

Apologising for Colonial Violence

The Documentary Film *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, Transitional Justice, and Portuguese-Mozambican Decolonisation

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When Aníbal Cavaco Silva, President of Portugal, went for a state visit to the Mozambican capital Maputo in March 2008, he was asked by a journalist if he would apologise for the ‘colonial war’, namely for the massacre of Wiriyamu where about 400 people were killed by Portuguese special forces. He responded:

“People make history every day, with all its defects and virtues. Regarding history, I try to identify the positive facts, because, if we keep looking back at the past, we will lose the future.”¹

Cavaco Silva avoided a direct answer and instead tried to contextualise the violence committed by Portuguese troops during the war of decolonisation, as a seemingly ‘normal’ element of a universal history of humanity. The newspaper *Jornal de Notícias* also reports that Cavaco Silva emphasised

1 Quoted in Luís Andrade de Sá, Pr/Moçambique, Cavaco contorna Guerra Colonial propondo o ‘Lado positivo da História’, *Jornal de Notícias*, 24 March 2008. This and the following citations from Portuguese sources are translations by the author. This paper forms part my PhD thesis on decolonisation and documentary films from Mozambique and Portugal at the International Graduate Center for the Study of Culture (University of Gießen).

some of his positive recollections relating to previous stays in Mozambique back in the days of colonialism. This rather conservative and nostalgic point of view causes astonishment. However, it could also be assumed that perhaps the context of a press conference was not the proper place for speaking about such an issue since it did not provide the right setting and preparation for the demanded apology. Was the response by Cavaco Silva then appropriate? Did it not ignore the experience of the victims of this or other violent excesses, and the violence of the 'colonial situation' in general?²

About ten years before, the documentary film *Return to Wiriyamu* directed by Felícia Cabrita and Paulo Camacho proposed a different perspective on the subject eschewed by Cavaco Silva.³ This Portuguese film production deals with the massacre of Wiriyamu (northern Mozambique, Province of Tête) conducted by Portuguese troops on December 16, 1972 and brings together one of the perpetrators and some of the survivors.⁴ As this paper will show, this film and its background provide the opportunity to reflect and think about the complexity and ambiguity of postcolonial and apologetic contexts.

The two situations mentioned allude to a broader context, where the discussion of the colonial past and connected experiences of violence has become an important issue in most societies of the former European colonial powers. These debates are not restricted to academic discourse but also

2 For a different attitude see the speech of Mário Soares, former President of Portugal, that he gave in Maputo on 23 June 2005. There, he refers to his encounter with Samora Machel in 1974, when he was Foreign Minister and involved in the Lusaka Accord, where the transfer of power to the *Frente da Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo, Mozambican Liberation Front) was negotiated. He, too, speaks about his exile in France before 1974 and his participation in demonstrations against Marcello Caetano in London in 1973. Mário Soares, *Conferência de Mário Soares na Universidade Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo* (Lisboa: Arquivo & Biblioteca Fundação Mário Soares, 23 June 2005).

3 Felícia Cabrita and Paulo Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu* (SIC 1998, Portugal).

4 It was broadcasted on 19 November 1998 as part of the series *Grande Reportagem* (Great Report) on the private television channel *Sociedade Independente de Comunicação* (SIC, Independent Communication Society). Marina C. Ramos, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, *Público*, 19 November 1998, 44.

reach a wider public and influence political decisions.⁵ In France, the year 2000 marked a turning point for the discussion of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). In fact, just one year before, the conflict in Algeria had been recognized as a ‘war’ by the French parliament. A public debate discussed the violence during the war,⁶ while historians analysed practices of torture utilized by the French Armed Forces.⁷ Despite this unsettling chapter of history, French politicians advocated the positive interpretation of colonialism.⁸ In the United Kingdom, studies of the decolonisation of Kenya troubled the image of the seemingly civilized British manner of

5 Andreas Eckert, Der Kolonialismus im Europäischen Gedächtnis, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 1/2 (2008), 31-38, here: 33.

6 On 20 June 2000, *Le Monde* published an article in which a former member of the Algerian Liberation Front reported on the torture that she had experienced during her imprisonment. Shortly after, General Aussaresses wrote about such violent practices (not showing any sign of regret) that he and others had used against prisoners in the war.

7 Robert Aldrich, Imperial Mise En Valeur and Mise En Scène. Recent Works on French Colonialism, *The Historical Journal* 45, 4 (2002), 917-936, here: 933. A detailed analysis is offered by Joshua Cole, Intimate Acts and Unspeakable Relations. Remembering Torture and the War for Algerian Independence, in: *Memory, Empire and Postcolonialism: Legacies of French Colonialism*, ed. Alex Hargreaves (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), 125-141. See also Neil MacMaster, The Torture Controversy (1998-2002). Towards a ‘New History’ of the Algerian War, *Modern & Contemporary France* 10, 4 (2002), 449-459.

8 Loi no. 2005-158 du 23 février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés. Article 4 of the law states: “University research programmes [will] accord to the history of the French presence overseas, notably in North Africa, the place that it deserves. School curricula [will] recognise, in particular, the positive role of the French presence overseas, notably in North Africa, and [will] accord the history and the sacrifices of the soldiers of the French Army who came from these territories the eminent place to which they have a right.” This law was retracted shortly after its introduction. Quoted in Robert Aldrich, Colonial past, post-colonial present: History wars French-style, *History Australia* 3, 1 (2006), 14.1-14.10, here: 14.8.

withdrawing from its overseas territories.⁹ The out-dated permanent exhibition at the *Musée Royal de l'Afrique Central* in Tervuren, near Brussels, still holds a rather colonialist view on the history of the Congo, and hence provoked discussions regarding the mass murder in Belgian Congo that took place around 1900.¹⁰

In Portugal, discussions about the colonial past can be observed as well even if they are shaped in a specific way.¹¹ Since the 1990s, mainly veterans of the decolonisation wars have been publishing an increasing number of memoirs and historical accounts. Over the last decade, the growing willingness of veterans to speak about their experience in the wars of decolonisation in the media – which, at the same time, became more open for these debates – has fostered an intensive and ongoing discussion about the colonial past in Portugal. This phenomenon also extends to the film production since there is a continuously increasing number of documentaries and fea-

9 Richard Dowden, State of Shame, *Guardian*, 5 February 2005, on the books by David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005) and Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/feb/05/featuresreviews.guardianreview6>, accessed 25 May 2011

10 There are already plans for the renovation of the museum building and the whole exhibition. The latter “is taking place in collaboration with external experts and representatives of the African diaspora”. Permanent Exhibition. In: Royal Museum for Central Africa, <http://www.africamuseum.be/renovation/newexhibition>, accessed 28 March 2012. See also Sabine Cornélis, Colonial and Postcolonial Exhibitions, in: *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures in English*, ed. Prem Poddar and David Johnson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 21-23, here: 22.

11 For a discussion of this issue that does not consider media representations see Isabel dos Santos Lourenco and Alexander Keese, Die blockierte Erinnerung: Portugals koloniales Gedächtnis und das Ausbleiben kritischer Diskurse 1974-2010, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37, 2 (2011), 220-243, here: 221. For a critical perspective regarding the memory of the Portuguese New State see Teresa Pinheiro, Facetten der Erinnerungskultur. Portugals Umgang mit dem Estado Novo, *Neue Politische Literatur* 55, 1 (2010), 7-22.

ture films dedicated to the wars of decolonisation.¹² Many of them can be perceived as interventions in a context, where speaking about the ‘colonial war’ constitutes a difficult issue and often creates polemical debates.

It is evident that many of the debates and studies mentioned focus on the consequences of colonial history, decolonisation and postcolonial immigration into Europe. At the same time, there is only little reflection on memory politics in the African context,¹³ where the colonial past – more than postcolonial excesses of violence committed by the independence movements against political opponents and other parts of the populations¹⁴ – is also an object of public and political discourse.¹⁵ Moreover, if then the examination of African memory politics proves to be a rare topic of academic discourse, the analysis of postcolonial memories situated between Europe and Africa transcending national boundaries, and being appropriated by different and sometimes competing social groups, really turns out to be a future task.¹⁶

This article contributes to this rather unexplored field. Its focus lies on an apology for past wrongs in the lusophone context, namely Mozambique and Portugal, and its filmic representation. The following case study sheds new light on the postcolonial negotiation of transnational memory; a process that takes place not only in the realm of official bilateral relations, but to which members of civil society such as veterans, survivors and journalists make their contribution. To grasp this complex issue, the article ana-

12 João Maria Grilo, *O cinema da não-ilusão: Histórias para o cinema português* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2006), 91.

13 Richard P. Werbner, *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1998).

14 Victor Igreja, Frelimo’s Political Ruling through Violence and Memory in Postcolonial Mozambique, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 36, 4 (2010), 781-799; Dalila Cabrita Mateus and Alvaro Mateus, *Purga em Angola: O 27 de Maio de 1977* (Porto: Asa Editores, 2007).

