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**GENDER, SELF, MULTIPLE IDENTITIES,
VIOLENCE AND MAGICAL INTERPRETATIONS IN
LOVOLO PRACTICES IN SOUTHERN MOZAMBIQUE**

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Abstract

In Mozambique, *lovoló* has generally been understood by participants of the practice as well as by historians (Harries, 1994: 200-8), politicians (Machel, 1974: 15; Organização da Mulher Moçambicana, 1988: 19) and anthropologists (Krige and Comaroff, 1981: 68-83; Kuper, 1982: 108-21) as practices that involve transfers of goods in association with a marriage ceremony, and inscribing the individual in a set of kinship and affinal relationships that define rights and duties.

In this thesis I document my research in Maputo city, which shows that *lovoló* practices facilitate a union but that this is not necessarily always a union between a man and a woman. I give an example of a union in which the *lovoló* practice of a woman celebrates her marriage to a healing spirit or a vengeance spirit. I also report on a situation in which *lovoló* is performed by a newly qualified healer to thank his or her teacher and to promote his or her own healing capacities. My case studies show that *lovoló* can also be carried out to restore peace with a vengeance spirit.

In this thesis I argue that *lovoló*, when practised as a ritual to worship the spirits, is part of a religious system and a collective identity embodied in a set of traditions and interpretations of the world. It also expresses a personal identity characterised by the comprehension of violence and the definition of values, priorities and expectations.

The *lovoló* ritual practice informs social relations that exist in the society as it reshapes them in continuous processes of righting past and present ills. *Lovolo* as an expression of the prevalent gender ideology is instrumental in controlling women's reproductive capacity, and generates an ideology of masculine superiority. It is one of the symbolic mechanisms through which gendered identities are built and embodied.

In this thesis I explain that *lovoló* practices transcend the signification of

just unions between living male and female persons. They are primarily used to signify a living person's or a group's relationship with the spiritual world or with another living person (possibly of the same sex) who develops the healing capacities of the person who makes the prestation. I show that, therefore, *lovolo* is a social and cultural process that allows access to clairvoyance, wealth, well being, children and peace. I emphasise that *lovolo* still constitutes an important practice in urban Mozambican society as it enhances people's relationships with the spiritual world.

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Glossary

In this glossary I have used Bento Sitoi's (1996) dictionary to write words in *Xichangana*. The *Xirhonga* and *Xichangana* orthography I have used reflects the principles introduced in 2000 in Mozambique (Sitoe & Ngunga, 2000). Throughout the thesis I have italicised all non-English words. I have used the most common system of referring to the identity of groups, people and spirits (i.e. Tsonga, Changana, Copi, Rhonga, Matsua) and I refer to their respective languages as *Xitsonga*, *Xichangana*, *Xicopi*, *Xirhonga* and *Citshwa*.

<i>agradecer</i> (Portuguese)	To thank.
<i>aldeias comunais</i> (Portuguese)	Communal villages.
<i>assimilados</i> (Portuguese)	African people who were considered <i>non-indigenous</i> in the sense that they were recognised to have abandoned their traditional customs and practices to adopt the Portuguese culture. They were issued with a legal document, which distinguished them from the “natives” who had to carry temporary passes.
<i>bandhla</i>	The <i>bandhla</i> is the common initiation around a teacher, the rebirth of the healer within a new kinship network formed by a teacher, his or her students and their respective students, in a hierarchical organisation led by a teacher.
<i>bava</i>	Father. This is a term given to healers' teachers by their students regardless of their biological sex.

<i>bukhontxana</i>	The practice of "mine marriage" in the gold mines of the Witwatersrand, whereby a man performs the <i>lovolo</i> for a male adolescent by offering money to the eldest brother or person in charge of the adolescent (Harries, 1994: 200-8).
<i>buta</i>	Engagement ceremony described by Junod (Junod, 1996: V1, 108-24) at the beginning of last century.
<i>capulana</i> (Portuguese)	A piece of fabric used to wrap around the waist. <i>Capulana</i> in Portuguese and <i>kapulana</i> in <i>Xirhonga</i> or <i>Xichangana</i> .
<i>chará</i> (Portuguese) <i>mabizweni</i> (<i>Xichangana</i>)	The namesake name of an ancestor or living elder given to a child several weeks after birth.
<i>chibalo</i>	Forced labour for the State during colonial time.
Copi	A group of people that has settled along the coastal area of Inhambane Province.
<i>contas</i> (Portuguese)	Iron or copper rings used in the past as payment for <i>lovolo</i> (Junod, 1996: V1, 254).
<i>curandeirismo</i> (Portuguese)	Traditional healing.
Gitonga linguistic group	The Gitonga linguistic group is situated mainly in the districts of Homoine, Inharrime Jangamo, Maxixe, Morrumbene and Inhambane city in the province of Inhambane.
<i>gona</i>	The combination of a calabash that contains medicine, the medicine itself, and the stick that is used to extract the medicine. It is a

	very powerful medicine.
<i>gratificação (Portuguese)</i>	An amount of money given by the groom instead of <i>lovolo</i> . This amount can be less than what is usually requested.
<i>hahani</i>	The father's sister.
<i>hikombela lovolo</i>	To ask for the <i>lovolo</i> .
<i>hikombela mati</i>	Literally "we are asking for water", this is a presentation of the groom's intention to establish bonds with a woman. This is the first ceremony in the <i>lovolo</i> process and it is carried out by a small number of the groom's relatives.
<i>hikombela mhamba</i>	Literally "to ask for the performance of a ritual offering".
<i>i mali ya ku nghena</i>	During the <i>lovolo</i> ritual "a sum of money paid to open the doors", to facilitate the process. Ritually to allow the process to go ahead.
<i>Igreja Metodista Unida</i>	United Methodist Church.
<i>indígena (Portuguese)</i>	People who did not fall under the category of <i>assimilados</i> during the colonial period.
<i>kukhendhla</i>	The act of becoming a healer through the purchase of power and knowledge from a healer. This is considered inadequate because it does not give the healer the usual profound strength.
<i>kokwana</i>	Grandparents and mother's brother.
<i>kufemba</i>	The capacity to detect malevolent spirits through smell and to expel them through inhalation . "The <i>femba</i> is unique in that the possessing spirit will locate evil spirits in the body of the patient by smelling them out,

	and will remove them from the patient by inhaling them in the body of the diviner" (Reis, 2000: 68).
<i>kufundrukisa</i>	An examination that tests the capacities of healers' students and takes place at the beginning of the initiation. The name of this ceremony, which is of Ndau origin and means "to grow", allows for the demonstration of the Ndau spirit's capacity to perform the <i>kufemba</i> , and tests the progress of the novice.
<i>kuhakela</i>	To pay.
<i>kuheleketa</i>	To bring back or to return something.
<i>kuheleketa muhliwa</i>	The ceremony to bring back an angry spirit.
<i>kuhlahluva</i>	The capacity to interpret the objects used for the oracle.
<i>kuhlahluva muhlalu</i>	A divination technique, which is based on the direct intuition and interpretation of the diviner.
<i>kuhlahluva tinhlolo</i>	The capacity to interpret the knuckle-bones or objects used for the oracle.
<i>kuhloma</i>	The ceremony in which the bride is escorted by a few friends to the groom's house. It takes place the day after the <i>lovolo</i> is given. This ritual is described by Junod (1996: V1, 108-24) at the beginning of last century.
<i>kukamba (see kukhendla)</i>	The process by which a person acquires special power. It implies the use of traditional drugs to achieve one's will.
<i>kukorhoka</i>	The visit the girls pay back to the groom and his friends. Described by Junod (1996: V1,

	108-24) at the beginning of last century.
<i>kulovola</i>	To perform the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony (verb).
<i>kulovola gona</i>	To perform the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony for the teacher in divination. It is carried out by the novices in order for them to learn the secret for the preparation of the most important medicine.
<i>kulovola mudlhiwa</i> (see <i>kulovola nandru</i>)	To perform the <i>lovolo</i> of a vengeance spirit.
<i>kulovola nandru</i>	To <i>kulovola</i> a debt. It is the ritual of giving goods or a woman to a vengeance spirit.
<i>kulovola nyanga</i> (also called <i>kulovola gona</i> and <i>kulovola wunyanga</i>)	To perform the <i>lovolo</i> of a healer master after an initiation, in order to obtain the healing's practice or to qualify as a healer.
<i>kulovola wansati</i>	To carry out the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony of a woman. This can be performed to marry a woman to a man. It can be carried out by a healer of either sex to marry a woman to a healing spiritual being. It can also be performed by groups that assume the sin of one of their ancestors to appease a vengeance spirit by offering a woman to that spirit in marriage.
<i>kunyika</i>	The kindness or virtue of giving.
<i>kuparura</i>	Part of the final examination ritual carried out at the end of the initiate's training.
<i>kuphahla</i>	To propitiate the ancestors through a ceremony of ritual beer pouring and through the emission of a sacramental sound.
<i>kupshu</i>	The emission of a sacramental sound for the propitiation of the ancestors during a <i>muphahlu</i> .

<i>kuriha</i>	To compensate or to pay a fine.
<i>kutlelisa</i>	To pay or to give back.
<i>kutlelisa nandru or nandzu</i>	The payment of a debt.
<i>kuparura</i>	Part of the final examination ritual carried out at the end of the initiate's training.
<i>kuthwasa</i>	The initiation of the medium is referred to by the verb <i>kuthwasa</i> , which means 'to renew' and refers to the new moon and the rebirth or emergence of a new person.
<i>kutrhekela</i>	A visit by the groom and his friends to the bride. Described by Junod (1996: VI, 108-24) at the beginning of last century.
<i>kuxava</i>	To buy.
<i>kuxavisa</i>	To sell.
<i>litlala</i>	Copper rings used in the past to perform the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony.
<i>lobolo</i> (Portuguese)	<i>Lovolo</i> is referred to as <i>lobolo</i> in Mozambique and is written in this way in Portuguese.
<i>lova</i>	A system that prevails among the Lovedu in which women are offered to the queen (Krige, 1975: 237).
<i>lovoliwa</i>	The past participle of the verb <i>kulovola</i> .
<i>lovolo</i>	In Mozambique, <i>lovolo</i> has generally been understood as a marriage ceremony inscribing the individual in a set of kinship and affined relationships that define rights and duties. <i>Lovolo</i> practices facilitate a union but not necessarily between a man and a woman. The <i>lovolo</i> of a woman can celebrate her marriage to a healing spirit or a vengeance spirit. <i>Lovolo</i> can be performed by

	a newly qualified healer to thank his or her teacher and to promote their own healing capacities. It can also be carried out to restore peace with a vengeance spirit. <i>Lovolo</i> is both the institution as well as the goods offered.
<i>malume</i>	The mother's brother.
<i>marobzwi</i>	The masculine spirit that the female spirit (<i>nyankwave-marombe</i>) couples with and that possesses women and men at birth (Feliciano, 1998: 370-3).
<i>marombe</i>	The female spirit that possesses women at birth. Spirit of a mad person (Feliciano, 1998: 370-3).
<i>mathwasana</i> (plural: <i>vamathwasana</i>)	The initiates. The students of a healer's teacher.
<i>matlharhi</i>	The spirit of a person who died a violent death and seeks vengeance against the family of his or her killer. (<i>Tlharhi</i> means a spear, thus <i>matlharhi</i> is the spirit of a person who was murdered or killed in battle.) <i>Matlharhi</i> are usually of Ndaun origin (Honwana, 2002: 62).
<i>mhamba</i>	A sacrifice; a ritual offering (Langa, 1992: 70).
<i>mhamba ya hombe</i>	A big offering, which is used to establish a positive relationship with different kinds of spirits and to allow individuals and groups to ensure social cohesion and a common worldview.
<i>mupfukwa</i>	<i>Mupfukwa</i> are generally Ndaun spirits, although both <i>muhliwa</i> and <i>matlharhi</i> may also be referred to as <i>mupfukwa</i> . A plant that

	the Ndau are believed to use, which, when put on the dead body, allows the spirit of the person to resuscitate.
<i>mukon'wana</i>	The in-laws. Father-in-law, mother in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law.
<i>mukume</i>	Two pieces of fabric sewn together and to which lace is added on the seam. The <i>mukume</i> is offered during the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony to the bride's mother.
<i>muhliwa</i>	A spirit of a person who died through sorcery. Generally these <i>muhliwa</i> want to be compensated for the misfortune that they suffered.
<i>muloyi</i>	Sorcerer.
<i>mulungo</i>	White person.
<i>muphahlu</i>	Ceremony undertaken on the homestead altar to the ancestors. The <i>muphahlu</i> is mainly the means of communication between the living and spiritual beings about any issue related to people's lives.
<i>muthimba</i>	The name of the ceremony to bring the bride's belongings to her husband's house after the <i>lovolo</i> ritual has been carried out. The ceremony performed at the end of the healer's training.
<i>muvatlwana</i>	A big iron ring used in the past to perform the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony.
namesake	The ancestor or living elder after whom an individual is named. The person who is given the name of the ancestor or elder is also called a namesake.

<i>nandru</i> or <i>nandzu</i>	<i>Nandru</i> means the debt and is used to refer to the sin of the group that killed an individual or diverted a spirit's force for its own benefit.
<i>não-indígena</i> (Portuguese)	The non-indigenous or <i>assimilados</i> during the colonial period.
Ndau people	The Ndau people lived in the central part of Mozambique and Zimbabwe and belonged to the Shona-Karanga groups.
<i>ndhumbha</i>	A round hut made from local materials dedicated to the spirits.
<i>ngoma</i>	Drums. Southern Africa therapeutic institution, which includes the following rituals: healing, life cycle, seasonal and royal.
<i>nguluve</i> (plural: <i>tinguluve</i>)	Ancestor of the Tsonga.
Ngoni people	The Ngoni were a South African group, dissident from the Zulu Kingdom, which invaded the south of Mozambique in the beginning of the nineteenth century and migrated northwards.
<i>nghwendza</i>	The spirits of men who died without being married.
<i>nkakana</i>	A wild plant whose leaves and fruits are widely consumed or used as medicine. In the past, a thread of <i>nkakana</i> was given for <i>lovolo</i> to symbolise the affinal link.
<i>nkarharha</i>	A small type of iron ring used in the past to perform the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony referred to by Junod (1996: V1, 254).
<i>nkeka</i>	A piece of white fabric that is used as a belt and is offered to the bride's mother during the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony.

<i>nsati wa svikwembu</i> (plural: <i>vavasati va svikwembu</i>)	The wife of a spirit.
<i>ntwaso</i>	The secret to get students, or the <i>gona</i> , the most powerful medicine, which is generally given to the student by the master in healing after the performance of the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony.
<i>nulu</i>	A type of tree. The fruit of this tree is used as a dice to divine with.
<i>n'wana</i>	A son. Brother's son. Nephew.
<i>nyamusoro</i> (plural: <i>vamusoro</i>)	Ndau healers (individuals possessed by both Ngoni and Ndau spirits).
<i>nyanga</i> (plural: <i>tinyanga</i>)	A healer that is not possessed by spirits.
<i>nyangarume</i> (plural: <i>vangarume</i>)	Healers who are possessed by the ancestors of the Tsonga. The <i>nyangarume</i> is generally a male healer who treats patients mainly with herbal remedies and by working through his ancestors (<i>ntumbuluku</i>), the Tsonga spirits. A healer who interprets the <i>tinhlolo</i> .
<i>nyankwave</i>	The female spirit that possesses men at birth.
<i>Organização da Mulher Moçambicana</i> (OMM)	The Mozambican Women's Organisation.
<i>régulos</i> (Portuguese)	Traditional leaders who were given a formal role in the colonial administration.
<i>svikwembu</i>	The spirits.
<i>tinhlolo</i>	A set of knuckle-bones or other objects used as dice for the oracle (used by diviners to diagnose the causes of the problems of their clients).
<i>tsakisa</i> (see <i>gratificação</i>)	Literally "make happy please", this was a gift from the groom to the father of the bride

	(Junod, 1996: V1, 474). It normally consisted of a lesser amount of money paid than the <i>lovolo</i> . Similar to <i>gratificação</i> .
<i>tontonto</i>	Liquor.
Tsonga	Tsonga is the linguistic group that includes the Changana, Rhonga and Tswa groups of southern Mozambique.
<i>ntumbuluku</i>	The Tsonga spirits.
<i>vana</i>	Sons and daughters. Name given by healer teachers to their students.
<i>vatukulu</i>	Grandchildren.
<i>vemba</i>	A piece of fabric that is of the same material and is worn over the <i>mukume</i> . It is offered during the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony to the bride's mother.
<i>vitu ra ntumbuluku</i>	The "traditional name" or "great name". The name of an ancestor or living elder given to a child several weeks after birth.
<i>wanuna wa svikwembu</i>	A spirit's husband.
<i>xa ku pfula bodlhela</i>	Literally "to open the bottle", this is the practice of giving "money for money". The money is placed on top of the gifts given as <i>lovolo</i> by the groom's family. A ritual offering to propitiate the acceptance of the <i>lovolo</i> goods.
<i>xigiyane</i>	A ceremony in which the bride's belongings are taken to her new home by her relatives. The last phase of the marriage process.
<i>ximbuwembuwe</i>	A bottle of white wine, which is given to the mother of the bride during the <i>lovolo</i> ceremony. The bride's mother wears it tied to

	her back in the same way women carry their babies, as a symbol of her daughter.
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Introduction

In my reading of anthropological literature I had always been puzzled by claims that the exchange of women between men forms the basis of kinship organisation (see, for example, Mauss, 1954; Lévi-Strauss 1969 or Meillassoux, 1982). I became concerned with the male-biased knowledge production in social practice as anthropologists assume female passivity in their models.

On my arrival in Mozambique in 1984, I found that the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique¹ (FRELIMO) government, was trying to abolish *lovolo*.² It was coined both an “obscurantist” practice and the “sale of the woman”. As a Marxist and a feminist I was very receptive to the FRELIMO discourses and slogans. However, despite fierce criticism, *lovolo* practices continued not only in the rural areas but among educated middle-class urban dwellers. The information that I collected at that time did not allow me, however, to understand the persistence of the institution.

¹ The Mozambican Liberation Front, which after fighting an armed struggle against colonial rule, proclaimed Mozambique’s independence in June 1975. FRELIMO took a Socialist and Marxist approach, which rejected some values of the so-called “traditional” society, and the practice of *lovolo* was one of these. This agenda was in many ways similar to that of the missionaries of the pre-independence era.

² The term “*lovolo*”, whose orthography reflects the orthographic principles introduced in 2000 (Sitoe & Ngunga, 2000) by NELIMO (Mozambican Cell for Language Study), is generally pronounced and written *lobolo*. In Mozambique, Portuguese-speaking people use the verb *lobolar* and the past participle *lobolada* (*lovoliva* in *Xichangana*). The term “*lovolo*” is generally understood as: “Effect a contract of marriage by the handing over of some present of goods or of an agreed number of cattle (or money in lieu thereof) on the part of the intended husband’s people to the father or guardian of the bride elect” (Doke & Vilakazi, 1948: 460) or “to give goods to the bride’s family for the marriage to be legitimated” (Sitoi, 1996: 99). The verb “*kulovola*” as well as the noun “*lovolo*” and its declinations exist both in Zulu and in Tsonga. However, as happens in many languages, the etymology of the word “*lovolo*” cannot be traced. It is possible that it is a loan word from Zulu because of the existence of an implosive “b”. However, Zulu and Tsonga are closely related languages and may use the same word to denote similar marriage practices. As it is impossible to find a clear synonym for the term “*lovolo*”, I believe that the ambiguities related to *lovolo* are inherent to the term itself and to the ceremonies that it defines. For this reason the meaning of this word cannot be understood outside of the context in which it is used.

Several pressures, such as the war with the Resistência Nacional de Moçambique³ (RENAMO) and peasant insistence in maintaining certain traditional practices, caused the FRELIMO government, in the early 1990s, to become more tolerant of traditional culture and to assume that its political agenda should be harmonised with traditional beliefs and practices.

In colonial southern Mozambique, the Portuguese government also showed an interest in *lovolo*. In the 1930s the colonial authorities established a price to be paid for *lovolo* with the objective of controlling exchanges of cattle, as at that time bridewealth was paid in cattle. It became necessary to report to the administration the transfer of cattle from one group to another (Welch, 1982: 13). In the same period, Christian conversion, aimed at "civilising" the local population, acted against *lovolo* by discouraging new converts from practising it, and by encouraging canonical marriages. However, and according to several authors (Kuper, 1981: 68-83; Junod, 1996: V1, 472), the majority of the rural population in southern Mozambique continued to practise *lovolo*, sometimes in conjunction with Christian and civil marriage systems.

Theoretical background

It was precisely these historical changes and the politics of traditional culture that I found important to consider in my study of *lovolo* in contemporary southern Mozambican society. I believed that it was extremely useful to understand *lovolo* practices within a wider socio-political context. I wished to examine how colonialism, Marxism, democracy and the free market economy influenced the institution of *lovolo*.

³ RENAMO was created by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation in 1977 and taken over in 1980 by the South African Security Forces.

Marriage is a "traditional" issue in anthropology, as it constitutes the core of kinship studies. Marriage and bridewealth have been understood and analysed from different perspectives. The reification of women, who are exchanged for the most precious goods or are seen as the most precious good (Lévi-Strauss, 1969: 60-1), has been assumed by the most prominent anthropologists without questioning. These theorists take for granted to a greater or lesser extent the commoditisation of women's productive and reproductive capacities. Mauss (1954: 44) considers the exchange of women as a gift to establish culture and allow alliance. Some authors explain bridewealth as a purchase of reproductive capabilities (see, for example, Evans-Pritchard, 1931; Gluckman, 1950; Fallers, 1957; Gray, 1960, Fortes, 1962; Goldschmidt, 1974). Meillassoux (1982: Ch. 1) links labour and reproduction, explaining that three factors determine social reproduction: food, seeds and women, and that the elders in each domestic community control them. He argues that the exchange of women was a result of agricultural development and a need to establish power based on good relationships between elders. He stresses that marriage payment allows elders to control young men. Lévi-Strauss interprets bridewealth as a guarantee that the wife-giver would himself be able to find a wife (Lévi-Strauss, 1969: 60-1). Gayle Rubin (1975: 157-210), revisiting Lévi Strauss, considers that kinship and what she calls "the traffic in women" are based, in most societies, on the obligation of marriage and the imposition of a norm of heterosexuality.

Bridewealth has also been studied to show its relation to agricultural production. Authors such as Boserup (1970), Gough (1971), Goody (1976) and Feliciano (1998: Ch. 4) demonstrate the inter-relations between the status of women, division of work, forms of marriage and forms of production. Gough (1971: 111) argues that bridewealth is the transfer of reproductive and sexual rights, while Boserup (1970: 48-50) emphasises women's output in agricultural work in farming systems with low

mechanisation. Feliciano (1998: Ch. 4) analyses the southern Mozambican context and argues that the existence of *lovolo* is the result of socio-economic conditions. The need to face crop failure, drought, lack of labour and seeds emphasises the importance of relatives and allies in different ecological areas.

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the Tsonga bridewealth system is described by anthropologists and missionaries as a network that binds individuals and groups through marriage relations and implies a particular set of obligations and rights (Kuper, 1981: 68-83, 1982: 108-121; Harries, 1994: 90-100; Junod, 1996: VI, 470-475). Jural dimensions and rights acquisitions through *lovolo* were widely assumed by most anthropologists. Maria de Haas (1987: 33-55), studying this issue, explains that several authors (Kuper, 1970: 471-2; Sansom, 1976: 154; Murray, 1981: 112) assumed that bridewealth transfers rights on to children (rights in *genetricem*) or rights to the sexual and domestic services of a partner (rights in *uxorem*). Jeffrey (1962: 80) assimilates bride-price with child-price. Marriage payment is also considered fundamental to validate a marriage (Radcliffe-Brown & Ford, 1950: 49-50; Ogbu, 1978: 258; Manona, 1980: 192), as the definitive step for the legalisation of a marriage (Lewin, 1941: 14), or as the recognition of a socially approved union (Brandel, 1958: 48; Mandeville, 1975: 253-261). It is considered to guarantee marriage stability (Gluckman, 1950: 166-206). Devisch (1993: 104-106), analysing bridewealth among the Yaka, also stresses its triple function: making official the relation, acting as a compensation for the bride fertility, and providing compensation for the children. This approach, which is firmly anchored in western jurisprudence, has been criticised by authors who stress the fluidity of customary law and consider that customs vary from one area to another and are a matter of negotiation by the parties concerned (Comaroff & Roberts, 1981: 18).

Lovolo is not an isolated institution but is part of a wider system of affinal relations. In an effort to understand the relation between different forms of marriages and socio-cultural and economic systems, three important monographs on southern African marriages were published (Comaroff, 1980; Krige & Comaroff, 1981; Kuper, 1982). By doing so anthropologists increased the body of knowledge about the *lovolo* system and provided methodological perspectives that stressed the need to establish a link between marriage payments and the social system that produces them. As Comaroff put it:

The transfer of objects, an interrelated class of alienations, of which marriage prestations are one element, represents a point of articulation between the organizational principles which underlie and constitute a socio-cultural system and the surface forms and processes which together comprise the lived-in universe (Comaroff, 1980: 33).

Understanding that marriage systems formed an integral part of the societal worldview and of their culture, and that they inscribed ways of doing things, anthropologists tried to break the prevalent ethnocentric bias and the methodological problems related to ethnographic comparison.

In recent years, studies of marriage have shifted from an analysis of an exchange of women between men to the study of marriage as a whole system that is embedded in other institutions such as the state (see, for example, Wilson, 1977; Moore, 1988; Lister, 1995). In Mozambique, only Arnfred (2001) has focused on *lovolo* in the broad context of state politics, although Granjo (2004) has analysed the capacity of the ritual to solve modern problems.

My research began with a focus on the marriage institution centred on women's reproductive roles in relation to patterns of kinship and gender relations. I aimed at analysing *lovolo*'s role in shaping the ways in which women constructed their identities in contemporary Mozambican society. I was interested in *lovolo* as an institution that has an effect on women's social roles, status and rights within society, as well as on their access to resources and, consequently, power. I intended to examine the complexities that emerged from discourses about marriage systems, production patterns, social organisation, cosmological beliefs, and gender and sex relationships. I sought to examine the reasons why *lovolo* managed to survive and thrive in an urban environment. Given the particular history of Mozambique, this question was essential to understand the ambiguous relationship between tradition and modernity in contemporary society from the perspective of marriage.

Nevertheless, during my fieldwork, I realised that the role of *lovolo* was far broader than I had initially thought. I found that the ceremony was performed in three distinct situations: *kulovola wansati* (*lovolo* of a woman), *kulovola nyanga* (*lovolo* of a healer), and *kulovola muhliwa* (*lovolo* of a vengeance spirit). Although all ceremonies were described as *lovolo*, each ceremony implied the establishment of a different type of relationship, between the living or between living and spiritual beings of different kinds. In addition, *lovolo* was in certain cases performed by a woman who was the female husband of another woman. The study thus had to examine a wider societal context by looking at the connection between the social and the symbolic power of *lovolo* and at issues of gender and identity construction. In showing the importance of the magical role of the ceremonies, I intellectually "liberate" *lovolo* from its gendered norms to integrate its spiritual meanings into its function. I claim that *lovolo* transcends the male-female union and is mainly the expression of a religious belief and a relationship with the ancestors.

Junod (1996) emphasised the power of the chiefs and argued that, in the 1860s, their dominance depended on their control over wives, juniors, land, tools, and social knowledge. The elders were believed to be the direct representatives of ancestors. They were able to exert a positive influence over productive factors such as rainfall, harvest reproduction, and people's health. They were responsible for the propitiation of the ancestors (*kuphahla*), through ritual beer pouring, the emission of the sacramental sound (*kupshu*) and through talking to the ancestors. Such ceremonies ensured the forefathers' blessings, and marked the passage of the seasons and important moments in life such as death, birth and marriage (Junod, 1996: V2, 255-488; Feliciano, 1998: 295-423). In my thesis I follow this line of research, looking at the religious role of the *lovolo* ceremonies.

I have adopted Scott's definition of gender as a social construction based on perceived differences between the sexes and as a primary form of signifying power relations (Scott, 1989: 28-50). Notions of power, therefore, particularly those presented by Foucault (1994), constituted a reference point in my analysis. Power can be looked upon as a network in which individual and social identities are made. Power is a form of subjectivation. Foucault argues that the social makes differences between sexes seem natural, which hides oppressive social systems (Foucault, 1994: 10-18). Bourdieu (1999: 32-55) emphasises that individuals present a "limited agency" as a consequence of "complicity" and symbolic violence. In other works, Foucault (1988a: 1-2) points out the possibility for individual agency as the result of power and as an historical product. He also considers that there cannot be relations of power unless subjects have some degree of freedom. He argues that, for the individual, freedom consists in exploring the limits of subjectivity through transgression: refusing to be what you are. In my thesis I recognise how women express their agency in the context of *lovolo* practices. I also analyse the ways in which identities are fragmented and how different fragments can conflict

as they represent different interests and embody different family and regional memories and histories.

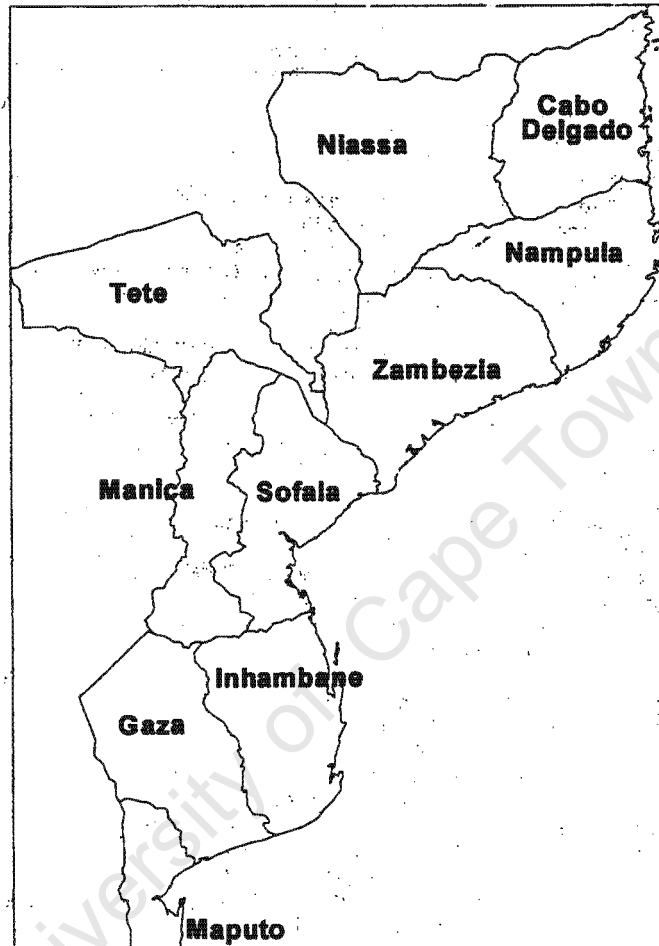
Apart from looking at women's potential transgressions, I identified forms of resistance and complicity. Baal (1975: 70-96) argues that by accepting her exchange in marriage, a woman creates a situation in which she can manoeuvre and in which two men protect her: her husband and her brother, who will use her bridewealth to marry. Collier (1988: 253-254) also shows that women fight to maximise gains.

I am aware that gender categorisations and ideologies are highly complex and multifaceted cultural constructions (Meigs, 1990: 101-112). Following authors such as Ortner & Whitehead (1981), I try to identify the multiplicity of gender discourses within the same culture, the same household, or the same person (at the same time or over time). I also take into account the different and sometimes conflicting interests among women and men (Wolf, 1974: 157-72; Lamphere, 1974: 97-112; Collier, 1988: 253-254). In parallel to the multiplicity of gender subjectivities within one individual, recent works write of multiple identities (see, for example, Moore, 1994; Appiah & Gates, 1995). Apart from gender identities, individuals are constituted through class, race, ethnicity, and age, and can take different subject positions within social discourse and practice even if they conflict with each other.

Research site: Maputo city

This study took place in urban and semi-urban areas in Maputo city in southern Mozambique. Situated on the coast, Maputo, which is also the capital of Mozambique, is the largest city in the country, with 966 800 inhabitants (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 1998: 32). It is the main economic and administrative centre of the country with an industrial park,

a port, and three railways linking Maputo to Swaziland, South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively.



Map 1: Mozambique

The population is quite heterogeneous because of the intense process of urbanisation and the migration that resulted from the war: a war that destabilised the country from 1982 to 1992. As a result, nearly a quarter of the residents have been living in Maputo for less than 15 years and are thus in the process of acquiring new values and new behaviour patterns. Most of the residents are from the southern region of the country and belong to the Tsonga ethnic group as shown by the maternal languages used. These are *Xichangana*, which is spoken by 34.1 per cent of the population, followed by Portuguese, the national official language, which

is spoken by 25.1 per cent of the population, and *Xirhonga* (20.7 per cent) (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 1998: 25).

As in the rural areas, the population is mainly made up of youth and children; more than 40 per cent of the residents are under 15 years of age. The fertility rate is lower in Maputo city (four children) than the national average (5.6 children). Only 15 per cent of the residents are illiterate with three times more illiterate women than men. Nearly 40 per cent of the population profess the Zionist religion. Second is Catholicism, with 21.6 per cent. In the third place are the 15.9 per cent without religion (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 1998: 30).

Methodology

Very early in my childhood I became aware, for many reasons and as a result of events in my personal life, of the many forms of violence that affected me, and women in general, and that hampered our harmonious development. For these very personal reasons I became interested in women studies and looked at the ways in which womanhood and masculinity are constructed in different contexts and in relation to different issues.

I began to research female sexual mutilation in 1982 and did my Master's Degree at the University of Lyon II (France) with a thesis entitled "Study on the practice of sexual mutilation of women in Africa". As part of my research I went to Egypt and Sudan to speak with activists and women about this issue. I became puzzled by the fact that women supported the practices and considered them a fundamental element of their feminine identity. While living in Italy in 1983 I studied a ceremony that took place near Naples at *Madona dell'Arco* and looked at the specific relationship of

women with the Madonna and the kind of problems and wishes that women disclose and confide to her.

On my arrival in northern Mozambique in 1984, I began looking at initiation rituals that were practised by the families of my colleagues at the Social Communication Institute. But it soon became clear to me that I was not going to be able to carry out the research. It was unsafe for me to go into the suburb at any time of the day or night as Nampula (capital of Nampula province), where I lived, was under siege. Renamo was daily attacking the suburbs, burning houses and killing people. Mistrust and insecurity were felt intensely by the whole community. Survival was difficult and we collapsed into a collective depression. All our efforts were concentrated on resisting the attacks and on solving people's basic needs. I engaged in developmental and emergency projects and in producing video documentaries to inform the world about the massacres. I felt that looking at initiation rituals was irrelevant in a war situation. It was only after the peace agreement in 1992 that I was able to feel free to think about issues other than those connected with the violence of the war.

After the war, life began stabilising slowly and it became possible once more to travel, sleep in villages or suburbs and to speak to people. From a security point of view, the only concern was the numerous land mines, which presented a danger to people walking around the villages and driving in the bush. Another problem, however, was the extreme poverty and human destruction that the war left behind.

As part of a study on prostitution in Maputo province from a human rights perspective, I began exploring *lovolo* as a form of commercial sexual exploitation for the benefit of third parties as defined in 1996 at the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. I wrote:

Family members of [the family of] the girl may benefit from commercial sexual exploitation through *lovolo*, from a fine levied for deflowering, from a fine for impregnation, and from the avails of prostitution. (Bagnol, 1997: 29)

In the event of forced marriages, these relations are illegal because they violate the rights of the girl

to freely choose her spouse and only to contract marriage of her full and free will (Article 16 of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). (Bagnol, 1997: 29)

In addition to looking at the benefits derived by third parties, I started wondering whether prostitution was not a way for women to free themselves from family ties by selling their sexuality for their own benefit. Puzzled by these issues I decided to embark on a PHD in 1998. Instead of working with sex workers, however, I began to work with families in an effort to understand the concept of *lovolo* itself. I limited my study to Maputo city, where I had been living since 1985, as I had developed a good network of friends across all social classes and ethnic groups in the city who could facilitate my study in many ways.

My research started with a literature survey in Cape Town, South Africa, at the University of Cape Town library and with archival research in Maputo to find pre-colonial, colonial and contemporary documents on the politics of *lovolo* at the Historical Archive of Mozambique and at the Mozambican Women's Organisation.

Fieldwork was conducted in Maputo for a year starting in June 1998. Encouraged by Alcinda Honwana, my supervisor, I began simply by

participating in *lovolo* ceremonies and by listening to people outside my circle and to friends. At this stage, I did not define precisely the main focus of the research so that I could capture relevant aspects that emerged from the fieldwork itself. I spread the word among my friends and colleagues that I wanted to participate in *lovolo* ceremonies and that I was looking for families who would be willing to accept me and discuss this topic with me. I thus used my own social network in different social classes to gain access to the ceremonies. I then used a snowball technique, which is useful for exploring highly sensitive topics where gaining access to a select group of individuals may otherwise prove extremely challenging.

Although all the people involved in the study live in Maputo city, the work was based on multiple contexts within which people socialise and interact in everyday life as well as for ceremonial purposes. In this sense the research took me to different places within and outside Maputo (Magude, Inhambane, Xai-Xai) and allowed for a comparison of different responses to *lovolo*, as I was able to participate in ceremonies carried out in the "higher society" in the Maputo urban setting as well as in poor rural villages. Some anthropologists have suggested that ethnographic fieldwork can be multi-sited and can constitute a journey that connects a multiplicity of sites (see, for example, Marcus, 1995; Clifford, 1997). As a filmmaker, I envisaged my research process as being similar to shooting a film in different set locations to participate in different ceremonies with different actors and at different time periods.

