Gaza who wanted to adhere to traditional practices to oppose Frelimo. In Gaza there is a historical context of rivalry and disparate access to resources between the north and south of the country combined with experiences of brutal treatment by Renamo forces.

Traditional leaders and healers were banned first by the Portuguese colonialists and then by Frelimo. In the absence of government, local leadership, and spiritual leadership took action to protect the community from the violence. Mungoi's powers expanded to protect beyond tradition of link to land/place and beyond a local, or narrow, definition of identity.

The choice to follow local leaders and call on cultural resources to address problems resulting from a national conflict occurred at the individual and family level.

As people told story of protection it became obvious that was not a one-hundred percent guarantee. Still, people describe feeling safer with the belief in the Spirit. They did hide but didn't evacuate.

Though the nature of the war varied in different parts of Mozambique, it can be said the warring parties were fighting community by community. It is this which makes it remarkable that the Mungoi community was able to negotiate with both Renamo and Frelimo.

Here is one way of understanding how the rules set forth by the Mungoi spirit satisfied everyone's needs while allowing the community to continue. Renamo soldiers were sent on a mission to bring back supplies to the stronghold. The soldiers needed to obtain food supplies and they needed people to help them carry the goods back to the stronghold. Therefore they did continue to raid and kidnap people from the Mungoi area. However, the soldiers were required by the Spirit to escort some of the kidnapped people back. When they brought people back to the Mungoi homestead they were fed and protected from attacks by Frelimo. Sometimes they were given food for their journey back to the stronghold. If they broke any of the rules set forth by Mungoi, then they would be punished. Of course Frelimo would be suspicious of these frequent comings and goings of Renamo soldiers to the Mungoi homestead.

At a time when some funding for conflict prevention is targeted at building new civil society structures and is focused on educating youth and finding young men jobs it is significant to find that this is not the population that were the early adopters. The credibility of elders and traditional leaders enabled them to call upon a set of shared beliefs to help this community to function during war time.

A word on peace and reconciliation in Mozambique

“We are still working toward a common understanding between people as a foundation for mature peace in Mozambique.”

In the introduction to this case study we pointed out that almost every person started the conversation by saying, “*there is a lot to tell*”. They went on to explain their understanding of how peace came to Mozambique and their hopes for a future peaceful nation.

People took pride in explaining that while other countries speak of reconciliation and mean that first you must acknowledge wrong doings and then find forgiveness. Here they say, “In Mozambique, we didn’t start with the past.” People said the focus is on, “how we live tomorrow” and “how do we create in the future different relationships”. They do acknowledge the past in terms of how to avoid the same mistakes and say, “the future makes us reconcile today”

For example, in Mozambique “trauma healing’ is not about dealing with the past but about preparing for a new life. People say that ex-combatants were sick from the violence during the war, and that the individuals remain brothers, sons, and Mozambiquans. In some rural areas rituals are performed to re-integrate former combatants into the community. Individuals are required to ask forgiveness by acknowledging their wrong doings, and go through process of purification to rid them of the feeling of guilt.

References

Armon, Jeremy; Hendrickson, Dylan; Vines, Alex. Accord: The Mozambican Peace Process in Perspective 1998.