15 Carola Lentz and Jan Budniok, Ghana@50 – celebrating the nation: An eyewitness account from Accra, *zeitgeschichte-online*, December 2010, <http://zeitgeschichte-online.de/Themen-Lentz-Budniok-12-2010>, accessed 27 February 2012.

16 See for example one of the few studies in this respect: Andrea L. Smith, *Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe: Maltese Settlers in Algeria and France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

lyses how the violent experience of Mozambican-Portuguese decolonisation is reflected in the documentary film *Return to Wiriyamu*.

The film is a striking example for showing that it is important to consider the procedure and effects of apologies, not only on the macro level of inter-state relations, but also on the micro level of social interactions. On this level, the physical wounds, emotions, and persisting images of the former adversaries that often continue to shape the relationships between perpetrators and victims up to the present, can be re-negotiated. To observe how the moment of the apology emerges in particular situations, and to analyse the specific elements that are constitutive to such interactions, provides knowledge and understanding of apologies for past wrongs and related dynamics along with new insights. For my argument, I am specifically interested in addressing two levels of analysis: the first explores the background of the making of the film drawing on an in-depth interview with the Portuguese journalist Felícia Cabrita; the second level deals with the specific perspective in which the film visualizes the encounter of both perpetrators and victims. In other words, how does the film proceed when translating a process in which people meet that were on opposing sides during the war of decolonisation into moving images? I argue that there is a complex relation between the two levels because seemingly both personal and filmic memory are connected to particular contexts, truths, and related objectives.

My examination starts with a brief overview of the concept of apologies for past wrongs in postcolonial settings. In sketching out some cases, it will become clear that there is still a great lack of approaches researching apologetic contexts at the level of social interactions and in relation to media representations. Subsequently, I outline the process of democratisation in Portugal and explore the attempts of transitional justice that occurred right after the revolution in 1974. This will provide the background for an in-depth analysis of the documentary *Return to Wiriyamu*. The main parts of the paper constitute an analysis of an interview I conducted with Felícia Cabrita in July 2010 and an examination of some of the central scenes of the documentary. To conclude my analysis, I draw on some newspaper articles that point to the reception of the film in Mozambique and Portugal.

APOLOGIES FOR PAST WRONGS ON THE MACRO AND MICRO LEVEL

One astonishing part in the documentary *Return to Wiriyamu* is the sequence, in which one of the perpetrators of the massacre comes back to the crime scene and meets with some of the survivors. In this encounter, the former Portuguese officer apologises for the deeds of the unit that committed the massacre. Even if this particular apology is in some ways unique, it can be related to similar attempts in postcolonial contexts. However, all these apologies are embedded in specific frameworks, as the following brief overview will show. One of the functions of apologies for past wrongs consists of demonstrating that a state, a social group or an individual holds at the time the apology takes place different values than from those held in the past when certain acts were committed. As Robert Weyeneth observes,

“acknowledgment of historical wrongs comes in diverse forms: outright apologies, requests for forgiveness, [...] expressions of regret, and payments of reparations and compensation. Apologies can be communicated in a wide range of ways through verbal statements issued publicly, joint diplomatic declarations, [...] reports, legal judgments, [...] days of observance, reconciliation walks, monuments and memorials, [...]. Both individuals and institutions apologize, for personal transgressions and for collective wrongs.”¹⁷

There are steps that precede and follow the processes mentioned: Remorse and regret are expressed in order to show that a conscience about the performed wrong exists. This can open a possibility for a dialogue where victims and perpetrators speak about their experiences. Within this context, the different perspectives on the crime become evident. Perpetrators have the opportunity to acknowledge what they have done. Furthermore, an apology is able to show the change of attitude of a former adversary, and this could “pave the way for the former victims to forgive, and help construct a new image of the former enemy”.¹⁸ Nevertheless, as Nick Smith indicates – in

17 Robert R. Weyeneth, The Power of Apology and the Process of Historical Reconciliation, *The Public Historian* 23, 3 (2001), 9-38, here: 20.

18 Jennifer M. Lind, *Sorry States. Apologies in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 12.

contrast to the work of Tavuchis¹⁹ –, a “categorical apology” could be difficult to achieve because it involves several interdependent factors.²⁰ However, if an apology is indeed accepted and perpetrators are forgiven, then a process of reconciliation between two or more actors involved could be initiated. Yet, (attempts of) truth telling, acknowledgment, apology, and forgiveness do not open perspectives for long-term reconciliation in every case.

In the context of international politics, the specific language of apology in postcolonial contexts often emerges due to questions of material compensation. The centenary of the outbreak of the annihilation war against the Herero in German South-West Africa was commemorated in 2004. It provided the reason for Heidemarie Wieczorek Zeul, then Minister for German development cooperation, to visit Namibia. In Okakara, the place where the war against the Herero had started, she gave an official speech that did not include an apology. However, she did add an important sentence: “Everything I said in my speech was an apology for crimes committed by Germany.”²¹

Until then, the German government and the Foreign Office had avoided an apology due to claims of reparations that were already in course.²² Officials stated that Germany already supported Namibia with a great amount of money in development cooperation. The Herero who attended the ceremony in Okakara were satisfied with the words and the contrition expressed

19 Nicholas Tavuchis, *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

20 For Smith, a “categorical apology” is constituted by nine elements: corroborated factual record, acceptance of blame, possession of appropriate standing, identification of each harm, identification of the moral principles underlying each harm, shared commitment to moral principles underlying each harm, recognition of victim as moral interlocutor, categorical regret, and performance of the apology. Nick Smith, *I Was Wrong: The Meanings of Apologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 140-142.

21 Quoted in Larissa Förster, *Jenseits des juristischen Diskurses. Die Entschuldigung Von Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul in Namibia*, *afrika süd. zeitschrift zum südlichen afrika* 5 (2004), 8-10, <http://www.issa-bonn.org/publikationen/5-04f%Förster.htm>, accessed 25 February 2012.

22 But the Namibian Government did not support the claims by the Herero.

by the minister. Shortly thereafter, rumours circulated that the Herero would eventually drop the charges; however, it turned out, this was not the case.

In postcolonial contexts, one can find other examples in which regret is expressed, but due to fear of material reparation claims, the word “sorry” is usually avoided.²³ This was the case with Tony Blair’s statements in 2007 when the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery was commemorated in the UK. It was also the case in 1999, when the Australian Prime Minister John Howard regretted “that indigenous Australians suffered injustices under the practices of past generations” and refused to apologise to Aborigines for the government policy.²⁴ As Howard-Hassmann and Lombardo observe, the expression of regret with simultaneous refusal of apology – often to avoid claims for material redress – is widespread in the postcolonial political sphere. However, the authors also question the progress that would be made by such gestures:

“It is unclear whether the small, tentative steps to acknowledge and regret the harms perpetrated against Africa by Western powers will have any real impact upon international relations. Nor it is altogether clear that apologies might have any real meaning or impact within Africa, or to African citizens.”²⁵

The mentioned apologies or the attempts to avoid them are part of complex processes where legal issues condition foreign relations. Nevertheless, for the following case study it is important to examine the different aspects of apologies not only on the level of inter-state relations or relations between governments and pressure groups from civil society, but rather on the micro level of social interactions. This level clearly differs from diplomatic, official declarations or apologies by members of governments, who were not directly involved in historical wrongs. The aim here is to observe a complex situation – seen through the prism of a film – that brings people to-

23 Eckert, *Der Kolonialismus*, 36.

24 Weyeneth, *The Power of Apology*, 18.

25 Rhoda Howard-Hassman and Anthony P. Lombardo, *Words Require Action: African Elite Opinion About Apologies from the West*, in: *The Age of Apology: Facing up to the Past*, ed. Mark Gibney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 216-228, here: 218.

gether to re-negotiate their roles as victims and perpetrators that result from colonial violence and persist to influence their lives and relations to each other up to the present. One can explore how the moment for the apology emerges in specific settings, analyse the crucial elements constitutive to such interactions and hence shed a new light on apologies for past wrongs and related dynamics. To grasp such social processes, ethnographic approaches have proven to be particularly useful. One example is the methodological framework outlined by Tim Kelsall who acted as an observer of the hearings for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the Tonkolili District in Sierra Leone in July 2003. In discussing the specific conditions of this cultural-religious setting and the resulting difficulties in bringing forth the truth, and by highlighting the significance of the closing reconciliation ceremony of the hearings where the perpetrators were forgiven, Kelsall concludes that:

“One must look beyond the notion that after four days of telling the truth, reconciliation would logically follow, the ceremony merely underlining a state of affairs that truth had brought into being. It is more plausible to view the entire five days of the hearings as a ritual building to the climax of the final ceremony, upon which the purpose of the Commission hinged. [...] ritual, at its most effective, has the power to transform perceptions and emotions and therefore situations, and it is for this reason that it ought to be taken seriously by truth commissions.”²⁶

His analysis of the perspectives of the different parties involved in the hearings – victims, perpetrators, commissioners, and the audience – provides a productive framework through which the apology for the massacre in Wiri-yamu can be considered. Kelsall’s analysis makes clear that such reconciliation rituals are shaped by a series of factors such as speeches, body gestures and emotional response.