When introducing myself to families I would explain that I was studying wedding ceremonies and that I would like to participate in all of the different rituals. I argued that I wished to speak with people before and after the ceremonies to gain a better understanding of their role in each of the rituals and to obtain their point of view about the meaning of the different phases of the ceremonies. I offered to record on video and to photograph all the ceremonies and to give one copy of the material

collected to the wedding couple. I also offered to help transport people or goods before, during and after the different ceremonies.

Manuel Massocha, to whom I taught photography and to use a video camera while working in the Green Zone Office in Maputo in 1989, was the camera operator, translator, co-driver in the bush, a bodyguard, a valuable friend and my overall assistant during the fieldwork stage of the research.

In June 1998, I participated in my first *lovolo* ceremony in Liberdade suburb. In a certain sense, this *lovolo* process constituted my first contact with these ceremonies as part of my research. It was in preparing for and following this ceremony that I established the methodology I was going to develop and refine for the overall research. For this reason I will describe the procedures that I adopted extensively, as I then used the same procedures and followed the same approach towards the people and events that I observed subsequently as part of the overall research.

I was invited by Lucas my godson and Marta, my goddaughter to attend this first *lovolo*. While Marta is a Bitonga and Lucas is a Machangana, Paulo, the groom, and his bride are both Rhonga. Paulo was Lucas' close friend and neighbour in Liberdade suburb. Paulo was studying sociology at the University Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo and was interested in explaining in detail all the issues around the practice of *lovolo*. He was extremely friendly and open, always willing to provide me with information. I met his family and the family of Sandra, his bride, before the ceremony to introduce myself and develop more intimacy with them. Sandra was a secondary school student at that time. I started taking pictures and conducting interviews with individuals from both families. I help to prepare for the ceremony. We went to the market on several occasions to buy the clothes for Sandra's relatives, the food and the beverages for the ceremonies. I collected information on the expenses

incurred by both families, an exercise that I later stopped when I realised that my research was taking a different path and that for focus of my thesis the material world was less interesting than the spiritual aspect of the ceremonies.

Two days before the ceremony took place, we started cooking in Sandra 's house where about one hundred guests were expected to be catered for. Relatives, friends, neighbours and women from the Catholic Church spent a great deal of time preparing for the ceremony; some of these people stayed in the house as guests as they had come from far away to participate in the ceremony. During these activities I was able to identify the relationships between all the participants, and to understand their roles, perspectives and main concerns. I negotiated my participation in the events to which I wanted to be invited, and made the necessary arrangements in terms of the people I had to collect to accompany me to the places where the ceremonies took place. I used to take detailed notes during the day and at the end of each day. People were puzzled by my presence, but I was introduced in different ways according to the situation, the person who was with me, and the people I was being introduced to.

Marta and Lucas hosted Manuel and me in their house, where we slept, wrote and charged the batteries of the video equipment. Manuel usually accompanied me to the ceremonies. To fulfil the textured aims of the study, I employed techniques such as photography to capture particular dynamics in marriages or other ceremonies. Daily activities and family life were also photographed to illustrate specific socio-economic realities. Manuel did most of the video and photographic recording, as I wanted to be free to move about and speak with people without being hindered by having to record images. I also did not want to be seen as the "intrusive foreign observer" recording all the most sensitive aspects of the ceremonies. Manuel, as a well known Mozambican photographer and

camera man who worked in a free lance capacity at birthdays, marriages and parties, was very familiar with this kind of situation. He was usually seen by participants of the ceremonies as a professional contracted by the family. Once I had explained to him precisely what I was looking for, he was able to move freely from one place to another, interacting with a variety of people and obtaining the photographic and video footage I required. He was also responsible for informing me of events that I should see. Although most of the people spoke Portuguese, the official language of Mozambique, I frequently needed an interpreter to communicate with older people. Marta, Lucas, Manuel, Sandra and Paulo helped me in this regard, but others would also support me when necessary.

After the *lovolo* ceremonies Manuel would translate the video, develop the photographs and make a copy of the video that we promised to the bridal couple. He would work at my home and this provided me with the opportunity to re-watch aspects of the footage, compare my impressions with his and to discuss best methods to approach future ceremonies. All the footage that Manuel recorded: songs, dialogues, comments, speeches, sermons, and prayers to the ancestors needed to be translated. It was slow and difficult work as we recorded as much as we could. When he finished, we would watch the video together and I would read his translation, asking for more explanation, adding comments related to the images and my personal observations. After this the translations were typed up.

As I had managed to participate in and record the ceremony to the spirits in both families, I decided, when writing my thesis, to describe Sandra and Paulo's *lovolo* ceremony in one of the chapters (Chapter 1). Of the other ten *lovolo* ceremonies in which I participated, only in one case did I participate in a ceremony to the spirits, as the bride's family were not living close to Maputo or because I was not informed of these types of ceremonies or invited to them. The footage of Sandra and Paulo's *lovolo* was also translated by Carlos Honwana, a linguist, as I needed a faultless linguistic

translation. During our encounters Carlos provided me with his insight into and understanding of the rituals.

After the *lovolo* ceremony, I met Paulo and Sandra and their respective families on several occasions, offered them the photographs and a copy of the video, and took the opportunity to clarify any uncertainties and to conduct individual interviews with the most relevant participants in the ceremonies. I interviewed Paulo and Sandra's fathers and mothers, their grandmothers, their brothers and sisters and some of their uncles and aunts. When the translation of the video had been completed, and after I had identified the main issues that I wanted to tackle with some of the participants, I invited the family as a group or individually to look at the footage with me alone or with Manuel at my home or at Sandra's house, which had electricity and where there was a television. Each time we organised a lunch and spent the afternoon together, I would take notes as far as possible in an effort to complete my information on the ceremony, outline my difficulties and identify the people I should speak with. I documented the life history of senior members of both families, and held focus group discussion about the video, the photographs or in an informal setting.

Three days after the *lovolo*, Sandra gave birth to her first son Elton. I went to see the child and I learnt of the importance of performing the *lovolo* before his birth and the issues surrounding the naming of the child. It was during one of these informal discussions that Paulo started to speak about his namesake and the role he had played in his life. He revealed aspects of his private life and the life of his family to me. In support of my quest he introduced me to the world of spirits (see Case study 1, Chapter 2). To support his explanation and to allow me to understand the wider impact of the spirits on different aspects of life, he introduced me to several healers and especially to Velemina, to some of his friends, and to the late professor Dimande. Professor Dimande was from Gaza province and had

studied the tradition of the people of this province extensively. He loved to share the information he had collected and we had several long discussions where I compared my findings with his knowledge.

Still in close contact with Sandra and Paulo and their families, a few months later, in October 1998, I participated in the *lovolo* of Celesta, Sandra's sister. The process was similar to Sandra and Paulo's *lovolo* ceremonies, and I had the opportunity to see the same people again, deepening our friendship and increasingly discussing private issues. Sandra's sister was being *lovoliwa* with a Mozambican living in South Africa and went away to live in Johannesburg just after the *lovolo*. Paulo was very upset, as he could not understand why Sandra was not allowed to live with him while Sandra's sister was allowed to join her husband immediately after the ceremony. While her *lovolo* was in June 1998, it was only in July 2001 that Sandra moved to her new home with her husband after the civil marriage, the religious marriage and the *xigiyane* ceremony had been carried out.

My relationship with Paulo's and Sandra's family, their relatives and friends extended far beyond the ceremonies and I grew to understand that *lovolo* was a set of performances that extended over a long period of time. I did several interviews with Paulo's father (Case study 2, Chapter 2) and with Velemina his father's teacher in healing. Paulo translated and made sense of the information I was collecting. He also identified key questions and people in better situations to answer them. He organised encounters and advised me about the best places and times to meet, the presents or food I should bring with me (beer, sugar, rice, coca-cola, biscuits), according to the people and the situations. Paulo, his father and Velemina helped me to understand the *kulovola nyanga* and to collect information on these issues (Chapter 3). Carlos Honwana also translated the interviews with Velemina and Paulo's father.

Puzzled by the *kulovola nyanga* described by Paulo's father and by Velimina I contacted Vina, the mother of one of my best friends, Esmeralda Mariano, a Mozambican anthropologist, to verify the information I had collected. We decided that the best means of verifying this information was to organise a trip together to Palmeira in Manhica district (Maputo province) where Vina had a lot of relatives, a few of whom were healers. Vina acted as my interpreter. She was used to doing fieldwork with Esmeralda and we stayed in her family's house. There, I verified the information given by Paulo's father and by Velemina about the need to carry out a *lovolo* for the master in healing at the end of a healer's training. Later, we came back to Palmeira to participate in a *lovolo* ceremony, where Esmeralda's mother had one of the most important roles as the eldest of the family. As Vina's *lovolo* was used by her father to *lovoliwa* a new wife, she explained to me the special relationship that resulted. I did several interviews with her, her husband and her old mother-in-law.

All my female Mozambican friends, even the women who are well educated and belong to the middle or upper class or those who have married Europeans, have carried out *lovolo* ceremonies. Some of them have been my friends for nearly 20 years, during which time I have shared with them my concerns on issues related to the complexities of *lovolo*. Our friendship has meant that our discussions have not required any kind of protocol. With them, I had an ongoing dialogue throughout the period of my research and the writing of the thesis. It was with them that I was able to compare the information I was collecting from other settings and from people of other social classes. It is thanks to them that I have been able to recognise the persistence of these ceremonies and their relevance to daily life. Understanding what was happening in the lives of my friends helped me to capture the similarities that were occurring in the other social groups that I was studying.

Esmeralda, who has been married to an Italian friend of mine, Gianfranco, for more than 18 years, performed the *lovolo* while I was writing my thesis. In addition to tackling the issues related to my research and to her *lovolo* ceremonies, Esmeralda also read some of the chapters I was writing. As an anthropologist she understood my worries and explained to me what she knew of these rituals and how she approached them as an academic. She also helped me on several occasions to identify relevant people to interview to answer minor questions.

I had the opportunity to see a video that Alberto, a European friend, took of his wedding several years earlier, which included a *lovolo* ceremony where his Italian friends represented the groom. I discussed these events with them. Alberto married a Changana medical doctor who shared with me her motivation for carrying out the *lovolo* ceremony.

I spoke, on numerous occasions, with a friend of mine called Maria, a person from the Marhonga clan who had lived and studied for more than 15 years in Holland and South Africa and had married a European. Maria is possessed by healers' spirits. During my research period her husband performed the *lovolo* and I was able to discuss with both of them their reason for performing it despite having been married for more than seven years. We also talked at length about the difficult decision she was facing about whether to answer the call to become a healer. She is trying to resist the demand of the spirits but has to overcome all the resulting difficulties and problems. The issue of her negotiation is a frequent discussion amongst close friends.

At my house, my relationship with my maid Adelaide and with my guard Alberto who had worked for me for eight years began to evolve quickly; they were used to see me working from home with my colleagues, but, as they started listening to and seeing us watch video performances of *lovolo* ceremonies, they became very interested. They would stop their activities

to join us and got involved in the discussions at the screenings and in the friendship that I developed with Paulo and his family. I started asking them about their perceptions and their experiences and I opened a file that focused on information I collected from them. I was continuously presenting them with my difficulties and my problems, asking for the translation of a word or for an explanation of the role of a spirit or a ritual in their lives. They became participants in the research. I involved them in some interviews as interpreters and was able to interview them at any time of the day.

Alberto is a Bitonga from Gaza province and his wife Cecilia is Rhonga from Maputo city. As they explained to me the problems they were facing because of the lack of *lovolo*, I became aware of Cecilia's problems with pregnancy. I organised a consultation with a well known gynaecologist in December 1998 (Case study 3, Chapter 2) and followed her progress up until the time that we performed the *lovolo* ceremony in July 1999 in Chidenguele in Gaza province. Adelaide came with us to participate in the ceremony as she had become involved in the issues surrounding Alberto and Cecilia's situation. She was my interpreter and, with Manuel (my photographer and camera man), helped me to understand all the negotiations involved. We spent two nights speaking to each other and participating in the ceremonies. We also went together to Alberto's father's house in Macia, after the *lovolo* to inform the spirits. I still discuss these issues with Alberto and his wife. I was informed when he performed a second *lovolo* for his second wife in 2000 and have been kept abreast of all the problems that Cecilia has faced until the present.

Adelaide is a 36-year-old Copi woman from Xidenguela, in Gaza Province. I have been following her life experiences since 1998. We prepared the *hikombela mati* ceremony for her daughter Celia in November 1998, the *lovolo*, the *xigiyane* and the civil and religious marriage in June 2000. Celia married a Muslim man whose family comes from Cabo Delgado province

in the northern region of Mozambique. Like my European friends, Muslims are expected to participate in the ceremony. I was involved in most of the discussion and negotiation around the performance of the different ceremonies. I interviewed Celia's mother and members of her family on different occasions and about issues related to the *kulovola wansati* and *kulovola muhliwa*.

Adelaide became a very important informant. She is possessed by several spirits (see Chapter 4 - Wife and husband of a foreign spirit of vengeance) and was obliged to start the process of becoming a healer in 2002. She introduced me to healers that she knew so that I could discuss the *kulovola nyanga* with them. She has promised to invite me to the ceremony that she will perform at the end of her training to become a healer when she will carry out the *kulovola nyanga*. To explore the changes that occurred in the last few decades I carried out with her two same sex focus groups with elders in an old age centre in Maputo. These elders sang ceremonial songs and enacted some of the situations they thought relevant. On this occasion, Adelaide was my assistant and interpreter.

With my godson and goddaughter, Marta and Lucas, I participated, between 15 January and 25 December 1999, in three *lovolo* of Marta's female cousins: Custodia, Telma and Rosetta. In these different situations I was also involved in their civil marriages and in the *xigiyane* that were performed in all cases the day after the *lovolo*. Participating several times in different ceremonies during the same year and involving the same extended family gave me the opportunity to become strongly involved with different elements of Marta's maternal family. I conducted several interviews with Marta's aunts and uncles and with their in laws, with Marta's father and mother, and with Marta's sisters and cousins. I was very well accepted in the family, as they had known me since Marta and Lucas' wedding in 1986 when as godmother I played an important role in the organisation of the ceremonies.

Jeanine van Vught, a Dutch anthropologist friend, invited me to participate in a *lovolo* ceremony carried out by her Rhonga in-law family, the Fumo, to marry a Copi woman. Attending this ceremony enabled me to analyse the differences between a *lovolo* performed in November 1998 and a *lovolo* performed in the same family at the end of the nineteenth century and described by Junod in his monograph (1996: 109-17). However, I did not pursue this line of research as I was already engaged in the analysis of the different types of *lovolo* and in exploring the link between *lovolo* and the spiritual life of the communities that engage in this practice.

While carrying out research in the Mozambican Women's Organisation's (OMM's) archive for data collected in 1983 during the Extraordinary Conference⁴ and while interviewing leaders from this organisation, the organisation's leadership suggested that I organise a round table discussion with elderly people. Thus, in September 1999, 16 women participated in a two-hour discussion of their experience and knowledge of *lovolo* practices. The debate was video taped, translated and transcribed. As a result of these regular visits to the Mozambican Women's Organisation I met Isabel with whom I started developing friendship and who explained the problems she faced because her husband did not perform the *lovolo* ceremony.

Isabel, Adelaida and Manuel with whom I discussed the influence of spirits in different episodes of their life introduced me to healers that they knew so that I could explore some of the questions the fieldwork was raising. With these healers I confirmed the information I had collected with Vina in Palmeira and in the Liberdade neighbourhood with Paulo's

⁴ Hundreds of meetings with both men and women took place in communal villages and towns all over the country. Questionnaires were distributed and district and provincial meetings were held. This "mega consultation" resulted in an impressive amount of information gathered from all over the country, which showed the discrepancy between political discourse and actual practice.

father and Velemina. I was aware of the importance of collecting information from different families, groups, regions and social classes to obtain a comprehensive understanding of *lovolo* practices.

Manuel's parents did not carry out the *lovolo* ceremony when they married. Isabel lived with a man for several years, had two children by him and was never *lovoliwá*. Paulo's father did not give the *lovolo* to his master in healing Velemina. With these people and their respective families I had several discussions around this specific issue and I was told of the fears relating to, and consequences of, not carrying out the ceremonies.

Intrigued by the possibility of women being able to free themselves from *lovolo* links by paying back the money to their husband's family, I had a focus group discussion with women who worked at the cashew factory in Machava. I also interviewed the director of the same factory to collect data on women workers and on trends in employment.

Below, I present a table with the names of the people involved in the ceremonies and the different rituals in which I participated. I was able to assist in 11 *lovolo*, which involved people from different ethnic groups (Rhonga, Changana, Bitonga and Copi). In addition I attended other related ceremonies.

Table 1: Different ceremonies attended as part of the fieldwork research

Participants	Ethnic group	<i>Hikombela mati</i>	<i>Lovolo</i>	Religious marriage	Civil marriage	<i>Xigiyane</i>
Tembe	M: Rhonga W: Matsua		X			
Paulo and Sandra	M: Rhonga W: Rhonga		X	x	X	x
Celeste and Ernesto	M: Rhonga W: Copi		X			

Milagre and Guida	M: Rhonga W: Copii		X			
Custodia	M: Swazi W: Bitonga		X	x	X	x
Telma	M: Rhonga W: Changana		X		X	x
Celia	W: Copi M: not specified	x	X	x	X	x
Alberto and Cecilia	M: Changana W: Changana		X			
Eulalia and Filipe	M: Copi W: Changana		X			
Lucia's daughter	W: Rhonga M: Matsua	x				
Manuel and Laura	M: Changana W: Rhonga	x				
Ximamati	W: Rhonga	x				
Luisinha	W: Changana					x
Rosetta	W: Changana		X	X	X	x
Fumo	M: Rhonga W: Copi		X			
		4	11	4	5	6

M: Man; W: Woman.

People and families with whom I worked belonged to different social classes in Maputo. Most of them had some level of education and worked in the formal sector, in state institutions (education, municipal council), or mass organisations (such as the OMM). Some worked as domestic workers, guards or healers. Most had come from the southern Mozambican rural areas to live in Maputo or were the first generation to be born there. I interviewed individuals of different ethnic groups and origins (Rhonga, Bitonga, Matsua, Changana, Copi, Italian, Dutch, South African, Portuguese) to grasp their point of view and experience. Most of them currently live in the Maputo city and suburbs but some were interviewed in the places where the *lovolo* ceremonies occurred outside Maputo. I give more details of narrators' backgrounds when I introduce them later in the thesis.

Participant observation methods permitted some degree of involvement with the people by allowing me to interact with them in their homes, work places and in the public sphere. I attended different phases of the *lovolo* ceremonies, civil and religious marriages, birthday parties, baptisms, and funerals in the families with which I was involved. I built empathetic relationships, which enabled me to identify with the concerns of the women and men. This allowed them to participate fully in the research. I tried to promote a fruitful dialogue between us to address the inherent inequalities of the relationship between researcher and researched.

The research was based on methods that allowed for the collection of qualitative data, such as interviewing, participant observation, and various supporting techniques (video recording and photographs). Maps and diagrams were also used to describe inter-familial relationships. With the interviewing methods, I collected life histories of men and women of different generations within the same families. I compiled several genealogies. My quest to give meaning to a variety of situations from one generation to another, from one field site to another, and from one sex to another, revealed the multiplicity of locations that the research required. I followed individuals' life histories, situating them in their family and social contexts.

In each family situation, I collected basic quantitative data on the composition and socio-economic aspects of the household to support my findings. When necessary, I interviewed women and men separately. In other cases, I contrasted women's experiences with men's experiences by having inter-generational groups or focus group discussions with both sexes. I compared memories and experiences of informants with texts obtained from archives. I did not assume that meanings generated by the research would be coherent over time, during the same period, or during the life of a single person. By taking notes, making audio recordings,

listening, translating from *Xirhonga* and *Xichangana*, and transcribing discourses, I allowed individuals to give meaning to their experiences and memories and to interpret the world in which they live.

In Mozambique, photography is a ritual that has been adopted by wealthy families and is being introduced in the middle class to record family events.⁵ Thus, offering photographs and video cassettes of the wedding rituals was an extremely appropriate action and was welcomed by the families concerned. It inscribed itself in the exchange of gifts and counter gifts that characterised these ceremonies. The offering of video tapes and photographs increased the formality of family rituals and the status of the families. This excess of luxury and bourgeois kind of expense in many ways served the purpose of the rituals. People felt that their status was increased by the presence of a white woman, a professional photographer and a cameraman.

Participants in the ceremonies were happy to be photographed, video taped and to receive a photograph of themselves or to see themselves in the video or pictures. In exchange for several photos in the formal pose socially ascribed for family photos (full body on foot, standing still and facing the camera) we were able to photograph people naturally in the course of the ceremonies. When people felt that some of the aspects of the rituals or some of the participants should be photographed they would request it, in exchange for which they would usually let us document whatever we wanted. Of course I knew that some of the pictures were considered awkward, as they did not correspond to the socially ascribed role of family photographs. It is usually more frequent to see families requesting the presence of a photographer during the civil and religious weddings, for the cutting of the cake and opening of the dance floor than for the other rituals such as *hikombela mati*, *xigiyane* or *muphahlu*. However, for me, being able to document all phases of the ceremonies on video was

⁵ See Bourdieu (1965) who probed the use of photography in the French middle class.

crucial so that I could have a record of all the speeches, informal discussion, prayers and songs.

Both Manuel and I knew exactly what was appropriate in each situation. We knew when it was adequate to stand at the front and put additional light into a room or when we had remain discretely at the back of the room. We would usually stand in the back silent and still when photographs were not considered socially pertinent, which was usually when the ceremony took on a private quality, such as with the ceremonies to the ancestors. In one of these rituals the ancestors were informed of my presence: "Do not be surprised by the presence of this white here with us today".

At night we had to use the camera only to record sound, as we could not add a spotlight to the dark of a rural area or of some suburb of Maputo without causing a great disturbance. Sometimes when a room was too small Manuel would record standing outside the window and I would see the image a few days later. We had several technical problems of which the main one was to have enough battery power to record ceremonies that lasted for more than 24 hours when electricity was not available.

In cases where the number and selection of participants were specifically determined, such as in the offering of the *lovolo* in the *hikombela mati* ceremony, we knew that special authorisation needed to be given. We always tried to have this granted far in advance as part of the general agreement and to make sure that we would be informed of and invited to the ceremony. But, sometimes, we needed to make sure, on the spot, that all the participants were comfortable with our presence.

Most of the ceremonies were later viewed (often more than once) with the people involved individually or in groups, at my home or in their

residences, for me to document the reactions of different members of the groups involved.

I decided to use pseudonyms throughout this thesis as an acknowledgement that events described by a person have a broad influence on all members of their group and have an impact upon private and public spheres of social intervention.

I am still in contact with most of the families I worked with. I am informed regularly of new developments in their lives. However, for the purpose of my thesis the interviews I used were carried out from 1998 until the end of 2002. Although I participated in 11 *lovolo* rituals, the present thesis focuses only on a few of the family groups and sometimes discusses the point of view of individuals outside these family groups. I chose this option because individual stories and histories allowed me to understand in depth the psychological mechanisms and cultural pressures that influenced individuals' decisions and hesitations. With some people I established a relationship of empathy and confidence and shared their perspectives and interpretations over a long period of time in very informal discussions and settings. This allowed me to document the slow process of negotiation going on with the different kinds of spirits, the different ways of interpreting each event, and the different perspectives individuals had on the same event. These insights enabled me to capture the role of the spirits in *lovolo* practices, and I grew to understand that this focus was extremely innovative, as I had never read anything that focused specifically on the links between the spiritual world and these ceremonies. I also felt that these very intimate reasons were explaining the persistence of *lovolo* practices in a dynamic context. Over the past decades, the different interpretations attached to *lovolo* practices, such as seeing them as the "commercialisation" of women or as "obscurantism", had contributed to the development of a profound sense of shame. People began assuming in public the hegemonic discourse, hiding their own beliefs and practices

and developing schizophrenic ways of life to cope with pressure and repression. Pushing them to explore with me these contradictions and to open themselves freely to my genuine curiosity and desire to capture the cosmological dimension of the practices, they found a way to free themselves from the oppression under which they were living. This also appears to me to be the reason why some friends engaged in helping me to find the roots of *lovolo* ceremonies. They were also puzzled by the complexity of these practices.

Because of my professional background, my engagement in the historical process and my participation in the Mozambican cultural production, I was respected and welcomed by family members. My friends and informants would invite me to participate in private family rituals and insisted on introducing me to some of their relatives, acquaintances or healers to help me to make sense of this world that they were opening up for the first time to a foreigner. Working with individuals I was able to look with them at the issues they were raising and to involve them in a participative way in trying to understand to what extent their problems were specific to their individual history or the result of a specific cultural setting.

Involving them in interviewing other people or participating in rituals performed in other families enabled me with them to understand the general trends of *lovolo* ceremonies and to compare practices and interpretations. From the very specific and clearly contextualised personal situation I could grasp the global challenges. I believe like Bourdieu that "any fragment of life, taken randomly, in any moment, enclose[s] the totality of destiny and can be used to represent it" (Bourdieu, 1989: 67). Focusing my in-depth investigation on a few clearly identified individuals enabled me to avoid "complaisant" discourse and answers that were merely the result of the interview situation. I could avoid interpretations that were made purely to satisfy my curiosity or might, from the

interviewee's perspective, correspond with what I was expecting. This was possible because I developed with my main informants a relationship and a kind of discussion that was regular, based on deep friendship and confidence, and of reciprocal and dynamic questioning. Key informants became fully involved as subject and agent of the research process.

Although there is a wide historical literature about *lovolo* there is no recent ethnographic description of the ceremonies in southern Mozambique and the way people relate to them. Junod (1996: V1, 108-20) is the only author to describe this ceremony, referring as he does to the period around the end of the nineteenth century. Paulo Granjo (2004), in a recent paper presented at the Luso-Afro Brazilian Social Sciences Congress, analyses with one case study observed in December 2003 the ways in which traditional representations can be appropriated to express modern families and couple worries. In Family Forms and Gender Policy in Revolutionary Mozambique (1975-1985), a booklet published in 2001, Signe Arnfred discusses the role of *lovolo* during the revolutionary period. What little literature exists reveals the gaps that need to be filled in the study of *lovolo*.

Although I participated and collected information about ceremonies from many different social and ethnic groups I was not able to describe in adequate depth the difference between the different family, regional or class practices. Similarly, I did not analyse in detail the evolution of the ceremonies over time. The findings of my work, which are based on several scrupulous analyses of selected case studies, highlight those aspects of *lovolo* that have to do with the maintenance of a relationship with the spiritual world and give to this practice a timeless perspective. I describe types of *lovolo* that were never discussed in the anthropological literature such as the *lovolo* performed by the novice to their master in healing (*kulovola nyanga*) or the *lovolo* to appease vengeance spirits (*kulovola muhliwa*). I show that women can also carry out *lovolo* to marry

women to their spirits. I emphasise the role of *lovolo* as a magical process that transforms gift into peace, fertility, healing capacity, rain and wealth.

I situate my work with feminist authors such as Collier (1988) and Moore (1988, 1994). Moore (1988: viii) inspired me when she encouraged scholars to discuss the impact of feminist thought on rites, rituals and religion. I also extensively draw on Bourdieu (1989, 1991, 1999), who looked at masculine domination and its relationship with symbolic power. I am aware that the practices I am analysing derive from complex precolonial, colonial and postcolonial interaction among race, gender and class factors, which lead to enormous changes between men and women under the pressure of missionaries, Marxism, and capitalism.

General outline

The thesis highlights five main themes. The first theme revolves around the modernity of the *lovolo* ritual practices in its external and material form. Even if they are considered as traditional, *lovolo* practices have long been modified along with socio-economical and cultural changes. The goods used for the ceremonies have shifted from agricultural products to manufactured ones. *Lovolo* practices have resisted colonialism and post-independence Marxist policies. They have been refashioned to suit the current realities of different groups of people and thus express changes in power relations between the various participants. Modernity permeates all aspects of the ceremony. It is expressed in the food offered, the songs intoned and in the compliance of civil and religious marriage. Individuals perform the ceremony as agents, who locate and relocate themselves in an interactional process (Schiffrin, 1996: 200). They are also motivated by political and historical events that they have to integrate in a reflexive process of changing their own identity. In my thesis I show that the main

reason for performing these ceremonies concerns the relationship of the participants with the spiritual world.

For this reason, the second theme of the thesis relates to a wide range of expressions of violence. I explore violence of people upon other people, violence of spirits upon living people, and violence exercised on women by their relatives and by their forefathers. I also investigate violence of one generation on the following one, violence of one's own group spirit, violence of healing spirits, violence of foreign and vengeance spirits, and interethnic violence. Analysing how symbolic violence dominates men and women and is exercised upon them to oblige them to comply with the ceremonies, I suggest that *lovolo* ceremonies are an expression of past and present conflicts, a mechanism for correcting social tensions and imbalance. I show that it is within this specific framework that individuals and groups express their agency and negotiate their identity.

Gender is also a recurrent theme throughout this thesis. Social relations between men and women are displayed and also modified through *lovolo* rituals. I show that *lovolo* transforms a person of the feminine sex into a wife able to conceive. It turns a person of both sexes into a successful healer and a male vengeance spirit into a benevolent brother or son-in-law. *Lovolo* establishes the domination of spiritual beings over the living and legitimises an established gendered order. I also explore how women can carry out the *lovolo* ceremony. I emphasise that it is not a male prerogative and that women can, in certain circumstances, challenge the gender stereotypes and adopt a trans-gender behaviour. I analyse how women exploit the internal contradictions of the practice to express their agency. I go beyond the typical concerns of gender analysis to interrogate *lovolo's* spiritual meaning and show how *lovolo* transcends the union between biological male and female person and is primarily a relationship with the spiritual world. For example, when a female traditional healer

marries a woman (takes a wife) she is doing so on behalf of a male spiritual being which forms part of her identity.

The "magical interpretations" (Moore & Sanders, 2001: Chapter 1) and the "ambivalent structure of giving" (Berking, 1999: ix) associated with the gift of *lovolo* are explored in the thesis and constitute the fourth theme of the thesis. Giving to obtain, giving to be forgiven, giving to establish a relationship, giving to define rights and obligations, to classify other people, are some of the objectives of complying with the *lovolo* ritual. The goods or rituals offered to living and spirit beings are symbolically transformed by the *lovolo* ritual. Social reproduction and production are the results of the same symbolic transformation made possible by the gift of *lovolo*. *Lovolo* is gift, bribe, economy, law, thanks, offering, debt, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

As the forces exercised on the individual to encourage the performance of the ceremony are multifaceted and come from the ground (the ancestors), from the living and from the fragments of the self that are shaped by the namesake and the different spirits, *lovolo* allows us to analyse the theme of identity. This is thus the fifth theme of the thesis. Because they have different spirits (ancestors, healers or foreign) or because they are involved in several kinships, people are unique and their complex construction and multiple identities are explored in the thesis.

Chapter outline

The first chapter of the dissertation presents an ethnography of a *lovolo* ceremony carried out in June 1998. In this chapter, I analyse the tensions subjacent to the overall ritual between the two groups involved in the ceremony and the ways in which ambiguities are part of the performance. I weave together historical data, interviews with family members, and

theoretical anthropological perspectives on marriage and *lovolo* practices to identify the changes that occur in *lovolo* practices. I analyse the different reasons why people comply with the ceremony. I claim that the spiritual dimension of *lovolo* practices is the most important one and explains most of its persistence.

Chapter 2 explores the different ways in which spiritual beings exercise violence on individuals and coerce them into complying with the *lovolo*. I show histories and memories are embodied and the ways in which ancestors and living persons constrain people to perform the ceremony. I analyse the complexity of the fragments of selfhood and connects with the deconstruction of the notion of a unitary model of the person. I show that the body is not always the locus of the self and that differences can be situated elsewhere. The idea of ambiguity is linked to the multiple influences on people's lives. Discussing the ways in which ancestors and the living can affect the fertility of the woman and the health of her children suggests a specific construction of gender identity and biological and social reproduction. I argued that it is within this framework of violence that individuals and groups express their agency.

Chapter 3 illustrates the role of *lovolo* in promoting healing capacities (*kulovola nyanga*). I study the rituals performed by male or female novices for their teachers of healing after their training. I also introduce the *lovolo* performed by healers of both sexes to marry a woman to a healing spirit. The status and cross-gender behaviour of a female healer is explored. This chapter moves beyond the forefathers and stresses the role played in healing practices by spirits of different ethnic groups. I analyse complementarities in terms of male and female characteristics, and look at the analogical system, which relates the production and reproduction system (rain, people and goods) to the economical, political and cosmic orders. Within these paradigms the specific role of the *lovolo* is articulated.

Chapter 4 deals with the *lovolo* performed to pay back a debt to a vengeance spirit (*kulovola muhliwa*). Case studies trace how sins or crimes are inherited by the descendant of the sinner in the form of a scourge sent by an angry spirit. Collective sin and collective self-love are explored to stress the role of the offering in re-establishing peace, and represent both the law and the possibility of forgiveness. The exchange of economic wealth against spiritual or symbolic wealth is again emphasised. Ambiguities are linked with the presence of a threatening spirit who is a son-in-law and can be expelled from or integrated into the sinner's descendant's group.

The Conclusion compares all of these different types of *lovolo* and analyses the meaning and implication of each of them. It challenges the conventional wisdom both from participants as well as intellectuals and anthropologists that views *lovolo* as the means to formalise a union between a man and a woman and stresses the view that *lovolo* is a symbolic process that propitiates clairvoyance, wealth, well being, fertility, and forgiveness. This shared meaning makes southern Mozambican *lovolo* unique and explains much of its ontological force.

Chapter 1

Lovolo ambiguities and transformative capacities Capturing the dynamic of *kulovola wansati*



Figure 1: Dressing the bride's mother

(...) We became people by carrying in our womb these beings. These are the fruits that we are bringing. (...) We are informing you that Sandra is going to her groom's house. (...) Our daughter is going to be insulted. She will be called witch. However we are giving her. Open the ways for her. That she lives in harmony with her father and mother-in-law, with all the family. (...) She should be looked after and she needs to respect the husband's family (...). That she goes with God. (...) In this way we are increasing the kinship (...).

- Standing up the old woman started singing: *vanavela la 'vakukala kubeleka* (those who are afraid to give birth are envying what is happening here). (Sandra's father's mother addresses to the spirits during Sandra and Paulo's *lovolo*. June 1998)

In this chapter I describe some of the most characteristic moments of Paulo and Sandra's *lovolo* ceremony, which I selected because it is typical of a *lovolo* ceremony carried out to marry a woman as it is celebrated in southern Mozambique. I analyse the joking relationship enacted during the ceremony and the ambiguities related to it.

I analyse the discourses about *lovolo* and its concomitant ceremonies and practices in the light of historical records and observed performance. I show that the material dimension of the Tsonga *lovolo* institution has varied greatly over time and has assumed different and contradictory meanings for scholars and practitioners according to their gender, class, religion, race, age, status, personal histories as well as the period in which they carried out their analysis or perform the ceremony. This diversity of perception produces the many layers of knowledge that I would like to focus on to inform on the context in which the *lovolo* is currently performed in the Maputo urban area. I show that since the social fabric is

constantly changing, and experiences in urban areas have modified the forms of reproduction of the social system, the material dimension and performance of *lovalo* have also changed in a dynamic process while the social and spiritual dimensions of the ceremonies have changed less even while integrating other philosophical influences. I also discuss the reasons why people do or do not comply with the ceremony. I argue that most of the people in Maputo city independent of their social class or ethnic group wish to perform the ceremonies not for one single reason but for a multiplicity of interlinked reasons.

The *lovalo* ceremony

The ceremony was performed in June 1998 when Sandra was nine months pregnant. In describing the ceremony, I focus specifically on the ambiguous relationship enacted on this occasion between the bride and the groom's group and on the transformative process the bride, the groom, and the two groups experience.

At the time of the *lovalo* ceremony, Sandra was 24 years old and had finished her 10th grade at school. Her father was employed as a smith in a factory and her mother was a housewife. Paulo, her groom, was a 29-year-old secondary school teacher. He was also a student at the Superior Pedagogical Institute. Paulo and Sandra were the first children of their families. Paulo's father worked as a civil servant at the Maputo City Council and as a healer. His mother was a farmer. Both families lived in urban and peri-urban areas in cement houses, were Catholic, and came from Xai-Xai, in Gaza province.

The *hikombela mati* ceremony took place one year prior to the *lovalo* ceremony and Sandra's parents had requested in addition to the *lovalo* ceremony, the performance of a civil and a Catholic marriage.

Preparations for the *lovolo* ceremony began early in the morning. In the room where the ceremony would be performed a few hours later, Sandra's father's mother (Sandra's grandmother), assisted by Sandra's father's brother's son (Sandra's cousin), performed the *muphahlu* ceremony with white wine and snuff. Sandra's father's mother addressed the *Muyochwa*'s spirits, expressing her fears and her wishes in her address (cited at the beginning of this chapter).



Figure 2: Preparation of the *muphahlu* on the altar of the groom's family

At the same time, a similar *muphahlu* was taking place at the groom's family. Paulo was being counselled by his paternal aunt, who gave the following advice:

(...) - The woman that you are fastening with these chains [the *lovolo*] has to be compared to a glass, like the one that you are seeing here - She holds a glass in her hand - If I

am letting it drop on this cement floor, what will happen?
- asked the aunt.
- It is going to break - said Paulo.
- If you ill-treat this woman, us who are here will be asked for it and I do not like to go into troubles. If you have any preoccupation, here you have your team. From today this couple [the godparents chosen for the *lovolo*] is your team. They are your *compadre*. It is not beating that you should use to solve problems. If you are not managing to go on with your wife, in whatever issue, you have this couple with authority to help you - continued the aunt. - There, where you are going, you will also meet two other police officers who are the persons with whom you can rely for problems (...) Never beat your wife, even less send her back home. (...) Diversions and going out late at night are ending now. (...) There are a lot of women (...) but you chose this one. It was your free choice. (...)