Besides this, other aspects can influence processes of apology and forgiveness. Considering a case described by Marie Breen Smyth, who is very critical regarding forgiveness, one topic, as some observers noted, was of particular importance in the reconciliation process in South Africa. Breen

26 Tim Kelsall, Truth, Lies, Ritual: Preliminary Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone, *Human Rights Quarterly* 27, 2 (2005), 361-391, here: 386.

Smyth affirms that “victims and survivors may feel under pressure to grant some form of absolution or forgiveness to perpetrators”²⁷ by arguing that the media can constrain processes of apology and forgiveness. Her point of reference is the television series *Facing the Truth* produced by BBC in 2006, in which in the presence of Archbishop Desmond Tutu encounters of victims and perpetrators of the conflict in Northern Ireland took place. In one of the three parts, Mrs Sylvia Hackett met Loyalist Michael Stone, the murderer of her husband. Although, at first unwilling, later in the program she was led to shake hands with Stone, but immediately afterwards, she had a breakdown:

“Following the prompts from Tutu, an international figure, and under the glare of television cameras with the question of what millions of viewers would make of a refusal to forgive, the pressure on Mrs Hackett to shake the hand of Michael Stone was almost irresistible. It was almost impossible for her not to shake the hand of the perpetrator.”²⁸

The gesture of shaking hands thus can be a sensitive issue that at least in this case does not have a clear ‘message’. As it turns out, being on television and therefore addressing a wide audience can create tensions and contradictory emotions due to presupposed expectations on the part of oneself, the other participants and the viewers. Furthermore, there are other questions arising: Can such problems to be resolved in public? Is this helpful? Or should these sensitive issues rather be treated in a setting that would respect the privacy of the victims and therefore not pressure them? It is, however, difficult to judge the television program solely from the analysis by Smyth. Donna Hicks, who was one of the participants, describes another issue of the program *Facing the Truth*, which in her view turned out to be successful. Though, she carefully admits:

“Even if one creates the right conditions for healing and reconciliation, not everyone is ready for it. There are steps along the way that are more difficult for some than

27 Marie Breen Smyth, *Truth Recovery and Justice after Conflict: Managing Violent Pasts* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 17.

28 *Ibid.*, 18.

others. For some, the reasons were personal and emotional, and for others, it was political.”²⁹

The examples given above point to the intricate relationships in situations involving former colonial powers and independent states in Africa, and show the complicated processes of apology and forgiveness that are taking place between victims and perpetrators in different social and political contexts. One can draw several connections from the outlined cases to Mozambique and Portugal. First of all, there was no officially pronounced apology of Portugal for the committed violence during the ‘colonial war’.³⁰ There were however moments of fraternization between Portuguese and Mozambican politicians and militaries during the difficult situation in 1974-1975,³¹ that became even more complex through the sudden and massive exodus of the Portuguese settler population.³² Secondly, Mozambique – similar to the case of Namibia and Germany – profits from the Portuguese development cooperation. Additionally, in contrast to the Herero, who managed to form a pressure group, it seems that rural populations in Mozambique, which during the war of independence were targets of attacks, continue to have ‘no voice’ and remain in a subaltern position.³³ This does not mean that an

29 Donna Hicks, *Reconciling with Dignity*, *European Forum for Restorative Justice*, <http://www.euforumrj.org/readingroom/Terrorism/DHicks.pdf>, accessed 9 November 2011.

30 Since there is no published work available, I gratefully acknowledge information about this point provided by Dalila Cabrita Mateus (email to author, 21 March 2012).

31 Norrie MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa: Metropolitan Revolution and the Dissolution of Empire* (London: Longman, 1997), 133-134.

32 Hundreds of thousands of Portuguese settlers left Mozambique in 1974-1975. Private property was mostly nationalized and claims for indemnity were about to be filed. However, this was “an unrealistic objective and the claims were never finalized”. Maria Beatriz Rocha-Trindade, *The Repatriation of Portuguese from Africa*, in: *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*, ed. Robin Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 337-341, here: 338.

33 This is not only due to economic factors but also to the general political situation in Mozambique. Although a multiparty system was introduced in the 1990s, it still remains a difficult task to discuss the colonial past or processes of the

attempt to bring some of them together with a perpetrator of colonial violence would bring 'positive' results more easily. On the contrary, it seems that staging an apology for the filming of a documentary also turns out to be a problematic issue. It not only causes potential constraints on the participants imposed through the medium and seemingly forces apologies. It probably also constitutes the non-visibility of some interactions that took place but were either not filmed nor included in the final edition of the film.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN PORTUGAL'S POST-REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

Following is a brief overview of the historical circumstances that characterised the post-revolutionary period in Portugal. It will discuss the transition from authoritarian rule to a democratic government as a troubled process where different approaches were chosen in order to achieve a solution that provided the conditions for a long lasting compromise forming the basis for the Portuguese republic. What is of interest here is the issue of "how societies address legacies of past human rights abuses, mass atrocity, or other forms of severe social trauma, including genocide or civil war, in order to build a more democratic, just, or peaceful future".³⁴ The background information provided here sheds some light on the unfinished process of transitional justice in Portugal that continued to inform the socio-political situation in the 1990s. This too affected to some extent the reception of the documentary film *Return to Wiriyamu* as will be shown below.

The authoritarian regime of António de Oliveira Salazar lasted for about four decades. Since the beginning of the 1960s, several independent movements challenged its power in the African territories because the *Estado*

post-revolutionary period. Frelimo is still the most powerful party and tries to exercise control over the narratives of the past, be it colonial or socialist. M. Anne Pitcher, Forgetting from above and Memory from Below: Strategies of Legitimation and Struggle in Postsocialist Mozambique, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 76, 1 (2006), 88-112.

34 Louis Bickford, Transitional Justice, in: *Encyclopedia of Genocide and Crimes against Humanity*, Vol. 3, ed. Dinah Shelton (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2004), 1045-1047, here: 1045.

Novo did not accept negotiations with the movements. The *coup d'état* on April 25, 1974 abolished the regime and ended the war in the colonies. When the revolution took place, there was only a small opposition to the regime; but this was sufficient to create a critical situation of political radicalisation. The resulting political instability characterised the transition to democracy. Whereas the *Movimento das Forças Armadas* (MFA, Movement of the Armed Forces) solely aimed at stopping the war in the colonies, left wing groups demanded immediate decolonisation and the transfer of power.³⁵

In the period of transition from 1974 to 1976, one finds attempts to purge the institutions and the people that collaborated with the authoritarian regime.³⁶ Compromised mayors, civil servants, headmasters of schools and universities were ousted from office; censorship was abolished; agents of the secret police *Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado* (PIDE) were arrested and waited for their judgement in prison. There was also a significant change in the Armed Forces: Generals, officers and other ranks in the Army, Navy and Air Force were purged and a new generation of young militaries entered the institution.³⁷

One of the most important reactions to the purge (led mainly by centre/left wing militaries and politicians) was an attempted coup on November 11, 1975 planned by right wing militaries. This incident marked a turning point in domestic politics in Portugal. From this moment on, issues like “reconciliation” and “pacification” were emphasised by the politics of the government. Consequently, agents of the secret police that had been imprisoned after their arrest were not convicted but freed and reintegrated into the society. The militaries that were admittedly removed from their positions were not made responsible war crimes that they had possibly commit-

35 Jorge Ribeiro, *Marcas Da Guerra Colonial* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 1999), 272.

36 António Costa Pinto, Purges and Counter-Purges, in: *Transitional Justice. How emerging democracies reckon with former Regimes*, ed. Neil J. Kritz (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 1995), 291-295, here: 291.

37 António Costa Pinto, Ajustando Contas com o Passado na Transição para a Democracia em Portugal, in: *Política da Memória, Verdade ou Justiça na Transição para a Democracia*, ed. Alexandra Barahona Brito (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2004), 87-108, here: 93-94.

ted.³⁸ Among them was also the former Commander-in-Chief of Mozambique, General Kaúlza de Arriaga, a hardliner of the regime.³⁹ After having returned from Mozambique, where the Wiriyamu massacre happened while he was in a leading position, this general was involved in a failed *coup d'état* in 1973.⁴⁰ His attitude and political point of view contributed to his imprisonment in September 1974 because the MFA was concerned that he would perhaps head a movement that potentially could stop the decolonization of Angola and Mozambique.⁴¹

Therefore, those responsible for crimes like the massacre of Wiriyamu were not sentenced. This strategy to grant amnesty is well known in transitional settings where newly emerging political players are still dependent on actors of the old regime, in this case the armed forces. Still, it caused an unresolved situation, where questions of guilt were suppressed. Like the 'colonial war' in general, soldiers involved in excessive violence were hence not considered a topic for public debate. Particularly in the 1990 public attempts to discuss certain incidents of the colonial past and their complex and ambiguous consequences slowly started to surface. This also extended to economic developments and social questions like the repatriation of Portuguese settlers from Angola and Mozambique after 1975.⁴² The documen-

38 Pinto, *Ajustando Contas com o Passado*, 102-103.

39 Kaúlza de Arriaga, *A Luta Em Moçambique, 1970/1973* (Braga: Intervenção, 1977), 75; Malyn Newitt, *History of Mozambique* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 529-532.

40 Hugo Gil Ferreira and Michael W. Marshall, *Portugal's Revolution: Ten Years On* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 29-30.

41 Since 1977, Arriaga was involved in a lawsuit against the Portuguese state concerning his 'unjustified' detention. The Supreme Court decided about this trial only in 1987 and convicted the Portuguese State to indemnify. Kaúlza de Arriaga, *Novas Sínteses. Política, a Africa Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Prefácio, 2001), 125-126.

42 Dalila Cabrita Mateus and Álvaro Mateus, *Angola 61. Guerra Colonial: Causas e consequências; 04 de Fevereiro e o 15 de Março* (Alfragide: Texto, 2011), 209-211.

tary film *Return to Wiriyamu* made by Felícia Cabrita and Paulo Camacho is one of them.⁴³

THE DOCUMENTARY RETURN TO WIRIYAMU

The decolonisation of the Portuguese territories in Africa was a prolonged and destructive confrontation characterised by violence. In Mozambique, the armed struggle against the colonial rule started 1964 and lasted for 10 years. One of the most violent incidents of these wars that gained enormous public attention at the time was the massacre of Wiriyamu conducted by Portuguese special troops *Comandos* on December 16, 1972 in the village Wiriyamu, where nearly 400 persons were killed.⁴⁴ It became known internationally through a report by Father Adrian Hastings published on July 10, 1973 in the *London Times*, shortly before Marcelo Caetano, the successor of António de Oliveira Salazar, arrived in London for a state visit.⁴⁵ Hastings received the information about the killing from Spanish Burgos Fathers, who were working near the crime scene and had managed to smuggle their report out of Africa to Spain. After the violent attack, some of the sur-

43 The film is thus a specific moment of a far reaching process of the negotiation in postcolonial relationships that here cannot be elaborated on in more detail. On the cultural dimensions of this process see Fernando Arenas, *Lusophone Africa. Beyond Independence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Carolin Overhoff Ferreira, *Identity and Difference. Postcoloniality and Transnationality in Lusophone Films* (Münster: Lit, 2012).

44 MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 48-49; Mustafah Dhada, Contesting Terrains over a Massacre: The Case of Wiriyamu, in: *Contested Terrains and Constructed Categories: Contemporary Africa in Focus*, ed. George C. Bond and Nigel Gibson (Boulder: Westview, 2002), 259-276, here: 265.

45 Some Frelimo key leaders even hold the view that the revelations about the massacre and their impact on the image of Portugal did more for the “revolution than decades of fighting in Mozambique”. General Hama Tai quoted in Dhada, *Contesting Terrains over a Massacre*, 274.

vivors had come to the mission station and the fathers had collected their testimonies.⁴⁶

Nearly three decades had passed, when the documentary film *Return to Wiriyamu* was produced in 1998. There were many reasons for its production. Among them was the changed relationship between Mozambique and Portugal. The end of the civil war in 1992, and the consequently new political conditions⁴⁷ offered a chance for a new beginning, regarding economic and personal connections between people in both countries that had been nearly stopped since the short period of rapprochement around 1980, and the official visit of the President of Mozambique Samora Machel in Lisbon in 1983.⁴⁸

46 Adrian Hastings, *Wiriyamu* (London: Search Press, 1974); Álvaro B. Marques, *Quem Matou Samora Machel?* (Lisboa: Ulmeiro, 1987), 212.

47 After gaining independence in 1975, the young Mozambican state, a socialist regime under the Frelimo, suffered from destabilization policies driven by Apartheid regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia. This led to a violent war between Frelimo and *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Renamo, National Resistance Movement) that only ended in 1992, when Frelimo and Renamo signed the General Peace Agreement. The first democratic elections took place in 1994. Alice Dinerman, *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Revisionism in Post-Colonial Africa: The Case of Mozambique, 1975-1994* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 29-30.

48 MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 44-50; William Minter, *King Solomon's Mines Revisited: Western Interests and the Burdened History of Southern Africa* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 329. This process was part of a broader change in foreign politics, particularly regarding cooperation policies in the *Países Africanos de Língua Portuguesa* (PALOP, Portuguese Speaking African Countries). Portugal, who had left the Development Assistance Committee in 1974, rejoined it in 1991, "when it was beginning to assist the important new nation building processes in the PALOPs, involving peace building, democratisation and economic reform"; *Development Co-Operation Review Series. Portugal*, ed. OECD and DAC (Paris: OECD Publishing, 1997), 7. In 1998, Mozambique was on the first place of the recipients of the Portuguese cooperation; OECD and James H. Michel, *Development Cooperation Report, 1998. Efforts and Policies of the Members of the Development Assistance Committee* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 1999), 123.

The Making Of

The Portuguese journalist Felícia Cabrita began working on the massacre of Wiriyamu in 1992 and is thus part of the above mentioned process. In an interview, Cabrita explained her interest in the massacre of Wiriyamu and referred to the way that the Portuguese Army wrote its official history:

“The only thing that exists is the official version, [there exist] some pages that are false. So, we didn’t have one single testimony of somebody who participated in that incident. And history, whenever it is possible, is obviously written with living people, and at best with several people. It is clear that in a work like this, we could not limit ourselves to listen only to one witness.”⁴⁹

This also holds true in the broader societal context of Portugal where, after 1974, inconvenient episodes of the wars in Africa were often silenced and kept away from the public. Therefore, speaking to the militaries who conducted the massacre and finding the survivors in order to record their testimonies would provide material to contest the way the wars in Mozambique and elsewhere were historicised.⁵⁰

After having investigated information available about the massacre and after meeting some of the Portuguese soldiers involved in it, Cabrita encountered Antonino Melo who had commanded this operation. While others talked about the committed violence without feelings of regret, the reaction of Melo was different:

“Obviously, I had the idea that he was a monster and postponed the interview with him until the end. I thought I would be badly received. [...] many years have passed

49 Interview with Felícia Cabrita conducted by the author on 26 July 2010 in Lisbon.

50 See for example the volume on the history of the war in Mozambique published by the General Staff of the Portuguese Armed Forces: Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África, *Resenha histórico-militar das Campanhas de África: Dispositivo das nossas forças: Moçambique* (Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 1989). Recent publications in military history seem also to be characterised mainly by unilateral perspectives. See Santos Lourenco and Keese, *Die blockierte Erinnerung*, 239-240.

since then, but in contrast to what I had imagined, I met a suffering man who was conscious about what he had done and who was disturbed because of all this.”⁵¹

The emotional state Melo was in, even two decades after the massacre had been committed, pointed to “a sense of remorse, regret, or sorrow that accompanies admission of a wrong”.⁵² Following the journalist, this constituted an important condition for his later participation in the documentary. Additionally, the recognition of an offense is often a first step in a process leading to a possible apology that can motivate gestures of forgiveness or even a process of reconciliation.

When Cabrita had spoken to the Portuguese soldiers, she decided to go to Mozambique in order to search for the survivors of this extremely violent incident. She succeeded in finding some of them. Her encounters and interviews with the survivors resulted in an article published in the weekly *Expresso*.⁵³ Cabrita’s commitment in 1992 constitutes an important element in the later process of the production of the documentary film; it enabled her to establish relationships with persons in Portugal and Mozambique who had experienced the violence of Wiriyamu.⁵⁴ This social interaction was a crucial basis for the making of the film and consequently provided the framework within which the apology of Antonino Melo would take place. It is, however, important to bear in mind that without the decision of the television channel SIC to invest in the film project, hardly anything would have happened.

The project was proposed to SIC as a part of the series *Grande Reportagem* by Felícia Cabrita and Paulo Camacho, when the 25th anniversary of the massacre was approaching.⁵⁵ Cabrita asked Antonino Melo to write a

51 Interview Cabrita.

52 Howard-Hassman and Lombardo, *Words Require Action*, 219.

53 Felícia Cabrita, *Os Mortos não sofrem*, *Expresso. Revista*, 5 December 1992, 12-21.

54 In her articles, Cabrita uses a journalistic style, mainly based on re-narration of the testimonies given by the survivors of the massacre. This proceeding is criticised by Dhada who states that Cabrita leaves the villagers again “mute”. Dhada, *Contesting Terrains over a Massacre*, 271.