Lovolo is often referred to as the thread of a plant that links the two groups and symbolises the union; here the *lovolo* is compared to a chain that unites Paulo and his wife. Paulo is changing his status from a bachelor to a married man. His life is going to be transformed by his new responsibilities. The advice he receives focuses on the behaviour expected of him and in so doing delimits the relationship between a man and a woman. Beatings and bad treatment are not acceptable and respect should prevail. To help him to fulfil his new identity, godparents have been elected for the *lovolo*.¹

The issue of violence against women is discussed in the *kupahltu* in both the bride and the groom's houses. The bride's relative seems to fear that

¹ For the performance of the civil and religious marriages another couple will be chosen to be the godparents.

she will be beaten but hopes that she will "live in harmony" with her parents-in-law and the groom's family. The groom's relative advises him not to "ill-treat" his wife but to resort to the godparents in times of trouble. These demands and advice seem to contradict popular accounts that suggest that women are told to endure suffering because of *lovolo*.

After the *muphahilu* to the ancestors and the counselling of Paulo, the *lovolo* presents were prepared and given to Paulo's representatives along with an explanation of whom each gift was for and how to use the money. Then, the groom's delegation travelled on foot to Sandra's home to bring the *lovolo*. Because they were 30 minutes late, they were forced to remain outside for a lengthy period before being invited into the house by the family. To apologise and negotiate entry, the group had to pay a fine of 5 000 MZM.



Figure 3: Money threads on a stick are brandished to gain entry into the bride's house.

Only the groom and bride's delegations attend the ceremonies inside the

house. The ceremony opened with a prayer, and greetings were conveyed by the bride's master of ceremonies, who was a dynamic female neighbour. Both delegations included about six to ten male and female representatives of different generations.²

The key actors of the *iovolo* ceremony are paternal and maternal aunts and uncles as well as brothers or sisters, the godparents and friends with experience in this kind of ceremony. They sit face to face on mats displayed on the floor or on chairs. A space is left vacant for the display of the *iovolo* goods. Few spectators are allowed in the room and the rest of the relatives and invited friends wait anxiously on the patio for the outcome of the ceremony. During the whole ritual, Sandra was shut in a room with few friends and came out only when called.

Both delegations had lost their *iovolo* lists. The bride's delegation accused the groom's:

(...) - If you have lost the paper it means that what is happening today is nothing for you. And one day you will also lose our daughter like you have lost the paper (...).

After apologies had been made for not having brought the list, the ceremony continued. Paulo's delegation laid down a *capulana* on which they placed the *iovolo* goods. Sandra's aunt wanted to take the *capulana*, and said:

(...) - You're very kind. You certainly know how to please, we're going to keep everything, including the *capulana*.

Surprised, a female representative of the groom answered:

- No this *capulana* isn't to be taken away. We want to use

² Paulo's delegation consisted of two men, five women, and three female adolescents.

it to place the gifts. We cannot serve the visitors without a tablecloth (...).



Figure 4: Two examples of a *lovolo* list. One is hand written on a pupil's exercise book and the other typed on computer.

The groom's delegation then presented the goods to the bride's representatives. Sandra's *lovolo* list contained 100 000 MZM³, five litres of red wine, a crate of beer and a crate of soft drinks. It also included a hat, a shirt, a pair of trousers, and a walking stick for Sandra's father.⁴ For her mother there was a *mucume*, a *nkeka*, a *vemba*, a *capulana* and a bottle of white wine (*ximbuwembuwe*), which she wore, tied to her back, as a symbol of Sandra. The presentation of the *ximbuwembuwe* pays homage to the mother of the bride and thus acknowledges the value of clan and of reproduction.

Sandra's paternal grandmother was given a *capulana*, a blouse, a foulard

³ 1 Rand = 2 104 MZM (30/01/1999)

⁴ Usually fathers ask for a suit in addition to the shirt and shoes.

and snuff. An aunt received a *capulana* and a foulard. Although Sandra's presents were not listed, she was presented with clothes, underclothes, shoes, a bag, and jewellery. The demand for clothes for several persons, including the bride herself, shows an increase in the number of beneficiaries of the offerings.⁵ The father is no longer solely entitled to receive the *lovolo*; the bride receives an important share of it. *Lovolo* thus shares certain similarities with the dowry. Her mother and aunts also receive their share. This distribution seems to be similar to the division of the slaughtered cow when each of the participants received a share according to their status, although the meat has now been replaced with durable goods. I will discuss below the evolution of the types of presents offered during *lovolo* ceremonies.

When the *lovolo* goods were spread out on the ground, the bride was called in and was asked whether the family should accept the *lovolo*. In accepting the *lovolo*, the bride took a bill of 10 000 MZM from the money offered and gave it to her father to perform *muphuhlu* to the Muyochwa's ancestors. The male elder of her mother's side was also asked to take a bill to venerate the ancestors. Although both families are Catholic, the *muphuhlu* is an important part of the ritual. At this stage in the *lovolo* proceedings, it is performed again to offer money from Sandra's *lovolo* to Sandra's paternal and maternal ancestors and to explain how successful the *lovolo* ceremony has been. In the *lovolo* process, three kin groups have to inform their ancestors of the *lovolo* proceedings and ask them to protect the new couple, the bride's maternal and paternal relatives, and the groom's paternal relatives.

Apart from the monetary value of the goods, money plays an important role throughout the ritual. To apologise for being late, the groom's delegation had to pay 5 000 MZM; to lay down the offering more money

⁵ In the past, when a cow was slaughtered for *lovolo* everyone could share in it. Currently communal eating still exists in the lunches and dinners offered by both the bride and the groom's families.

was needed.⁶ Money was needed to call people and to dress people, including the bride. It cost 10 000 MZM to call the mother, 20 000 MZM to call the father and 20 000 MZM for the aunt and the grandmother. The groom's delegation also paid 5 000 MZM to dress the mother, 10 000 MZM for the father, and 25 000 MZM for Sandra. Each case was an occasion for bargaining.



Figure 5: The bride's mother is dressed with the *ximbuwembuwo*, the bottle of white wine that symbolises her daughter.

To dress Sandra, Paulo's delegation started by putting 5 000 MZM on the ground. The discussion over the money needed to dress Sandra went as follows:

- This is very little money – said a man from Sandra's

⁶ The groom's delegation put "money for the money" (10 000 MZM). Money was put on top of the crate of beer (5 000 MZM), on the soft drinks (5 000 MZM), on top of the bottle of wine (10 000 MZM), on the box of snuff (5 000 MZM), etc. This is called *xa ku pfula bodhela*, which translates as "to open the bottle" or corkscrew.

delegation.

- We don't have any more money – replied Paulo's sister.⁷

- If there's no more money, it's not enough to dress her.

(...) Paulo's sister took out a further 5 000 MZM – I had to borrow this.

- This person who lent you the money didn't realise that it's too little.

- That's all there is now. I don't have any more – Paulo's sister replied.

(...) - You'd better leave your earrings to dress the bride.

(...) A woman took out a 10 000 MZM note – If you don't accept this money, we're going to dress her at home – Paulo's delegation attempted to leave.

(...) - They want to make things difficult, they could have left 50 000 MZM at once and done everything easily. It looks as if they're being forced to marry – replied a woman from Sandra's delegation.

(...) - Sandra, you're very unlucky, you have to realise that in this home things won't go well for you. You're putting yourself in the sun [in the open]. You'll have a bad time there. Because today at least they could have pretended – continued a representative of Sandra's delegation.

- In our house, our daughter didn't eat maize porridge, she'll do badly with you – added another of Sandra's female relatives.

- Since I want my children to marry, I'll take the risk.

- One of Paulo's delegates took out 50 000 MZM. She put it on the floor and received the 25 000 MZM that was already there as change.

- That's what we want – said a representative of Sandra's delegation.

⁷ Paulo's older sister is married and has children.



Figure 6: The bride and her maid of honour are covered with a cloth.

At this stage, Sandra entered the room, her face covered with a cloth. She was then fully dressed by her sister-in-law. When the latter took off Sandra's earrings to replace them with gold ones, she put the old earrings in her pocket. Sandra's relatives demanded that they be returned. While putting the earrings on Sandra, Paulo's sister said:

(...) The earrings that I am putting on you are to close your ears so you can't listen to anybody else. This necklace is to tie you so you can't go with anybody else. This ring is my heart. When a man calls you, I am with you. This watch is to remember that you have a compromise with me. All this isn't to go around and look for other men (...).



Figure 7: The representative of the groom puts the watch on the bride's wrist.

Once dressed, Sandra and her relatives went out onto the patio to show off their new clothes and to be congratulated. People danced and sang a mixture of religious and popular songs. Everything concerning the delivery of the *lopolo* had been "solved" and people felt relieved. Inside the room Paulo's delegation paid a 500 000 MZM fine because Sandra was pregnant. The groom's delegation put another 50 000 MZM on the floor and asked for Sandra to be allowed to go to Paulo's house as soon as possible to give birth there. Sandra's family agreed.

The food was brought in for lunch and, before starting to eat, the groom's family demanded the presence of the bride's father and mother, claiming that they were being offended. They asked them to eat first to guarantee that the food had not been poisoned. After the meal and celebration, the groom's delegation left to report back to Paulo and his relatives.

In the evening, a party was held at Sandra's house to which Paulo and some of his friends were invited. On arrival at the party, the groom and his delegation of young people were also expected to wait outside the door and to pay a fine for being late. The groom and his delegation of young people expressed anger over this. One said:

This is why many young people give up. Our tradition is very heavy, it's very complicated. This woman is already ours [we have already given the *lovolo*] they can't do this to us....

About 100 people, mainly youth and Sandra's extended family, attended the party. A wide range of western influences revealed in the *lovolo* ceremony illustrated the continuous process of adaptation. For example, a mixture of religious and traditional dances had been performed during the day, while the music of the party came from a cassette player. At the party, a wedding cake was cut and the dance was opened by the bridal couple in accordance with classical western practices. A wide range of western and Mozambican food and drinks were consumed.

***Lovolo* ambiguities and transformative capacities**

The relationships established between the different participants in the *lovolo* are ambiguous. These ambiguities lie in the exchanges between the groom's and the bride's representatives; between the bride-to-be and the groom's sister; between the bride and her kin; and between the groom-to-be and the bride's representatives.

One of the first issues to arise was that both delegations had lost the *lovolo* list. The bride's representatives saw this as a sign of irresponsibility on the

part of Paulo's delegation. The list is one of the central elements in the *locolo*. Two copies are made of it, one for each group, and these should be kept carefully even after the ceremony, to be used in case of subsequent discussion, such as in the event that the couple separates.

Starting with a request for a fine of 5 000 MZM for being late, the demand for money in almost every transaction becomes crucial to the ritual. It defines the ambiguity of the situation: money to call, money to dress, money to apologise. This emphasis on monetary value (although sometimes in small amounts) has prompted many scholars to look at *locolo* as economic or commercial exploitation or as an institution for the "selling of the bride" or for "acquiring reproductive or sexual right".

Contrary to that line of argument, I believe that such performances are instrumental in creating dialogue and exchanges, which allow for the establishment of the relationship between the two groups.

Such exchanges for more or less money provide representatives of both sides with the opportunity to express themselves, to joke, to tease and to make fun of each other. For example, the comment that the bride's family is so "mean" that they demand 5 000 MZM more is an exaggeration in the light of the fact that 5 000 MZM is not a lot of money, and should be seen as part of the bantering that establishes relationships during the ritual.

In fact, while many believe that the bride's family makes a 'fortune' out of *locolo*, Sandra's family spent much more (for the lunch, the dinner and the party for over 100 guests) than they received. Moreover, Sandra did not see her prestige decrease as a result of the ceremony. On the contrary, some prestige accrues to Sandra herself from the ritual. A woman for whom *locolo* is performed sees her status changing in her family and in society. In her husband's family she will be considered the wife of the eldest son and as such will have authority over the other daughters-in-

law. Similar situation has been referred to also by several authors such as Herskovits (1926: 272) and by Granjo (2005).

Another exchange worth considering is the discussion about the *capulana*, which is similar to other situations that occur during the ceremony (such as the attempt to keep the earrings of Sandra's or of Paulo's aunt). The fact that Sandra's aunt insisted on keeping the *capulana*, although she knew that it was not a present, shows the mocking and joking character of the relationships as part of the ritual process. These exchanges between the two delegations test the in-laws' ability to handle jokes and are part of the "*savoir faire*" of the ritual. The joking and teasing between the two groups aim at indulging in abnormality and in non-cooperation between affined as part of the anti-structural state enacted in a ritual of transformation (Turner, 1969: 201-202).



Figure 8: Three women observe a *lovolo* ceremony.

Sandra's father explains that in the past aggressiveness between groups

could result in a fight:

In the past, it was necessary to fight, people did fight and if the groom's family was weak they would come back without having carried out the *lovalo* ceremony. They would come back because they were defeated. Thus, they needed to prepare themselves again.

But little by little they saw that no, we are creating familiarity. Why should we create discord, noise and so? They could even be wounded (...) Because they really struggled. If you are not strong you run, but if you resist a bit, they beat, beat and you resist.

Enough! They stop. OK! You are strong, fortunately. We are receiving a good *mukon'wana* (son-in-law), who will defend us in case of problems.

Because that's what it is for, to know if the person who comes in is a true man or not. If he is weak, shit, what interest? A weak man like you? (...) The idea is only to see the value (...) Some times the other family gets demoralised and goes back, because they are dissatisfied. But for those who know that, it is rather to create situations for discussion, to see if they are interested or not, who is cleverer, who is weaker (...) It is a competition that is carried out; they want to know if they are more vigorous, if they are clever or not. (Sandra's father, interview, January 1999)

According to Sandra's father, the groom is tested, not only on his own capacity, but on the capacity of his representatives. There is the

underlying idea that giving out a wife should not be easy and that the difficulties will give value to the woman. Therefore, it should not be easy to give the *lovolo*, and it should not be easy to "receive it". Making everything complicated and arduous establishes whether the groom's kin group is really interested in the relationship. Jokes and counter-jokes are meant to express the difficulties involved in the exchange of women and the establishment of affinal relations between different groups. This situation recalls Lévi-Strauss' (1969) well-known work The Elementary Structure of Kinship, where in the introduction and conclusion he expresses his philosophy on kinship. According to Lévi-Strauss, humanity went from the age of nature to the age of culture, in which they established the matrimonial exchange or the exchange of women between groups of men. In this way, these groups became kin, allies, and social partners, and forgot their enmities.

People are not expected to take the teasing seriously, but, as Sandra's mother explained, situations might occur during the rituals that exacerbate the contradictions; people might not understand the intention of the jokes and begin to fight:

Only those who don't know get angry and fight. They make problems without necessity because in reality it is a day of happiness. (Sandra's mother, January 1999)

The ambiguous relationship between the two groups, established by the continual mockery, insults, jokes and lack of cooperation, is a characteristic of a ritual that has to be entered into carefully by the participants. The anti-structural state is enacted by these reversals of "normality", which express the liminal character of the relationship: the participants are no longer strangers but they are not yet related to each other. The teasing, often annoying and embarrassing to those it is aimed at, becomes part of this "between and betwixt" stage of the establishment

of affinal relationship. For example, the groom's delegation is expected to go through many difficulties to be able to satisfy the bride's kin.

Paulo's sister plays the role of her brother, in the process turning gender roles upside-down. This gender reversal demonstrates the unusual symbolic process in contrast with the normal order (Moore et al., 1999: 139). It also reveals the specific role of the elder sister in matters related to her brother's house. In her counselling, Paulo's sister echoes what was said to Paulo earlier in the morning, which emphasises the bonds created by the *lovolo*. *Lovolo* symbolises the ties between the groups and aims at providing fertility and health for the woman. These bonds also strengthen the woman's position within this web of relationship. With the transfer of *lovolo* to her family, a woman becomes a member of both families.

Two highly formulaic speeches are directed to the ancestors. One is performed in the groom's house and the other in the bride's house. The groom's ancestors are informed of the arrival of a new wife for one of their descendants. In the bride's house, the ancestors have to be informed of the bride's departure to the groom's house as they will support her, and promote her fertility and her well being. For the efficiency of the *lovolo*, a magical process that makes birth the basis for the success of the new union, the connivance of ancestors is of the utmost importance. For the performance of this ceremony, the presence of different generations and genders is of great importance to symbolically enact the complementarity necessary for its success. This ceremony aims at informing the ancestors of the bride's group of the proceedings and at asking them to protect and help the woman in her new house. Maternity is the core of womanhood in southern Mozambican society, but also the central element for the establishment of alliance and kinship with other groups.

The new relationships depend on their capacity to go through this "rite of passage". Similarly, the complementarity of gender (masculine and

feminine) and generations (grandparents and grandchildren) and the reversal of gender roles (the groom's sister assuming her brother's role) are constitutive elements of this transformative ritual (van Gennep, 1960: 11; Turner, 1969: 92-93; Moore et al., 1999: 126).

New ceremonial performances and old patterns

Junod's description of a *lovolo* ceremony in a Rhonga family, the Mpumo, of Maputo Bay (currently Maputo city) that he attended at the end of the nineteenth century (Junod, 1996: VI, 108-24) is the only written document from the past that deals with the *lovolo* ceremony. In this document, Junod also gave an account of the main ceremonies that form the *lovolo* process: the engagement ceremony (*buta*) and the visit of the groom and his friends to the bride (*kutrhekela*⁸). Junod also describes the visit that the girls paid back (*kukorhoka*) to the groom's house. He explains that the *lovolo* consisted of money and hoes (Junod, 1996: VI, 108-24). According to Junod, when the *lovolo* had been fully given, the bride departed the following day to her husband's house. This ceremony was called *kuhloma*. The bride was escorted by some friends to her husband's house and they carried wood, and few cooking instruments (a basket, a spoon, and a mat) (Junod, 1996: VI, 108-24).

The three different phases described by Junod (1996: VI, 108-24): the presentation, the offering of the presents and the bride's trip to her groom's house are similar to the process observed and described by all informants regardless of their ethnical group or social class. Junod used the term "*buta*", which corresponds to "*likombela mati*", the presentation of the groom's intention to establish bonds with a woman. This ceremony is carried out by a few relatives (brother, sister, uncle and aunt are usually represented) and friends. On this occasion, the bride's kin give the groom's

⁸ I use here the orthography given by Junod.

representatives a document on which their request for *lovolo* has been written down. After a few months, or sometimes even years, depending on the groom's capacity to acquire the presents, the *lovolo* takes place. The bride is then considered to be part of her husband's group and the groom is a *mukon'wana*, a son-in-law. Both the *hikombela mati* and *lovolo* ceremonies are carried out by representatives of the groom and the bride (close relatives such as paternal and maternal aunts and uncles as well as brothers or sisters). In addition, neighbours or friends from church or work, selected for their ability to communicate, are included. Gender balance is generally sought in the composition of the delegation. After the *lovolo* ceremony the bride is taken by her relatives, mainly women, to her new home in a ceremony called *xigiyane* (that corresponds to the term *kuhloma* in *Xirhonga*). For the *xigiyane*, the bride's belongings and gifts (generally clothing and domestics utensils) from her family go with her. The couple usually live with the groom's family (virilocal residence) or in an independent residence.

The description by Junod (1996: V1, 108-24) of the *lovolo* ceremony shows similar patterns to the ritual described above in Paulo and Sandra's *lovolo*. Junod explained that the preparation for *lovolo* ceremonies involved beverage and food processing in the bride's family and an accumulation of the required hoes and money. On the day agreed upon for bringing the *lovolo* to the bride's family, the groom's group verified the amount of money and the number of hoes. The bridegroom's group then "assaulted" the village of the bride and a joking battle was engaged in between the two groups. Then the hoes were displayed and counted by the bride's family (Junod, 1996: V1, 108-24). A goat was killed. The bride was hidden in a neighbouring compound, and the women later forced her to leave the house and covered her with a cloth. Placed face to face, the two families insulted each other and some times threw at each other the half-chewed material taken from the goat's stomach. The groom's family shouted:

“Since you are the wife of our brother and you're going to enter our compound, leave your defects behind you here! Stop stealing! Give up your bad habits and become a quiet girl.” The bride's relatives shout: “You've got nothing to talk about. Stop annoying people! She's too good for you! Don't you know about your son's mischief, your family's shame”. (Junod, 1996: V1, 116)

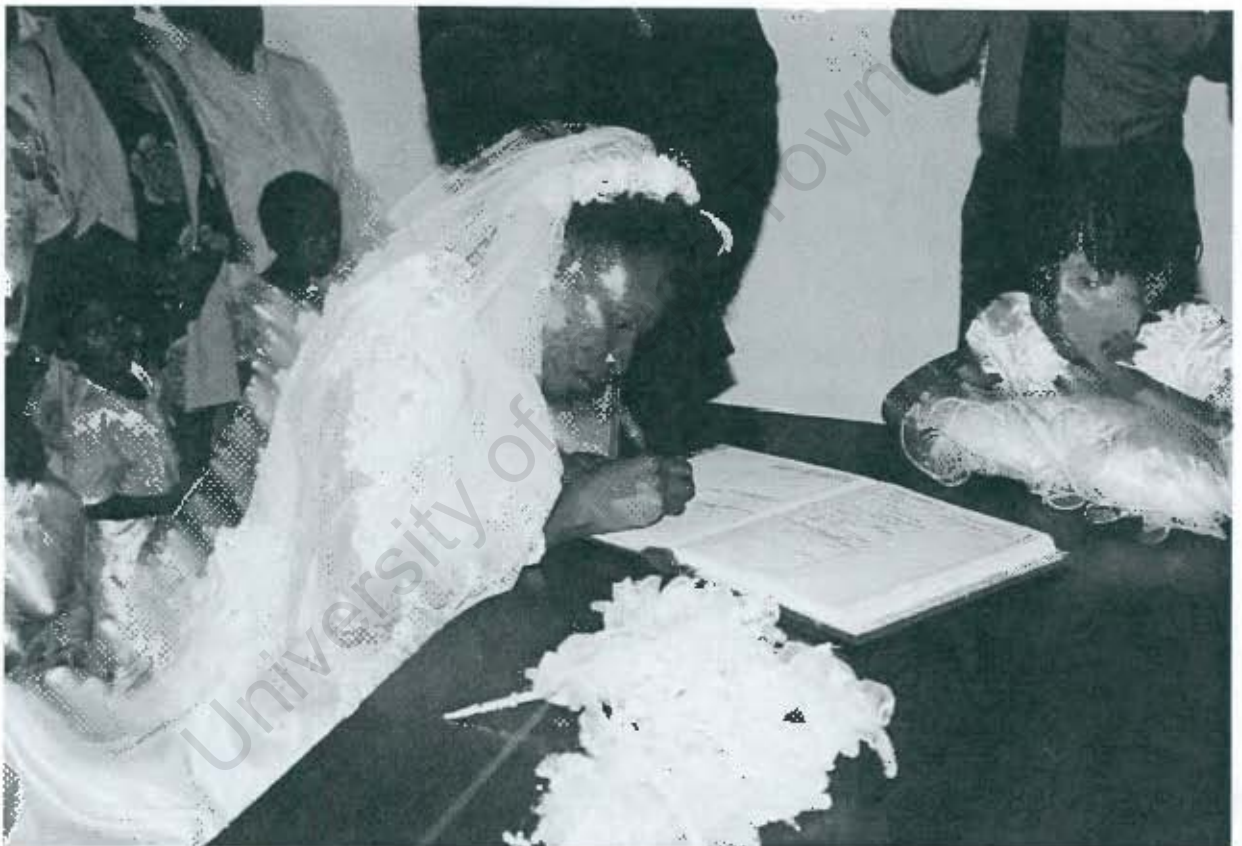


Figure 9: The civil marriage

Then the religious ritual was performed by the father of the bride, who took a little ball of material from the goat's stomach and with the young couple in front of him performed the sacramental sound and spoke with his ancestors. He informed them that the woman was going to live with the groom and prayed: “May she be happy there, may she have numerous children and get on well with the people she is going to live with”. The

Just as the colonialists that condemned the practices and tried to abolish them had failed to do so, FRELIMO also failed to do this mainly because of the spiritual dimension of *lovolo*. The analysis of the *lovolo* system articulated during the OMM Extraordinary Conference led to a profound reformulation of FRELIMO's policies, specifically those policies that related to "traditional" issues.

When health or relationship problems arise in a couple that has not performed the *lovolo* ceremonies, these problems are always considered to be related to the lack of *lovolo*. (See Chapter 2 for a discussion of this issue.) *Lovolo* is also considered a precondition for any help to be offered by family members to a woman confronted by such health or relationship difficulties. The justification given is that the living and the ancestors do not know "where the woman has gone", which is the metaphor for an unofficial relationship. If the couple has children, they are also considered illegitimate. It is by performing this ceremony that the ancestors are informed during the *muphahlu* that the daughter of the house "has gone" to stay with her husband and that the positive influence of the living and ancestors can be activated.

In some cases, the woman's family can refuse a man permission to bury the woman with whom he has lived because he has not performed *lovolo* until he and his family come to the woman's parents' house to perform *lovolo* on a grave. As the burial ritual is of extreme importance in placing the dead person in the right position in the world of the ancestors, failure to do so may turn the spirit of the dead woman into an angry spirit who seeks revenge.²⁹ To avoid these situations and prevent the activation of negative acts of spiritual beings, families prefer to perform the *lovolo* ceremonies according to the established set of rules and principles.

²⁹ In Chapter 4, I focus on some aspects of the influence of vengeance spirits on the living.

constraints and political and philosophical/religious controversies. But at the household level, *lovolo* expresses the conflicts of interest of men and women as well as of elders and younger persons.

Propitiation of fertility and harmony

The performance of the *muphahlu* is, as Junod (1996: V1, 117) noticed, extremely relevant in people's view to promote fertility and harmony in the new couple. The speech that Junod collected is very similar in its content to the many that I recorded during my research, with its emphasis on the wish to propitiate numerous children. The relationship established as part of the *lovolo* ritual, through the *muphahlu*, is considered of utmost importance in guaranteeing the fertility of the woman and the well being of the couple and of their children.²⁸

For this reason, an issue widely discussed at the OMM Extraordinary Conference related to the fact that a woman whose *lovolo* had not been carried out would not bear any children because the spirits of her ancestors would not help her. The need to maintain the practice of allowing the spirits of the woman's group to know "where the woman has gone" was emphasised in many reports (Organização da Mulher Moçambicana, 1985: 30). The ceremony performed to the ancestor on the family's altar was considered by participants in popular meetings to be the most important step of the ritual, as it formally established the union of the woman with the groom's group. This was one of the so called "backward" ideas that FRELIMO wanted to eradicate in its attempt to abolish all forms of religion. However, the Extraordinary Conference showed FRELIMO that *lovolo* ceremonies were far more than a religion brought by colonialists but was part of the southern Mozambican identity.

²⁸ For issues related to the role of the *lovolo* in promoting female fertility and the overall well being of the couple, see Chapter 2.

children. This demonstrates the woman's complicity with the Tsonga *lovolo* institution because it is within this system that her identities and agencies are defined.

In the urban setting, in cases of conflict, families can have access to the community courts where women are able to exercise their rights on an equal footing with men and where cases are resolved through a combined application of both customary norms and the law (Department of Women and Gender Studies, 1996: 82). It is in these courts that women demand their succession, inheritance and maintenance rights. It has been shown that in a dynamic process, customary laws inform the law, but the reciprocity is also true and the law does influence the customary laws (Department of Women and Gender Studies, 1996: 82). Under the influence of Marxism, women's emancipation, the war and the economic crisis that followed it, and alterations to Mozambique's social and economic models, changes took place and led to elements of family adaptation to the new contexts and an alteration of the forms of domination to which women are subordinated.

In 1999, a process of legal reform started, which included, amongst others, the establishment of the Family Law and Penal Code. The Family Law, approved in 2003, provides the possibility of transcribing religious and traditional marriages (called *de facto* unions), thus allowing the persons married in such a way to have access to the obligations and rights established by formal law. In this way, the State has an option to encourage the protocol of these unions, recognising that they produce most of the effects of a civil marriage.

Lovolo practice as a "total social phenomena" (Mauss, 1954: 1) is an expression of socio-economic, juridical, political and religious relationships. It is the product of both global and household dynamics. It contains and is a result of local, regional and international economic

and children (Department of Women and Gender Studies, 1996: 81-2). A woman who is involved in a “*de facto*” union is not respected or recognised as somebody's wife by her relatives, her neighbours and her husband's group. Similarly the man is not treated as a son-in-law in the woman's house and, even if he is living with the elder daughter, he is considered inferior to the other daughters' husbands who have performed the *lovolo* ceremony. In the absence of the *lovolo* ceremony, the woman is easily sent away by her partner and she might not be able to ask for any assistance from her family as she is not in a formally recognised union. The *lovolo* is thus still a fundamental element of a woman's status and acquisition of rights.

Loforte (2000: 193-6) shows that because of her position in the kinship, a woman's spirits play an important role as they can interfere in two lineages: her brother's and her children's. A paternal aunt is the protector spirit of her nephews and of her brother's daughter, who is her namesake. Even if she is married out of the family, the paternal aunt owes this position in her paternal group, to her status as elder sister, and to her religious role²⁷, which allows her to interfere in the health, the fecundity, and the harmony of the family. In her husband's group she is not allowed to perform the ceremonies to the ancestors and in all matters related to her health she is obliged to consult her paternal and maternal ancestors. In contrast, as a *hahani*, or aunt, her presence in her patrilineage's ceremonies is of great importance. If she has children, at her death she is evoked as the mother of her children in the ceremonies to the ancestors in her husband's lineage and as a *hahani* in her father's group. It is this position in the kinship network that gives her status as a mediator between the living and between the living and the dead (Loforte, 2000: 193-6) and allows her to participate like the men in discussions related to her paternal group. The father's elder sister is ceremonially a male persona to her brother's

²⁷ Among the Rhonga from Catembe, Marracuene and Manhiça, the paternal elder sister can perform the ceremonies for the ancestors while in other groups she cannot (Loforte, 2000: 195).

kinship and social obligations established by their ancestors, is giving way to multiple and contradictory choices that engender doubts and anxieties.

The ontological security rooted in the reproduction of established conventions is turned upside down and women are trying to reconcile with and adapt to new realities. They do not want to be objectified in a process of exchange and have tried to resist it as religious agents, as Feminists, as Marxists, as educated and modern women and as agents of change. In this process, however they have subordinated themselves to the power that oppressed them at different moments and in different ways. They also explore their agency, recognising the powers exercised on them from outside and interiorising these powers. As Butler argues:

The agency of the subject appears to be an effect of its subordination. Any effort to oppose that subordination will necessarily presuppose and re-invoke it. (Butler, 1996: 12)

When they refuse to conform to a particular paradigm, people stop benefiting from family support and place themselves outside the security of their family group. They become autonomous persons, whose linkages with kin are eroded.

For this reason, recent studies on women's issues in Maputo and in southern Mozambique²⁶ stress that *lovolo* is still important in everyday life as it establishes gender relations of power (Loforte, 1996) and allows women's valorisation and dignity (OMM [s.a.]: 82-83, 83, 85, 88). Nowadays as a general rule, according to customary law, the passage of a complete *lovolo* gives the man's kin rights over the woman and her children, which make the husband and his group responsible for his wife

²⁶ Investigations concerning women have been conducted in the country as part of a regional project entitled Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) (Stewart, 1990; CEA, 1993, 1996; WLSA, 1994; Ncube, 1995).

The influence of traditional alliances on marriage strategies in urban centres is not as great as in the country (WLSA, 1997: 29). Love is an essential dimension in the unions carried out currently in Maputo city. Few marriages are arranged by the families without a long courtship. And it is maybe because of this new dimension that women participate actively in the creation of the *lovolo* list and contribute as much as they can to make things as easy as possible for their future partner. Where they are able to do this, women even contribute monetarily to the expenses, as they know that excessive spending will delay their living with their partner and negatively influence their future standard of living. They are also aware that a large amount of money given as *lovolo* might present difficulties in the case of divorce, even if the giving back of the *lovolo* money is not practised frequently in urban areas.

This appropriation of the *lovolo* by women seems to be possible because, although these practices represent a system characterised by inequality, the promotion of relationships of subordination/domination, and gender relations that typify discrimination against women, this system is changing and women are trying to negotiate their rights within it. Are they in this way submitting themselves to the forms of masculine domination or are they trying to explore the limits of the existing systems?

When societies go through profound changes, individuals lose the sureties of common social practices. Identity can become "the sustaining of a coherent, yet continuously revised biographical narrative" (Giddens, 1991: 5) or can turn into a process that lacks sequence and consistence. Women's identities are unstable, as they are always locating and relocating themselves within different frameworks. They are both agents of change and are pushed by uncontrollable political and historical forces. They integrate changes in their conception of self sometimes in a reflexively coordinated effort and at other times through anger at external factors. The notion of trust, which was anchored in a certain kind of relationship, with

constrained to stay in a relationship with a man who beat and did not respect them because their families refused or were not able to give back the *lovolo* (Malandzele, 1979; Manuense, 1994; Arnfred, 2001: 33).

Women gained access to secondary education, paid work and, as a consequence, access to public life. This implied a reduction of the time spent in domestic and reproductive spheres also as a result of access to contraception, the progressive contraction of the family and delay of the marriage (Centre for African Studies et al., 2000). In such situations, even if the structure of the marriage ceremonies, the ideology or the symbolic system behind the *lovolo* practices is still acknowledged, women seem to have appropriated the forms of marriages that were seen in the past as an instrument of their domination. Power relations between men and women have changed greatly. Women are no longer considered as goods that are simply exchanged in a bargain between two groups. Rather, they are also actors in the ritual. They receive most of the goods distributed; the bride receives a large share of the presents given to her mother and father. Women often try to participate financially in the *lovolo* that their partners are going to give to their family. Women of all generations contribute to the feast in various ways: by carrying out the *muphahlu*, praying, cooking, singing, dancing, counselling the bride, and enacting an ambiguous role in certain exchanges during the ritual itself. Women demonstrate their agency in the preparation and performance of the *lovolo* ceremony in which they are the main protagonists.

The added option of a symbolic amount of money (*gratificação*) being given as a *lovolo* in addition to the clothes for the bride and her parents shows that the bride's parents want to feel free not to give the *lovolo* money back and do not want to tie their daughter into an unhappy relationship.

with illegitimate offspring, the children of a woman whose *lovolo* had not been performed belonged to the woman's group (Junod, 1996: VI, 254-60).

The Tsonga *lovolo* institution also defined succession practices. The first son of the first woman had the right to succeed among the entailed heirs. Children of slaves had the lowest status. Apart from goods, a man also inherited his eldest brother's wives and sons. This man had the right to receive *lovolo* for the daughter of his eldest brother's wives and for the daughters that the man who inherited her had with her. If there was no man to marry the widow, her eldest son could stay with her and represent paternal authority together with his maternal uncle.

Heads of homesteads could contract several marriages because of their control over the herd and the possibility of inheriting wives of their elder deceased brothers. However, when the woman's brother/father died, if there was no younger brother to inherit the widow, she could claim to live with the widow and enjoy the inheritance left by her brother/father. These situations could result in disputes with the widow over the goods left by her husband, thus creating opposition between the two women (Centre for African Studies, 1996: 88).

While in rural areas the situation in many aspects might still be the same than as the one described above, typifying the woman's situation in the urban complex is more difficult, as the social fabric is constantly changing (Centre for African Studies, 1996: 84) and the reference to rural paradigms still very much alive.

After World War II, the opening of new factories in Maputo and the posting of women in schools and hospitals many women found in working and earning money a way to free themselves from marriage relationships. Many interviews tell the stories of women obliged to marry at an early age to allow their families to obtain *lovolo* money, and/or

wives, had authority over them. The first official wife had a higher status than that of the following wives who were subordinate to her. With her husband she could take part in problem resolution. She maintained her special status after the death of her husband and, during ceremonies to the ancestors, she was one of the most important forebears evoked by the eldest of the celebrants.

Adam Kuper²⁵ (1981: 68-83; 1982: 108-21), using data collected at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, describes the Tsonga system of bridewealth as a network that bonded individuals and groups in marriage relations that contained a particular set of obligations and rights. Kuper (1982: 110) found that a marriage allowed for other marriages to happen, as the *lovolo* given by the groom's group to the bride's kin was, in turn, used to establish a marriage for the woman's brother or father. He described Tsonga bridewealth as a circuit that linked all marriages together and implied a series of debts (Kuper, 1981: 68-83; 1982: 108-21). *Lovolo* created continuous problems between kin groups and most of the issues brought to legal courts were related to it. He stressed that if a woman divorced her husband, her brother who had married with her *lovolo* sometimes had to divorce his wife as a means to recover the *lovolo* and pay back his former brother-in-law. However, according to Kuper, another alternative was to provide a wife, a daughter, or a young sister or, in exceptional circumstances, one of his own wives for his former brother-in-law (Kuper, 1982: 110-1).

The absence of children in a marriage established with *lovolo* could result in divorce and *lovolo* repayment or in the supply of another woman. A man whose wife died leaving children when the *lovolo* had not been fully given had to complete the offering if he wanted to keep the children. As

²⁵ Kuper based his analysis on information collected by several authors (Junod, 1898; Earthy, 1925; Jaques, 1929; Clerc, 1938).

dynamic creation of practices and moulding of traditions. The current complexity of *lovolo* practices results from the different elements integrated during this historical process. In this way individual and collective identities result from historical transformations.

According to Junod (1898: 87-94), at the end of the nineteenth century the kinship system was characterised by relationships that promoted inequality, subordination and discrimination against women. In Junod's view, women were in a state of clear inferiority, although they were not considered slaves. Women were subordinated to the authority of their own families or to that of their husbands or their maternal uncles. Kinship under the control of older men defined access to land, distribution of work and marriage strategies.

In the household, women had different statuses²⁴ according to their age, their status as senior or junior wives, whether they had children, and whether they were widows or slaves. A young girl was submitted to the authority of her eldest sister and brother, her parents and her grandparents. As a wife she was subordinate to her mother-in-law and to her husband's parents. But when her sons married she could exercise her authority over her daughters-in-law and offspring.