55 Simultaneously, Cabrita did work on another article about the massacre for the journal *Expresso*, which was published shortly after the screening of the docu-

diary about his experience in Mozambique, which later served as one of the main sources for the script of the documentary.⁵⁶ Thus, Cabrita had to decide which of the former Portuguese soldiers would be the protagonist of the film. She asked Antonino Melo, “because he had shown great regret during the first work [in 1992 and wanted to] [...] apologise”.⁵⁷ According to Cabrita, Melo almost immediately agreed upon participating in the film although in similar cases “many former combatants [...] are reluctant or unwilling to participate for fear of reprisal, prosecution or the stigma that could follow such disclosures”.⁵⁸

As the presence of a non-convicted war crime perpetrator in Mozambique seemed to be a risky undertaking, the film team took some precautionary measures:

“Supposedly, his [Antonino Melo’s] name was horrifying in Mozambique. [...] Therefore, I was very cautious and his name was always hidden. We went along with him pretending that he was our cameraman. Because we had two cameramen, one Portuguese and one from Mozambique that was also working for SIC.”⁵⁹

This kind of approach is of course highly ambiguous. On the one hand, Antonino Melo belonged to a unit of the *Commandos* involved in a war crime and had never been prosecuted for it. On the other hand, he was the only one of the Portuguese soldiers who had shown regret, was willing to go to Mozambique and to be confronted with the past. However, this obvious and inevitable dilemma has to be seen in the context of the film, where a kind of exculpation of Antonino Melo is proposed, as will be shown below.

mentary on television. Felícia Cabrita, Wiryamu, *Expresso. Revista*, 21 November 1998, 154-171.

56 Interview Cabrita. As Melo was born in Mozambique, he did not only write about his military experience and the massacre but also about his life in Beira and in the capital Lourenço Marques (now Maputo). One can presume that this twofold narrative had a better chance to be accepted by SIC in comparison to a script that would only include the oral reconstruction of the massacre.

57 Interview Cabrita.

58 Breen Smyth, *Truth Recovery*, 10.

59 Interview Cabrita.

In 1998, the film team went to Mozambique and filmed in Maputo, Beira and in Tête, at places connected to the biography of Antonino Melo. This included places such as the school he went to, the hotel where he spent his honeymoon, and the house in Beira where he used to live as a child. Then, in and near Tête, the team split up. While Paulo Camacho, the cameraman Karl de Sousa and Antonino Melo were filming at sites around Cahora Bassa, at the river Mazói, and at other locations, Felícia Cabrita and the other cameraman Paulo Cepa were searching for the survivors:

“[...] we managed to search for the individuals with whom I had talked five years before. The idea was to find the same persons, bring them to Wiriyamu, where a monument exists that contains some of the bones of the victims [...] There, a meeting with Antonino Melo would take place, but on the condition that neither they nor Melo knew the date on which the encounter would be happening.”⁶⁰

Cabrita found some of the survivors and interviewed them again on their experience of the massacre. She met again with the people whose families had been destroyed by the excessive violence of the Portuguese *Comandos* and the involved PIDE agents. At the same time, she was trying to get a sense of how the survivors would react in case of meeting one of the perpetrators:

“I would interview them again and pose always a question in the end: If one day, one of those men came back here in order to apologise for what he did, how would they react? [...] After having talked to everybody, I understood that there was no danger. There was one young man, he was a bit nervous, but I thought that [due to the presence of the oldest] [...] a lack of control was impossible. So, I was relatively calm about the situation.”⁶¹

Taking into account the professionalisation of experts in the context of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions nowadays,⁶² it is surely doubtful

60 Interview Cabrita.

61 Interview Cabrita.

62 See for example Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Intersubjectivity and Embodiment: Exploring the Role of the Maternal in the Language of Forgiveness and Reconciliation, *Signs* 36, 3 (2011), 541-551.

whether a journalist has the capacity, the skills and time to prepare people who suffer from traumatic experiences, for an encounter with a perpetrator. Nonetheless, the survivors accepted to speak with her about the massacre; and despite the preliminary work and judging the potential consequences for Antonino Melo, it was all a risky task. Moreover, it was difficult to foresee the consequences for him in such a situation, as this was no “officially promoted truth recovery mechanism”⁶³ but only a television project without the approval of the Mozambican authorities. At this point, it is important to mention two further aspects: first, Antonino Melo, as other former combatants of the ‘colonial war’, had already begun a psychological treatment with the well-known psychiatrist Afonso de Albuquerque before the work on the documentary had started.⁶⁴ Secondly, regarding the victims and their preparation for the meeting with the perpetrator there is little information accessible. It can be presumed that they drew on the general background of national reconciliation in Mozambique when they were faced with the situation of how to deal with the presence of Antonino Melo and the film team.⁶⁵

63 Breen Smyth, *Truth Recovery*, 8.

64 The group around Albuquerque was the first to recognize the long-term consequences of post-traumatic stress disorder in the case of the former combatants of the ‘colonial war’ in Portugal. Carlos Anunciação, ‘Stress Traumático’: Fenómeno, etiologia e tratamento, *Revista de Psicologia Militar* 10 (1997), 147-161, here: 150.

65 A public judgment with a subsequent re-integration of the so-called traitors who collaborated with the colonial regime took place around 1980. It is reported that the ‘compromised’ showed generally gratitude and enthusiasm for the learning process at those staged meetings framed by a regime of a socialist one party system. The long-term effect of this process is difficult to measure due to the 16-year war. A process of national reconciliation and a silence followed the General Peace Agreement in 1992 over the conflict that had stopped immediately. Former adversaries got along apparently without any “rancor over past abuses”. Priscilla B. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 200; Andrea Bartoli, Forgiveness and Reconciliation in the Mozambique Peace Process, in: *Forgiveness and Reconciliation. Religion, Public Policy & Conflict Transformation*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick and Rodney Lawrence Petersen (Philadelphia: Tem-

When the day of the meeting arrived, the teams made an appointment at the memorial of Wiryamu. Until that particular moment, the protagonists in the film – the victims and the perpetrator – had only spoken about their experiences separately in the presence of a journalist, the camera, and the cameraman. The encounter was thus a particular situation because it implied a personal face-to-face confrontation between victims and the perpetrator, who had not met before.

When remembering the encounter between the survivors and Melo, Felícia Cabrita foregrounded three aspects. The first is connected to her personal experience and her work as a journalist. At the moment when Melo approached the group standing next to the monument and started to introduce himself as the commander of the troops that had committed the massacre,

“[...] it was somehow one of the most impressive moments in my work as a journalist, and I always do complicated jobs. But I think it was the only time that I got emotionally involved and had to turn around, when Melo started to speak [...] I had to turn around, I could not hold it and started to cry.”⁶⁶

The second aspect mentioned by Cabrita relates to a reaction of one of the survivors who recognises Melo not primarily as a perpetrator but as the one who had spared some lives in the situation of the mass killing:

“The girl [Augusta Creya] who had told me five years before, when I had done the first work, that a blond man had saved her and her mum in those conditions, gave

pleton Foundation Press, 2001), 361-382. For the issue of the “compromised” see the homepage by Colin Darch: *The Comprometidos, 1978-1982, Mozambique History Net*, <http://www.mozambiquehistory.net/comprometidos.html>, accessed 27 February 2012. Some information about this is also provided in a personal account of a former colonial soldier who also participated in the massacre of Wiryamu: Dalila Cabrita Mateus, Valeriano Baúlque. *Entrevista*, in: *Memórias do Colonialismo e da Guerra*, ed. Dalila Cabrita Mateus (Porto: ASA, 2006), 649-659, here: 657-658.

66 Interview Cabrita.

Melo a hug and thanked him. [...] On the one hand, it is revolting [...] It is difficult. [...] Because they knew that this man had destroyed their families.’⁶⁷

In this statement, the ambiguity regarding Melo as a brutal perpetrator becomes evident. The monstrosity of the soldier as a killing machine is humanized. The gesture of embracing described by Cabrita underscores this view. It is however not evident that this is a gesture of forgiveness.⁶⁸ One can presume that her reaction demonstrates mainly how grateful she is for not having been murdered. However, the question whether she forgives Melo for murdering parts of her family, is not explicitly mentioned and therefore remains open.

The third aspect emphasised by Cabrita has to do with the local Chief. After Melo did apologise and after the spontaneous reaction of the girl, it was the Oldest to express his view regarding the apology brought forward by Melo.

‘And the answer of the oldest was ‘There were a lot of wars after that one, and even worse ones’. [...] That people suffered a lot, not only with our presence but also afterwards continued to suffer. But there exists a capacity of accepting the adversary and accepting the other who comments on his behaviour and [and the deeds committed].’⁶⁹

Here, the excessive violence of December 1972 is contextualized in the postcolonial history of Mozambique. Following independence, the country did not reach peace but entered in another armed conflict due to its geopolitical situation as a neighbour of Apartheid states like South Africa. Another fact mentioned by Cabrita is the virtue of those Mozambicans who are able to accept a perpetrator who explains his deeds done in the past. But in this case, such a reaction could at most be conceived as the starting point

67 Interview Cabrita.

68 Gobodo-Madikizela describes a case where women forgive the person that had murdered their sons by expressing their forgiveness verbally and through the gesture of embracing. Both verbal explanation and gesture of the women are preceded by specific emotions that trigger feelings of empathy. Gobodo-Madikizela, *Intersubjectivity and Embodiment*, 346-347.

69 Interview Cabrita.

for the beginning of a process of dialogue and acknowledgment, because there are no convincing signs and expressions of forgiveness or reconciliation.