Individual ranking within the homestead depended on the kinship system, as the persons classified as brother, father, or uncle had authority irrespective of their age. In addition, the order of the birth of a child and his/her mother's status could give or withdraw authority. Thus, the children born of the first wife, even if younger than siblings of other

²⁴ Several studies show that women have different statuses in the same household and that a woman's status changes over her life cycle and within the same society (sister, wife, elder, queen, etc.) (Wolf, 1974: 157-72; Lamphere, 1974: 97-112; Collier, 1974: 89-105; Meigs, 1990: 101-12; Sanday & Goodenough, 1990: 101). There is not only one gender model but a multiplicity of gender discourses within the same household or within the same person (at the same time or over time). Positions of women vary in relation to different categories of men. Different and sometimes conflicting interests exist among women (Wolf, 1974: 157-72). Women are actors who are trying to maximise gain and are not only seeking to minimise problems (Collier, 1974: 89-105).

ritual as something humiliating for the woman. My discussion with informants led me to believe that to maintain such a stand both partners needed to have parents who agreed with this option, otherwise they would prefer to comply with their parents' or grandparents' wishes to avoid causing family tension. It is unusual to see children going against the desire of their parents on such issues.

Currently in southern Mozambique *lovolo* ceremonies are required and carried out by most families. Data from the last census in 1997 indicate that in Maputo 32.6 per cent of couples live in *de facto* unions and 10.9 per cent are officially married. Both categories can include couple married with the *lovolo*²³ (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 1998: 11). Most of the people who belong to the southern Mozambican ethnic groups and social classes comply with the *lovolo* ceremonies. Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel also performed the *lovolo* in 1998, a situation that surprised many who knew Graça's stand against this practice in the 1980s.

Rights, obligations and status

In southern Mozambique, as elsewhere, marriage ceremonies establish kinship relationships that define rights and obligations according to prevalent practices and rules that take their origin from customary or legal sources in a dynamic and changing process.

The impact of colonisation led to confrontations and profound change in perceptions, in social practice and structure. After independence, the rejection of customary laws and practices as a way to destroy old relationships of domination and subordination promoted a great transformatory process and allowed the integration of influences in a

²³ It is worth noting that new legislation adopted in 2003 allows couples married by the performance of the *lovolo* to register their marriages officially.

women wearing the same *capulana*, is required and this group has to receive some kind of training to perform the dancing and singing. The groom has to prepare a lunch for his own family and the bride's delegation, which involves all the preparation mentioned above.

Most of the people that I met who did not perform the *lovolo* explained that they had financial problems or that they had failed to organise the ceremonies but that they wished to do so as soon as all the necessary conditions had been met. Sometimes in the process of preparing for a *lovolo* ceremony unforeseen events change the priorities of the couple. Usually these ceremonies as well as religious and civil marriages are planned several years in advance to allow for the necessary saving to take place. To support the cost of the *lovolo* presents and the several feasts that have to be financed some degree of contribution in cash or kind from friends, family and godparents is often expected in both the groom and the bride's house. Time also is necessary to prepare all the logistical aspects of the ceremonies. The degree of sophistication of the ceremonies and difficulties encountered in the preparation of the ceremonies depend both on the economic status of the families involved and of the godparents, and how costly their requests are.

Even if its performance has to be delayed for economical or practical reasons it is the desire of most Mozambican couples to formalise their union with the *lovolo* ceremony. Independent of social class, level of education, religion, ethnical group and sex, most Mozambicans wish to comply and do comply with the ceremonies. Among the various people I interviewed very few did not practise the *lovolo* ceremonies (see the introduction of the thesis). Most of the people I spoke to did not envisage that they would not perform the *lovolo* ceremonies. The few who decided not to carry out the ceremony did so mainly because they felt it is or was - when they thought about its performance - contradictory to their religious or philosophical beliefs and considered or - and may still consider - the

requirements and sensitivities. On the day of the ceremony, a small bridal delegation waits for the groom's representatives. Lunch is usually given to the bride's family, which often gathers for the event. The groom has to prepare a small delegation that, as a group, has to reach the bride's house at the agreed time. A small amount of money is needed as a present "to open the doors" and the groom usually has to supply money for transport for the members of his team.

For the *lovolo* ritual, the bride's family needs to obtain all the ingredients for food and beverage preparation; gather or rent tables, chairs, plates, pots, a sound system and means of keeping food cold; invite friends, family and church members; identify people to help to prepare food, to serve, to clean; select people to be in the *lovolo* negotiation with the groom's representatives. The groom's family buys all the presents requested in the *lovolo* list given by the bride's relatives, selects the group of representatives that will offer the *lovolo*, invites relevant family members to receive the delegation on their return and prepares food for all of the participants. It is also necessary to consider that family members may gather at the bride's house days before the ceremony. They will live in the bride's house, where they contribute to the preparation but where they also have to be fed. A lot of work is made the responsibility of the groom and the bride when they are in charge of managing these aspects. But some aspects related to contacting older members of the families, mostly for the ceremonies to the ancestors, have to be coordinated by the couple's parents.

The *xigiyane* ceremony usually gathers a large group of people in the bride's house to accompany her with a dowry (mats, bedclothes, cooking utensils, clothes) to her husband's house. These offerings can be considered, to a certain extent, a return of the *lovolo* presents. Here also a small amount of money is required to gain entry into the house as well as for transportation. For this ritual a large group of people, mainly of

acquired through a gift by a man as was stressed during the revolutionary period (Machel, 1974: 15; Organização da Mulher Moçambicana, 1988: 19).

In the same vein it is important to notice that the bride and the women in general receive most of the presents that complement the money given as *lovolo*. In Sandra and Paulo's *lovolo* four women (including Sandra) and one man received at least a piece of cloth according to their status. The father tends to receive more, or more expensive items, than the mother, the grandmothers and the aunt. The bride also tends to receive expensive presents that might equal or be of higher value than the fathers' present in monetary value. This pattern is very common and contrasts with the idea that the *lovolo* benefits only the father or the brother. Junod (1996: V1, 108-24) did not mention in the ceremony that he described how the hoes were distributed and whether they were shared. He only mentioned repeatedly that the *lovolo* of a daughter was used to *lovoliwa* a wife for a son or for the father himself (Junod, 1996: V1, 470-4). When the *lovolo* was given in cattle or hoes it seems that they were exclusively under the father's control as were most of the means of production and herd. Thus, transformation of presents offered for *lovolo* ceremonies shows the evolution in power relations between individuals in the household.²²

In a middle-class urban setting, organisation of the *lovolo* process consists in the preparation of the three ceremonies. All of these ceremonies require a great deal of organisation and expense for the groom's and the bride's families and it is difficult to identify who bears most of the costs and difficulties.

The *hikombela mati* ceremony requires that a list has been established by the bride's family that satisfies as far as possible the different individuals'

²² Ngubane (1987: 179-81), who studied Zulu marriages, stresses that the transformation of *lobola* (the Zulu name for a practice similar to *lovolo*) with the introduction of money brought disadvantages for women as it led to the loss of the beasts that the bride and her mother used to get. According to her, modification in *lobola* practices also implied increased association of the institution with a purchase, with a loss of the symbolic value of gift exchange.

list:

(...) I didn't want any money but some people said "two millions, one millions". I said "no, neither 500 000 MZM, I just want the ceremony and the goods". They said "no, the groom will think that you are unhappy for some reason". That's why we established 100 000 MZM.
(Sandra's father, interview, January 1999)

As Sandra's father explained, the establishment of this monetary value is a compromise. Sandra's perspective influenced her kin's group request as she was expected to know what demands on the groom would be compatible with his abilities. She would also take into account that the money spent by Paulo in the *lovolo* ceremony would influence his ability to pay for the later ceremonies (*xigiyane*, and the civil and religious marriages). It was also important that Sandra not be seen as the object of an exchange. Thus, she was involved in every stage of preparation and bought most of the presents to be offered to her relatives. This aspect is important as it shows that some people want to give to the ceremony a clearly symbolic characteristic, trying as far as possible to avoid the idea that they are selling their daughter. It also shows the active role that the bride plays and the evolution in the status of women in society.

The bride is not a passive victim of a negotiation that occurs behind her back. The participation of many women in all the phases of the ceremony also stresses the present day involvement of women in the ceremony. The grandmother carried out the *muphahlu* in Sandra's house; women were praying, cooking, singing, dancing; they also counselled the bride and enacted an ambiguous role in certain exchanges during the ritual situation. This contrasts with the notion of the woman's submission, which involves the unquestioning serving of a man and the idea that she is

(Gaza province) cattle is still requested for *lovolo*. In urban settings, *lovolo* varies from a symbolic amount of money (*gratificação*) to several millions of Meticaís²¹ in cash, money to which it is necessary to add clothes for the bride, her father and mother and both her grandmothers. It is worthwhile noting that even in case of *gratificação* the expenses supported by the groom are still high because of the other goods (mainly clothes and food) that need to be bought.

The *lovolo* list contains ambiguities from the moment it is drawn up. The bride's group needs to evaluate carefully their strengths and weaknesses before deciding what will constitute the *lovolo*. It is a difficult balance to achieve. First, they have to make sure that the groom will be able to afford their demands and that the bride will not run away with her lover before the *lovolo* ritual. Secondly, they have to be cautious so that excessive requests will not result in the bad treatment of the woman if the groom feels that he has given a great deal and thus is entitled to mistreat his wife. Finally, they need to be prepared to give back the *lovolo* in case she is "returned" for reasons such as infertility. For this specific reason, the *lovolo* is often substituted by a *gratificação* a symbolic amount of money far below the cost of the clothes given to the bride and her parents, which do not have to be returned in case of separation. Even when a large amount of money is involved, *lovolo* is usually not returned in case of separation. This is maybe one of the most important changes that have occurred in urban areas, where performing the *lovolo* ritual does not signify that women have to remain in a bad relationship without possibility of divorce because of the *lovolo* money.

The discussion about what to include in the *lovolo* list takes place with members of the family (particularly uncles and aunts), who belong to different generations and who have different perspectives. For example, Sandra's father was persuaded to add a certain amount of money to their

²¹ In November 2004, 1 US\$ = 23 000 MZM

Coca-Cola. In rural areas cattle could still be requested, although the war with RENAMO had decimated livestock numbers.

In the same period, data were gathered and discussions held in preparation for the OMM Extraordinary Conference held in 1984. Echoing the old debate about the increase of the *lovolo*, one of the issues focused on by men and women at the meetings was the "symbolic" meaning of the ceremony that linked two families. By symbolic was meant that the amount asked to celebrate the union in the past had been very low and without commercial value. Many people asked for the establishment of an amount of money to be given as *lovolo*, as the chiefs had done in the past. A value that varied between 2 500 to 4 000 MZM was suggested. However, it was also stressed that asking for too little money could be used against the woman to humiliate her as the husband could say "you are not worth anything reason why your father did not ask for much".

From the data presented it seems that *lovolo* has always been performed with the most prestigious goods that existed at the time, even before the colonial period, the monetarisation of the economy, and the introduction of capitalism. Even when the *lovolo* was constituted of seeds or agricultural products, these were the most precious possessions available at that time. Since the first information gathered, a constant increase in the quantity of goods and of money requested is registered. Simultaneously, regional differences as well as a social differentiation between common citizens' daughters and rulers' daughters have been observed in terms of the monetary value requested (Santos, 1891: 92; Junod, 1898: 89; 1996: V1, 118). This is why it is more appropriate to refer to *lovolo* practices and *lovolo* ceremonies, with an emphasis on the plural.

Currently, the amount requested varies from zone to zone, and depends on the education of the girls and the conceptions that the bride and the bride's family have. In some area as, for example, in Chibuto District

slogans "*abaixo lobolo*" (down with *lovolo*) and denounce *lovolo* along with obscurantism and other wrongs. Individuals, if found performing *lovolo* ceremonies, would be denounced, judged by popular tribunals and punished. For example, during the second OMM conference in 1976, it was established that a woman who accepted *lovolo* after the meeting would not be chosen for any leadership position within the organisation (Welch, 1982: 23).

Consequently, in the 1980s, as a way of avoiding political problems, people changed the name *lovolo* and referred to it as a *gratificação*, adopting religious people's way of naming this ritual. This was a way to maintain the practice and, for some time, to disguise a hidden transaction. *Gratificação* is a compromise between the need to thank the bride's parents and to show respect to the ancestors and the freedom of the groom (sometimes supported by the bride) to offer an amount of money considered symbolically adequate. *Gratificação* binds the two families, allows the performance of ancestors' rituals, and gives more freedom to the bride who does not feel linked to her husband because of the need to repay the *lovolo* in the case of separation, thus allowing for an easier divorce.

Nevertheless, despite the official prohibition on performing the ceremony, the money asked for *lovolo* was still increasing. In 1983 it varied from region to region, priced at between 10 000 Meticaís (MZM) and 80 000 MZM²⁰ in addition to the other presents given. At that time the goods requested for *lovolo* reflected the most sophisticated pattern of consumerism and, in urban areas, had long since changed from cattle to money and other material gifts such as jewellery, clothing, wine, beer, and

the participation of women in productive activities, the development of scientific and cultural education, and the modification of relationships between couples.

²⁰ In 1983, one USD was exchanged for 40 MZM on the official market, but reached around ten times more on the black market.

In 1975, with the arrival of Independence, the new Constitution of the Popular Republic of Mozambique established legal equality between men and women. Apart from moving away from the old customary and colonial structures of power, FRELIMO's Marxist-Leninist¹⁸ stance aimed at transforming the roles of men and women in society, as well as their political and economic relationships. Women were understood to be oppressed by male workers, by the colonial and capitalist society and by men in the family.

As had the colonial State and the missionaries, FRELIMO viewed *lovolo* as the sale of women, and as a ritual that had to be eradicated to create a new society. The system of marriage and the relationship between men and women were considered sources of humiliation for women. Women were exploited in the family as a source of sexual pleasure, as labourers and as producers of new wealth: the children. Thus, possessing women by means of the payment of the *lovolo* was considered a way to increase men's wealth. The issue of *lovolo*, seen as the sale of the women and their reification, was thus central to the analysis and discussion of issues related to polygamy, early marriage, violence against women, divorce, and broadly women's rights and gender relations.

FRELIMO, OMM¹⁹ and other mass organisations fought against old ideas, organizing political campaigns against curandeirismo (traditional healers), initiation rites, *lovolo*, polygamy, extra-marital relations and early marriages. Similar to events that took place during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, campaigns to root out the vestiges of any form of exploitation and tradition were embarked on. In meetings, people would shout the

¹⁸ Engels viewed the establishment of private property and the development of agriculture as the "historical defeat of female sex". He believed that women's oppression would cease with the dissolution of the private property. This analysis has been criticised by feminists who refute the association between the origin of man's control over woman and the establishment of private property or patriarchy.

¹⁹ The women's organisation (OMM) was conceived as the arm of FRELIMO, and implemented FRELIMO's strategy. The process by which the "new" woman would be "constructed" included

Therefore the church breaks completely away from the past. Every Christian must renounce his right to *lovolo*, or be excluded from the communion of believers. (Junod, 1941: 31)

Christian conversion discouraged followers from practising *lovolo*, and promoted canonical marriages. According to Junod (1941: 25-36), the main aspects criticised were the exchange of a woman for goods or currency, that through *lovolo*, a woman was bound forever to her husband's group even after his death, and that she could not recover individual freedom.¹⁶ *Lovolo* was seen as allowing polygyny, encouraging early marriage and marriage without the consent of the woman.

While the missionaries condemned the use of *lovolo*, in the 1930s the colonial authorities established a price to be paid for *lovolo* (2 500 Escudos for a commoner and 4 000 "Escudos" if the woman was the daughter of a chief) with the objective of controlling exchanges of cattle. It also became necessary to report the transfer of cattle from one group to another to the administration (Sachs & Welch, 1990: 92).

Despite missionaries' attempts to abolish the practice among Christians, *lovolo* continued to be performed, sometimes in conjunction with Christian and civil marriages. Christians opted to offer a *gratificação*, which entitled the groom to give a monetary amount below what was usually requested.¹⁷

¹⁶ Junod, himself, believed that *lovolo* practices should be forbidden between Christian people. He proposed that the State should register these marriages, encourage for the request of a lower amount of money and protect the women who want to free themselves from these unions (Junod, 1996: V1, 472-4).

¹⁷ "Amongst the Christian natives a compromise is sometimes adopted. The groom gives the father of the bride a gift which is called *tsakisa*, which is to say, 'make happy, please'. That gift consists generally of a certain number of Pounds sterling, less than the number demanded for a normal *lovolo*. In that way the suitor 'stills the heart' of the father-in-law, who would think it tough to give him his daughter for nothing" (Junod, 1996: V1, 474).

In the 1860s, when the first Mozambicans from the southern region started to seek work in South Africa, *lovolo* negotiations, began to take place in "Pounds Sterling", in parallel to hoes and cattle, whenever available (Harris, 1959: 57; Harries, 1994: 154; Junod, 1996: V1, 254-6). The need to put together money to give *lovolo* was also a powerful motivation for male migration to the mines. At the beginning a Pound Sterling was worth ten hoes¹⁴ and the *lovolo* was fixed by the chiefs at eight Pounds.¹⁵ Junod explains that the amount requested rose to twenty Pounds for a commoner woman and thirty for a woman of a higher status (Junod, 1898: 89). Economic changes not only modified the type of presents given but also the relationships of power between individuals. As *lovolo* in cattle was supplied by the groom's agnates, it created a dependency of younger men on the elders for wives. However, migration, which enabled men to earn their own money, facilitated their independence from the elders even if the latter tended to increase the amounts requested.

In South Africa, men discovered a new ideology and a support in Christian and Zionist churches. The miners brought these religions back home and, between 1880 and 1890, numerous women adopted Christian religions. Christians were of the view that:

[*Lovolo* is] an inferior form of human marriage; it ties the individual to his clan; it encourages cupidity and sensuality; it renders impossible a true Christian family life and constitutes an obstacle to progress and civilisation; it is the basis of a heathen society; it creates a community in which woman works and man idles; the noblest union becomes a business transaction.

¹⁴ Hoes lost their value as money and were substituted by gold coins, which were less corrosive and easier to transport and to hide. However cattle remained a symbolic reference in defining the value of what was to be paid.

¹⁵ A migrant worker earned around three Pounds a month (Feliciano, 1989a: 650).

to a new situation (Gregory, 1982: 115). Bourdieu explains that women are exchanged as a symbol to ensure the reproduction of the social and symbolic capital of men through the production of descendants and acquired status (Bourdieu, 1999: 115).

Very few pre-colonial accounts exist of marriage ceremonies in Mozambique. The stories we have mainly emanate from European missionaries and travellers who viewed this arrangement as an economic transaction. The first written account of *lovolo* is by Frei João dos Santos (1891: 92-5) who visited the coastal area of Sofala between 1586 and 1595 and who referred to differentiations made in the types of goods⁹ offered according to the economic capacity of the prospective groom and the characteristics of the bride. He explained that women were "bought" and that the purchase was made with "cows, pieces of fabric, *contas* (iron or copper rings¹⁰) or hoes" (Santos, 1891: 92).

Junod in his monograph Usos e Costumes dos Bantu, first published in 1912-13, provided a short history¹¹ of *lovolo* (1996: V.1, 254-6). He wrote that before colonial occupation, "mats and wicker-objects" were substituted with red beads and that the use of cows in marriage ceremonies only began in the 18th century.¹² Between 1840 and 1870 hoes¹³ became an important commodity. Hoes were stored and sold in case of need and used as special currency for *lovolo* ceremonies instead of the beads still in use.

⁹ Since the tenth century, the coast of Mozambique had been regularly visited by traders, mainly from Asia, who established themselves to deal in successive phases, first in gold, then in ivory and lastly in slaves (the latter between 1759 and 1900). Trading of ivory, slaves and articles of iron and copper for imported pieces of fabric and beads extended beyond the limits of the local kingdoms.

¹⁰ Junod (1996: VI, 254) refers to two ring types: a small one called *nkarharha* and a big one called *muvalwana*.

¹¹ In southern Africa, under the influence of historical factors, administrative policies, religious influences and economic changes, a variety of modifications have been noticed in bridewealth practices (Schapera, 1941; Kuper, 1982).

¹² However, because of endemic tsetse fly and raids by the Swazi, and later, in 1820, by the Ngoni people, cows were scarce in the south of Mozambique, which made it difficult to use them as currency for *lovolo* (Junod, 1996: VI, 254-6).

¹³ These were first controlled by local blacksmiths and then by the Portuguese and were exchanged for elephant tusks (Junod, 1996: VI, 254-6; 1898: 88).

daughter. Because he was strong. He demonstrated his value, his strength (...) Speculation is the exaggeration of the things they are asking now. (Albertina, interview, November 1999)

Oral reports stress that in the past *lovolo* was mainly symbolic and performed with local products such as seeds or agricultural products. Albertina, a 65-year-old Rhonga woman, synthesises this opinion. She transmitted the common feeling that, in the past, no commercialisation was implied in the transaction. She explained the symbolism of the thread of *nkakana* associated with the link that united the affines and the man's offerings, which demonstrated his bravery and his capacity to defend and to feed his family. The issue I thus would like to address is whether the changes in presents requested imply a modification in the meaning of the ceremony. Does the apparent increase in the material dimension of *lovolo* signify a reduction in its spiritual value or does the spiritual meaning *lovolo* ceremonies deploy explain the reason for their appeal in contemporary urban Mozambique?

As a way of maintaining tradition and respect for the elders, but at the same time avoiding the commoditisation of *lovolo*, Paulo and Sandra and their families accepted the performance of *lovolo*, which entailed a small amount of money (100,000 MZM). To situate Sandra's *lovolo* in the Mozambican context I would like to give a summary of the evolution of discourse and practices since the middle of the sixteenth century. A recurrent complaint is the way in which the monetary value of *lovolo* is increasing in an uncontrolled way. Ambiguities that relate to the commercialisation of the practice are not recent issues and anthropologists have diverged, with some seeing the woman as "the most precious good" (Lévi-Strauss, 1969: 60-1). Others suggest that the practices may have originated in a context devoid of economic interest and thus should not be seen from an economic perspective but rather as a contemporary response

presents requested for *lovolo*. Families living in rural area still can request a cow on the hoof, following the practice in their area. In one family, I witnessed the request of clothes for the bride's namesake. In another family, an aunt who played a special role because she had educated the bride received a piece of fabric and a blouse. At Sandra's *lovolo*, her father asked for a hat and a walking stick, accessories that are not always requested. These are the kinds of family specificities that informants referred to.

Informants also commented on the families' specific types of "*savoir faire*" deployed during the performance of the joking repartee established during the *lovolo* ritual, the songs, the ritual speeches for the ancestors, or when the bride or her relatives were dressed by her in laws. These performances can be specific to a specific family as some songs or attitudes can be defined beforehand, but they are also the result of improvisation by participants. To perform a mass during the *lovolo* ceremony is also a novelty with regard to the past, which shows the adaptability of the ceremony and its capacity to integrate new value systems. It is not unusual to see families venerating their ancestors and a God and thus combining in the same ceremony the two references in the same way as they perform the *lovolo* and the religious marriage.

The most precious goods

Before, they used to bring animal skins, or a thread of *nkakana* was brought as a gift, because nothing was needed. It meant something of an alliance. The idea related to the animal skin was to show the boy's bravery, because it was to be him who hunted and found the animal. Then he took it to the in-laws. This meant that he would be able to protect and sustain their

Religious songs and dances are usually seen when women's groups from the church of the bride's family are invited to the *lovolo* ceremony in the bride's house.

For *lovolo* ceremonies, as well as for the civil or religious marriage, participants wear their most beautiful outfits, jewellery or accessories that increase the ceremonial importance and show the special status of these events. Women display a variety of colourful *capulanas* or up-to-date clothes, while men tend to wear elegant suits that mix in a palette of tastes, cultural references and expression. This characteristic is coherent with Junod's description, which explained that on *lovolo* occasions the young people wore their most beautiful clothes and adornments and the boys carried their little leather shields (Junod, 1996: V1, 108-24).

During my fieldwork I was able (as I explain in the introduction to this thesis) to discuss and participate in ceremonies with people and families from different groups (Rhonga, Matsua, Bitonga, Copi, Changana). Because the *lovolo* is performed in the bride's parents' house I saw ceremonies in different districts in southern Mozambique. However, I was not able to observe any fundamental differences between the practices, neither was any difference stressed in the discussions I held with participants in ceremonies that involved families from different ethnic origins or geographic regions. Identifying differences was not an objective of my study as to do so I would have had to undergo a rigorous collection of practices in several families of each ethnic group, taking into account their geographical origin and class. Where I was interested in and aware of the need to capture any diversity in the practices I observed, my interest extended only to confirming the link between *lovolo* practices and the spiritual world.

When tackling issues of differences in practices, people usually refer to families' characteristics. These specificities mainly have to do with the

Possibilities vary with the economic condition of the families, their access to facilities and the place where the *lovolo* is carried out. Usually, the *lovolo* ceremony is performed in the house of the bride's parents. If the parents are not living together, the ceremony is carried out in the house of the bride's father if the bride's mother was *lovoliwa* or in the bride's mother's house if she was not *lovoliwa*. This practice relates to the recognised social lineage established through *lovolo*, which defines who should ask for and receive the *lovolo*. In the first case the bride belongs to her father's lineage and part of the *lovolo* is owed to her father and her mother while in the second case she belongs to her mother's lineage, which is entitled to receive the *lovolo*. Belonging to a lineage implies a special relationship with the lineage's forefathers and thus defines the place where the *muphahlu* has to be carried out.

Families' tastes and preferences might dictate the preparation of special beverages with maize, millet or sorghum, which are considered typical for such ceremonies. These beverages are served alongside whisky, wine, beer, coca-cola and other soft drinks in wealthy families. Traditional Mozambican dishes can be offered to some of the guests while others will be served with dishes that require an occidental type of preparation. It is also common to see people from a higher class enjoying traditionally prepared food and beverages and poor relatives or friends delighting in a good wine, whisky or an exotic and expensive kind of dish.

Similarly, a multiplicity of musical expressions can take place during the *lovolo* ritual itself. Religious songs are not infrequently heard in support of the performance of traditional songs and dances, and modern music played on cassette or CD player is often listened to. While the traditional dances and songs are seen in most of the phases of the *lovolo* process the inclusion of modern music can be witnessed, depending on preferences of bride and groom and on access to a sound system, at the bride's house on the night of the *lovolo*, when the party is mainly for young people.

will reduce the cost and the energy spent on preparing the different ceremonies it requires a very high level of organisation and a large capital outlay. Usually families prefer to perform the different ceremonies one at a time when they manage to save enough money to do so. The order of the different ceremonies (*lovolo*, civil and religious marriage) will vary according to their needs and the pressure exercised on them as well as their own priorities established from beliefs and options.

The main changes observed in the ceremonies are related to the material dimension of the ceremonies caused by the transformation of the socio-economic situation of the families involved, which implies modification in terms of the preparation of the ceremonies, the way people dress, what they eat and drink, the presents offered and the types of song and music played.

Preparations differ from the past as means of transport and communication facilitate contact between relatives and the possibility of families meeting to organise the events. I saw a mobile phone being used by a bride's family to find out how far away the groom's delegation bringing the *lovolo* was from the bride's house. While in some ceremonies in rural or urban areas I witnessed *lovolo* presents being carried by public transport and on foot I also saw groom's representatives arriving in luxury cars.

For women who prepare food for the ceremony, access to gas, electricity and a fridge to keep the ingredients cold facilitate some of their preparation. These facilities also allow for substantial changes in all the process of preparation and type of food offered. Poor rural families without access to tap water and electricity still will have to collect a large quantity of wood and water and prepare the beverage prepared out of maize well in advance.

ankle-bone of the goat was tied in a belt around the bride's hips as a way to guarantee good fortune and fertility (Junod, 1996: V1, 117).

The process described by Junod recalls the performances described above in Paulo and Sandra's *lovolo*. The main elements are still enacted in a both joking and violent kind of ritual whose main elements are the difficult entrance in the bride's home, the counting of the *lovolo* goods, the joking insults exchanged between the two families and directed to the bride. As Sandra's father explained earlier, in the past, people were really fighting and the "assault" on the bride's village, which was once real, has evolved into a verbal and ritualised fight around money issues. As I have explained the tensions, joking exchanges and ambiguities are constitutive elements of this transformative ritual. The exchanges between the two delegations are the core of the *lovolo* ritual, establishing alliance and kinship between the groups, and are a fundamental element of the recognition of a formal union.

Considered a new practice, and demonstrating an ongoing process of innovation and syncretism, there is a tendency for a greater number of couples to combine several types of marriage rites. The request to perform these different ceremonies is often mentioned on the written *lovolo* document given by the bride's family to the groom's. This document refers then to several symbolic systems.

While Sandra's *lovolo* was in June 1998, it was only in July 2001 that she moved to her new home with Paulo after the civil marriage, the religious marriage and the *xigiyane* ceremony had been carried out. Once, I came across the performance, by one couple, of three different kinds of marriage ceremonies in the space of 24 hours. The *lovolo* was performed on a Friday and the civil and religious marriages on the following day. All these ceremonies were closed by the *xigiyane* ritual. Very few couples, however, manage to perform all the ceremonies over a weekend because even if this

Not infrequently children who to bear the consequences of their parents not performing the *lovolo* ceremony. For example, Chapter 2, Case Study 2 “Assuming responsibility for namesake’s action” describes a situation in which a man has to carry out the *lovolo* of his namesake who died 100 years earlier. Granjo (2005) also gives an example of a *lovolo* performed to try to solve a difficult relationship explained as the result of the lack of *lovolo* to the woman’s family (after 12 years of life in common) and to her mother’s family. Expected consequences on children are thus also a reason for people to carry out the *lovolo* ceremony. As *lovolo* has the magical role of appeasing the spirits of the ancestors and of the living (Chapter 2, Case study 1 “Identity and ancestral namesake”) people try to comply with it and by doing so avoid possible problems and bewitchment.

Conclusion

The structure of the *lovolo* process has remained unchanged with its fundamental three phases: the engagement (*hikombela mati*), the symbolic union (*lovolo*), the separation of the bride from her family and integration into her husband’s family (*xigiyane*). This structure, similar to the process described by Junod in the Maputo city area at the end of the nineteenth century Junod, 1996: V1, 108-24), confirms the maintenance of a reference to a basic set of practices that characterise the process of formalisation of a union between a man and a woman in southern Mozambique.

The ambiguous relationship between the two groups, established by the continual mockery, insults, jokes, lack of cooperation and request for more money, is a characteristic of a ritual between the affines and is part of the anti-structural state enacted in a ritual of transformation. This specificity, described in the Maputo city area at the end of the nineteenth century (Junod, 1996: V1, 108-24) as a characteristic of the *lovolo* process, might

have prompted observers to conclude that the bride's family aims at economical benefit while the rituals have mainly a symbolic objective.

The *lovolo* ceremonies in which I participated illustrate numerous adaptations. One of these adaptations is the tendency for couples to combine several types of marriages. While civil marriages define a link between the couples and the State (civil law), and religious marriage establishes a connection with God, *lovolo* is essential in establishing relationships between the couple, their families, and the ancestors. For those to whom the bond with their ancestral roots is fundamental, the performance of *lovolo* is of utmost importance. I believe that this is the reason why in urban areas a combination of different forms of marriage is common practice showing that individuals have mobilised a multiplicity of identities. This also appears to support the argument advanced by Mbembe (1992: 5) that in the postcolonial state individuals have mobilised a multiplicity of identities.

One of the major changes to the system described in the literature on *lovolo* practices in southern Mozambique is that, currently, in urban areas, the *lovolo* is provided by the groom himself and not by his family even if he receives support from them and from his future wife. Another aspect that is worthwhile noticing is that the *lovolo* received for a daughter is very seldom used to acquire a wife for a son. Repayment of *lovolo* in the case of separation is disappearing, a situation that has freed women from having to live in a bad relationship. An increasing number of people are carrying out *lovolo* with a small amount of money in cash called a *gratificação* in addition to other goods. In addition to the money, an important proportion of the *lovolo* constitutes clothes, which benefit mainly the bride and both her parents. Although of minor impact, a wide range of contemporary influences illustrates the continuous process of adaptation. Many influences have been integrated into the music, the dance, the drink, the food, and the ceremony.

The main finding of my fieldwork is that *lovolo* still constitutes an important practice in urban Mozambican society. It inscribes the individual in a set of kinship and affinal relationships both with the living and with the dead. Therefore, despite the existence of religious or civil forms of marriage, *lovolo* survives because it transcends marriage, and covers areas that are not dealt with by the other forms of union, such as the spiritual relationship with the ancestors. It is precisely this characteristic that makes it unique and that explains much of its persistence.

As a dynamic construction crucial for the establishment of marriage (and the rights and obligations that flow from it for the wife, the husband, the children and relatives); for the definition of social relationships expressed mainly in terms of kinship; and for the affirmation of individual and regional identity, *lovolo* is not a single and monolithic practice. Instead it varies according to group, family and individual points of view on all the issues to which it relates because it is negotiable and interpreted differently. *Lovolo* is a living institution, a sphere where conflicts, negotiations and compromises, creativity, family relationships and love take place. As part of a reflexive process that connects personal and social changes, *lovolo* has a strong impact on gender relations and processes of identity construction among men and women. *Lovolo* is both a result of and a paradigm of gender relationships. Hence, it is a dynamic institution.

Chapter 2

Lovolo, identities and violence: the embodiment of histories and memories



Figure 10: The goods offered are displayed as is the *lovolo* money. The groom's delegation puts some "money for the money" on top of the crate of beer and on most of the items. This is called *xa ku pfula bodhela*, which translates as "to open the bottle" or as a corkscrew.

The sacred is all that which dominates man (sic), and all the more certainly to the extent that man considers himself able to dominate it. Accordingly, amongst other things it includes, if in a secondary position, the storms, forest fires and epidemics that annihilate a population. But also, and principally if in a hidden way, the violence of men themselves, violence seen as external to man and thus confused with the forces that weigh down on him from outside. It is violence which constitutes the true heart and secret soul of the sacred.¹ (Girard, 1998: 46)

As I suggested in the previous chapter, on the one hand, notions of well being are strongly based on harmonious relationships with the ancestors. On the other hand, social problems, disease, and death are often interpreted by spirit mediums as signs from the forefathers of an interruption in the relationship and as a call for repair. In this chapter I explore issues that complement the aspects analysed earlier, such as the people agency and mechanisms that ensure the maintenance of the *lovolo* ritual.

I probe the complex means of coercion that constrain individuals and groups to perform the *lovolo* and that affect their autonomy. I show that a considerable number of people perform *lovolo* to preempt being afflicted by the ancestors or in response to ancestral sanctions. Misfortune, disease and death are seen to constitute violence perpetrated by the ancestors to coerce the living to adopt certain behaviours or respect social norms. This violence thus limits human agency in the same way that laws and other forms of socialisation do. In southern Mozambique, kinship-based power relations use *lovolo*, *inter alia*, to establish family norms.

¹ My translation.

The *lovolo* ceremonies are dynamic and can be shaped and re-shaped years or generations later if a social crisis demands this, thus always allowing for the possibility of negotiation. There are always possibilities of reparation: if a person feels disrespected, for example, a *muphahlu* ritual or a *mhamba* can be performed. The rules and expected behaviours related to the *lovolo* ceremony are flexible and negotiable, and can largely be complied with over time. Descent and affinity can also be redesigned and challenged, as children or adults who belong to one kin group may, with the performance of the *lovolo*, become affiliated to another group.

In this chapter I show how *lovolo* performances are often at the centre of complex disputes where agency/negotiation and coercion/violence exist in the same framework. I explore three case studies that show the consequences of the non-performance of the *lovolo* ritual and indicate the scrutiny of affinal rituals generations later, when unexpected crises occur that are thought to have originated in the absence or inadequate performance of ritual obligations. I discuss the concept of "self", looking at the role of ancestors in an individual's life and showing how this challenges western conceptions of selfhood and agency. I argue that the maintenance of *lovolo* practices, in southern Mozambique, is strongly related to ancestral violence but also works towards the establishment of balanced and stable relationships between the living themselves and between the living and the dead.

The first case study illustrates the complexity of the fragments of selfhood and the relationship of the individual with an elder after whom he or she has been named. This name is called *chará* in Portuguese (*mab'izweni* in Xichangana) and is given to the child several weeks after birth. Children from the same or different generations and with different personalities can be named after the same dead ancestor or living elder. I refer to both the persons who carry the same name as the "namesake". The older namesake directly influences the life of the individual who bears their name and has

a strong influence on the individual's character, behaviour, appearance, likes, and dislikes.

The second case study shows how relationships between different generations can be re-established through *lovolo*. Here the living assume responsibilities for the non-compliance of *lovolo* by a dead relative. In this way, the living redefine social relationships established in the past, and reparation can be performed by individual agency in the course of several generations. Agency is thus constructed within the ongoing ambivalent relationship of fear and veneration that links individuals to their ancestors and to kin.

The third case study demonstrates how *lovolo* impacts differently on men and women and how it tends to promote a deeper subordination of women to the forefathers and to men. The *lovolo* ritual, as an expression of the symbolic system, informs gendered relationships and interacts with the practical world within specific power and knowledge relations. This case study also shows that contradictions occur in the interpretation of disease and death and in the way that divination facilitates the elaboration of different narratives.

Case study 1: Identity and ancestral namesake

In June of 1998, Sandra and Paulo performed the *lovolo*, a ceremony that has been described and analysed in the previous chapter. Three days after the ritual, their son, Elton, was born. When he was two months old, Elton received his "traditional name" (*vitu ra ntumbuluku*), also known as the "great name". The traditional name is chosen from the names of the paternal and maternal forefathers. Choosing the "great" name is crucial as the namesake will define characteristics and behaviour of the child and will provide the child starts with a connection to the world of the dead.