In Cabrita's view, the apology of Antonino Melo was well received and accepted by the survivors. Therefore, the journalistic practice, the documentary film work and the interaction with and between the different actors involved in this process apparently had a positive outcome. She remembers that on the day after the encounter Melo was spending time with the survivors on their *machambas* (vegetable garden, small territories for subsistence agriculture), looking at the cattle and having lunch with them. It seems that "he had become a family member from one day to another".⁷⁰ This comment suggests a constructive effect of Melo's apology on the survivors who welcomed him and got along with him. It is however necessary to question this perspective, ask for other reactions to the apology of Antonino Melo, and explore if his gesture led to forgiveness or even reconciliation. In order to do this, it will be necessary to analyze not only the making of the film but also the film in its final version as broadcasted on the television channel SIC in November 1998.

The edited version

In order to reconstruct the historical events, the documentary *Return to Wiriyamu* relies mainly on personal accounts of eyewitnesses. The central figures of the film are the officer Antonino Melo who commanded the massacre and the surviving victims of Wiriyamu. The film is structured as follows: In the first part, it focuses on the biography of Melo, in particular on his childhood, youth and early manhood. These stages in his life are connected to places in Maputo and Beira. Furthermore, his military education is highlighted in order to explain the ideological background and cultural context Melo's generation was influenced by. In this section, a considerable amount of footage is used. Towards the second part of the film, the team gets closer and closer to Tête. There, the encounter takes place at Wiriyamu and Melo apologises for his deeds to the survivors of the massacre. Afterwards, the documentary brings together different points of view in order to reconstruct the massacre of Wiriyamu without any reference to archival im-

70 Interview Cabrita.

ages. Among the collected voices are the testimonies of survivors, Spanish fathers and sisters of the mission in Tête, former colonial soldiers, and of Antonino Melo. Consequently, within the structure of the film the narrative gains a new dimension: the monologue of Antonino Melo is enriched by northern-Mozambican voices that give a view on the experience of the victims. Through the video interviews, the survivors are able to tell an experience firsthand that until then was just known to the public through the mediation of Spanish missionaries, a few newspaper articles, and scarce historiographical accounts.⁷¹

The encounter between Antonino Melo and the survivors took place at the memorial for the victims of Wiriyamu. Melo reaches the place by car and after leaving, the camera follows him while approaching the group waiting for him. Here, a deep synthesiser sound is introduced and creates suspense. Melo joins the group and since everyone knows about the purpose of the meeting, he comes straight to the point using the following words:

“Good day. You are the Oldest? Many years ago, I was the commander of the Commandos that came to this village and killed a lot of people, like you remember, at that time we were all young and got orders from our generals to come here and kill the villagers. 25 years later I am here again, I want to honour the dead, those who died that day, and I would like to apologise to the survivors for everything that happened.”⁷²

In his statement Melo mentions different aspects. First, he chooses to address Baera, the Oldest, whom he thus considers the most important person in this situation. The Oldest here is probably seen as a respected person with authority and decision power. Supposedly, there are hopes by Melo that if Baera would forgive him, the other survivors would follow his way.

71 See for example José Amaro, *Massacres Na Guerra Colonial: Documentos Secretos: Tete, Um Exemplo* (Lisboa: Ulmeiro, 1976). The individual meaning of each testimony is modified by their inclusion into the narrative of the documentary film. But in the separate shots, viewers are still confronted with the survivors that tell the stories of their suffering, sometimes looking straight into the camera. Such records have definitely a different impact than a written re-narration of their experience.

72 Cabrita and Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, 00:32:38-00:33:20.

A second point consists in acknowledging the mass murder of the villagers in 1972 – an important point, since the Portuguese Armed Forces had officially denied the killing of the 400 people.⁷³ But Melo does not fully admit his guilt. Instead, he expresses his leading role in the incident using the third person plural to indicate that he was part of a military unit that committed the massacre. Thus, he avoids connecting a specific deed to his very person. Thirdly, he makes a distinction between his identity as a young man and soldier that aims at attributing the guilt to the Commander-in-Chief or other commanders and therefore to factors that he as an individual obviously could not influence because he and the commandos unit were only ‘following orders’. Furthermore, he tries to introduce a broader human practice that respects the memory of the dead. This appears to be a universal condition, but in fact one has to be careful here, as perspectives on how the dead are to be honoured might differ in the context of military tradition, religion or in more broader terms of Portuguese and northern Mozambican society and culture.⁷⁴ Melo finally states that he returned in order to apologise to the survivors. But an apology is not only addressed at a particular individual or group, it also should include a specification of the wrongs committed. Melo dismisses such clarity by declaring “for everything that happened”. Considering the reflections of Smith one would have to problematize the status of this statement as an apology, for it does not correspond to what Smith defines as a “categorical apology”.⁷⁵ It seems that this is a moment of avoiding to take responsibility. However, the way in which Melo articulates his apology can also be seen in relation to the emotions that appear in such situations: Commonly shame, guilt, embarrassment, remorse, and regret emerge.⁷⁶ In the view of Cabrita, as Melo speaks, his “voice is faltering”

73 But since he comes as a private person embedded in a film project and not as a representative of the army, this acknowledgment has its limits, especially having in mind any kind of material reparations.

74 For apologies in diverse religious and cultural context, see Smith, *I Was Wrong*, 114-125.

75 Among a variety of aspects, identification of harm is central to the categorical apology: “The offender will identify each harm, taking care not to conflate several harms into one general harm or apologize for only a lesser offense or the ‘wrong wrong’.” Ibid., 141.

76 Ibid., 101.

and he “is ashamed” of the past wrongs.⁷⁷ Moreover, it seems that there is another emotion to be considered. Notice that Melo is somewhat aloof as he speaks and that this uneasiness is potentially owed to feelings of prudence and/or fear. Both Felícia Cabrita and the cameraman Karl de Sousa are convinced that Melo was seriously worried about the encounter. He even had an escape plan in case of an attempt of taking revenge. Therefore, the avoidance to designate his particular deeds in the very beginning of the encounter possibly reveals a certain precaution. In this respect, one could also speak of a strategic character that informs the speech of Antonino Melo.

After the apology, Baera, the Oldest, answers him in local language,⁷⁸ which is then translated into Portuguese by an interpreter who remains invisible:

“[...] we don’t bear you any grudge, because we know very well that war is war, because it wasn’t you alone, it was an order to conduct the massacre here. Now it is necessary that we get along well with you.”⁷⁹

Baera asserts that there is no danger for Melo and sets the frame for a peaceful interaction without vengeance. He acknowledges the situation of war as well as the conditions mentioned by Melo, and is thus following the provided argument of attributing the guilt to others and not primarily to this specific person. However, what follows neither constitutes an explicit acceptance of Melo’s apology nor does it express any kind of forgiveness. Instead, the Oldest just points to a future process of getting closer and establishing a good relationship. In his position as authority he obviously proceeds in a cautious manner.

Besides the verbal exchange, one has to consider another moment at the beginning of the encounter. After having expressed the apology and having received the answer from the Oldest, Melo moves towards him and reaches

77 Cabrita, *Massacres em África*, 277.

78 Curiously, while he is speaking, Baera does not appear in a medium close up, as Melo does. Instead, the camera keeps focusing on Melo, in a medium shot/medium close up shot. The voice of Baera is even lowered and an inner monologue by Melo who explains his nervousness is superimposed on the voice that speaks in a local language.

79 Cabrita and Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, 00:33:38-00:34:01.

out his hand. The offer for shaking hands is accepted by Baera who also moves towards the other. This physical interaction seemingly closes the scene in front of the camera and suggests that the apology might have a positive effect on the future relation between the former aggressor and the victims. Nevertheless, as I have shown above, such a gesture can have various interpretations. Therefore, one could on the contrary presume that there is little empathy here between the protagonists, as they did not embrace.⁸⁰ Shaking hands in this case can also signal a gendered dimension of apology due to forms of masculinity that are connected to cultural and different social settings (e.g. military education). Somehow, as they do not show emotions and as the film does not give any further clues of the recorded moment – at the level of the voice over, for instance – it is difficult to understand whether there were other signs and/or gestures of acceptance or forgiveness.⁸¹

After Melo's apology, conversations between the victims and the perpetrator took place near the monument where they talked about what had happened on the day of the massacre. The film puts parts of this encounter and parts of the previously recorded interviews with the respective protagonists together in order to reconstruct the massacre. Here, a series of tensions and difficulties become visible.

As Cabrita mentioned, there was one of the survivors who was a bit "nervous".⁸² But at least two survivors of the massacre in the film did not seem to welcome the presence of the Portuguese military: António Michone

80 Such a physical interaction happened for instance during the Lusaka Meeting in June 1974, where Foreign Minister of Portugal, Mário Soares embraced the future President of Mozambique Samora Machel, "an attempt to fix the talks from the beginning in a non-adversarial context". MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, 133. The gesture of embracing plays also a significant role in other apologetic context as observes Gobodo-Madikizela, *Intersubjectivity and Embodiment*, 546-547.