Paulo describes the role of his namesake in protecting him, and the importance of identifying a good namesake for a child:

He is the one who has warded off the malignant spirits. For example, when they want to attack me he's the one who will defend me. If there's an attempt at bewitchment, someone can undertake witches to do ill, someone can undertake witchcraft against me, so he's the one who will see it first, to defend me so that I don't come to harm. Any and all traditional ceremonies held in my house, when directed toward me, I have to evoke his name. Grandpa Yasi, I ask for this thing here to go well for me, that I manage to achieve such and such. In day-to-day life when anything goes wrong for me, in my heart I request, and I really do ask. Why don't you help me, namesake? And at times I even get angry. Why is it that my namesake can't help me in some other way, not this one? It's involuntary, because I've got it in my head, I believe in him. (Paulo, interview, January 1999)

As Paulo explains, the namesake is considered to have great power over the daily experience of the living. Through the person who carries his or her name, a forefather enjoys a new life and determines, to a certain extent, the life of his descendant.

Elton was given the "great" name of his father, Muthiyasi, and use of the diminutive Yasi, which is also Elton's paternal grandfather's name. Paulo describes the similarities between himself and his namesake:

He died before I was born. He was a very good person. Tall and thin. He used to work in South Africa. When he

came he would be with his friends, he would drink cashew fruit *tontonto* (liquor). He paid no attention to his wife and kids. They say I'm just like him. For example, in terms of physiognomy they say that we're identical, and my manner is also just like his, very quiet, a joker. When it's time to horse around, I get into it so much that I split a gut. (Paulo, interview, January 1999)

The namesake manifests him or herself in various ways and can request the person to perform specific actions as signs of respect and veneration, such as buying a white cloth to put under their pillow or a bottle of white wine for *kuphahla*.

The giving of a name to a child is a time of tension and of questioning for the family. In choosing a name, the parents try to interpret the sensibility of the forefathers. When Elton became restless and started crying every night, it was immediately understood that this could be related to this name. As Paulo explained, the name might "fit" or it might not.

It is necessary to try different names. It might be accepted by the forefathers immediately and there is no problem. Or this name might not be accepted because amongst the forefathers there is somebody who thinks differently and manages to convince the others that he is the one who has to give the name because he wants a *chará* (namesake). They consult each other. And if you give a different name you will not see peace, you will feel pain or fever, a disease, until the name is the one defined by them. Giving a name is a way to show respect and venerate them. For the forefathers, giving their name is the way to get reincarnated and be remembered as an ancestor. Some of them might be jealous because their name is not used.

Through consultation with a healer, the forefather who wants to give his name can be identified. (Paulo, interview, January 1999)

Paulo and Sandra sought divination to understand the causes of Elton's afflictions. The diviner identified that the disease was not related to Elton's father's kin, but was a problem related to Sandra's group. Sandra's parents consulted another diviner who found out, by throwing the bones (*tinhlolo*), that there was a problem related to the *lovolo* of Alberta, Sandra's mother. Sandra's parents already knew about this issue, which had emerged in consultations with diviners about other problems but which had never been solved. For Alberta's *lovolo*, Sandra's father had respected the requests of her parents and did not feel he had neglected anything. The diviner explained that Alberta's old maternal aunt was unhappy that she had not been offered a *capulana* during the *lovolo* of her niece in 1973. A *mhamba* (the sacrifice for the ancestors) had to be performed and a *capulana* had to be offered following the instruction of the diviner.

This *mhamba* was performed in Sandra's mother's aunt's home, as she was the eldest representative of Sandra's maternal group. During the ceremony, the forefathers were informed that Sandra's father, their son-in-law, had brought presents. They were also told of Sandra's *lovolo* and Elton's birth. However, neither Elton's disease nor the demand of the old maternal aunt was actually mentioned. A chicken was killed, and a bolt of cloth and a headscarf were given to the old lady. It was assumed that this would solve Elton's problem, which it did.

The case study shows the potential tension and difficulty embodied in *lovolo*.² Elton, Paulo and Sandra were not directly responsible for the

² In Chapter 1 I discuss the symbolism of the *kulovola wansati* ceremony and describe and analyse the conflicts and tensions associated with its preparation and realisation. Such tension and anxiety is not a characteristic of the *lovolo* ritual, but can be attributed to the relationships between the living and between the living and spirit beings.

problems with which they were confronted. Sandra's mother's maternal aunt used the occasion of the birth and naming of Elton to express her discontent. She caused disturbances in the life of Sandra's mother's descendants, and Sandra's baby became the victim of the family malaise. This raises certain questions, such as whether problems like this are the result of the fundamentally ambivalent relationship between kin and between the living and the ancestral spirits. How can ritual processes not be respected when their neglect brings such troubling consequences? How can one "forget" to give part of the *lovolo* present when such consequences may be expected?

The family is usually consulted about who should receive *lovolo* presents. In some cases both grandmothers receive goods, in others neither. If a grandmother dies her sister stands in for her and succeeds her, thereby inheriting her status. Relatives who stand in for the deceased, however, do not cut across gender lines. For example, a brother cannot take his sister's place. Seniority rules prevail, but the number of women to receive goods depends on factors such as individual charisma and relationship with the bride. Family, regional, and group norms are also important in determining who receives the *lovolo* presents and what presents they receive.

If we consider Elton's restlessness, his parents' sleepless nights and worry, the need to involve both Sandra and Paulo's parents, the cost of the two visits to the diviners, the expenses and the time needed for the organisation of the *kuphahla* ceremony, the upsets caused by the old aunt were considerable. Moving away from static notions of identity and culture, offering a *capulana* and a headscarf to an old lady to solve the restlessness of a young child is part of the system of beliefs about health that Paulo and Sandra share with their family. Most southern Mozambicans, despite their adoption of different religions (Paulo and Sandra belong to the Catholic Church), negotiate old and new beliefs in a

myriad of complex ways.

Rituals to the ancestors are negotiable. In this case, the gifts present a solution to a resentment born 15 years previously during the *lovolo* of Sandra's mother. The *lovolo* ceremony can be practically re-shaped or symbolically re-enacted (giving goods to the old aunt) in a process of crisis resolution, and proves the possibility of substantiating a claim and legitimising a request. This case highlights the ability of the woman to address what she considers her right through her dead namesake who, through spiritual strength, disturbs Elton's health. The issue is resolved in secret so as not to compound implicit social conflicts. According to Paulo:

We could not just go there to see the aunt and explain to her that such and such happened and say that we discovered that she is the one responsible for these troubles. No, this is not possible. She cannot suspect that we know. (Paulo, interview, January 1999)

Discontent is not directly expressed because many human beings are believed to have supernatural powers, which they can use to harm others. A living person and his or her namesake can be seen as sharing the same feelings. If a person is unhappy, a dead person may also feel the same way and may help the living to assuage his or her unhappiness. The opposite is also true: if a namesake has a problem, he or she will communicate it to the living person that bears the same name. Paulo explains:

If I am happy, my namesake is happy. If I have trouble, my namesake feels it. If I am angry with somebody, he is too. (Paulo, interview, January 1999)

Thus, individuals try to avoid rancour, anger or hatred. There is a strong interdependence between individuals and their namesakes, which benefits

both the living and the spirits. Individuals are involved in a phenomenological chain of events that connect people who are related by affinity. Their relationship is based not only on shared blood links within their lineage, but also on shared alliance and affinity links established through *lovolo* and spirit possession.³

Paulo refers to the relationship between the individual and his or her namesake as a form of reincarnation, as do some anthropologists (Feliciano, 1998: 320). Naming children after ancestors ensures that the ancestors are always remembered. In this context, reincarnation is strictly limited to within the kinship;⁴ individuals can only be named after maternal or paternal forefathers of the same sex. Reincarnation in this sense is, however, more like a renewal as there is no previous life since there is no real end to life. This explains the ontological duty to get married and to have children, especially boys (in patrilineal society), to survive physical death and have one's name preserved.

In addition to having a genealogy of kinship relations, individuals also belong to the genealogy of the spirit after whom they are named. People shift between the mundane kinship and the other more restricted form, which is known to the kin who are familiar with the "great names", which they frequently use to refer to each other. The roles individuals play as person and persona are not confused. By using different names, individuals play different roles in the network of relationships. Each name they use is associated with a relationship.

For example, when Manuel (Paulo's father) wants to remind his son of his

³ See Chapters 3 and 4 on spirit possession.

⁴ Forefathers can also be given an animal such as a hen or a cow as a way to show veneration. That animal will be respected as the person was respected in life. Generally, when there is any need to kill the animal, the spirit will be asked permission and it will be suggested to him or her that they accept another animal as vehicle (Bagnol, 2001: 70). Similar situations among the Shona have been referred to by Gelfand (1959: 94) and Bourdillon (1976: 269). Spirits of vengeance from another kinship group can also choose a person in the family of their offender to reincarnate, as a way to oblige them to pay the debt.

responsibilities towards himself he calls Paulo "father". This is a form of respect, which is of extreme ceremonial importance and which has many implications for everyday life and relationships. By using this name, Manuel establishes the same relationship with Paulo as he had with his own father because of Paulo's namesake, Yasi, which was the name of Manuel's father. Similarly, Manuel relates in the same way to Paulo's son who shares the same namesake. Both Paulo and Elton reincarnate Manuel's father, Yasi. On the occasions that Manuel calls them "father", he treats them with the respect he owes to his own father and in exchange he puts himself under their protection as a son would. In so doing he expects a higher level of responsibility and wisdom from them.

Sandra, Elton's mother, gives her son the same respect that she accords her husband or would give to her husband's grandfather if he were alive. This special relationship makes constant reference to ancestors who were known and respected by the living, and who, in addition, acquire with death a strong power over the living.

The individual's namesake is thought to have an important role in determining the perceptions of the individual and the decisions he or she makes. The ancestor namesake, like other ancestors, communicates with the individual through dreams and other signs, and can have good or bad influence in his or her life. In addition to being interrelated with their namesake, individuals are also connected to all the ancestors of the paternal and, to a lesser extent, maternal group, on whom they also depend. This shows the multiple fragments of the selfhood of individuals and deconstructs the notion of a unitary model of the person.

Individuals have multiple identities and may navigate from one aspect to another, sometimes having to reconcile different positions. A person, as the "reincarnation" of relatives who had their own life, experience, and agency, has a complex identity that can shift from one fragment of self to

the other. The individual might adopt different positions fluidly, according to the pressure exercised on him or her and the possibility (historical, social, psychological, or economical) of compromising, renouncing or assuming certain positions. Shifting and fluidity are the characteristics of male and female identities according to the emphasis they give to their various fragments and the level of contradiction.

Over generations individuals perpetuate not only the name of their ancestors but also their physical characteristics and their personalities. Individuals carry out events in their lives in a continuous process of transformation, which gives expression to a circular notion of time. Dijk explains:

Representation of the past, such as the ancestors being considered the living dead in the present, reflect therefore a profound orientation towards the past as potential time for the now. In other words the future is moving "backward" and does not allow for linear progression.

(Dijk, 2000: 139)

Cyclical time, however, is not incompatible with future planning. Many elements, such as accumulated knowledge about agricultural production or child rearing, illustrate an anticipation of tomorrow. Furthermore, where past events have to be rectified, this is done from the perspective of ensuring a better future for the living. Cosmological representation of time and future is foremost in the individual's understanding and perceptions of life and identity. As reincarnations of dead ancestors, or as living dead, individuals are deeply intertwined with the past, and actions performed in the present may depend on past events. As in genetics, where previous mating patterns affect the health of the living and the unborn, the lives and actions of ancestors have consequences for the living and unborn. Knowing the history of a family and the type of spirits it represents makes

it possible to predict problems that might rise. It is on the basis of this knowledge that healers' carry out many of their activities.

Elton's problems could only be explained and solved by a diviner. Two divination rituals were performed to find out the reason for the disease, the person who had sent the disease, and the way to cure it. Divination provides "the context in which old and new, secular and sacred, real and ideal may be contrasted and resolved" (Peek, 1991a: 195). It plays a critical role in the search for knowledge and in defining any action to be taken. The quest for multiple consultations is frequent and expresses the difficulty in getting sufficient knowledge and in carrying out the action suggested. It may also be a result of the skepticism felt toward diviners, the idea that ancestors are not so malevolent and that there is time available before any action is taken.

The diviner centres and interprets the problems in the light of knowledge and understandings shared by the clients. This interpretation is not completely new, nor different from what clients expect; it is mediation between divine and mundane, public and private, current and past events. When the exchange between the living and the ancestors is broken, the ancestors sanction the living and ask for repair. Diviners work within a model that takes into account family relationships. The response to the harm inflicted by an ancestor reflects the pattern of kinship relations. According to Devisch,

the oracle orders the facts according to the interlinking-structural model, which involves law / prohibition - infringement - curse - sanction - affliction or death (Devisch, 1991: 126).

In southern Mozambique, as in southern Africa generally, and for

particular peoples, such as the Nyole of eastern Uganda⁵ (Whyte, 1991: 154), three categories of agent of misfortune are believed to exist. These are senior relatives, sorcerers, and foreign spirits.⁶ There is gradation in the fear people have of these spirits. Witches and unquiet spirits are the most feared,⁷ while the aggression of the ancestors only indicates the need to win their protection by the performance of rituals. However, accusations of witchcraft can also occur between agnates and affines, widows being the most common victims of this attribution.

Ancestors know every daily event in the lives of the living. Ancestors may be benevolent, rewarding individuals and giving them protection. They bestow on the living health, rain, fertility and prosperity (Berglund, 1976: 197-208; Junod, 1996: V2, 328-367). The spirits can remove illness and misfortunes and can solve social problems, such as those relating to work or to witchcraft.

The interrelation and symbiosis between dead and living and the resulting possibility of the dead influencing the lives of their living kin are seen as key issues in the interpretation of different types of misfortune. Ancestors are thought to be easily offended. The ancestors are powerful and are able to punish. Ancestors are seen to resort to punishment where their descendents have not complied with kinship rituals or have neglected to repay a debt (Berglund, 1976: 262-263). Many people have an unpaid debt, but not all have to face the same problems, as not all ancestors are vindictive. Inherited problems are usually expressed in current tensions

⁵ Whyte (1991: 154) distinguishes: a) the senior relatives (from both matrilineal and patrilineal sides) who can give malediction if their rights are not respected, if the bridewealth has not been redistributed correctly, or if they have not been treated with respect. "Attributing misfortune to these agents emphasised one's identity as a junior kinsman (related to a curser) as a member of a local descent group (descended from a particular forefather) or as a member of a patrilineal clan (associated with a specific clan of spirits). The rituals prescribed to address these causes dramatized kinship identity by bringing kinsmen together for the common expression of moral ideals." b) The sorcerers opposed to those moral, kin-related spirits who act out of envy, jealousy, vengefulness, hatred. c) foreign spirits (*emisambwa, miganda, miswahili*), who are little spirits with no pre-existing relation to the victims (Whyte, 1991: 154).

⁶ In relation to malevolent foreign spirit, see Chapter 4.

⁷ In Chapters 3 and 4, I deal with different kinds of foreign spirits and vengeance spirits.

between the living. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to wait for a crisis to perform a sacrifice, the rituals are done preventatively and regularly as part of a cycle of exchange between living relatives and between living and dead kin. Failure to respect affines, agnates or the maternal group might create animosity amongst the people themselves and with their dead namesakes.

The relationship between ancestors and the living has thus both positive and negative attributes. When dealt with properly, the living obtain protection in everyday issues, but the neglect by the living of an obligation to the spirits or to the living can cause severe problems. In the following statement, Sandra's father establishes the relationship between conflict and bewitchment very clearly. He explains:

Bewitchment ends up being all that which is against a father's will, for example, my daughter had it in her to not comply with my demands, so I create acrimony, they'll just see how things go! They shouldn't come and ask me for anything, if they have problems let them solve it all themselves, that's where things get complicated. (...) If during the *lovolo* the *kuphahla* ceremony is not performed to inform [the ancestors of] her departure from her home, her life will not go well. Because this is to explain to the ancestors that what is going to be carried out is in accordance with me, the father. I accepted. There are no problems; there can't exist any problems here. (Sandra's father, interview, January 1999)

Sandra's father stresses the importance of *kuphahla* in communicating to the ancestors, in a ritualistic form, the happiness of the living and the fact that the ceremony went according to the ancestors' wishes. It is because Sandra and Paulo respected their parents' guidance that they received

support from both kin groups when they had problems with Elton and needed to consult the diviner. As Sandra's father stated, bewitchment and rancour are related. If for some reason he had not been satisfied that his daughter or her groom had respected his will, he would not have communicated the performance of the *lovolo* to the forefathers. His unhappiness would have manifest itself in his relation with his daughter. If she had had problems, he would not have asked for the ancestors' intervention. In addition, the ancestors would have known about Sandra's father's resentment against his daughter, and they would have brought her disease or bad luck.

Fear of the ancestors is a mechanism used to maintain power relations at the core of certain kin relations. Kinship establishes rules of behaviour, such as respect for parents and elders, including elder brothers and sisters, and sets out relations of power exercised by old on young and by men on women. This power also carries an obligation to look after and to take care of the person in a subordinated position. Such rules are not always limiting and can be empowering. For example, newly born babies are already powerful because of their order of birth, their mothers and fathers' status, and their namesakes, and this power will increase over their lifespan. Similarly, one's status changes during one's life cycle according to one's position, marital status, number of children, status of one's namesake, inheritance, alliance, and chance. It is not necessary to die and become an ancestor in order to have power and to be respected.

Respect is expressed both by fear and worship and is a core concept in African morality.⁸ The aim of sacrificing to the ancestors is to sustain an on-going relationship with them. Gifts and the counter-gifts are integrated in a chain of gifts and debts that never ends. Emerson (1997), in his book entitled Gifts, in which he looks at individual psychology, raises the issue

⁸ The idea that suffering is a divine punishment is not peculiar to southern Africa religions. On the contrary, it is common in many religious cultures; for example, in Christianity, it is seen as an opportunity to share in the passion of Jesus.

of the feeling of inferiority of the receiver and the intrusion onto his or her independence when a gift received is unable to be reciprocated (Emerson, 1997: 25-7).

The living feel permanently indebted to the ancestors as a sacrifice cancels one debt and begins another, repeating the cycle of family ties. The exchange maintains the relationship between relatives and between the living and the dead. The interval between the gift and a counter-gift allows for individual and collective self-deception. People who make sacrificial offerings give part of themselves because they owe their wealth and their lives to their ancestors. Thus, from generation to generation, the debt is transmitted.

This debt principle allows the reproduction of the social order: the young are indebted to elders and will become elders to their own children and dependants to whom they will be creditors. People are agents in a social logic where they reproduce individuals similar to themselves, in a cyclical process, where identification and debt are key features. Individuals surrender part of their agency to the group because a refusal to reciprocate is inherited by the next generation and may harm many people. Individuals do not exist in isolation and if one rebels, others will suffer.

The affliction and death sent by the ancestors as a way to oblige the living to perform certain actions or as a way to show their discontent can be seen as a form of violence. Héritier writes of violence:

Violence for us is any constraint of a physical or psychic nature which is liable to lead to terror, dislocation, misfortune, suffering or death of an animate being; any and all acts of intrusion which have as their intended or unintended effect, to dispossess someone else, or the

damaging or destruction of inanimate objects.⁹ (Héritier, 1996a: 17)

People consider disease and misfortune to be expressions of ancestral disapproval. This understanding is sustained by the interpretations of mediums. I acknowledge the physical and psychological violence exercised on the living by the ancestors, which may cause guilt in the living. The experience of violence is a profoundly personal as well as a collective event and is deeply related to the construction of individual and collective identity. I agree with Girard who points out that the sacred constitutes "that which dominates man" and that "it is violence which constitutes the true heart and secret soul of the sacred" (Girard, 1998: 46). I therefore consider violence to be the physical and psychological impact that the forefathers have on the living.

This symbolic violence is part of the ambivalent relationship of fear and worship that links the living with the living and the living with the dead. It is through such mechanisms that violence is hidden from the understanding of individuals and that the symbolic order is established. The self-deception is both individual and collective.

There is then the ontological experience of being a victim of an ancestor's violence. On the other hand, it is within their relationship with the sacred that people make sense of their lives and find strength and protection.

Case study 2: Assuming responsibility for namesake's actions

Manuel (Paulo's father), who is a healer, introduced me to the brother of his teacher in healing, Muzondi Xikonela, who lives in the Liberdade neighbourhood, on the outskirts of Maputo. He was born in the 1920s in

⁹ My translation.

Magude, which is on the border with South Africa. In attempting to explain to me the persistence of *lovolo*, Muzondi told me his story. The use of different names for the same person and his references to people with the same name who lived in different periods made the narrative quite complex. The complexity and strength of the relationship between namesakes was expressed in this narrative. For example, the *lovolo* debt contracted by a namesake one hundred years previously was assumed in 1997 by his namesake, and was paid by the choice of name for Paulo's son (discussed in the first case study presented in this chapter).

Ndindane, a Changanana warrior at the time of Ngungunyana's war (1884–1895), kidnapped Musekese Muhlanga, a Ndau woman, and had a son called Mundawu. Ndindane was the great grandfather of Muzondi Xikonela, my informant, who is roughly 75 years old. Both Ndindane and Muzondi were also named Maxalukwane and are namesakes. Muzondi also has a son called Mundawu, like his namesake's son. Muzondi Xikonela is a *nyangarume*, a healer who interprets the *tinhlolo*, the set of bones used for the oracle. His namesake gave him this gift, which he has enriched by being trained for several years by a teacher.¹⁰

Recently, the Ndau spirit of Musekese Muhlanga's family required that the *lovolo* for Musekese be paid. Muzondi assumed his namesake's debt. Thus, Muzondi carried out a *lovolo* to give a wife to his son Mundawu, in the name of Muhlanga's spirit. The instructions about how to perform the *lovolo* ceremony were given by the spirits of Musekese Muhlanga, who expressed themselves through the diviner. The *lovolo* money was presented to them and the *muphahlu* was performed in their names. They were thus considered the owners of the money, with the respective rights over the women and children. The children of the union between Muzondi's son Mundawu and his wife were called Muhlanga, and belonged to the line of descents of the kidnapped Musekese Muhlanga,

¹⁰ For issues related to the process of becoming a healer, see Chapter 3.

whose family had not received *lovolo*. By doing this, Muzondi extinguished his namesake and great grandfather's debt. Mundawu, Muzondi's son, took on the continuation of his namesake's lineage. As his namesake's mother had been kidnapped and the *lovolo* not paid, he should not have used the surname Xikonela. To rectify this situation, Muzondi's offspring, the children of the woman *lovoliwa* with Muhlanga's money, bore the Muhlanga's surname.

Muzondi's narrative puts a new perspective on the possibility of manipulating biological descent. The symbolic owner of the *lovolo* money is of utmost importance in determining the affiliation of the children. Through the *muphahlu* performed on behalf of the Muhlengas at the time of the *lovolo*, Muzondi and Mundawu renounce the right of affiliation of the children, and establish affiliation to the Muhlenga. The *muphahlu* engages the symbolic relationship with the forefather. The children who are born from the woman who was *lovoliwa* on behalf of the Muhlengas, belong to the Muhlengas. Other children from another mother whose *lovolo* has been performed in the name of the Xikonela, will be affiliated to the Xikonela. The lineage of a person is of utmost importance because it determines which spirits the individual should perform the *muphahlu* to. The *lovolo* ceremony defines the symbolic paternity of the offspring.

The importance that symbolic rituals have for the participants, and the acceptance of ancestors' acts, debts, and lives, is stressed in this case study. Muzondi's narrative confirms that after the death of a husband, his descendants may be victims of aggression from the spirits of the woman's group if the woman was not *lovoliwa*. *Lovolo* is unavoidable, and can be requested of the descendants, generations later. The *lovolo* debt and the curse that results from it are inherited. The curse can be inflicted by a woman's group on a woman or on her children. As in Elton's situation and as is discussed in the following case, spirits and living persons who want to exact their right over the *lovolo* can interfere with a woman's health,

fertility, birth delivery and post-delivery, the relationship between a couple, and their children's health.

Women's spirits have an important role to play as they can interfere in two lineages, their brother's lineage and their children's lineage. A paternal aunt is the protector spirit of her nephews and particularly of her brother's daughter, who is her namesake. The paternal aunt owes this position in her paternal group to her status as elder sister and to her religious role (Loforte, 2000: 195), which allows her to become involved in the health, fecundity and harmony of the family. It is this position in the kinship networks that gives her her status as mediator between the living and between the living and the dead (Loforte, 2000: 193-96) and allows her to participate with the men in discussions that relate to her paternal group.

Paulo's narrative in the previous case study showed that the living were paying respect to their namesakes because of the influence the namesakes had amongst the forefathers and on their own lives and because of their mimetic relationship and sharing of sentiments. Individuals who act in accordance with their own constitutive spirits are not solely responsible for their actions. They are not the only proprietors of their selves. Muzondi and Mundawu assumed the debt that their namesakes had owed the Muhlangas. Each of them took up his responsibility: Muzondi gave the money that Muzondi, Ngungunyana's warrior, should have spent for the *lovolo* of Musekese Muhlanga, and Mundawu gave to his descendents the name that Mundawu, the warrior's son, should have borne. In a society that places value on children and compares them to wealth, for a man to renounce his right to transmit his own lineage because of social responsibility toward an ancestor is of extreme consequence.

The capacity to repair voluntary or involuntary mistakes made one hundred years earlier by ancestors shows the ongoing possibility of transforming past events and of changing their course. Old debts and

unresolved issues can be dealt with after the death of the interested parties, and re-enacted to follow a path that is considered healthier. Inappropriate affinal relationships will have unexpected consequences for the descendants. Although the living person is a "reincarnation" of a forefather (same physical and behavioural characteristics), the living person is made aware of the need for strategic change through violence. Misfortune transmits to Muzondi, my contemporary, the desire of his namesake forefather for the former to correct the latter's oversight on his behalf. The violence exercised by the namesake on the living is profoundly internalised as the namesake's life and experience is part of the self of the living. The reason why Muzondi assumes responsibility for his ancestor's actions is that his self is not only embodied in his own body but also in his dead namesake's body and spirit.

The violence experienced by the living and the dead is self-inflicted. All ancestors engage in self-inflicted violence for they are alive in all their descendants. There is no such thing as claiming innocence as sin and crime are a collective misfortune. However, depending on kinship relations and closeness to the ancestor, some are guiltier than others. Being the namesake of an ancestor who carries a sin narrows the distance between a person and their namesake and obliges the person to assume the debt.

Southern Mozambican people can be involved in several kinship relationships that generate the complexity of their identity. One type of kinship relationship is established mainly for administrative purposes, another according to the Tsonga *lovolo* institution, which determines the affiliation and the rights and duties that flow from it, such as inheritance, succession, recognition of the group to which one belongs and the obligation to perform rituals.

Generally the man that performs the *lovolo* celebrates it in the name of his

patrilineage and, thus, transmits this lineage. In this case, his daughter at birth is named after her father's group and is part of it, but the children to whom she will give birth belong to their own father's group, in other words, to the husband of this daughter. However, sometimes, to solve past omissions and to satisfy spirit beings, the *lovolo* is performed in the name of a lineage distinct from the father's lineage. In these situations, the children are attached to the lineage of the spirit in whose name the *lovolo* was performed. Individuals also occupy the position of their namesake in the latter lineage, which might be from the maternal or paternal lines. Lastly, in addition to belonging to these kinship systems, healers are bound to the lineage of their teacher,¹¹ and individuals who are possessed by spirits alien to their group are also part of the kinship networks of the spirits who possess them.

The two case studies that I have presented show the complexity of the relationships of individuals with other living persons and with ancestors. People take responsibility for their namesake's physical and psychological characteristics; they are afflicted by their ancestors and assume their actions. One's namesake and other ancestors, including ancestors from the maternal side of the family, are fragments of the self. They are spiritual beings who live in the earth but are also embodied in the living individual.

These observations support the recent discursive explosion and reconceptualisation of the notion of person, identity and physical embodiment. Deconstruction came from a set of different disciplines and practices, namely philosophy, psychology, anthropology and political activism that criticised the Enlightenment model of the person conceived by Descartes (1975), Rousseau (1994) and Kant (1997), which characterises the individual as rational, autonomous and unitary. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre (1968) theorised about the crumbling of the subject. In doing so, he anticipated the theoretical inventions of Deleuze (1987), Lacan

¹¹ See Chapter 3 on healer training and identity.

(1989) and Foucault (1991). He developed a subject without substance who is nothing more than his acts of subjectivity, who does not have a consciousness or an "ego", but rather multiple subjectivities.

In southern Mozambique, the namesake, the group of forefathers of the lineage to which this ancestor belongs, and the affines are fragments that make up a self. They all play a great role in the persistence of *lovolo* and can be compared to the "super ego" or the symbolic order from which the individual seeks models of behaviour and suffers constraints. It seems that the way violence and power are conceived by participants of *lovolo* rituals relates to a conception that power is expressed not only from outside but also from inside the individual. This is because violence may emanate from the individual's namesake, from the forefathers, or from foreign spirits.¹² These ideas show that the force exercised on the individual by the symbolic power is dissimulated and transfigured into a set of practices that produce effects that can only be overcome when clearly recognised and identified.

Case study 3: *Lovolo* and gendered identities

With this case study I develop the issue discussed in the previous chapter on how rituals display gender-specific systems to interpret and transform the world. In this section, I introduce new elements that relate to how gender symbolism constructs male and female bodies and produces a certain conception of fecundity and reproduction.

Cecilia was three months pregnant and had been sick for one month. She was not eating; she constantly vomited and experienced severe pain. After

¹² See Chapter 3 on the influence of foreign spirits on healing practices, and Chapter 4 on foreign vengeance spirits.

a consultation with her spirits in the Zionist Church,¹³ the prophet confirmed what she had already learned from a medium. It was necessary to go back to her father's home in Chidenguele (250 km from Maputo, in Gaza province) until Alberto, her partner, had performed the *lovolo* ritual.

When she was pregnant with her first child in 1996 she had also had health problems and had consulted a traditional healer who had informed her that her problems were related to the non-performance of the *lovolo* and that if the *lovolo* issue were not solved she would never fall pregnant again.

An ultrasound showed that she was carrying twins, and that one of the fetuses had died. This information reinforced the couple's idea that the spirits of Cecilia's lineage were opposed to their union and to her pregnancy. The death of one of the babies was an expression of the spirits' power and it convinced Cecilia to go back to her father's home before they killed the other baby or herself. Cecilia explained:

He (Alberto) should have done something. If he had performed the *lovolo* this would not have happened. Now I do not know what to do. Maybe at home they will say something. (Cecilia interview, July 1999)

When she arrived in Chidenguele, she went to consult her sister who is a spirit medium. Cecilia's namesake "came out" and explained that the problem was related to the lack of *muphahlu* to the forefather after the *hikombela mati*¹⁴ ceremony: "The ancestors do not know where you are". Cecilia's parents, particularly her father, had not informed the ancestors that Alberto had come to introduce himself and to ask to marry Cecilia. As the *muphahlu* for the forefathers was performed, Cecilia immediately felt

¹³ The prophets of this Church communicate with the spirits and may substitute the *nyamusoro*, the diviner. One of the advantages of consulting a prophet is that they work for free.

¹⁴ In relation to the marriage process see Chapter 1.

better. Cecilia understood then that her father, and not Alberto, was the one responsible for her troubles and the death of her baby.

Cecilia and Alberto had known each other since 1993. Their parents are farmers from Gaza province. While Alberto's family sought refuge in Maputo in 1988 during the war with RENAMO, Cecilia's parents stayed in their village in Gaza. Alberto, who is 26 years old, is a watchman, and studied up to the eighth grade in school. Cecilia, who is 24 years old, came to Maputo to study and was in seventh grade when she fell pregnant for the first time, in 1996. When they discovered the pregnancy, Cecilia's brothers beat Alberto and forced him to perform the *hikombela mati* ceremony. He went to Cecilia's parents' house, indicated his intention to *kulovola* her and paid a 400 000 MZM¹⁵ fine for Cecilia's pregnancy. For the *lovolo*, her parents wanted 900 000 MZM in cash, in addition to the other goods requested on such occasions. The pregnancy was painful and difficult and the couple faced several problems.

In May 1996, when he received the list of goods requested, Alberto thought he would be able to purchase the different items little by little. The whole of his salary would have to be saved for eight months to cover the *lovolo*. Those demands were, in his view, beyond his means. He had no house at the time and prioritised its construction rather than the *lovolo*. He asserted,

They [living and spirits] will see that it is not because I don't want it, it's because I can't afford it. I explained to them: "If I am making a house it is not because I have money, it is because I am feeling the rain and the cold".
(Alberto, interview, July 1999)

But when the spirits in the Zionist Church were consulted, after Cecilia's

¹⁵ In December 1996 1 US\$ was equivalent to 11 452 MZM.

illness in January 1999, they expressed a different point of view, saying:

If they [Alberto and Cecilia] eat every day, it is because they have the money to give *lovolo*. (Alberto, interview, July 1999)

Cecilia's situation illustrates that disease, death and misfortune are seen to be a manifestation of anger by the living and the ancestors, which results from the lack of *lovolo* ritual and disrespect for requests or practices related to it. Taking a wife without the authorisation or blessing of the ancestors can be compared to robbery. Cecilia and Alberto followed the explanation given by the spirit medium and the Zionist Church that the violence exercised on Cecilia's health and the death of their baby were the results of the violence of Cecilia's ancestors, who wanted her to perform the *lovolo*. Divination by Zionist and healer allowed an understanding of the mechanisms that govern practices and how they are linked within the web of relationship.

For Cecilia, access to modern technology, such as the ultrasound, confirmed the spirit mediums' predictions and the couple's belief that the problems originated in disrespect for the *lovolo* rules. Cecilia's health and pregnancy would have been at risk until a solution was found, and conflict would have prevailed between the couple. Cecilia did not understand why her husband was not performing *lovolo*. In her view, Alberto was indirectly the cause of her suffering. From Alberto's perspective, the spirits of Cecilia's lineage lacked kindness and an understanding of their economic situation. Alberto's vision of the relations with the spiritual world was different from that of Cecilia's brothers and possibly of Cecilia herself.

Alberto was reluctant to introduce himself to Cecilia's family and to perform the *hikombela mati* ceremony. Such formal introduction requires

saving money for several months, to the detriment of other basic needs. He also apparently saw his priority as building a house for his family rather than giving the *lovolo*. He was expected to have saved money and performed the *lovolo* ceremony before he impregnated Cecilia. Alberto's resistance to performing the *lovolo* shows the possibility of individuals negotiating alternatives within the system and a certain lack of understanding of the consequences of such resistance. His choices, however, were seen as a threat to his family, negatively impacting on his wife's and children's lives. The situation caused tensions between Cecilia and Alberto. Cecilia would sometimes say that she understood why Alberto was not giving the *lovolo*, but in successive interviews explained that she thought that the *lovolo* should be carried out despite financial difficulties.

Cecilia and Alberto believed that the spirits of Cecilia's family were responsible for the couple's unhappiness. Following the interpretation of the spirit medium and the Zionist Church prophet consulted in Maputo, Cecilia and Alberto understood that they were at fault. In opposition, Cecilia's sister identified the absence of *muphahlu* following the *hikombela mati* ceremony as the problem. This sensational turn in the interpretation of the same events highlighted the need to consult different diviners to obtain a final, satisfactory explanation. In the case of misfortune, healers are able to give meaning to the unknown and produce a narrative that links new and old, secular and sacred, real and ideal, within a cultural framework that is in permanent transformation. The translations given by the healers are not blindly accepted by the clients and have to be tested against reality. This explains why there are sometimes delays in the performance of rituals and there is often failure to recognise a clear relation of cause and effect between gift and counter-gift or offering and blessing.

Despite the different interpretations given by the diviners, all showed that their clients' irresponsible behaviour had some relation to their problems. The various solutions suggested indicate that, to satisfy the ancestors, several rituals have to be respected by different people. It is not enough that the groom practices what has been requested of him. The ancestors need to be formally informed of their daughter's departure through the performance of the *mupahlu* to the ancestors.

Respecting the demands of the living and of the forefathers can be seen as part of a complex set of rules that constitutes a process of conciliation. In both prayer and sacrifice, people take proactive steps to prevent misfortune. The relationship with the spirit world is continuous and not limited to divining illness. Ancestors express their unhappiness in different ways. Killing a child to claim *lovolo* is an extreme measure, but this becomes part of the ongoing relationship of worship, respect and veneration, which in turn provides protection, good luck and well being.

The warnings of death, disease and misfortune indicate that it is never too late to carry out certain rituals and to venerate the ancestors. They show the ongoing possibility of negotiation, and the flexibility of these practices. Such possibilities are the result of the recognition by the participants of the symbolic efficacy of rituals and the agency of the individual in transforming his or her life. With the performance of such rituals, and through the power of symbols, individual and social relations between the dead and the living are reorganised and individuals are transformed. Through her sufferings, Cecilia is no longer the same person and her relationships with her husband, with her parents, and her forefather have changed.

This last case study can be related to the first case study, where I described Elton's disease. In both situations, the couples had to consult a spirit medium to interpret the causes of the difficulties, and they received

treatment. Cecilia had to go back to her parents' home to perform a *muphahlu* to the ancestors and Sandra's relative had to buy beverages and the bolt of cloth and perform the ceremony for the ancestors. Both couples, through the handing over of presents and by performing the *muphahlu*, solved their problems and repaired the mistakes of their relatives. The failure to offer goods during the performance of the *lovolo* and the non-communication to the ancestor of the *hikombela mati* ceremony, both of which resulted in misfortune, could be overcome by the performance of sacrifices. This shows that it is possible to transform the past and promote good relations between living and dead. In both cases, the centrality of the relationship between the living and the dead with regard to marriage matters, and the capacity of *lovolo* ceremonies to provide children, health, and happiness to the couple is clearly established. If a *lovolo* performance does not manage to satisfy the dead and the living, the *muphahlu* ritual to the ancestor regenerates the relationship with the living and re-establishes the blessing of both the living and the dead.