81 This view based on the film can be contrasted with Cabrita's perspective. She writes that while Baera answered, the "rest of the group nods with every word of the Oldest. Tenente, the rudest, perhaps motivated by the reaction of the others, alleviates and greets him [Melo]." It is a moment that is not visible in the documentary. Cabrita, *Massacres em África*, 278.

82 Interview Cabrita.

and Vasco Tenente. The case of Vasco Tenente deserves special attention because this specific case allows us to observe how through the use of cinematic montage the different perspectives of the historical event brought forward by each of the participating protagonists come together. Furthermore, Tenente plays a crucial role in complicating the issue of apology that is at stake here. This will also become evident later when analysing the end of the film, where he and Melo appear.

The problematic dimension of the encounter is already visible in the scene of the apology, where the camera focuses not only on the interaction between Baera, the Oldest, and Melo, but also observes the face of one of the survivors, Vasco Tenente. The viewers can see his rather hostile facial expression framed by a close up, which emphasises the expressed emotional state associated to feelings like non-acceptance, anger, or grudge. This reaction of rejection is connected to the fact that he lost his whole family in the massacre. Framed by a medium long shot, Tenente stands in front of Melo and explains: “I am alone, my mother, my brothers died here because of the war. This is the only thing that I can tell you.”⁸³

In the beginning of this section of the film, Antonino Melo explains that there was an order to ‘clean up the zone’ which meant murdering everyone present there. In December 1972 the systematic murder started, although violent interrogations conducted by the PIDE agents did not reveal any connections between the locals and the Mozambican Liberation Front Frelimo. Melo acknowledges that due to a lack of ammunition it was not possible to kill all villagers by shooting and that it was he who took the decision to gather people in the huts and kill them by throwing grenades into the huts:

“One began to put the people into the huts, in groups, and the soldiers threw grenades in there, either they died burning or the ones that eventually managed to flee were shot.”⁸⁴

Melo’s explanations about the massacre given in the shade of a tree can be seen as a late oral confession that breaks with the conventions of military discipline – turning public a war crime as a former member of the armed

83 Cabrita and Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, 00:34:08-00:34:19.

84 Cabrita and Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, 00:39:31-00:39:42.

forces. Interestingly, Melo uses the third person “one” in this instance indicating therefore a collective action. Such a statement can be regarded as problematic in this apologetic context because the “active voice claims responsibility. The passive does not.”⁸⁵ Only several scenes later in the film he affirms, “I reached the point, where I threw a grenade into a hut”. After the explosion, Melo remembers, the roof of the hut blew up. Finally, the huts were burned with the villagers inside.

The survivors confirm this proceeding although with some differences. At the memorial site, Vasco Tenente, whose mother died in the massacre, speaks about his survival: “Then, they put us into the hut of my mother. When we were inside [...] they closed the door and threw in a grenade.”⁸⁶ He continues:

“When I was with my mother in the hut, [...]. We did hide under the cereal pot. When we were under the cereal pot, the door opened with the explosion. I took that way and escaped.”⁸⁷

When Tenente explains how he escaped, images from the second camera show him together with António Melo at the memorial site and thereby make the dialogical structure of the meeting at the memorial visible. As Gobodo-Madikizela observes in the context of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa, such a dialogue can allow “victims and survivors to revisit the sites of trauma, [...]. Through dialogue, victims as well as the greater society come to recognize perpetrators as human beings who failed morally.”⁸⁸

Another person who appears in the film and who contributes to Tenente’s testimony is Baúque, a former colonial soldier of the Special Forces *Commandos*.⁸⁹ He already affirmed in an earlier scene that villagers trying

85 Smith, *I Was Wrong*, 35.

86 Cabrita and Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, 00:40:33-00:40:47.

87 Cabrita and Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, 00:40:53-00:41:09.

88 Gobodo-Madikizela, *Intersubjectivity and Embodiment*, 543.

89 Like most of the former African soldiers that appear in the film, Baúque was interviewed in Maputo and not in Wiriyamu. All these Mozambicans had passed through the process of the *Comprometidos* in the 1970s (see footnote 65). But they had not revealed details about the massacre at that time. Both Felícia Cabri-

to escape were also shot and confirms here that he remembers a child running away during the massacre. As Vasco Tenente says it was not easy to escape from the murdering: “Then, they wanted to kill me and shot at me, I did not count how many times they shot at me.”⁹⁰ His account is followed again by a statement of the former colonial soldier, who asserts, that he did not try to shoot at a child he saw running away. What remains open in the juxtaposition of these two statements is whether the child Baúque saw was in fact Tenente or another person or whether other soldiers of the *Commandos* had tried to shot Tenente.

In this scene, the perspectives of survivors and perpetrators on the massacre are spliced together in a particular way. The filmic montage of the different testimonies enables to confront the accounts of Vasco Tenente, Melo, and Baúque with each other. But there is no voice off that would explain or guide the viewer’s attention to assure the ‘truth’ of one of the versions. The viewer is left with an impression of uncertainty about whose memories might be right. However, the survivor’s testimonies have a strong impact and the film foregrounds, although in a very particular way, the physical marks that the colonial violence had left on their bodies. In this context, their scars provide evidence for the committed acts and authenticate their narratives. Consequently, the film assures that there is no doubt that the Portuguese commandos committed those violent acts. On the other hand, there is an impression that the veterans of the *Commandos* intend to safeguard the image of the colonial armed forces from crimes like killing children or raping women. Various survivors also address such aspects in the film; however, the perpetrators neither confirm nor deny them directly.⁹¹ In such particular scenes of the film, one is confronted with the fact

ta and Camilo de Sousa confirm that it was only when Antonino Melo arrived in Maputo for the making of the documentary that they spoke about what happened in December 1972. The reason for this was firstly, that, they were still accepting Melo as their (former) superior. Secondly, they were assured that the documentary was not to be broadcasted on Mozambican television.

90 Cabrita and Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, 00:41:09-00:41:39.

91 Melo assumes that the massacre was a *criminal act*. Although in some moments of the documentary he does not fully recognise the violent acts of the massacre described by the survivors (rape for instance). He just affirms that the area of the village was so big that he could not control every move of the soldiers. There-

that this documentary is no formal truth recovery process that can provide “a structure within which irreconcilable accounts can be juxtaposed and compared”. On the contrary, it appears, that sometimes “the contest between divergent accounts [...] occur[s] in a piecemeal [...] fashion”.⁹²

The tension between Vasco Tenente and Antonino Melo is not resolved at the end of the film. Instead, both of them are shown in separate scenes at the memorial of Wiriyamu and this in turn highlights the ambiguous effects of the encounter and the apology. First, Tenente appears:

“Twenty five years passed and we are still collecting the bones. Here, a lot of people died. [...] A lot of people died in the forest and we were still not able to collect all of the bones. When I find some of the bones, I have to store them at the monument.”⁹³

After this statement, Tenente puts the collected bones into a small repository at the monument. It seems that he, whose family was killed during the massacre, is still struggling with this loss. The images and his account about how he and others relate to this place that constitutes a crucial point in their biographies, suggest that Tenente did not forgive Melo for the things he had done. Like in other cases, “certain kinds of damage and judgments may nevertheless linger indefinitely”.⁹⁴ This impression is underscored in the film insofar as Tenente is shown alone at the memorial and not together with Melo.

In the next sequence, Antonino Melo visits the memorial. As he approaches the monument the camera follows him and the voice off reflects his thoughts:

“During many years, I tried to forget the hell of that day. I decided to go back in order to resolve this story definitely and find some tranquillity. I even thought that they would kill me. But it turned out worse. Those who I destroyed welcomed me

fore, Melo doubts some of the related acts and states: “I didn’t see such things and don’t know if they happened.” Cabrita and Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, 00:30:27-00:31:32.

92 Breen Smyth, *Truth Recovery*, 9.

93 Cabrita and Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, 00:57:29-00:58:19.

94 Smith, *I Was Wrong*, 133.

peacefully and without critique. It was hard for me to understand them. What we did, was a criminal act.”⁹⁵

The violence at Wiriyamu, it seems, marked also some kind of turning point in the biography of Antonino Melo. His memory of the incident persisted and created feelings of remorse that he wanted to get rid of through the encounter with the survivors. As it turns out, it was he who could not forgive himself whereas some of the villagers showed a reconciliatory attitude.⁹⁶ Melo’s inner conflict is visualised by the image of the small repository in the memorial with the bones inside and covered by a glass window. There, against the background of the mortal remains, the mirror image of Antonino Melo appears.

The documentary proposes that the apology had limited effects. No embracing, no hand shaking, not even a joint visit to the memorial in the end. These two sides of the story of the massacre of Wiriyamu seem to continue being irreconcilable. But the juxtaposition of solitary rites of mourning and persisting troubling memories suggests a very ambiguous idea, namely that both survivor and perpetrator are haunted by the past. Their present lives are conditioned by what they experienced in 1972. It seems contradictory, but this leads to the effect, that – to a certain extent – the figure of Melo becomes a ‘victim’ as well, as he ‘suffers’ from what he has done.⁹⁷ Conse-

95 Cabrita and Camacho, *Regresso a Wiriyamu*, 00:58:20-00:58:54.

96 Others, of course, did not welcome the initiative of Melo as the example of Vasco Tenente shows. One has to be cautious here. The dramatic aspect created by the documentary film does not necessarily mean that there had been a real tension between Tenente and Melo. Rather, one could think of this also as a filmic relationship that is shaped by conventions of television film making that often try to produce effects of suspense or surprise in order to convince the viewers to stay watching the programme.