It can be seen as an unusual logic, that forefathers focus their aggression on their family members in order to obtain the payment of the *lovolo*. Why do the spirits of a woman's family demand the performance of *lovolo*, endangering her health, fertility and her children's lives? Why don't the spirits act against the husband? When the spirit medium is consulted about the couple's problems, the fact that they have not performed the *lovolo* is the first reason given and the first remedy is to carry out the ritual. Similarly, Whyte (1991: 170), in her study of the Nyole of Eastern Uganda, found that most of the problems that were taken to the healer were related to bridewealth and that the women were innocent victims of sickness and problems whose responsibility often belonged to men.¹⁶

¹⁶ Whyte, in her study of the Nyole of Eastern Uganda, presents extracts of a consultation carried out by a grandfather about his son's child's disease, in which she found out that the problem was related to a bridewealth payment. The bride's father's brother had made a loan to the bride's father, who was expected to pay it back at her marriage. As this had not been done, the man had cursed his niece's child. The author emphasises the innocent victim pattern and the impact that it has on women's perceptions of themselves. She suggests that the most frequent problems were related to

Women and their children are mainly affected because their maternal and paternal forefathers have no direct power against their partners who belong to other lineages. The ancestors' power is exerted on the woman who has left her family to serve in another lineage to indirectly punish the erring husband. The men are seldom directly targeted by the ancestors for the lack of *lovolo*, although they can be targeted by the living, who can interfere as Cecilia's brother did by beating his sister's lover or by using bewitchment by going to a diviner. It is in the name of fertility and childbirth that women are victims of the violence exercised by spirit beings. This situation seems to be widespread and is discussed in the work of several authors who cite evidence of the belief that spirit beings were responsible for barrenness or abortion (Verger, 1969: 51-57; Horton, 1969: 38; Beattie and Middleton, 1969: xxii). Ngubane, examining Zulu rituals associated with marriage, stresses that most of these rituals are performed to make the bride fertile (1977:95).

A woman's ancestors may even be said to withhold her fertility if the bridewealth is not paid in full. (...) Among the Zulu it is said that the woman's ancestors 'furnish the blood with which the shades of the male, in the male fluid, mould the child in the womb'. (Berglund, 1976: 207)

Everything is done as if the woman needed spirit support to produce children and to be happy in her new house. Good harvest, rain, happiness, health, and wealth are the results of the benevolence of the ancestors. In addition, human fertility is not considered an intrinsic quality of women and men but it is an attribute given to women because of the interaction between the living and the forefathers of two groups. Like the notion of

bridewealth and that the general view was that women were persons for whom the bridewealth had to be paid by certain men to other men (Whyte, 1991: 162-9).

fertility held in the Pacific Islands, which can be summarised as "women do not make babies" (Strathern, 1988: 314), fertility in southern Mozambique is not an intrinsic attribute of women. It is in performing the *lovolo* that a woman's reproductive capacity is symbolically given by her paternal and maternal group to her husband's group. The gifts offered during the *lovolo* are symbolically transformed into children.

Women need the protection and guidance of the ancestors because many factors, such as the neighbours' jealousy, and inadequate or non-performance of her obligations as daughter, mother or wife can endanger the lives of her children. For example, the unfaithful woman is dangerous for her child; she might have an abortion, or her delivery might be difficult and the child might die (Feliciano, 1998: 318).

Witches and malevolent spirits can also be the cause of infertility. Women who have been through menopause, widows and relatives within the kinship network, such as a husband's mother for example, can be accused of rendering a woman barren. As human fertility is a metaphor for social reproduction, by promoting human infertility these people are also considered to be a threat to socio-economic processes of reproduction. A man who experiences relationship problems in his family, a lack of productivity on the land, and difficulties in having children might suspect and even accuse his own wife of being a witch.

Women are only able to reproduce if several conditions are met. These conditions are mainly brought into being by the blessing of her maternal and paternal ancestors but also by her harmonious relations with neighbours and relatives as well her respect of social norms and an absence of malevolent spirits or individuals. The intervention of spiritual beings determined by the performance of the *lovolo* turns the female body into a fertile one. The *lovolo* allows the transmission of the life-flow, which transforms the biological body into a socially gendered body. Fertility is a

social construction to which men (through the *lovolo*) and spirit beings contribute. Such conceptions show how womanhood is elaborated through a ritualistic event that marks the female body. This spirit power is exercised upon women, and the complementarity of male and female characteristics is symbolically achieved. The *lovolo* ritual creates an understanding of the origins of gendered differences and the creative life forces of the world. Both body and gender are culturally constructed and have to be understood as dynamic categories that result from human agency. Human fertility and childbirth are shaped by cultural praxis and knowledge in all societies. Thus, *lovolo* achieves "a physical and symbolic manipulation of the body in relation to the world, and of the world in relation to the body" (Moore et al., 1999: 13). The rituals are an interpretation of symbolic constructions and a display of those that incorporate moral precepts.

A woman's importance is based on her capacity to reproduce her husband's lineage. To prohibit or control a woman's capacity to give birth in a family that has not paid due respect to her parents, family and forefathers is to eliminate the reason for her presence in another lineage. In some cases, even after *lovolo*, healers' capacities are requested to solve the problems of infertility so that other origins of misfortune can be divined and appropriate rituals performed. Sometimes, medicines have to be given to the woman and, generally, if the treatment is not successful the husband is prompted to get another woman from his wife's group or from another group.

The ultimate "beneficiary" of the reproduction is the husband and his lineage (because of patrilineality); thus, if the woman is infertile, he is the one who is punished. A man does not need his forefathers' blessing to reproduce; his fertility is not questioned but his wife's fertility depends on the *lovolo* performance and on the blessing of her relatives and forefathers. Consequently, both man and woman depend mainly on the *lovolo* to

procreate and to establish a harmonious relationship. However, the man is responsible for providing the *lovolo*. He is thus invested with a higher degree of autonomy than the woman is, who, to achieve her identity, depends on him and on the blessing of her group. When women are able to contribute to the payment of their *lovolo*, as is sometimes the case in urban areas where women work, they are in this way able to promote their fertility and can attain better control over the achievement of their goals.



Figure 11: The groom's delegation on its way to the bride's house

Reproductive capacity is a mechanism through which women are oppressed but through which they can also be empowered (Loforte, 2000: 192-93). In southern Mozambique, a woman's identity is closely related to her role as a mother. It is when she gives birth to her first child, particularly if he is a son, that a woman achieves full womanhood. Children stabilise the marriage as they are considered its major outcome, which allows the ancestors to "reincarnate". They are a measurement of wealth both in spiritual and material terms. It is through her children and

her brothers' children (especially if she is the eldest sister) that a woman's status can evolve. She tries to gain power through her sons, guaranteeing their material support and controlling the work of her daughters-in-law. As an eldest sister, she also has religious and political roles in mediating conflict and is a major influence on her brothers' children's socialisation. As it is from this social organisation that women are able to achieve some kind of power, women are party to the system.

Although *lovolo* is concerned with far more than fertility, because it promotes health, wealth, harmony within the couple and good luck, the focus of *lovolo* is on procreation. During the *mupahlu*, associated with the *lovolo* and the *lovolo* ceremony itself,¹⁷ constant reference is made to the need to reproduce and to maintain the cycle of "reincarnation". The complementarity of female body and symbolic ritual needs to be achieved to allow reproduction. As Moore phrases it, rituals can be seen:

as moments or events, where images and narratives about the nature of gendered identities, the relation between women and men, and the powerful nature and sexuality are being reiterated and repeated. (Moore et al., 1999: 28)

Through the performance of the rituals, individuals and groups find a space where their agency can be exercised and where their experience and interpretation of the body and the world is enacted. Through *lovolo* rituals a symbolic order is displayed that establishes a connection between knowledge, social practice, and the cultural symbols within which individuals and groups have been socialised. The symbolic aspect of social practice plays an important role in the subalternity of women, which establishes certain powers such as the power to carry out the *lovolo* ceremony and the power to negotiate and to receive *lovolo*. The performance of *lovolo* is the expression of a biological and social world in

¹⁷ See Chapter 1 for a description of a *lovolo* ceremony.

which a woman's kin group appropriates her reproductive capacity.

The obligation to comply with *lovolo* is achieved through a set of social practices, which includes religious beliefs, the gendered division of work, and language and art that form the social order and that are expressed in the ritual. However, this obligation manifests itself through physical violence directed towards the woman and her children by the ancestors and expresses the control exercised on her sexuality and reproductive capacity by her kin group. The *lovolo* performance thus impacts differently on men and women and tends to promote a deeper subordination of women to their forefathers than it does of men. *Lovolo* expresses and maintains a gendered order, is instrumental in the appropriation of a woman's reproductive power, and results in her double subordination to her kin and to men.

Conclusion

I have focused on some of the ways in which the case studies I have collected illustrate the mechanisms that guarantee the performance of the *lovolo* and have explained the ontological strength of *lovolo* in exacting compliance from couples.

The findings regarding the constitution of the self from childhood, in Elton's case study, corroborated by Muzondi's attitude toward his namesake, show the degree to which self in southern Mozambique corresponds to a specific model that is foreign to the Western concept of self. The notion of self is embedded in the reference to another person who is alive or dead, has his own body, perceptions, life, and past, but with whom the individual has to live in negotiation and/or submission. These findings support ethnographic material collected since the beginning of the century by anthropologists and described by Moore (1994). She raises

the question of the capacity of individuals connected to other non-living persons to develop their own agency and discusses the physical embodiment of the locus of the self.

Paulo and Muzondi's narratives, which explain their symbiosis with their namesakes, confirm that the self is not only a corporal being. The self is also connected with the ancestor and the namesake and thus exists outside the body. The namesake is embodied in the living individual and is "reincarnated" in the living person's body. This is true to a lesser extent of the other ancestors because individuals incorporate the history of their dead and experience the consequences of their actions. As such the ancestors become fragments of the self. Person and persona do not always coincide and different fragments can have conflicting interests, which are mainly internal to the individual. A notion of individual agency is not pertinent as the self is the result of several relationships (Englund, 1999: 138-57).

The violence related to *lovolo* is exercised mainly within the limits of the lineage, but can affect the descendants and, thus, is also connected to affinity and affiliation. The Tsonga *lovolo* institution can be perceived as the result of the violence exercised on the individuals by namesakes, kin or by affined ancestors. As such it is part of the philosophical conception of self, kinship, the sacred, life, wealth, health and death that is inscribed in the cosmology and in the symbolic social order. The sacred, understood as "the forces that weigh down (...) from outside" (Girard, 1998: 46), is also challenged. The case studies show that the power of the sacred is to be found in the symbiosis with the namesake and the links with the ancestors. Thus, one can assume that sacred violence is also associated with the self. Violence is embedded within the sacred and the self although it is not recognised as such. The sacred or symbolic violence is both external and internalised. The force exercised on the individual is multifaceted, from the ground (the ancestors), from the living, and from

the fragments of the self that are shaped by the namesake and the dead.

Lovolo as a ritual to worship the ancestors is part of a religious system. It is simultaneously an expression of two identities: a collective identity embodied in a set of traditions and interpretations of the world as well as a personal identity, characterised by the comprehension of the violence and the definition of specific values, priorities and expectations. The capacity to develop agency, even if it seems limited, is built within the ongoing relationship of fear and veneration that implies negotiation and that links the living with their namesake and their forefathers. As it may take several generations between the failure to perform a *lovolo* ceremony and an ancestor's demand for repair, individuals have an abundant margin for agency. They are able to modify and re-shape the relationship with their own and their affines' ancestors, and negotiate the violence exercised on them. *Lovolo* is inscribed in the multiplicity of ongoing exchanges between living and between living and dead, which allow the relationships to continue.

The *lovolo* ritual informs social relations in the society as it reshapes them in continuous processes of righting past and present ills. As an expression of the way people understand the world and transform it, the Tsonga *lovolo* institution must be analysed in the context of a gendered ideology. Women are more frequently the victims of the violence exercised by their ancestors on their health, their reproductive capacity, and their children. Men are affected indirectly through the woman because a wife's infertility and a lack of descendants undermine the paradigm of masculinity. If women need their ancestors' blessings to be happy and to have children, men, as a consequence, need to perform the *lovolo* ceremony to guarantee it. Men's offerings are fundamental to women's happiness and reproductive ability. Constrained to heterosexuality, a woman depends on her ancestors' blessings to be fertile and to achieve her full womanhood. This only can be achieved by her husband's compliance in undergoing the

lovolo ritual. But, as I explained earlier, the woman can sometimes contribute to the payment of the *lovolo*, and in this way protect herself from the violence. Thus, the *lovolo* ritual allows a particular configuration of gender, which deprives women of control over their reproductive capacity and the symbolic power attached to it and results in her double subordination to her kin and to men. It is a symbolic mechanism by which gendered identities are built and in which they are embodied.

The appropriation of a woman's reproductive capacities is instrumental to the establishment of a society based on her subordination. Women's mothering generated the need to create an ideology that allowed control of this capacity. The social organisation thus coerces female sexuality to achieve fertility. *Lovolo* as an expression of the prevalent gender ideology is instrumental in generating an ideology of masculine superiority. However, the need to control and sustain male superiority has its origin in the recognition of women's power. This is the paradox of the situation, and it is mainly because men and women's power is built within this ideology that their complicity is ensured, as it is within this context that their possibility of agency is negotiated

Chapter 3

Lovolo and healing practices



Figure 12: Dressing the bride's father

There are different types of *lovolo*. There is the *kulovola wansati*, the *lovolo* of a woman. But, there is also the *kulovola nyanga* or *kulovola gona*, for the teacher in divination. These *lovolo* are similar because if you don't comply there will be all sort of problems and diseases for you and your children. (Velemina, interview, June 2000)

Velemina, a 68-year-old female diviner, opens a new perspective on *lovolo*. When she speaks of *kulovola wansati*, the *lovolo* of a woman, she describes a ceremony that she performed for her healer spirit. With this *lovolo*, she symbolically offers a woman to three Ndaú healing spirits, which possess her and allow her to exercise the *kufemba*, to thank them for 'working' with her and to signify her willingness to care for them. This *lovolo* ceremony is thus different from the one that establishes a union between a living man and a living woman. It is, in this case, a union between a woman and the male and female spirits of a female healer. In addition, unlike the *kulovola wansati* for the marriage of a woman, which is performed by a man, this *lovolo* is performed by a woman. The sex of the diviner is largely irrelevant in this kind of ritual, which emphasises the complexity of gender constructions in the society and the particular position of the diviner.

Velemina also speaks about the *kulovola nyanga* or *kulovola gona*. *Kulovola nyanga* means to carry out the *lovolo* ceremony for the *nyanga* (the healing practitioner). *Kulovola gona* signifies giving *lovolo* to obtain the most powerful medicine: the *gona*. This ceremony is performed by Velemina's students of both sexes to thank her and the spirits of diviners she possesses for their training. It also aims at promoting good luck in healing practices, expressed both in terms of clients and successful healing.

In this context, *lovolo* ceremonies transcend the notion of marriage

arrangement with its jural and structural aspects¹ and the promotion of health, fertility, and luck for the couple and their children. *Lovolo* cannot be understood only as bridewealth or as the celebration of a union between two affinal groups. The concepts surrounding *lovolo* have to be challenged and broadened. We might begin by asking why similar rituals are performed for different situations.

In this chapter I analyse Mr Langeni's *lovolo* to Velemina, his teacher in healing, and Velemina's *lovolo* to offer a young woman to three of her healing spirits to show the similarities between the *kulovola wansati*, which establishes a marriage between a man and a woman, and a woman and a spirit, and the *kulovola nyanga*, which establishes both a spiritual and a kinship relationship between a teacher and his or her student. In the current Tsonga situation, *lovolo* cannot be limited to a contract between living persons. The demands of the spirits are pressing and dominate exchanges. Compliance with the *lovolo* ceremony allows the promotion of harmony and fruition by ending or preventing violence exercised by different types of spirits on the living. The performance of *lovolo* is a debt owed both to the spirits and to the living. In the *kulovola nyanga*, as well as in the *kulovola wansati*, people or spirit beings and commodities are connected and past and future bonds are established.

Healing practices, interactions and complementarities

In southern Mozambique, as elsewhere in Africa, social changes and new spirits have been assimilated into pre-existing cult phenomena (Gelfand, 1959; Beattie and Middleton², 1969; Beattie, 1969; Colson,³ 1969; Lee, 1969;

¹ See Chapter I for a full discussion of bridewealth and marriage arrangements in Mozambique.

² "Such new spirits are reported for the Tonga, the Alur, the Zulu, the peoples of southern Ghana, and the Banyoro, and many aspects of social and cultural change and of the Western cultures identified with it are reported" (Beattie & Middleton, 1969: xxix).

³ Among the Tonga of Zambia, Elizabeth Colson describes the dynamism of spirit possession by different kinds of spirits, which establish relationships with the outside world. People can be

Ngubane, 1977; Peek, 1991a; Whyte, 1991⁴; Janzen, 1992; Reis, 2000; Dijk et al., 2000). Tsonga possession by spirits of other groups is the result of interaction with the Ngoni and Ndaus and the embodiment of local history (Honwana, 1996: 30-50). Honwana argues that in southern Mozambique before the Ngoni invasion there were amongst the Tsonga only two categories of healers. These were the *tinyanga* (or *nyanga* – singular), who were not possessed by spirits, and the *vangarume* (or *nyangarume* – singular), who were possessed by the ancestors of the Tsonga, the *tinguluve* (or *nguluve* – singular).

Ndaus and Ngoni practitioners were possessed by their groups' spirits. The Ndaus healers called *vamusoro* (or *nyamusoro* – singular) performed the *kufemba*,⁵ which is the capacity to detect and expel malevolent spirits through smell. The Ngoni healers, called *ngoma*, practised the *kuhlawula*, which is the interpretation of the *tinhlolo* (a set of knuckle-bones or other objects used as dice for the oracle).

With the Ngoni invasion and the establishment of the Gaza State⁶ in southern Mozambique, other forms of spirit possession were introduced.

possessed by animal spirits, in which case the person possessed will imitate the call of the animal, by vehicle spirits (like a train or an aeroplane) thus imitating their noise, or by foreign spirits, which cause them to speak in the language of the spirit's homeland. Possession can also express symbolic action (musical instrument or European dancing) or a person's status or characteristics (police, soldiers, cannibal). Colson considers that possession by the aeroplane began in around 1954, and the symbolic action of guitar and European dance around 1956-60 near the railway line (Colson, 1969: 82-7).

⁴ Among the Nyole of eastern Uganda before 1970, the diviners only used *ehifumu* (the most important spirit of divination, literally the 'divination thing') but since then most diviners also have foreign spirits and might even use foreign languages. The most frequent of these are Ganda, Soga, Swahili, Gwere and Gisu (Whyte, 1991: 158).

⁵ "The *femba* is unique in that the possessing spirit will locate evil spirits in the body of the patient by smelling them out, and will remove them from the patient by inhaling them in the body of the diviner. For a short while the evil spirit will take over the body of the diviner, so that the patient directly faces his or her enemy. The *sangoma* who performs the ritual functions as a medium not only for the spirit of an ancestor of the victim, but also for the enemies of the patient" (Reis, 2000: 68).

⁶ The Ngoni subjugated the Tsonga and the Ndaus and took the latter as slaves to southern Mozambique, where they established their kingdom. The Gaza State was established in 1821. The first capital city was established in Mussapa and later moved south to Mandhlakazi.

Individuals possessed by both Ngoni and Ndau⁷ spirits appeared and were called *nyamusoro*, in an adoption of the Ndau terminology.

Divination in the region is a dynamic system of knowledge, which integrates external influences.⁸ Among the Zulu and the Swazi, distinct therapies and influences have also been identified. Peek (1991a), introducing Callaway's study of Zulu diviners, remembers that he recorded four types of Zulu diviners.⁹ Two forms of possession, by *amandawu* and *amandiki* have originated in Swaziland or Thongaland and recently, English and Indian spirits have tended to supplant Swazi or Thonga spirits (Lee, 1969: 130-3). In her study entitled The work of Ngoma in Swaziland,¹⁰ Reis (2000) differentiates several diagnostic rituals, the *ukuvumisa*, the *kufemba*, and the *pengula* (bone-throwing). Reis considers the *kufemba* to be a widespread form of possession by the spirit of an enemy killed by the ancestors (Reis, 2000: 68).

In the southern African region, and especially among Bantu language speakers, becoming a healer practitioner is generally not a personal choice. Being possessed by healer spirits can be an ancestral inheritance, a gift from paternal or maternal ancestors (*tinguluve*), or a debt contracted by

⁷ As a result of early nineteenth-century invasions, the Ndau are also said to have influenced the *n'ganga* practices in Tanzania (Janzen, 1992: 95).

⁸ Among the Shona, the mediums can be possessed by ancestor spirits called *midzimu*, by spirits of royal ancestral, the *mhondoro*, or by *mashave* spirits, which are considered foreign spirits or spirits of animals (Lan, 1985: 31-9). In addition to allowing the exercise of the healing practice, the *mashave* have a special dancing cult, with each dance corresponding to the characteristics of a foreign spirit (Lan, 1985: 31-9). Gelfand (1959) distinguishes another type of medium possessed by *chikwembo* (author's orthography). The *chikwembo* spirit protects and can be used for three purposes: to obtain compensation for a crime (if somebody is killed) to seek stolen or borrowed property, or to bring back a wife to a husband (Gelfand, 1959: 116).

⁹ "The first type, the *izinyanga zesitupa*, or 'thumb-doctor', gives diagnoses that are answered by people striking the ground with rods. A second type is the *izinyanga ezadhla impepo*, 'those who ate *impepo*'. A third type includes the *omabukala iziniti*, who use sticks, and the *amatambo* who use bones. (...) Lastly, there are the *abemilozi* or *inyanga yemilozi*. These diviners use *imilozi* (familiar spirits) - *amatongo* or spirits of the dead who wait on a particular diviner, and speak in a low whistling tone ... they are ... spirits who live with a man" (Peek, 1991a: 24).

¹⁰ *Ngoma* refers to music, singing and dance with the drums, to the performance, and to the group of performers. The authors of The Quest for Fruition Through Ngoma (Dijk et al., 2000: 7) put forward a definition of *ngoma*: "1) *ngoma* is a way of articulating and commenting on processes of transition or transformation; 2) it produces a certain type of power and authority which is based on claims to a specific association and communication with the spirit world; 3) this power is

ancestors with regard to foreign groups (Nda, Ngoni and *Mulungo*) that must be taken on, respected and nurtured. In addition, an individual may be caught by a spirit¹¹ at any place or by walking over the burial ground of a healer who was buried without the performance of adequate rituals. Another way in which a person can become a healer, although this is considered improper because it does not give profound strength, is by buying the power and knowledge of a healer: *kukhendhla*.

Individual selection is generally signalled by a period of illness and misfortune, and divination has to be used to confirm the origin of these problems. Various authors¹² refer to the "call" of the spirits, the "calling illness", "the calling to divinership" or "election disease" that emphasises the extraordinary capacity of this person and legitimises his or her abilities (Spierenburg, 2000: 83). These authors stress that the person may try to resist becoming a medium; however, the possibility of individuals of developing independent agency is very limited if possessed and they generally are compelled to accept their new identity.¹³

The novice's training is a "*rite de passage*", a slow and harsh process of changing one's identity (Devisch, 1991: 115); a re-birth (Lee, 1969: 134; McLean and Solomon,¹⁴ 1971: 39-42); and a transformation (Reis, 2000: 61) that can last for months¹⁵ or several years.¹⁶ During the training, various

embodied, expressed and effected in rhythm (drumming, singing, dancing)". On this issue, see also Janzen Ngoma, *Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa* (1992).

¹¹ In relation to possession by other kinds of spirits see Chapter 4.

¹² On this issue, see Callaway, 1968; Beattie & Middleton, 1969; Lee, 1969; Berglund, 1976; Ngubane, 1977; Devisch, 1991; Peek, 1991a; Whyte, 1991; Hammond-Tooke, 1993; Junod, 1996; Honwana, 1996, 2002; Janzen, 1992, Dijk et al., 2000.

¹³ Young girls can be forced into marriage in similar way. However, some authors have found evidence that it is possible to refuse to become a diviner. Analysing the Zulu diviner's initiation process, Callaway (1991: 28) explains that if a man does not want to become a diviner he can be treated to lay the spirit. Nevertheless he will always have ill health and signs that he has special capacities will remain. Among the Nyole the call may be rejected with the performance of a sacrifice (Whyte, 1991: 157).

¹⁴ McLean and Solomon, studying the Bena Lulua of Zaire (1971: 39-42), also refer to the diviner's initiation as a ritual dominated by symbols of death and rebirth as is boys' and girls' initiation into adulthood.

¹⁵ Among the Northern Yaka of Zaire, the initiation lasts nine months (Devisch, 1991: 116).

¹⁶ Peek (1991a) refers to the Yoruba, whose diviner's initiation can last for at least ten years.

levels of complementarities are achieved, mainly between the individual and the spirits and between male and female entities, but sometimes also between various ethnic groups' spirits and healing techniques.

Both the spirit and the individual go through the initiation process (Ngubane, 1977: 102; Honwana, 1996: 51). The novice's personality is changed by the growing¹⁷ spirit inside his or her body.¹⁸ Symbiosis between the individual and his or her spirits is sought.¹⁹ The training emphasises the ontological dependence of individuals on the spirits. The whole process allows individuals to develop a fragment of their identity and to bring it to full completion. It is an expression of their care for themselves and an expression of narcissism as it is deeply rooted in the love for someone in their own body. It is a self-recognition of their identity. The person does not choose his or her spirits but the spirits choose their medium and they become interdependent. A healer can move in and out his or her state of possession, playing on different fragments of his or her identity.

The initiation of the medium in southern Mozambique and among the Zulu is referred to by the verb *kuthwasa*, which means to renew,²⁰ and is also used to refer to the new moon²¹ and a rebirth or emergence of a new

¹⁷ Audrey Richards (1956), in a study on the Chisungu, also refers to this nubility rite as allowing the growth of the young woman. The long ritual with its tests, ordeals and teachings aims at enabling the magic of growth and fertility, and the protection against the dangers of sex and maternity.

¹⁸ Callaway explains that the Zulu diviner's disease is the result of the ancestors walking in the individual's body (1991: 30). The incorporation of the spirits in the body and in the individual's identity is also presented in Chapter 2.

¹⁹ Marja Spierenburg, describing the role of the *mhondoro* medium, stresses that mediums and spirits are completely separate and that mediums cannot be considered responsible for the statements made by the spirit through them (2000: 84). Separation and symbiosis are well expressed by Lan (1985: 49), who explains: "The medium combines in one body two contradictory aspects: he has no special qualities and he is as close as anyone can come to divinity. He has no influence on the will of the ancestor, yet the ancestor cannot act without him. He is a person of no special powers and he is a source of the most significant powers on earth".

²⁰ Devisch (1991: 117) refers to the initiatory process among the Yaka of northern Zaire by the metaphor of the 'children on the point of laying an egg' and as the way by which the diviner 'generates himself in an androgynous way'.

²¹ Lee explains that *kuthwasa* means 'coming out' or 'emergence', as in the appearance of the new moon or the reappearance of a planet or constellation (Lee, 1969: 134). Langeni (1992: 54) argues that *kuthwasa* stands for 'to come out from clandestinity or obscurity'. Analysing the analogies

person (Honwana, 1996: 51; Lee, 1969: 134). The initiate is called *mathwasana* (plural: *vamathwasana*).

The analogical system, which relates the system of production and reproduction (rain, people and goods) to the economical, political and cosmic order has been explored by Feliciano (1998: 297-323), in his economic anthropological study of the Tsonga of southern Mozambique. The reproduction of people depends on the economic, social and cosmic order. People need food (economic) that results from the farmers' work (social) and the rain (cosmic). Rain, food and people are the most important elements in the production and reproduction process. For Feliciano, there are several codes (sexual, thermic, culinary, corporeal, digestive, topologic, chromatic, ethno/flora and ethno/fauna), and the link between the elements within one code can be used to reinforce another relation in another code.²² The real economic, social and cosmic order can be modified by interfering with the ideal order. By manipulating these analogies, healers re-establish the order, while witches work to prevent the success of these processes (Feliciano, 1998: 297-323). The harmony and success of the processes are the result of human forces (both positive and negative) and of a certain amount of chance.

between the moon and procreation, Feliciano explains that the blood expelled by the woman is called *wheti*, a name also given to the moon when producing rain. Within the same code the mother of the rain (the moon), can be called the mother of the child (pregnancy) or vice versa, and when it rains during the new moon, it can be said that the moon is pregnant (Feliciano, 1998: 305-11). Rain is conceived as a result of the sexual relations of the moon with the king's wife. Feliciano explains: "The production of rain is expressed, locally in sexual code, resulting of the union between the North wind called *N'walungo*, which means Man, and the South wind, called *Dzonga*, which means woman. The rain is also the union between the Sun and the Moon. Yet, in the local discourse, when it rains it is said that the 'the moon is pregnant', as if referring to a woman. Both are cyclical and if the moon is called *Weti*, this term is also applied to menstruation. In an expression of profound symbolic extension, when there are signs of rain and when it does not rain, people say that 'the wife of the king had an abortion' or, 'the sky aborted', as if the rain was the result of the sexual union between the hosi and his first wife" (Feliciano, 1998: 305). For the Tsonga, the rain is the result of the complementary link between the solar and the lunar cycle, the hot North wind (male) and the cold South wind (female) and finally the white and the black clouds.

²² Within the sexual code, the sexual union of man and woman in the fields during the seeding period promotes agricultural production. In contrast, miscarriage and abortion are said to dry the land, which will result in the lack of food or in burned food that can be compared to an abortion (Feliciano, 1998: 312). Food preparation and eating is used to describe sexual activity and human reproduction.

As it has been noticed in the region, the body is the main reference for individuals in their relation with themselves, each other and the world (Moore et al., 1999: 135). The metaphors linking social and natural reproduction are part of the symbolic logic that emphasises the place of the female body as the space of procreation. It is from people's perception of the female body that other transformations (natural and human) are conceived.

Honwana also finds similarities between healer initiation and human reproduction. She considers that:

Moreover, there is the belief that the spirits which possess an individual are like babies, and that only during initiation do they grow up in the individual's body. The concept of the development of the spirit inside the individual's body, together with the idea of "coming out" to express social appearance and external manifestation, suggest that the process of possession is in some way associated with the process of procreation. Alternatively, one may be the metaphor of the other. Like an embryo, the spirits grow inside the human body; as the birth of a child symbolises wealth, so the spirits "come out" to heal and protect the communities. (Honwana, 1996: 51)

Women are the means by which groups reproduce themselves. Thus, a baby can be one's grandmother who has returned, and has the grandmother's characteristics. Similarly, the diviners give voice to dead persons and to spirits, and by doing so give meaning and transform reality. As soon as the healer is afflicted, he has the ability, like a baby has, to develop his own identity. Both women and healers cannot avoid being mediums of life. Through children, women acquire a senior status, just as

healers gain reputation through vision.

Like Honwana, Berglund (1976) points out the similarity between divination and conception, and quotes an interview carried out with a Zulu diviner in South Africa:

Berglund: How do the diviners come into matter of conception?

- They (diviners) are people seeking health. If the diviner is sick he cannot see things clearly. So he must be healthy, having no ailment. (...)

Berglund: Is the barrenness of the woman and the sickness of the diviner the same?

- They are the same in that they do not see the thing they want. When a woman does not conceive she does not see her chicken (*itswhele*, i.e. child) that she wishes to see. In the same way the diviner who is sick does not see the thing that he wishes to see. He does not see the chickens of the shades properly.

Berglund: I do not see the relationship between children and the clarity of diviners.

- They are both given (*ukuphiwa*). They come from the outside. Conception comes through the water (of men). Clarity comes through water, the diviner having come from water and always drinking the water of the vessel.²³
(Berglund, 1976: 178)

²³ The vessel referred to by Berglund has considerable importance because it is known to the spirits and because it is the vessel in which the teacher prepares the medicine to restore the health of the novice. This vessel is kept throughout the novice's life (Berglund, 1976: 177-9). In southern Mozambique, the *gona*, the calabash that contains the most powerful medicine for which the *lovolo* is performed (*kulovola gona*), seems to play a similar role to that of the vessel in Berglund's records.

The analogies between the growing of the spirits during the initiation and the possibility of having babies are important for the understanding of the role of the kulovola wansati and kulovola nyanga. In both cases, the external influence of the spirits is necessary. The notion that conception and divining capacity come from water seems to be widespread in the region and adds to the similarities between the two processes. Ngoni and Tsonga believe that the first human beings came from reeds in the water (Feliciano, 1998: 308). Honwana (1996: 51) suggests that the Ndaun diviner spirits come from the water, and Callaway (1991: 28) describes the same understanding amongst the Zulu. Callaway describes a person who is about to be a diviner as “shaking like a reed in the water” (1991: 28).

The association between conceiving children with the water contained in the womb of the woman (the water that surrounds the foetus) and the water (semen) of the man has been discussed by Berglund (1996: 146-147) with regard to the Zulu and by Feliciano (1998: 308) with reference to the Tsonga. Kuper²⁴ (1982: 16) also establishes the relation between rain and seminal fluid. Feliciano (1998: 325-352) compares the child before he or she starts to walk to water. He shows that water is associated with life since water makes life possible. Along the same lines, explaining the parallel between water and woman, a healer told me: “It is from water that life comes. The woman is needed for life. The woman is the most precious water.”

For this reason I suggest that the ceremony called *hikombela mati* (which means 'to ask for water'), where the groom asks for the woman in marriage, can be related to the requirement for a symbolic water to reproduce the man's lineage. Water, in this way, symbolises both

²⁴ Kuper (1982: 16), to sustain his argument, quotes Schapera and Berglund: “Among the Tswana, for example, when a woman's family accepted a marriage proposal the suitor's party said, 'Re nesa pula' – 'We cause it to rain for you'” (Schapera, 1938: 131). Semen was directly associated with water and rain, and the fertilisation of a woman might be compared with the fertilisation of fields. As a Zulu rain-doctor put it: “The husband fertilizes the wife. The fertilizer is the water. That is how it is with this thing of rain. It is the water of the sky which causes something to happen on the earth” (Berglund, 1976: 62).

production²⁵ and reproduction (Kuper, 1982: 16) and a feminine power able to produce wealth and life, which is expressed either in crops or in children. In semi-arid and arid areas water is a basic element of survival. Water is thus a basic source of life and prosperity. Water is white, the colour associated with fertility (Feliciano, 1998: 301-323), coolness and femininity. Male fertility is implicit and is never questioned.

As Berglund (1976: 178) and Honwana (1996: 51) have noted, a child's conception, a diviner's initiation, and the coming out of the spirit of healing can be used as a multiple metaphor. Such a metaphor seems to be used in the region as it has been referred to by several authors. Devisch (1991: 116), studying the Yaka of northern Zaire, explains that the teacher is "mothering" the novice. Whyte (1991: 158), in her study of the Nyole of eastern Uganda refers to experienced diviners being referred to as "midwives" who initiate a novice.

The similarities between the process of procreation and the initiation of a diviner are not only related to their growth in the body and their external dependence, but also to the fact that the ritual carried out to promote them is the *lovolo*. In the southern Mozambican context, through the initiation, spirits and individuals are bent together and united as in a marriage: male spirit to female individual and vice versa, or a pair of male and female spirits to a person of either sex. In addition, novice spirits are united with the mentor's spirits. Both the initiation and the offerings made to the *mathwasana*'s spirits may sometimes be referred to as a marriage, even if the term *lovolo* is not employed.²⁶ The rituals are said to bind the *mathwasana* with the spirits, strengthening the complementarity between

²⁵ Among the Shona, *mhondoro* provides rain and fertility for the land as well as protection for the crops (Lan, 1985: 31-35).

²⁶ Interview with Mary, a 40-year-old white South African woman with a homo-erotic orientation, who trained in Swaziland in 2000 with a Mozambican mentor. Mary stresses that when she left her home to go to the training, rituals were carried out to inform her spirits that she was leaving and when she arrived at her mentor's house the mentor's spirits were notified of her arrival. On her departure at the end of the initiation these rituals were performed again. This is similar to what

person and spirit, which is necessary to become a healer. The use of the term *lovolo* in southern Mozambique to refer to the ritual that symbolises this union also reinforces the metaphor of marriage.²⁷

Complementarity between male and female spirits is a characteristic of all individuals. All individuals are “possessed” at birth by a female spirit called *nyankwawe* when in men, and *marombe* when in women. This female spirit forms a couple with a masculine spirit called *marobzwi* (Feliciano, 1998: 371; Loforte, 2000: 197). Individuals in specific positions within the kinship also stand as male-female figures to others. This is seen in the case of the mother's brother (*malume*), or the male-mother, who is biologically a male person but assumes a female persona in relation to his nephews. The mother's brother enjoys special rights and duties, as he is the person who took ego's mother's *lovolo* to marry a woman. He is indebted to ego's mother (Kuper, 1982: 33). The father's sister (*hahani*) also stands in a similar position, being a biologically female person but with a male role with regard to her nephews. The father's sister is a female husband to the father's wife because she is the one through whom the *lovolo* came; thus, she can claim her brother's wife and wealth.²⁸ Even if these claims are not common among urban residents, these characteristics and roles highlight the contextual nature of gender and that it can vary according to people's positions within kinship networks and in relation to *lovolo* arrangements.²⁹

Androgyny or symbiosis of the masculine and feminine seems to be a

happens in the *kulovola wansati* in southern Mozambique, where the bride's and the groom's spirits are informed of the establishment of the new union.

²⁷ Similarly, some authors in different contexts refer to the relationship with the spirits as a marriage (Southall, 1969: 269; Whyte, 1991: 158), whether it occurs before birth (Horton, 1969: 38-40) or later as the complementarity between male and female spirits (Feliciano, 1998: 370-1) or as a union between an individual with an opposite sex spirit (Peek, 1991a: 196-7).

²⁸ Kuper (1982: 33-36) analyses the situation of the sister's claim among several groups in the southern African region. He explains that among the Pedi and the Lovedu a woman could marry her brother's daughter herself if she had no son (Kuper, 1982: 34).

²⁹ See Chapter 1 for more details on the kind of relationship established as the result of the circulation of the *lovolo*.

characteristic of a healer's identity.³⁰ Within different cultures, some healers behave (Lee, 1969: 140) or dress (Colson, 1969: 86) in ways that accentuate cross-gender identification (Middleton, 1969). In southern Mozambique I also identified transvestism and homo-attraction amongst male diviners (Bagnol, 2003) as a noticeable trait. Loforte, (2000: 198) explains that women dress in men's clothes and smoke cigarettes "signifying a symbolic synthesis of the dialectic complementarity of masculine and feminine in gender relations". Irrespective of their biological sex, healer's teachers are called *bava*, father, and stand in a male position, but they are also the mother giving birth to a new individual, thus integrating both genders. When the *lovolo* is performed, male or female novices stand in a masculine role, the role of the man who usually gives the *lovolo* to marry, while the teacher irrespective of his/her biological sex stands in a feminine role, the role of the mother whose daughter has now grown up and is going away.

Some authors analyse the use of male and female divining objects (Junod, 1996: V2, 462-470) or the both "womblike and phalliclike" shape of the instrument used for divination (Devisch, 1991: 115). For Peek (1991a: 196-7), this demonstrates that divination practices rely on the need to make the difference between male and female characteristics and roles and to synthesise them. In Mozambique, the need for complementarity of male and female spirits working together, of male and female animals killed during rituals, or of animals of the opposite sex to the ill person has been pointed out by Feliciano (1998: 369-375).

The following section examines the process of becoming a healer and the consequences of not giving the *lovolo* to the teacher after the training.

³⁰ Lee, dealing with the Zulu, considers that "women are the chief sufferers and the whole *izangoma* cult is female centered, male neophytes being transvestite and copying the ways of women" (1969: 140) and 'are certainly of homosexual bent' (Lee, 1969: 143). He also reports that male novices are dressed as women during their initiation. Similarly, Ngubane, also referring to the Zulu, and quoted by Peek (1991a: 24), considers that "divination is a woman's thing (paternal

The *lovolo* of a healer's teacher: *kulovola nyanga*

Mr Langeni is Paulo's father³¹. He is about 67 years old and lives in a reed house in the Liberdade neighbourhood near Maputo. In the past, Mr Langeni was a *nyamusoro* and used to work with several spirits. At present, as Mr Langeni has not given *lovolo* to his teacher Velemina, he only works as a *nyangarume*³² and performs the *kuhlawula*, which is the interpretation of the objects used for the oracle. He divines with dice made from a fruit called *nulu* and animal bones. He treats individuals with herbs, minerals, and animal components. He can heal and protect against sorcery and witchcraft but does not go into a trance or into an altered state of consciousness.

Velemina, Mr Langeni's teacher, was born in Magude in Mozambique and currently, like Mr Langeni, she lives in the Liberdade neighbourhood in a brick house with electricity and water. She is a well-known healer, who works both in Mozambique and in South Africa, where she spends several months of every year. She obtained her reputation as a result of being possessed by 11 spirits of healers who are Ngoni or Ndau. She is a *nyamusoro*.

Mr Langeni explained his resistance to being a healer:

I have been caught since my childhood by this spirit. (...)
This Ndau spirit stays in my body (...). When I grew up I had my face coloured red and a big bracelet on my foot. It meant that I accepted to follow the will of the spirits. I

ancestral spirits only return through daughters), and if a man gets possessed he becomes a transvestite, as he is playing the role of a daughter rather than that of a son".

³¹ Paulo is one of the main characters of Chapter 1, where I describe the *lovolo* ceremony carried out by Paulo in order to marry Sandra, another of the main characters discussed in the chapter.

³² The *nyangarume* is generally a male healer who treats patients mainly with herbal remedies and by working through his ancestors (*ntumbuluku*), the Tsonga spirits.

was the husband of the spirit's wife and my cousin was the wife of the spirit [they had both been offered to the spirit]. The spirit wanted both of us to become healers. My cousin was older than I and she went through the training to become diviner, but I didn't want to. I resisted for a long time. In 1936 I started to study [in a Catholic school] and the spirit was asked to let me go. I removed the paint on my face and the bracelet on my foot. I washed up and kept my clothes where we stored the spirit's belongings. After leaving school I started to work as a civil servant. My cousin was exercising the healing profession. But in 1968 I started to shake; I was very ill. But even so, I tried to resist. I left the Catholic Church and joined the Zionists to see if I could avoid being a healer. I could have had 12 children, but six died because of the spirit. When my cousin died in 1969, I got very very sick. She had always told me that I had to continue, and that if I didn't, I would have a lot of troubles. So I took the spirit items that she had left and went to train for two years. (Mr Langeni, interview, January 1999)

Individuals of both sexes, having been "called" and afflicted by the calling disease (*mavabzi ya svikwembu*), must be trained to become healers and, in this process, have their disease treated.³³ The teacher can be identified through divination or by the spirit of the individual himself, which guides him or her to the house of the teacher (Honwana, 2002: 92). Some healers, as was the case with Velemina, have to be trained by several teachers. This is because some of the novice's spirits might be unusual or stronger than their teacher's spirits and they cannot be trained by him or her. In addition, the Ndaou and Ngoni spirits might need different specialists.

³³ Reis (2000: 62), following Eliade, calls this type of healer the 'wounded healer'.

At the beginning of the training a first amount of money is paid “to open the doors” (*i mali ya ku nguena*). The amount of money is defined according to the number of spirits to be trained. Mr Langeni paid 500 000 MZM³⁴ in 1983 to Velemina to learn to be a *nyangarume* with the support of the *tinguluve* and 500 000 MZM to be able to *kufemba* (to smell) with the Ndaou spirit.³⁵ The training allows the acquisition of various divining and healing techniques whose origin and use can be traced to different groups of the southern African region and which are ratified by tests. The training of a *mathwasana* is considered to be costly as the novice's family has to sustain him or her throughout this period, bringing food and providing the animals, presents or money necessary for the sacrifices and the various ceremonies. In addition, a *ndhumbha*³⁶, a round hut made from local materials, also has to be built in the yard of the novice's house to receive the healer's spirit.

Over a two-year period, Velemina taught Mr Langeni to interpret the dice; to recognise the medicinal plants and where and how to collect them in the bush; and to prepare them following all the required rituals and taboos. She taught him to live in harmony with the spirits and to interpret their messages. During the initiation, novices have to change their hygiene and eating habits and adapt them to the spirits' demands,³⁷ “avoiding fish and seafood as a requirement of the Ngoni spirits, and chicken out of respect for the Ndaou spirits” (Honwana 2002: 91-2). Drums (*ngoma*) and singing are taught; this important part of the therapy led Janzen to introduce the notion of *ngoma* as a regional therapeutic institution (Janzen, 1992; Dijk et al., 2000).

³⁴ In 1983, one USD was exchanged for 40 MZM on the official market, but reached around ten times more on the black market.

³⁵ In relation to olfactory means of healing, see Devisch (1991: 117-8).

³⁶ House for the cult of the spirit, where light has to be offered and people have to sleep.

³⁷ Callaway (1991) considers one of the first manifestations of a person about to be a diviner to be an avoidance of certain kinds of food. This has also been observed in other social contexts, such as among the Yaka of Zaire (Devisch, 1991: 116).

An examination referred to as *kufundrukisa*, which tests the *mathwasana's* capacities, takes place at the beginning of the initiation. The name of this ceremony, which is of Ndaou origin and means to grow, allows for the demonstration of the Ndaou spirit's capacity to perform the *kufemba* (exorcism) and tests the progress of the novice. Mr Langeni, like any *mathwasana*, was Velemina's assistant for a lengthy period, but when he became able to perform the different techniques properly he was allowed to give consultations and medical advice on his own. However, any money he earned was considered Velemina's.

At this point in the training, Mr Langeni evokes Velemina's spirits in addition to his own spirits. He is already a member of Velemina's *bandhla*, a new kin group. Velemina explains:

When I start a consultation the first spirit to be evoked is the spirit of my teacher, the name of the *bandhla* I belong to is Nkomu wa Lwandle Xikonela. He is my paternal uncle. He is the one who started the work. (Velemina, interview, November 1999)

In Mr Langeni's consultation, he also evokes the spirit of his teacher. In this way, the initiation relationship becomes a kinship relationship in the sense that it defines a link with a new group of living and dead persons. The *bandhla* is the common initiation around a teacher, the rebirth of the healer within a new kinship network formed by a teacher, and his students and their respective students in a hierarchical organisation led by a teacher (Honwana, 2002: 101-4). The origin of the *bandhla* is the teacher and his spirit. This organisation is articulated around a kinship relation, where the teacher is considered the *bava* (father), independently of sex and age; the students are the *vana* (sons and daughters); and the students of the teacher's students are considered *vatukulu* (grandchildren). These students call the teacher of their teacher *kokwana* (grandparent). By being

named *bava*, father, by their students, healers assume a masculine role irrespective of their biological sex or gender identity.

A final examination is carried out at the end of the training,³⁸ after which the initiate goes home. This “confirmation ritual” (Honwana, 2002: 104-14) is a public ceremony in which parents, friends and neighbours participate to certify the capacities acquired by the *mathwasana*. Honwana distinguishes two distinct components of this ritual: *kuthwasa* for the Ngoni spirits, where a goat is sacrificed, and *kuparura* for the Ndau spirits, where chickens are sacrificed.

In each situation, the *mathwasana* has to demonstrate his or her skills. He or she behaves in an unusual way, drinking the animal's blood³⁹ while it is still alive, and shaking. This sets him or her apart from ordinary individuals. This behaviour, like the eating of mud for the *kuparura* ritual, illustrates the liminal⁴⁰ status of the *mathwasana*, and demonstrates the relationship of the initiate with the spirit, the sacred, the marginal, and the abnormal. The major test of the *kufemba* is to identify and exorcise any evil manifestation, while for the *kuparura* the initiate has to find the gall-bladder of a goat, which has previously been hidden somewhere about the place.⁴¹

When the *mathwasana* successfully passes the test, he or she is brought back home in a ceremony called *kuheleketa*, which means to take something somewhere (Siteo, 1996: 55). The ceremony to bring back spirits that were stolen through witchcraft is also called *kuheleketa muhliwa*.⁴² Honwana

³⁸ Peek (1991a: 25), analysing various healers' initiation rituals, notices that when a diviner concludes his or her initiation, a public test has to be performed.

³⁹ In the first case, the blood has to be vomited but in the second it is not necessary (Honwana, 1996).

⁴⁰ The liminality of the diviner's initiation and status within society has been stressed by various authors (Evans-Pritchard, 1968; Beattie, 1969; Turner, 1975; Peek, 1991a).

⁴¹ In relation to the Zulu, Callaway (1991: 32-3) and Berglund (1976:136-40) also refer to the need to demonstrate the special vision acquired by the diviner. Such a situation has also been referred by Turner: in *Revelation and divination in Ndembu ritual* (1975).

⁴² See Chapter 4 for an analysis of the rituals performed to bring malevolent spirits home.

(1996: Chapter 4) writes that the ceremony performed at the end of the healer's training can also be called "*muthimba*", which is the name also given to the ceremony to bring the bride's belongings to her husband's house after the *lovolo* ritual has been carried out.

This notion of bringing back implies that something has been stolen or borrowed and recalls the recurrent theme of the inalienability of things as a gift (Mauss, 1954: 12-3; Gregory, 1982: 18). By giving, a person gives himself or herself and the parties involved in the exchange are bound in perpetual dependence. By giving, a debt is created that has to be repaid with a counter gift. Things are loaned more than sold. It is this mechanism that creates social cohesion. People value the social relation that the exchange of the gifts creates, not the gifts themselves (Gregory, 1982: 51-5). Both the woman and the novice are integrated in a new relationship.

Even though they are integrated into another group, both the bride and the healer still depend on the spirits of their own lineage. The woman who is received in exchange for the *lovolo* offering is placed in a close relationship with the ancestral spirit of the family who gives the *lovolo*. Nevertheless, the wife is a foreigner in her husband's lineage and still relies on her kin to perform the offering when required (Loforte, 2000: 229). Similarly, the healer never cuts ties with his or her lineage. Both the wife and the healer belong to both groups and are mediators in the relationship. Everything is done as if the woman and the *lovolo* were lent and borrowed for an indeterminate period. In case of divorce, the woman will come back to her father's home and the *lovolo* will have to be returned. But the woman's family may prefer to make her stay with her husband instead of returning the *lovolo*. In this way, the offering of the *lovolo* serves to maintain the relationship between the wife, her husband, and her own family. In the case of the healer, the *lovolo* also aims at establishing a relationship between the novice's spirit and the spirit of his or her teacher.

Back home, the *gona* and the healer paraphernalia is installed in the *ndhumbha* and the healer starts practising his or her profession. Several months or years later, the *kulovola nyanga* has to be performed. Similar to the money given to 'open the door' at the beginning of the training, the amount of money required for the *kulovola nyanga* is determined by the number of spirits that the *mathwasana* has and that the teacher has trained. The amount may be decided on before the training starts or at the end of the training. Velemina points out that within a *bandhla* the value of the *lovolo* tends to be the same but that it varies from one *bandhla* to another. In her time, it was "fifteen cows and another animal to thank the *bava*". Mr Langeni has to give five cows for the Ndaus spirits and five for the Tsonga spirits.

In addition to the cows or the money, the son (*n'wana*) brings to the father (*bava*) clothes, *capulanas*, soft drinks and alcoholic drinks, following the pattern of the *lovolo* of a woman (*kulovola wansati*) in a case of marriage.⁴³ Like the *lovolo* of a woman, the offering of the *lovolo* by the novice to the teacher is an occasion for a big feast and brings together neighbours, family members, and colleagues. In the *kulovola nyanga* the teacher has to inform the spirits in the same way as the group that receives the *lovolo* for a woman has to inform their spirits.

After putting together the money requested by his teacher, the son (*n'wana*) performs the *lovolo* ceremony. This money is the result of the work of the *mathwasana*'s spirit and thus belongs to the spirit. It is thought by the people that it cannot be money of a different origin like a salary or from a business. The goods and the money are thus given by the *mathwasana*'s spirits and demonstrate their capacity to work with the

⁴³ See Chapter 1 for a detailed description of the presents given for a *lovolo*. In the present case the clothes for the father go to Velemina's husband or son. The *ximbuwembuwe*, the bottle, which symbolises the daughter, stands here for the *mathwasana*, who is considered the son of his or her teacher independently of his or her sex.

mathwasana under the leadership of the spirits of the chief of the *bandhla*.⁴⁴ The healers express the idea that they are possessed by the spirits but that, after the training and thanks to the *lovolo*, they are united with them and thus interdependent. This interdependence must be constantly renewed by gifts. The notion that a healer is perceived and perceives himself or herself no longer as a passive subject but as an agent in the relationship with the spirit is strengthened by the offering that the healer performs to maintain his or her healing capacities.⁴⁵

The metaphor of vision used to describe the capacity of diviners to translate unintelligible information into knowledge through which practical action can be taken. Several authors⁴⁶ refer to vision or the capacity to see as the ability to understand the causes of affliction. Callaway explains that a medium sees things that cannot be seen and that he has clearness of perception (*kcakcambissa*; literally, "to make white") (Callaway, 1991: 24). He explains that to become a medium "they employ means for making the *itongo*⁴⁷ white, that it may make his divination clear" (Callaway, 1991: 28). In a similar vein, Ngubane, describing the Zulu's initiation ceremony for mediums, explains that it consists of "a series of sacrifices and treatment with white medicine [which] all aim at promoting her [the female medium] illuminations" (Ngubane, 1977: 87). In the colour system,⁴⁸ white is associated with coolness (ancestors, rain, sperm, milk, semen, snake) and femininity.

⁴⁴ Lee quotes a *sangoma* who explains that after her initiation she "was sent back home to be given present by my [her] people". In brackets Lee explains that "presents are said to be given to the spirits and not to the *isangoma*" (Lee, 1969: 135).

⁴⁵ Gelfand also claims that the healer has to perform regular ceremonies to her or his spirit to thank them and to be able to continue to work: "Every *nyanga*, whether of the *mudzimu* or *shave* type, must hold an annual celebration to thank his spirit for the guidance he has given him and to pray for continued help". (Gelfand 1959: 100)

⁴⁶ See Beattie & Middleton, 1969; Horton, 1969: 30; Shaw, 1969: 143; Peek, 1991d: 200; Devisch, 1991: 117; Janzen, 1992; Dijk et al., 2000.

⁴⁷ *Itongo* (singular), *amatongo* (plural) means the ancestors in the Zulu language.

⁴⁸ Red is associated with danger and infertility (witches, blood, miscarriage, fire, lightning) and is related to heat. A menstruating woman cannot cultivate the fields as she would compromise the harvest. The blood of a dead person on the soil can dry the land and provoke drought. Women and female sexuality are considered hot and dangerous and able to compromise agricultural production

But, the diviner's activity can also be compared with discovering the right path among the many traversing paths. Velemina explains:

I am working for these spirits because they are the ones who "open the way" (*kuphula*). They are the ones who "let me see the way (*kuphulela*)" (Velemina, interview, January 2000)

Peek quotes Callaway, who explains that,

Like a man who has lost his cattle, having found a footprint he will return again and again to it, till he succeeds in connecting it with others, and thus form a continuous track, which leads him to the lost property. (Peek, 1991a: 24)

Lee refers to diviners as possessed persons whose "ways are clear" (1969: 140). The metaphor of opening the way,⁴⁹ or of opening the doors, is referred to several times during the performance of the *lovolo* ceremonies for a woman and for a healing mentor. Blindness of a diviner and infertility of a woman mean that the ways or the doors are closed. In both cases, the way can be closed by enemies, rivals or by chance.

Velemina describes the *kulovola nyanga* as follows:

When a student performs *kulovola nyanga*, it is to thank the teacher. And the teacher communicates it to the spirits. I have to present to them the money from the *lovolo*. When I

and threaten death to cattle and men. Black is the colour of the night, dry blood, and night witches (Kuper, 1982: 20-1; Feliciano, 1998: 419-20).

⁴⁹ Whyte, in her study entitled: *Knowledge and Power in Nyole Divination*, about the Nyole in eastern Uganda, also states that "chickens were killed at a crossroads to 'open the way' for the spirit to come in" (Whyte, 1991: 158).

need to use the money I have to ask them for permission.

The spirits are the ones that “open the doors”, that allow one to have vision and knowledge. If the teacher doesn't do that, the student will not be able to work. (Velemina, interview, June 2000)

The language used by Velemina is a form of commercialised healing but is also a modern response to the current situation. It suggests that the aim of *lovolo* is to give luck in the healing activity (i.e. wealth from the clients), in the same way that luck in a marriage is wealth, which is expressed in children. It also suggests that the non-performance of *lovolo* constitutes a threat and is the guarantee of an unsuccessful future. Velemina and Mr. Langeni explain that the *lovolo* is offered to “provide the vision”, and that it allows the healer spirits to “work”, by which they mean the spiritual capacity to be connected to the dead and to interpret their desires. The *kulovola nyanga* is the symbolic means by which the spirits promote the healing capacity in the same way that the *kulovola wansati* brings luck, health, and children. The money is a fundamental link between the real world and the symbolic world. By acting on the symbolic world, processes in the real world will be harmonious.

It is only after giving the *lovolo* that the teacher reveals the secret of the *gona* preparation to the student. The *gona* symbolises spiritual forces and gives the novice the potential to have “clients” and students. The *gona* is the combination of the little calabash, its contents, and the stick used to extract a small quantity of the medicine.

The teacher also explains to the novice how to train students. The *lovolo* is necessary to obtain the *ntwaso*, the secret to having students. Being able to train and to have *vamathwasana* are essential as they allow one to expand the *bandhla*, but, as Velemina explained, this is only feasible after having performed the *lovolo* ceremony:

When the *mathwasana* comes following training to *kulovola nyanga*, the teacher has to take him to the bush to show him the plants that allow one to prepare the *gona*. If the novice doesn't know how to undertake the *gona* he cannot have students. The son⁵⁰ also learns how to teach so that he can have his own students. He has to be able to perform examination. It's necessary to perform the *lovolo* because the *gona* has plants that allow one to get clients and to work. (Velemina, interview, June 2000)

The *gona* medicine protects an individual when a bad spirit is evoked.⁵¹ It is a defence and the most important medicine. Melding both phallic and feminine shapes, the calabash recalls the androgyny of the diviner and his power to symbolise the complementarity and synthesis of both genders.

The *gona* is only for the healer who has spirits. The healer who *doesn't* have spirits (*nyangarume*) doesn't need to carry out this ceremony [the *lovolo*]. On the contrary, even if the training processes are different, both the *nyanga* and the *nyamusoro* have to perform the *kulovola nyanga*.⁵² The *gona* symbolises the spirits, as the spirits need the *gona* to be able to work. Every time that I work I put on my special clothes. I put the money given by the client to one side of the *gona* and evoke my spirits, the spirits of my *bandhla*. (Velemina, interview, June 2000)

The money earned by the healer is the result of the power of the spirits

⁵⁰ The teacher calls his or her students son (*n'wana*) and they call him or her father (*bava*), irrespective of the teacher's sex.

⁵¹ The medicine, a type of oil, is sucked, applied between the fingers and the toes and on the earlobe or mixed with other medicine.

⁵² The *nyangarume* (a category of healer) works with herbs, minerals, and animal components.

and cannot be used without informing the spirits.



Figure 13: A *gona*

Polanah (1967), describing a healing activity, illustrates the relationship between *gona*, money and spirits:

As a rule no healing is performed without the prior payment of 20\$00, considered a gift for the titular spirits, and which the client ought to lay next to the sacred calabash, the *gona* containing honey mixed with secret medicines. (Polanah, 1967: 85)

The *gona* symbolises the power of the spirits; it is the materialisation of the spirits' knowledge and is used as a metaphor to refer to them.⁵³ Gelfand in his study entitled *Shona Ritual* explains that "a calabash or buck's horn

⁵³ Gray (1969), discussing the *shetani* (spirit) cult among the Segeju of Tanzania, explains that a *mganga* (medicine man) is a person intimate with a spirit and that his or her power depends on the co-operation with the tutelary *shetani*. "His own *shetani* is associated with his principal medicine calabash, the stopper of which is carved crudely in the form of a head; this figure is anointed with blood from time to time as an offering to the spirit, and thus it is covered with a gummy patina"

filled with the *nganga's* special medicine is known as his *gona* or *chinyanga* and is the most precious of all his equipment. No doctor is complete without his *gona*" (Gelfand, 1959: 102). The association of the *nyanga*⁵⁴ with the *gona* and the transposition of the terms, which is described by Gelfand above, is similar to what I found in southern Mozambique, where the *kulovola nyanga* is also called *kulovola gona*. Sometimes people refer to *kulovola wunyanga*, which means to carry out the *lovolo* to obtain the *nyanga's* practice or to qualify as a healer.

Velemina is usually informed when her *vamathwasana* (her sons) are training new *vamathwasana*. Velemina explains that the first *mathwasana* of each of her sons is trained mainly by her and for that reason she receives the *lovolo* given by him or her. However, she does not receive anything from any subsequent *lovolo*. This practice tends to differ from *bandhla* to *bandhla* or between each teacher as, in other cases, the teacher does not receive any additional amount after the first *lovolo*, the *lovolo* of his or her own students. To justify the need to give the *lovolo*, Velemina told me: "if you lend a goat to a neighbour to improve his stock, when the goat gives offspring you have the right to take back your goat and one or two offspring". Another female healer, Josefina, whom I met in Palmeira, 100 km north of Maputo, used the same metaphor to explain that the *lovolo nyanga* is paid only once. She said "each time that the goat gives birth you do not give an animal. You give it only once." She refers to the fact that when a "son" has a student, the *lovolo* given by the latter does not go to the *bava's* teacher. This contradicts Velemina, who says that she receives the first *lovolo* of the first student of each of her "sons".

(Gray, 1969: 177). Tanner, describing the Sukuma spirit mediumship in the south of lake Victoria, also refers to bells and gourds, which are associated with various ancestors (Tanner, 1969: 277).

⁵⁴ It is a basic Bantu word. The term *nyanga* is found in different parts of southern Africa.

Bourdillon, (1976) in Shona Peoples speaks of the *n'anga*, as does Spierenburg in her description of the *Mhondoro* cult (2000). Gray explains that the medicine man of the Segeju of Tanzania is referred to as the *mganga* (Gray, 1969: 177) Dijk explains that the traditional healers in Malawi are called *asing'anga* (Dijk et al., 2000). Callaway (1968) describes several divination practices among the Zulu, with some practitioners being called *nyanga*. In Lower Congo the healers are known as *banganga* (Janzen, 2000).

The notion that a debt is contracted, whatever that debt may be, as soon as something is acquired without performing the appropriate ceremonies to the spirits, seems to apply here. I would like to quote Mauss, who states that:

Men say that gift exchange brings abundance of wealth. (...) Among the first groups of beings with whom men must have made contracts were the spirits of the dead and the gods. They in fact are the real owners of the world's wealth. With them it was particularly necessary to exchange and particularly dangerous not to (...). (Mauss, 1954: 12-3)

It is clear that the primary exchange is with the spirits and the notion that most wealth comes from the ancestors is widespread in the region (Lan, 1985: 32). Callaway (1991: 35), in the Zulu context, validates the connection between the offering of animals to the ancestors and the payment received from the healer's clients.⁵⁵ Lee (1969: 135) stresses that the offerings made at the ceremony that culminates the Zulu healer initiation are given to the spirits of the healer and not to the individual because any offering given by the clients implies the need to make a sacrifice to the spirits. Tanner (1969: 278), in his research into the Sukuza⁵⁶ divining practices, also observes that mediums do not appear to benefit materially from their practice. He suggests that the web of reciprocity that results from the success of the healer's practice, which implies entertainment of neighbours, aims at avoiding animosity and jealousy. Avoiding envy is one of the equilibriums that are foreseen as necessary to be maintained (Wilson, 1971: 12).

⁵⁵ He writes in a footnote: "By sacrificing to the *Amatongo* (the ancestors) he (the healer) obtains their blessing; they enable him to treat disease and to divine successfully; and thus he obtains many cattle, which enter his kraal instead of those he has sacrificed" (Callaway, 1991: 35).

⁵⁶ The Sukuza live south of Lake Victoria.

The same logic seems to apply to the tribute given to the chiefs,⁵⁷ or to the offers made to priests during religious functions. Here the economic transaction is also underrated to promote the collective, political, or religious objective. If the economic principal is to spread good fortune, it is not incompatible with the religious concept that the living and the spirits are part of the same exchange process and that something that is paid has to be repaid. The exchange enables society to function and reproduce itself. But if the economic principle means that some lucky people should be better off than others, the principle of equal share does not apply.

In the section that follows, I examine a situation that illustrates the difficulties related to the establishment of a clear procedure for the request of a *lovolo*. For a woman, being called to be a healer might create some additional difficulties. Mr Langeni explains that if a girl's father gives the *lovolo* for the *nyanga* before she gets married, her future husband will have to pay two *lovolo*:

When a husband appears, he has to provide two *lovolo*. He has to give the *lovolo nyanga* that has been paid and the *lovolo* to the father. Because if he doesn't the money resulting from the work exercised by the woman as a healer can't go to him. We consider that it is a form of wealth. It has to go to the father. The father is the one who had all the expenses and then, will the woman produce for her husband? This isn't possible! There are places where they say: my daughter studied, she'll earn money and the *lovolo* has to be higher. Here, we do not do that. But to avoid demanding two *lovolo* the daughter waits until she gets married. So when a man comes to ask for the daughter they hide the fact that she has a healer spirit.

⁵⁷ Monica Wilson affirms: "All these sacrifices are believed to bring rain and fertility, for the well-being of each chiefdom is thought to be bound up with the health of the chief and the goodwill of his ancestors" (Wilson, 1971: 12).

With the suffering and the problems that the spirit will raise, her husband will have to deal with the issue. (Mr Langeni, interview, January 1999)

According to Mr. Langeni's statement, girls' parents tend to hide the fact that their daughter is afflicted by spirits of healers. This illustrates that precautions are taken when dealing with these issues and that they are usually handled confidentially. This aspect adds ambiguity to the relationship between the two affinal groups and might explain some of the mistrust and suspicion displayed during the *lovolo* ceremonies.

The idea that two *lovolo* have to be given by her husband for a girl who has gone through a *nyanga* training process is not shared by everybody. Different discourses reflect various conceptions of these ceremonies and stress the ambiguities surrounding the potential commercialisation of the practice. Some people say that as the *lovolo* for the *nyanga* is not paid by the father, but is paid with the money earned from the work of the spirit, the father cannot claim to be the one who bore the expenses. This shows the difficulty in identifying the logic underlying this practice and in distinguishing practice from discourse and spiritual interpretation from economic interest. It seems that the source of the money given for the *lovolo* is of extreme importance as it is around this issue that the polemic takes place.

The woman's healing activity and her procreation are attributed to the person or group that gives the *lovolo* or in the name of which it is given. The *lovolo* is of great importance in both cases in defining the beneficiaries of the 'work' or of the wealth produced by the woman. For this reason, a woman without individual access to resources tends to be dependent on her family or on her future husband to appease the diviner's spirits who want her to embrace the profession. She goes through terrible suffering until somebody accepts the responsibility for paying for her training. She

is dependent on the *lovolo* given by her husband to be fertile and have children. She is also dependent on her parents and her husband to finance the ceremonies to develop her spirits of healing with her teacher. As such she is dependent on her kin and relatives to develop her identity as a woman (being fertile) and as a *nyanga* (having healing power). Being a healer and being a fertile woman is achieved through the intervention of both the living and the spirits in a collective symbolic performance that emphasises human agency. The understanding that the *kulovola nyanga* is the result of the work of the healer's spirit allows a woman healer to be more independent than a married woman.

While reciprocity builds up social relationships and social reproduction, the denial that offerings and gifts are owed results in a rupture in biological and social reproduction. In the same way that the lack of *lovolo* in the union between a man and a woman might result in infertility, relationship problems, and divorce, the teacher and his spirit will interfere in the activity of the novice if the *lovolo* for the teacher has not been performed. The absence of the *lovolo* will result in few clients and poor results. As with the *kulovola wansati*, the *lovolo* for the *nyanga* is demanded by the spirits. Mr Langeni explains:

If I don't perform the *kulovola nyanga*, if I don't pay Velemina, the spirits will demand it. They can interrupt the rhythm of my work, I start not having clients any more. There are no patients coming, and so I'll have to look for the reason for this situation. I can't consult with my teacher as I know that I owe her money. I consult another diviner and say: nobody is entering my house, what is happening? There, the diviner will say: the one who "closed the door"⁵⁸ is your teacher. So I will have to

⁵⁸ The metaphor of "opening the door" is used to mean "propitiation", while "closing the door" indicates "dangerous acts against social reproduction". Mark Auslander (1993: 167-92) also refers to the expressions "open the womb" and "close the womb as having the same meaning.

start negotiating with this diviner to “open” the business again. He will ask for money. I will pay. The diviner will do the ceremonies to expel the spirits of the person who came here to close the business. Generally we use goats, lambs or chickens. Consequently business recommences. But after the death of my teacher, her spirits of vengeance will be released and will demand the money that has not been paid. If I am already dead, her spirits will demand it from my children. To *kulovola nyanga* is the same thing as *kulovola wansati* [a woman] because if someone takes a woman as a wife without performing the *lovolo* the consequences will be serious for the future generations. In the same way, if you take the *nyanga* and do not carry out the *lovolo* it also will be serious for future generations. (Mr Langeni, interview, January 1999)

Velemina, Mr Langeni's master confirms his explanation:

As an example, Mr Langeni does his training here and does not *kulovola nyanga*. I do not evoke my spirits to say that I did the training for this person. If I die, that is when they [the spirits] will start to demand the debt money from Mr. Langeni and his children. Since I am alive you do not find a *muhliwa* (a bad spirit). I feel resentment. But as soon as I die you will find a *muhliwa*.⁵⁹ (...) You pay the *lovolo* to the *nyanga* to avoid that his or her spirit comes to disturb you. You give the *lovolo* so that they can't say that you stole. (Velemina, interview, January 2000)

⁵⁹ A *muhliwa* is a spirit of a person who died through sorcery (Honwana, 2002: 76; Feliciano, 1998: 372). Generally these *muhliwa* want to be compensated for the misfortune that they suffered. It seems that here Velemina uses the term *muhliwa* in a broader sense as a spirit of a person seeking vengeance, or the payment of a debt. A person can only turn into a *muhliwa* for a person from another group. If a *tinguluve*, a spirit of an ancestor, seeks revenge, he is not called a *muhliwa*. See Chapter 4 on vengeance spirits.

Velemina and Mr Langeni present two consequences of non-performance of the *lovolo* ceremony. Velemina provides evidence of the disturbance caused by the teacher's spirits after his or her death on the student and his family. Mr Langeni points out that even during his teacher's life he can experience such problems as lack of clientele that originate in his teacher's anger. Fear of the living and fear of the spirits blend and promote strong motivation for individuals to comply with the demands of the living. There is a price to pay for non-conformance to the ritual. The performance of the *lovolo* ceremony is not understood solely as an economic transaction, but as a means to promote the functioning of symbolic forces. *Lovolo*, like the big *mhamba* ceremonies generally used to integrate the dead into the world of the spirits, or the little offering (*kuphahla*) performed to communicate important events to the spirits, aims to establish harmony between spiritual beings and persons.

It is because Mr. Langeni did not pay the *lovolo* to Velemina that he is now unable to practise his healing activity as a *nyamusoro* and can work only as a *nyangarume*. He managed to work as a *nyamusoro* for a while, but then his power weakened, his reputation and his clientele declined, and he had to stop practising. His healing power has been withdrawn because he did not respect the established contract between individuals and spiritual beings. This contract is expressed by the embodiment of these spirits in the individuals. The training appears to be the treatment of the "calling disease" and a loan given by the teacher to the novice to allow him or her to start practising and to undertake the *lovolo*. If the symbolic process has not been respected, the real process is endangered. If respect has not been paid to the spirits, the clientele will not be forthcoming. The direct relationship between symbolic process and reality is obvious. Wealth given as a symbolic gesture is expected to be returned later in the form of clientele and healing power.

As a ritual with an element of magic, *lovolo* aims at propitiating the positive action of symbolic forces. Displeased spiritual beings can ask for a *mhamba* to be performed (*hikombela mhamba*) or can ask for the *lovolo* to be carried out (*hikombela lovolo*). In the event of a *lovolo*, the spirits of the two groups (affinal in the case of a marriage or related by healer initiation in the *kulovola nyanga*) are informed and are given the opportunity of getting to know each other. The forefathers of the wife cannot disturb the couple by arguing that she was stolen, neither can the spirit of the teacher disturb the novice saying that he or she has stolen his or her knowledge.

Velemina's spirits allowed her to be a diviner, to practise her activity and give birth to a son (the *mathwasana*), thus promoting the growth of his diviner spirit.⁶⁰ Mr Langeni's healing spirits that stay in his body are like babies and he needs the teacher to make them grow. But this transformation alone is insufficient; the novice needs to acquire the permanent spiritual blessing of his or her teacher and this can only be achieved by giving the money that results from the activity of the son's spirit. Giving money to the teacher and his or her spirit demonstrates the novice's and his or her spirits' allegiance. It also promotes health and well being, which are essential to the healing activity.

Velemina *kulovola* Rosaltina

Since I had read the reference by Polanah (1967: 71-91) to a *lovolo* performed in 1964 in the Maputo area by a person named Amélia⁶¹ to

⁶⁰ Whyte (1991: 158) explains that among the Nyola of eastern Uganda the spirit is seen as the one who teaches the initiate and not the experienced diviner.

⁶¹ Polanah (1967: 71-91) explains that Amélia, the 50-year-old daughter of a black woman and a white father, and living with a European, became afflicted by a spirit that wanted her to become a *nyamusoro*. As she refused to take on this activity, she negotiated the possibility of having her place taken by a younger person. With this in mind, Joana was *lovolíwa* from another family and trained to comply with the request of the spirits (Polanah, 1967: 71-91). She lived with Amélia and practised her healing activity, working with this spirit as his wife and remaining chaste. By acquiring Joana, Amélia managed to avoid becoming a healer and going through the training. However, Joana was linked to Amélia as she was the one who did the *lovolo* to satisfy her own

obtain a woman to serve her spirit, I was interested in investigating this practice more deeply. I was particularly interested in it as it recalled the practice of women marrying other women described by Evans-Pritchard (1951: 108-11) and the wives of the Lovedu Queen (Krige et al., 1981: 149). This critical issue of the diviner's cross-gender identification also puzzled me.

When I discussed Polanah's narrative with Paulo and his father, Mr Langeni, they suggested to me that I meet Velemina because she had performed three *lovolo* in order to get women for herself and her healer spirits. One woman, Rosaltina, lived with Velemina and her husband, while the other two women lived with Velemina's brother. All the women for whom she performed the *lovolo* are considered her wives and belong to her spirits. They are *vavasati va svikwembu*, which means wives of the spirits.

Velemina has 11 spirits who assist her in her work. Five spirits come from her father's side, two of which are Ngoni spirits of vengeance and three of which are her ancestors. From her maternal side she has six spirits of which three are ancestors and the other three are Ndaу vengeance spirits.