97 In an earlier scene, Melo describes how he and his unit went a second time to the crime scene at the beginning of the year 1973 in order to remove the corpses. After ‘cleaning up’, the *Commandos* got into an ambush. It is suggested that this was an attempt by the Portuguese Armed Forces to kill those soldiers who were not only perpetrators but also eyewitnesses of that massacre. Thus, Melo claims that he was an aim for attack. However, he was only a quasi victim because he eventually managed to dominate the situation.

quently, and despite all the efforts of giving voice to those survivors without a voice, the documentary also constructs a rather ambiguous ‘community of victims’⁹⁸ that once participated in the same historical event. Here, one can observe a specific victimizing discourse that shapes the figure of the perpetrator; Melo is not only conceived as the confessing soldier, but his characterization in the documentary points to a dimension of a man who was part of a generation of about 800,000 male Portuguese who participated in a mandatory military service in the ‘colonial war’.⁹⁹ His psychological and filmic victimization corresponds to an often-articulated opinion in Portugal, stating that those young men were sacrificed by the *Estado Novo* while implicitly downplaying their potential agency and responsibility for violent acts committed in the former colonies.¹⁰⁰ This argument is also brought forward by the documentary film: Although Melo admits in the end that the massacre was a crime, he is ultimately not the one to be sentenced to have been guilty of this violence. One could rather, as the film suggests, hold the former Commander-in-Chief of the then colony Mozambique responsible for it. This was, as a caption reads in the closing credits of the film, General Kaúlza de Arriaga.

98 This is a term used by Judith Keilbach in order to analyse the specific inclusion and treatment of *Zeitzeugen* in television documentaries. She explains that there is a recent trend to present a community of people that exists due to the common participation in the same historical event. There, one can observe a blurred distinction between victims and perpetrators. Judith Keilbach, *Zeugen, Deutsche Opfer und traumatisierte Täter: Zur Inszenierung von Zeitzeugen in bundesdeutschen Fernsehdokumentationen über den Nationalsozialismus*, *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 31 (2003), 287-306, here: 300-301.

99 Additionally, as the film tells in its first half, Melo’s family belonged to the group of ‘returnees’ that after the end of colonial rule in Mozambique left the country and lost nearly all their belongings due to the political circumstances at the time.

100 Such a victimizing discourse is for instance provided by the Monument to the Overseas Combatants in Lisbon, which also includes a memorial that honours the approximately 9,000 fallen Portuguese soldiers of the ‘War in Overseas’. Teresa Pinheiro, *Portugiesische Erinnerungskulturen*, <http://www.tu-chemnitz.de/phil/europastudien/swandel/erinnerung/kolonialkrieg.htm>, accessed 3 November 2011.

CONCLUSION

The analysis shows that the documentary film by Felícia Cabrita and Paulo Camacho is a complex audiovisual articulation connected to specific socio-historical circumstances of the postcolonial relationships between persons from Mozambique and Portugal. It reflects the sophisticated and ambiguous nature of apologies for past wrongs. Through the critical observation and examination of the micro level of social interaction of this particular apologetic context, the difficulties, ambiguities and emotions connected to this situation were considered. The film and its background exemplify how victimhood and perpetration can be re-negotiated and modified. Simultaneously it also demonstrates how the effects of past wrongs continue to have a persisting impact on relationships between survivors and perpetrators up to the present.

The film provided a specific framework for the apology of Antonino Melo, who, as one of the perpetrators, came back to Mozambique and visited Wiriyamu in order to apologise for his deeds to the survivors. Although a respectable and courageous act, the apology situation captured by the film proves to be ambiguous possibly due to the fact that victims and perpetrators had not spoken directly to each other before. In this context, the apology seems to be a starting point rather than the outcome of a common endeavour.

As this analysis indicates, the structure of the filming process and the final media product differ to a considerable extent. Whereas Felícia Cabrita highlights a rather productive outcome, the film centres on the antagonistic positions of Antonino Melo and Vasco Tenente. The confrontation and filmic juxtaposition of the testimonies of Melo, other former colonial soldiers, and the survivors, does not only reveal difficulties in reconstructing the history of the massacre, but they, too, hint at the problematic filmic construction of a 'community of victims'. The film argues to a certain extent that the issue of the massacre is resolved neither between victims and perpetrators nor in relation to the former responsible leading militaries of the Portuguese Armed Forces.

In Portugal, the latter alludes to unfinished processes of transitional justice and is reflected by the subsequent debate, after the broadcasting of the documentary on television that centred on the figure of the former Commander-in-Chief of Mozambique. Several journalists took up the opportuni-

ty to investigate the possibility of convicting General Kaúlza de Arriaga for the massacre committed during his service in Mozambique.¹⁰¹ However, the Portuguese law determined prescription of such crimes after 15 years and thus did not enable a judgment of General Arriaga. In other words, despite the public discussion, Arriaga was not charged and did not change his attitude regarding the ‘allegedly’ mass murder. When speaking about Wiriyamu, he continued to communicate the ‘official’ version stating “that approximately 60 persons died, among them terrorists and non-terrorists”.¹⁰² He thereby ignores

“[...] the reality of much of the tragedy of the war. Not only does he deny the significance of the massacres of civilians by the troops under his command, he also denies the disastrous conditions of the war, preferring to see the events of 1974 and the subsequent independence of the colonies as acts of political treason.”¹⁰³

This point of view is contradicted by the documentary, despite all ambiguities and problems resulting from the editing and framing of the accounts of the interviewed survivors.¹⁰⁴ In this respect, one cannot underestimate the value of the collected testimonies of the victims included in the film; because they constitute a crucial element in constructing an audiovisual evidence of the violence carried out by the Portuguese Armed Forces during the war of decolonisation in Mozambique. As a journalist wrote, “the television documentary about the massacre of Wiriyamu [...] recovered the

101 Miguel Carvalho, Amaral quer julgar Kaúlza, *O Independente*, 5.

102 Kaúlza de Arriaga quoted in João Paulo Guerra, *Descolonização Portuguesa: O Regresso das Caravelas* (Lisboa: Oficina dos Livros, 2009), 61.

103 Paulo de Medeiros, Hauntings. Memory, Fiction and the Portuguese Colonial Wars, in: *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, ed. Timothy G. Ashplant (London: Routledge, 2000), 209-210.

104 Here, one could still complicate the picture and point to the linguistic dimension of the audiovisual testimonies. Some are given in broken Portuguese, others in local language, and then translated in subtitles. Does an account given in Portuguese offer the same opportunities for articulation of suffering as the mother tongue? Hence, this alludes to the broad field of postcolonial linguistic politics in the PALOP.

memory of this genocide of 400 Mozambicans – men, women and children”.¹⁰⁵

These brief remarks point to a broader field of postcolonial relationships, in which the complex consequences of the war of decolonisation are discussed. This unfolding panorama of transnational memory practices that in the meantime goes beyond questions of guilt and is thus enabling new and other forms of interaction needs further investigation in order to acquire more detailed and differentiated insights. It appears to be an urgent task because the common future and relationships between people from African and European states may also depend on the negotiation of the colonial past and wrongs connected to this shared history. In this respect, it will be crucial to discuss in a productive manner not only wrongs of the colonial period but the post-revolutionary processes in the countries of both continents as well. Some attempts pointing in this direction are already visible in a series of countries.¹⁰⁶ In the context of globalised media representation, this holds true also for documentary productions. Since *Return to Wiriyamu* a number of documentaries have been produced on the topic of decolonisation in Portugal and other countries as well. By and large, these films aim at the production and transmission of knowledge about decolonisation, by bringing together the actors in these processes.¹⁰⁷ An analysis of these films is yet to be made and can be productive for the understanding of the complex dimensions of decolonisation, the cultural dimensions of memory politics and their negotiation in moving images.

105 Comment by Fernando Couto about the film in the weekly *Domingo* on 14 February 1999; Fernando Couto, *Vivências Moçambicanas* (Maputo: Ndjira, 2010), 73.

106 Regarding Portugal: Patrick Chabal, *Nós e a África. A Questão do Olhar*, *Africana Studia* 1, 1 (1999), 67-84; Pinheiro, *Facetten der Erinnerungskultur*, 21; Robert Stock, ‘Zusammenhalt und Einheit aller Kämpfer’. Die museale Repräsentation des Portugiesischen Kolonialkrieges (1961-1974) in der Gegenwart, *Berliner Debatte Initial* 20, 3 (2009), 117-26.

107 The effects and consequences of these films, such as the series by Joaquim Furtado entitled *The War. The Colonial, The War of Independence, The Overseas War* (RTP/Correio da Manhã 2009) are to be analysed by future investigations.