Her paternal ancestors' spirits are: Basi, her father's mother; Wukwini, her father's father; and Nkomu wa Lwandle, her father's eldest brother. The latter was the first in the family to start the healing practice. He is, as she said, the "origin" or "root" of the practice. In addition, Velemina has two Ngoni spirits, a male spirit called Nhlavavu (who is her father's namesake) and a female spirit called Sovalhe, who is her own namesake. Both Ngoni spirits were healers in life and were killed by Velemina's paternal ancestors during Ngungunyana's war. They were reincarnated as some of

spirits of healer. The girl became the wife of Amelia's spirit of healer and a healer. From Polanah's account it is unclear how Joana turned herself into a healer as healing spirits acquired by means of *lovolo* do not allow the individual to become a diviner. To be a healer, it is the individual healer's spirits who are at work (ibid.).

the descendants of their murderers who are now obliged to assume their healing activities. These Ngoni spirits allow Velemina to perform the *kuhlahluva tinhlolo* and the *kuhlahluva muhlalu*.⁶²

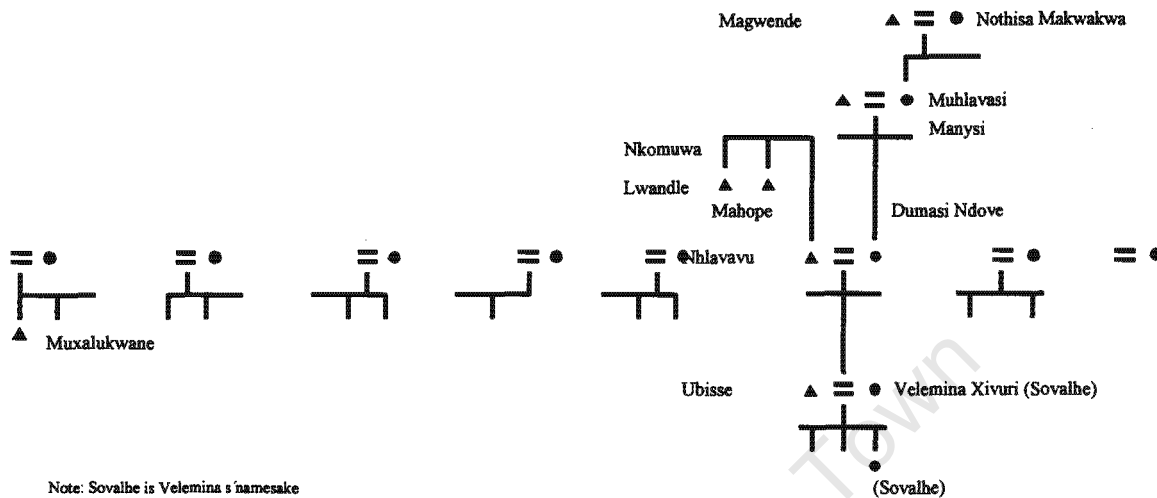


Diagram 1: Velemina's genealogy

From her maternal side, Velemina reincarnates Nothisa Makwakwa, her mother's mother's mother; Muhlavasi Manysi, her mother's mother and Dumasi Ndove, her mother. Velemina's mother's mother's father was the regular Magwendere who killed a substantial number of Ndaus during Ngungunyana's war. Mubuwa Ntive (a woman), Mutungameri Sitoi (a man) and Makwhekwhetse (Mutungameri Sitoi's nephew) were killed by Magwendere (Xinavane) and "came out" in his daughter Muhlavasi Manysi, whom he had with Nothisa Makwakwa. Muhlavasi's daughter (Dumasi Ndove) and Muhlavasi's daughter's daughter (Velemina Xikonela) inherited these three spirits and became *nyamusoro*. These Ndaus are the ones who allow Velemina to perform the *kufemba*.

⁶² The *kuhlahluva muhlalu* is a divination technique, which is based on direct intuition and interpretation, while the *kuhlahluva tinhlolo* is the capacity to interpret the knuckle-bones.

Velemina's spirits of healers communicate with her through disease or social problems, or "emerge" suddenly when she is not working. They might express any kind of desire to guarantee her veneration. She explains that the spirits generally ask for a young girl or a couple of children to clean the *ndhumbha* and light a petrol lamp or a fire every day so that they feel that they are receiving constant care. The spirits might define whom they want or leave the decision to her. The children are considered as wife and husband of the spirits. As the child generally belongs to the segment of lineage of the person afflicted by the spirits, the formal act of giving the child is achieved through the performing of the *kuphahla*.

Because possession by spirits impacts differently on men and women, Velemina feels that it is preferable to give a son or brother rather than a daughter. She explains:

The spirits ask for somebody to work for them. Usually one gives a son or a brother. The boy cleans the houses of the spirits (*ndhumbha*). One then has to get a woman for this man. It is necessary to *kulovola* a woman for him with the money earned from the work with the spirits. This money comes from the spirit; it is a result of their work. In that way, the woman becomes the wife of the spirit. And it is this woman who will work for the spirits. She needs to carefully respect their wishes and to fulfil all her obligations towards the spirits; otherwise they will take revenge on her. Because if she accepted [becoming a spirit's wife] she would have to work. If we give a woman from the house, she will not be able to find a man to marry (*kulovola*) because she has to be kept as the wife of the spirit. In the event of being *lovoliwa* by a man, the spirit persecutes her because her children belong to her husband. The spirit gets really angry because he wants the

children. It is possible to give a woman from the house, but in this case she has to stay at home, she cannot be *lovoliwa* and she'll give birth to children that belong to the spirit that possesses her. Usually these women have affairs with different men. But if I give a son it is easier, as he stays at home, he *lovoliwa* a woman and the children belong to the spirits; they will bear the spirit lineage's name. (Velemina, interview, June 2000)

It seems that various forms of possession by a healing spirit exist and that how individuals are possessed has implications for their careers and their descendants. The healer's Tsonga spirits choose their career. The Ndaou or Ngoni spirits of healer possess the descendant of the person who offended them. A young girl or boy can be possessed by being given to a spirit through *kuphahla*. Finally, a woman can be possessed by being offered through *lovolo* to a spirit.

While boys and girls can be offered to a spirit through the *kuphahla*, only women are usually offered through the performance of the *lovolo*.⁶³ And, although both boys and girls can be offered to spiritual beings through the *kuphahla*, sons and daughters are in a different position with regard to being offered to a spirit. Offering a son means that, by giving the *lovolo*, he is able to acquire a woman who can provide descent for any types of spirits, ancestors or others, that possess him and affect or influence his group. Offering a daughter to the spirits implies that she will have problems in establishing a union with a living person. If a man gives *lovolo* for her, the spirit will not accept this union as he considers himself the husband of the woman and he will disturb her, her partner, and her children.⁶⁴ The conflict will generally concentrate on the filiation of the

⁶³ See later in this chapter some cases from the literature where men perform the *lovolo* to establish a relationship with a male adolescent.

⁶⁴ See in Chapter 4 the case study of a woman who was given to a foreign spirit of vengeance.

children. Being possessed by a spirit upsets the patrilineage, as women, like men, are requested by the spirit to pass on the lineage of the spirit. When the *lovolo* is performed in the name of the healer's spirit, there is no doubt that the children that result from this union are spiritually linked to this spirit; however, when the woman has not been *lovoliwa* by the spirit, there will be ever-present tension and pressure.

Nevertheless, the possibility of a woman possessed by a spirit of a healer being substituted by another woman does exist. Honwana (2002: 67) refers to the fact that if a woman belongs to a spirit, the spirit can be consulted and asked permission for the woman to be replaced by another woman. The woman offered is generally from the healer's own group or is *lovoliwa* for this purpose.⁶⁵ Although currently the Zionist Church allows people possessed by spirits of healers to turn themselves into prophets, it generally seems quite unusual to be able to deny possession by a spirit and to refuse to be a healer.

Whereas a woman possessed by a spirit can use *lovolo* to acquire a substitute to replace her, a man cannot. He has to perform the *lovolo* on behalf of the spirit that possessed him and give his children the spirit's filiation. The man cannot *kulovola* another man to replace him or to substitute a son possessed by a spirit. For a man who is possessed by many spirits, the way to transmit his different spirits' names is through polygamy. He can *kulovola* a woman in the name of each spirit that possesses him. This suggests that, in addition to offering a couple of children to take care of the spirit through *kuphahla*, another way to satisfy the spirit of the healer who wants a wife and children is through *lovolo*. In such a case, a woman, like a man, can *kulovola* a woman. Velemina explains:

I performed *lovolo* for a girl, Rosaltina, when she was still

⁶⁵ The case described by Polanah (1967: 71-91), and referred to above, is an example of this.

a child. She is my niece, my brother's daughter. She is a Xikonela. I was sick and I couldn't recover. Rosaltina's parents understood my suffering. My suffering was their suffering, for which reason they understood the need to find somebody to work for the spirit. Rosaltina is also a healer. I taught her. I educated her until she reached the age to be involved with a man. She lived in my house and she slept with my husband. She became my husband's wife. Rosaltina's children belong to me because I am her husband. She had seven children who are Xikonela. Xikonela is my father's surname. The Xikonela are the one who have the Ngoni spirits: the ones who allow me to practise the *kuhlahluva*.⁶⁶ When I got divorced from my husband, Rosaltina also left his house and established herself on her own. (Velemina, interview, June 2000)

Rosaltina's parents were aware that she was being *lovoliwa* for a spirit; the goods given for the *lovolo* were presented to the Xikonela (Velemina's father's lineage) and to the Ndaus spirits during the *muphahlu*, which legitimised the relation with them. The children born from this union belong to her paternal lineage and to the spirit of healer that she inherited from her maternal side as she explained in an interview carried out one year later:

With the money of the *svikwembu* I did the *lovolo* of this woman. As her *lovolo* was done with this money, she is called after my *svikwembu* [the spirits] from my maternal side. She came to help me in this work. I did the *lovolo* for Makwhekwehetse, so that when I do the *kufemba* she could "hold" my spirits and I could work. I did the *lovolo*

⁶⁶ *Kuhlalhuva* is the capacity to interpret the objects used for the oracle.

to the Nda. I did the *lovolo* for Makwhekwhetse, for Mutengameri and for Mabuwa. But Makwhekwehetse is the most important. (Velemina, interview, April 2001)

As a woman, Velemina can carry out the *lovolo* of another woman and turn herself into a female husband. Although she is a woman, she adopts a male role in relation to her wife. Similarly, it is interesting to note that Rosaltina was given to three spirits, of which two are male and one is female. As a wife of these spirits, Rosaltina is expected to “hold” the spirits when Velemina performs the *kufemba*, which means to ensure that the spirits stay with Velemina during the consultation. As Velemina’s wife, Rosaltina cleans the *ndhumbha* where the spirits live and collects medicinal herbs to be used as treatment for the clients.

Sometimes Velemina stresses that Rosaltina's children belong to the Xikonela, her paternal lineage, while at other times she puts the emphasis on their belonging to the Nda spirits inherited from her maternal side. This situation reflects the level of integration of the different spirits in the individual. The Ngoni or Nda spirits of healer “are with” a lineage throughout generations, and are transmitted from one generation to another. When the healer’s career is in disharmony with the spirits, or when the healer’s position shifts from one fragment of identity to another, to emphasise a specific aspect, the point of view originally expressed by the healer might change. This perhaps explains why, for Velemina, the children might be seen as the Nda spirits' children or as the Xikonelas' ones. Ultimately this does not matter much as she is the reincarnation of all the spirits. She is Makwhekwehetse and she is Sovalhe. She is both male and female. However, her dominant spirit is Xikonela, her father’s lineage, the “root”, as she terms it, of her healing practice.

Rosaltina is Velemina's husband's co-wife and Rosaltina's seven children are officially registered with the surname of Velemina's husband, Ubisse.

During the *kuphahla* or *mhamba* for the ancestor, the children are referred to as Xikonela (the name of Velemina's patrilineage), as Makwhekwehetse, the main male Ndaus spirit, or by their official surname, Ubisse. Different levels in the relationship can be identified: the mundane and the spiritual. Biological paternity usually provides the official level. However, spiritual paternity is socially redefined according to which spirit the children's mother has been offered to during the *kuphahla* performed at the giving of the *lovolo*. At a spiritual level, Rosaltina and her children belong to the spirit who allowed the money for the *lovolo* to be earned and in whose name the *lovolo* was carried out.

The *bandhla*'s relationship overlays these different levels of kinship. Velemina is Rosaltina's teacher because she initiated her as a healer. Rosaltina did not become a healer because she was *lovoliva* by Velemina or because she was a spirit of a healer's wife. She became a healer because she was also possessed by healer spirits. Rosaltina is Xikonela by birth; she is married to Velemina Xikonela and belongs to the Xikonela *bandhla*. Rosaltina calls Velemina "father" (*bava*) and her children call Velemina "grandfather" because of the relationship established within the *bandhla*. Rosaltina also calls Velemina "husband" because Velemina is the one who did the *lovolo* for her.

Tsonga rules of patrilineality are not defined by blood relationships but by symbolic arrangements within the Tsonga *lovolo* institution. Consanguinity and kinship are socially recognised constructions and not biological ones as they are defined in relation to a spiritual starting point and not a biological one (Héritier, 1996: 53). The man does not enjoy biological privilege; it is the spiritual being to whom the woman belongs that determines the spiritual lineage of a man's children, while the social lineage is defined according to the man whom the woman has officially married (Velemina's brother or husband in this case). In a system imbued with patrilineal ideology, filiation is an eminently social phenomenon.

Both men and women can acquire women to give descent to the lineage of a spiritual being through *lovolo*, independently of paternal biological filiation. It is the male or female spirit in whose name *lovolo* has been performed that will determine the children's lineage.⁶⁷ While the man will *kulovola* the women to be his own wives, the woman must *kulovola* the women to be the social wives of other men (husband, son or brother). Thanks to polygamy, a male or a female healer can satisfy the different spirits he or she is possessed by, as different women can be *lovoliwa* in the name of different spirits and thus give sons to different lineages. A woman, as Velemina's case illustrates, can *lovoliwa* several women for different spirits that will have children to continue the spirits' lineages, but over which the biological fathers' lineages have no spiritual power.

In southern Mozambique, the spiritual lineage of a woman's biological sons and daughters can be determined by the origin of the *lovolo*, by its absence (in which case she transmits her father's lineage⁶⁸), or by the spirit possession of the children. If a woman is possessed by a healer spirit or by other spirits, the kinship of the children born in the absence of *lovolo* might be controversial because there was no *lovolo* given.

As a general rule, the lineage of a man's biological descent is determined by the spirit in whose name the mother is *lovoliwa*. However, the children might be possessed or offered to a spirit in which case there is a conflict between the relationship established by the *lovolo* and the relationship with the spirits the children are possessed by. A man cannot transmit his own lineage if the *lovolo* of the children's biological mother has not been performed in the name of his ancestors. The acquisition of a woman through *lovolo* is thus of particular importance as within it lies the

⁶⁷ Herskovits (1926: 270-1) explains that for the Zulu the status of a child depends on the origin of the cattle given for his mother's *lovolo*. If the cattle have been acquired by the father, the woman starts a new line and the children may not inherit family property. If the cattle come from the father's inheritance, the first son is the heir and the head of the family.

⁶⁸ This is the case of illegitimate children who are born outside of any *lovolo* arrangement.

potential for a man or a woman to acquire a woman in the name of any spiritual being that possesses him or her. *Lovolo* guarantees the provision of descent to lineages and allows manipulation of the filiation of children to the benefit of different spirits and their lineages.

The union between Velemina and Rosaltina seems to be similar to a combination of two types of marriages described by Evans-Pritchard: the marriage of a woman by another woman and the ghost-marriage (1951: 108-11). For a male Nuer from Sudan it is of utmost importance to have children who continue his lineage and use his name so that he can be remembered through his son. The continuance of his lineage is guaranteed through kinship and, in the case of neglect, the spirit will haunt his kin. Thus, the ghost-marriage is performed when a man or, more rarely, a woman who was barren during her life (and is thus considered as a man) dies without an heir. In these cases, the kin of males or females can marry a woman in the name of their dead relative in the hope of providing children and especially a male heir. In everyday life, the name of the biological father prevails, while in legal and ceremonial situations the name of the spirit is employed. "The legal husband is the ghost in whose name the bridewealth was paid and the ritual of matrimony was performed" (Evans-Pritchard, 1951: 110).

Among the Nuer, the marriage of a woman to another woman is generally promoted by women who are barren and who practise as healers or diviners. The ceremonies of marriage and the bridewealth are performed as in a marriage between a man and a woman. The woman-husband gets a relative, a friend, or a neighbour to beget children. The woman-husband is considered the pater; her children call her "father", and she receives the husband's part of the bridewealth in the event of a daughter's marriage. As a legal husband, she (the woman-husband) can receive fines if her wife has sexual relations with other men without her agreement (Evans-Pritchard, 1951: 110).

The offering of women to the queen in the *lova* system that prevails among the Lovedu of South Africa, which is described by Krige (1975: 393-424); Krige et al., 1981: 149), can also be related to the situation described by Velemina. To *lova* the queen means:

to show loyalty by frequent visits to the capital for attendance at court case, as also by occasional gifts to the queen. The *lova* system associated with political allegiance to the queen is employed also when a man wants a certain office or favour, in which case he brings a solicitory gift of livestock or money (recently even a sewing machine and other goods), or if he is a claimant in a contested headmanship of an area a daughter may be appointed as a future *motanoni* (wife of an important person) of the queen. In time of drought the queen's subjects come, district by district, to "dance rain" bringing with them these days, also a gift of money for the queen. (Krige, 1975: 237)

Krige (1975: 249) argues that the strong political organisation and the integration of foreign groups were mainly achieved through the strong bonds of kinship that arose out of female marriages with the queen. This practice linked the queen with her subjects, which allowed the redistribution of some of these wives to the queen's relatives and other subjects and the continuation of the alliance with the queen through to successive generations by cross-cousin marriages (Krige, 1975: 249).

While the marriage ceremonies mentioned above link a woman to another woman, ethnographic literature on southern Mozambique also refers to *lovolo* ceremonies that celebrate the union between two men, usually an older to a younger one (Harries, 1994: 200-208; Junod, 1898: 123). Junod

explains that at the beginning of the last century, chiefs had the right to perform the *lovolo* for a young boy to make him a son (Junod, 1898: 123). Harries (1994: 200-208), also referring to the early twentieth century, describes the practice of "mine marriage" or *bukhontxana* in the gold mines of the Witwatersrand, where a man performed the *lovolo* for a male adolescent by offering money to the eldest brother or person in charge of the adolescent. Although the boy was called "son" by the older man and called the latter "father"; homoerotic attraction was registered between the two (Harries, 1994: 200-208; Bagnol, 2003: 16). The boy adopted a female role in the couple, fetching water, cooking, and ironing the clothes while the man was responsible to protect and provide financial security. This practice, characterised by sexual inversion, also had an educative role and was a rite of passage into manhood and an expression of cultural identity in a foreign country and in a harsh situation.

Thus, even if *lovolo* is commonly seen as celebrating a union between a man and a woman, it must be recognised that it can promote a variety of relationships and processes.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The *lovolo* is the magical process that allows one to gain access to clairvoyance, wealth, well being, and children. For this reason one can see that *lovolo* practices mark more than just the male/female union of conventional marriage. They also signify persons' relationships with the spiritual world, and we might even argue that it is the latter characteristic that is the more culturally salient, even though it is not necessarily so obvious. In a similar way to the *lovolo* performed by Mr. Langeni in relation to Velemina (*kulovola nyanga*), the *lovolo* of a woman (*kulovola wansati*) offered to a healer spirit shows the continuous exchanges that

spirits request. This type of *lovolo* stresses the bond and mutual obligation between individuals and spirits. An individual's identity, capacities and skills are recognised as originating in the spiritual forces.

The act of offering reminds the individual and the society of their history and of how and why they acquired their characteristics. Offering re-activates the relationship with the spirits. The obligation to give and to offer to the spirit allows the individual to express the recognition of belonging to a specific group, of being a *nyamusoro*, or a healer with specific powers. This offering unites a person with his or her ancestors or with a specific spirit, and is the acceptance of one's own identity and continuity with the dead.

An offering to a spirit will result in an improvement in the individual's situation. A gift given by the spirit to the living reinforces the living's strength as a powerful healing specialist as it is a gift-event of being. The nature of the being, and of his agency and capacities depends on the gift, which is the gift of being possessed, and the gift to work in harmony with the spirits. The aim of the *lovolo* ritual carried out by a healer is to promote a good relationship with an ancestor or a spirit who has divining skills or with the teacher's spirits.

Making offerings to a spiritual being that is embodied in one's selfhood is a process of establishing and maintaining one's own identity, history and individual power, which are deeply rooted in a specific understanding of life, death and economic exchange. It is an act of narcissism, self-satisfaction and self-recognition with regard to the individual's ontological identity.

The spirits give the gift of being, and therefore individuals feel a moral debt to them. Spirits and individuals are inscribed in a cycle of exchange, where any gift is already a counter-gift (Mauss 1954: 37-40). One always owes the other something. A form of contract links them together. This contract is grounded in a cosmological understanding, which is the ontological force that is provided by the strong links of interdependency that unite individuals and spiritual beings. Individuals and spiritual beings are deeply rooted in one another. Spirits and individuals are embodied in the same living body and this makes their relationship

unique. Ancestors are given a body and a new life through the living being from which they express their desires.

All types of processes (biological, agricultural and cosmic) are performed under the protection of the ancestors and are threatened by the influence of malevolent spirits (Feliciano, 1998: 320), which can be foreign spirits, forefathers and living persons (through witchcraft). Women, although they alone possess the biological capacity to reproduce, need a spiritual intervention through *lovolo* to turn themselves into reproducers of the species, able to give birth to children of both sexes and to result in two people from one. Women ensure their fertility because of symbolic interventions through *lovolo* on their bodies and as a blessing from their ancestors.

Similarly, the healer is able to achieve vision because of her or his androgyny, and to produce wealth, which is expressed in terms of money. To allow procreation and vision, the complementarity of masculine and feminine characteristics is necessary. This mixture is not only biological (masculine and feminine fluids) but also spiritual (maternal and paternal spirits of men and women have to bless the sexual union). Differences and oppositions of temperatures (cold and hot) and colours (white, black and red) are also conceived in terms of complementarity. These differences and oppositions are necessary and can be dangerous if not dealt with properly.

The practice of *lovolo* (*kulovola nyanga* or *kulovola wansati*) represents far more than an economic arrangement or “access to women”. It is an integral part of the construction of the symbolic world as it is justified through an interpretation of biological and healing phenomena. The *lovolo* ceremony explains the transformation of individuals and the acquisition of new powers: the power to reproduce, the power to heal, and to obtain wealth in children or money. For this reason, *lovolo* must also be understood within the economy of the symbolic.

Lovolo is the magical process by which these transformations happen. The magical operation rests on an unconscious unity of giving, receiving, and returning. The reference to the spiritual force belongs to the order of

Chapter 4

Lovolo and vengeance spirits



Figure 14: The groom's representative puts the ring on the bride.

thinking. It has a semantic function and corresponds to a symbolic logic.

The *lovo* has the symbolic function of synthesising exchange.

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Just as we find ourselves always *between* the gift and economy, so we find ourselves always between justice and the law, always trying to interrupt the authoritative voice of the law with the soft sighs of justice, to relieve the harsh strictures of the law with the gentleness of a gift. (Caputo, 1997: 151)

In the preceding chapters I argued that *lovolo* has the practical capacity to promote good relations amongst the living and between the living and different kinds of spirits such as the ancestors of the women married through such ceremonies (see Chapters 1 and 2) or the spirits of healers (see Chapter 3). However, in addition to these kinds of spirits, alien spirits of vengeance can demand a woman and compensation in goods for the harm they have suffered.

Possession by foreign spirits has been widely documented in southern Africa. Studies have usually focused on transformation through healing initiations and the contribution of these initiations to new healing techniques¹ (Beattie & Middleton, 1969; Beattie,² 1969: 161; Colson, 1969: 69-103; Lee, 1969: 128-58; Bourdillon, 1976: 269-83; Ngubane, 1977: 87-144; Hammond-Tooke, 1986: 157-70; Peek, 1991a: 195-7; Whyte, 1991: 154-70; Janzen, 1992: 93-6; Dijk et al., 2000: 135-40; Reis, 2000: 70-1; Honwana, 2002: 51-79). The expulsion³ and use of vengeance spirits are ambiguous and it is in this context that I analyse the role of the *lovolo* ceremonies.

I present two case studies: the first of a Ndau spirit of vengeance who

¹ In relation to foreign spirits in the healing context, see Chapter 3 of this thesis.

² Studying the cult of the Banyoro in western Uganda, Beattie identifies, in addition to the 19 "white" spirits or historical figures dealing with household issues, an increasing number of "black" spirits, who are considered to be inimical rather than beneficial. These are said to be of foreign origin (Beattie, 1969: 161).

³ Alien spirits, as in the case of the *ufufunyane* among the Zulu (Reis, 2000: 70-1), have to be expelled.

wants a wife and the second of a male spirit, who was a victim of witchcraft and demands to be brought back home from the house of the descendants of his murderer, to show that *lovolo* also pacifies and establishes relationships with spirits of vengeance. I discuss the fact that the *lovolo* performances expose social contradictions and are an expression of a power relationship played out in terms of acceptable conflicts.

The *lovolo* carried out for spirits of vengeance expresses all the notions of forgiveness and thus recalls Mauss (1954: 80), who (like his philosophical predecessors) sees the gift as a social contract that allows for the establishment of peace between antagonistic or potentially antagonistic parties. It is also worth referring to Derrida,⁴ who emphasises the semantic connection in French between the words "don" (gift) and "pardon" (forgiveness). "Pardon" can be split in "par-don", that is "par" (with) and "don" (gift), which suggests that forgiveness can be achieved with gifts. Cixous, analysing the question of gender implied in the gift, plays with the ambiguities of the French word "rapport", which means both relationship and profit (1997: 158).

The gift, like the bribe, avoids conflict, pacifies in advance and pre-empts conflict, thus creating a situation in which the offence cannot be committed. I suggest that *lovolo* is an offering of valuables (goods, money) to render homage to individuals and spirits and that, in this way, wealth is redistributed amongst the living, and peace is achieved. I therefore discuss the economy of *lovolo* and its role in symbolically making justice possible.

Possession by angry spirits and foreign spirits

In southern Mozambique, spirits of vengeance may be foreign spirits,

⁴ Talk given in the seminar "Forgiving the Unforgivable" held by Derrida on 10 August 1998 at the University of Western Cape (South Africa)

generally Ndaou, or, occasionally, from the same group of the person possessed. For example, an older person can curse a younger person of the same lineage and may then be appeased by the lineage. However, in this chapter, I focus on spirits who are foreign to the lineage.

Although many spirits of vengeance exist,⁵ two main types of spirits can be identified: *muhliwa*⁶ and *matlharhi*.⁷ A *muhliwa* is a spirit of a person who was killed to work as a spiritual being for another person through the intervention of witchcraft or a spirit who was stolen from his group to work for another group. *Muhliwa* means a person who was "eaten" by a *muloyi* (sorcerer) (Honwana, 2002: 58). *Matlharhi* refers to the spirit of a person who died a violent death and who seeks vengeance against the family of his killer. (*Tlharhi* means a spear, thus *matlharhi* is the spirit of a person who was murdered or killed in battle.) *Matlharhi* are usually of Ndaou origin (Honwana, 2002: 62).

Both *muhliwa* and *matlharhi* may also be referred to as *mupfukwa*, although *mupfukwa* are generally Ndaou spirits, as the Ndaou are believed to use a plant called *mupfukwa*,⁸ which, when put on the dead body, allows the spirit of the person to resuscitate.⁹ Feliciano suggests that the name of these spirits comes from the term *kupfuka*, which means to be awoken from death (1998: 372). Although boys and girls drink a beverage prepared with this plant, the majority of vengeance spirits are male (Honwana, 2002: 63). Eathy (1934) points out that the Ndaou man is often buried with an assegai "to help him to carry out his work of vengeance" (Eathy, 1934: 227) and

⁵ Feliciano (1998: 373) describes other spirits: the *marombe* (spirit of mad people), the *bsa nova* or *vandixika* (which means "you step on me"), the *bsa ku hahela* (people who were *tinyanga*). The spirits of men who died without being married, the *nghwendza*, are also referred to.

⁶ Spirit of a person killed or stolen through witchcraft.

⁷ Spirit of a person killed in a violent way.

⁸ Dora Eathy explains that the Ndaou use an important medicine called *mipfuko* that "give the power" to rise "(*ku pfukela*) in one enemy after the other, in order to kill it" (Eathy, 1934: 226). Langeni (1992:29-31) also analyses the verb *kupfuka* in *Cicopi* and *Xichangana*, which has a similar meaning.

⁹ These spirits seem similar to the *ufufunyane* found among the Zulu, which emerge as a result of a medicine prepared with cemetery earth (Reis, 2000: 70-1).

that Ndaou spirits are extremely dangerous and can destroy a whole family. Angry and vengeful spirits are synonymous with evil forces, which interfere in production and reproduction processes, diverting the flow of value for purposes of revenge. The sin of the group who killed an individual or diverted a spirits' force for its own benefit is called *nandru*, the debt. The average person is not credited with the power for vengeance, which is considered a characteristic of specific groups, such as the Ndaou, or the result of specialist activity.

Spirits of vengeance are angry spirits, which seek revenge from the person or the descendants of the person who killed them. Feliciano (1998: 372) and Honwana (2002: 62) explain that this situation has to be related to the fact that these individuals were not buried according to ritual and were not mourned. As they died in an unnatural way, and because their death was provoked, they did not enter the world of the dead properly and their spirits are bitter and restless until they are properly settled.

Most of the vengeance spirits are of Ndaou origin and are the spirits of warriors killed during Gungunyana's war (1885-1895). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Ngoni, migrating north, subjugated the Tsonga and the Ndaou. They integrated the former in their socio-political system and took the latter as slaves to southern Mozambique. This seems to be part of the reason for the current rivalry, as most of the spirits of vengeance who possess women today refer to their murder during this period. After independence, the war between RENAMO whose leader is Ndaou and whose political base is in the Ndaou area (in the central zone of the country), and FRELIMO whose main political support is in southern Mozambique in the Tsonga area may have deepened the existing antagonism. Despite the fact that spirits of individuals killed in this recent war have not yet manifested themselves, the fear of their impact is already noticeable, which shows the important link of the living with the spirits, and their relationship with political events.

The importance of being buried properly seems to be wide spread in the region. Werbner (1991: 151-3) describes a similar belief amongst the Kalanga of Zimbabwe, which holds that spirits of persons wrongfully killed and improperly buried (during the liberation war around 1977) are dangerous to the living. Similarly, among the Zulu, the *indiki*, i.e. *amandawe*, are spirits of men whose funeral rites were not performed properly (Reis, 2000: 70-1). These situations affect mostly the families of migrant workers, who are bothered by an angry ancestor (Van Nieuwenhuijsen, 1974: 12; Ngubane, 1977: 144; Hammond-Tooke, 1986: 162-164).

The fear of the angry spirits and the methods used to appease them, vary according to the relationship between the victim and the spirit.¹⁰ Foreign spirits of vengeance are considered worse than angry ancestors even if in both cases disease and death can occur. Amongst these spirits, the spirit of a person who has been murdered is the most feared. For this reason, murderers have to perform specific ceremonies to avoid the retaliation of the spirit of their victim. Among the Shona (Bourdillon, 1976: 270-3) and the Tsonga (Junod, 1996: V1, 419-24; Feliciano, 1998: 372), the murderer may try to avoid the revenge of the victim by eating his flesh. Ceremonies can also be performed when soldiers come back from the war to cleanse them from the death of the enemy (Dawes & Honwana, 1996: 7-8). When the murderers do not perform the proper rituals or are not punished, their

¹⁰ A similar distinction between ancestor spirit and foreign spirit of vengeance is found among the Shona. Bourdillon (1976: 270-3), drawing widely on information collected by Gelfand, writes that one can distinguish a variety of angry spirits (*ngozi*): the spirit of a stranger acting through witchcraft, the spirit of a victim avenging some wrong, or the spirit of an elder relative angry about the behaviour of his/her living descendant. These spirits are all feared because they cause death and destruction (Bourdillon, 1976: 270-3). Large fines can be imposed when the grievance concerns debt and bride-wealth accounts. Bourdillon explains that among the Shona the fear of vengeance spirits ensures that the ceremonies are performed carefully and that living relatives are not offended. If the spirit becomes aggressive, a large fine in cattle is necessary. The family of a victim of murder may want to avenge him and oblige the group of the murderer to pay the debt by "awaking" (Bourdillon, 1976: 273) the spirit against the offenders. In all cases, the means to appease the angry spirit involves loss of wealth and humiliation (more generally when the angry spirit is a relative).

sin will be inherited by the following generations.

While eating the flesh of the victim can, for the murderer, be the means to appease the vengeance of the spirit (Junod, 1996: V1, 423-5), it can also be the means with which to appropriate social production and reproduction through witchcraft. "Eating" human flesh is the metaphor widely used in the region to refer to the person whose spirit has been usurped or who has been killed to benefit another person, generally to accumulate wealth by means of witchcraft (Shaw,¹¹ 1991: 147; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1993: xxvi). Niehaus (1997a: 3) refers to these victims of witchcraft as zombies.¹² In southern Mozambique, the *muhliwa* is the spirit of a person who was "eaten" by a sorcerer (*muloyi*). After the death of the person he worked for, the spirit (*muhliwa*) seeks revenge from the descendants of this person. Similar to the desire of the spirit of a person killed violently, the spirit wants to be reintegrated in his own group. He might know where he comes from and he asks to be returned home. In addition, a *muhliwa* asks to be compensated for the work he has done in the house that stole him. This can be done by bringing goods to his home or even offering a woman. The form the compensation will take depends on the will of the spirit and the negotiation that one is able to carry out with him. However, goods are usually given for the repayment of work done while a woman is offered to pay for the life of murder victim.

In analysing the role of foreign spirits in the healing practice in Chapter 3 of this research, I pointed out that Ndaus spirits of people who were healers during their life generally request their host to be a healer. If this

¹¹ Rosalind Shaw (1991: 147), analysing epistemological aspects of the Senegalese Temne divination, also refers to children being eaten through witchcraft.

¹² Niehaus (1997a: 3) explains that: "Witches are believed to change their victims into zombies. They first captured the victim's *seriti* ("shadow" or "aura") and then progressively took hold of different parts of his or her body, until they possessed the entire person. Witches deceived the victim's kin by leaving an image of him or her behind. Kin would assume that the victim was dead, but they would actually bury the stem of a fern tree, which had been given the victim's image. At home witches changed their victims into diminutive zombies whom they employed as servants to do domestic work, herd cattle, and work in their gardens."

occurs, the Ndaus perform a characteristic ritual called *kufemba* (Honwana, 2002: 69), while the Ngoni perform the *kuhlahluva*.¹³ Others spirits may ask to be given a man and/or a woman so that they can have children who will bear their lineage name, and thus, they settle as affines in the group of their murderer. Some of the spirits who died far from home may remember the place where they lived and ask to be brought back to their home, sometimes with a wife. To illustrate the tension between integrating and expelling spirits, and, in the process, making justice through *lovolo* ceremonies, I have chosen to describe two situations. These situations involve marrying a spirit with a woman and returning a spirit to his home, in ceremonies that are called *kulovola muhliwa* or *kulovola nandru* respectively. The names of these ceremonies can be translated as to *kulovola* the vengeance spirit or the debt.

Wife and husband of a foreign spirit of vengeance

Adelaide is a 36-year-old Copi woman from Xidenguela, in Gaza Province. She lives on her own with four children and has worked as a maid since her husband, a civil servant employed in a state enterprise, was killed in 1989 by RENAMO in Matola Town, near Maputo City. In February 2000, she lost her brick house in the flood that ravaged Maputo and came back to live with her mother and her sister in Matola where she was born. Her spiritual husband, Mavurenvure, is a Ndaus spirit, a *bsa matlharhi* spirit: a spirit of a person murdered with a spear during Gungunyana's war (1885 to 1895) by Adelaide's father's ascendant. Adelaide discovered that she had been chosen by a spirit of vengeance when she experienced the election disease characteristic of the call of the healer.¹⁴

In 1992, Adelaide was very sick. She had pain in her head and her body.

¹³ See Chapter 3.

¹⁴ See Chapter 3 for more detail on this issue.

Her life was not going well and all her children were sick. She went to a diviner, who performed the *kuhlalhuva* and gave voice to a spirit. The discussion went as follows:

Spirit: You don't know me.

Adelaide: No, I don't.

Spirit: When you are in bed alone, don't you have the feeling that you are with a man?

Adelaide: Yes I do.

Spirit: I am this man. Your father and mother know me. I am your husband.

The spirit then looked at Adelaide's brother, Samora, and said: "and you are my homonym, Mavurenvure (...)"

(Adelaide, interview, May 1998)

Up to now Adelaide and Samora had ignored the spirit's existence. Their mother explained to them that the vengeance spirit manifested himself for the first time when she was four months pregnant with Adelaide, in 1964. Adelaide's mother was about to miscarry and she went to a *nyanga* who consulted the *tinhlolo* and suggested that she should see a *nyamusoro*. With the help of the *nyamusoro* the spirit came out and said:

I did not want her to miscarry, I just wanted to show you that I exist in this house. In the woman's womb there is a girl and she is my wife. (Adelaide, interview, May 1998)

Ten years later, when Adelaide's brother Samora was born in 1974, the diviner was consulted and the *tinhlolo* revealed that he should be given the name of Mavurenvure, Adelaide's spiritual husband. Since he had been killed by a forefather of Adelaide's father in the late nineteenth century, it had taken several generations before Mavurenvure had started to express himself. He had killed off most of Adelaide's father's lineage but he had

never said clearly what he wanted. Vengeance spirits are considered extremely dangerous and it is believed that they may take a long time before they stop placing exaction on the group and formulating their demands.

Adelaide describes the process carried out to appease the spirit and the apprenticeship of a new language:

When my father or when my grandfather used to go to the medium spirit the forefathers would say, that they were killed by Mavurenvure. During the ceremony the living would be explained "who went out is Mavurenvure, he is not speaking because he is still angry". The ancestors would say "we are speaking with him so that he can explain what he wants". At the beginning when he started expressing himself Mavurenvure spoke in *Cindau* [language of Ndau people] but, after living for so long in the earth with the Tsonga people Mavurenvure also started speaking *Xitsonga*.
(Adelaide, interview, May 1998)

Spiritual beings are not the souls of dead persons, who visit their descendants; they are people living in a different way in the earth but in permanent contact with the living, as they also inhabit their bodies. They have no fixed behaviour and can follow the course of history and adapt themselves to changes of modern life. Mavurenvure was angry and did not accept the request of the living that he express himself. Adelaide's ancestors encouraged him to communicate his requests. In the same way that he changed his attitude toward the living, he also learned Xichangana by living with Changana people. In a similar way, it is believed, a group's ancestors become familiar with any religion or situation, such as the advent of HIV/AIDS, by being present in the day-to-day lives of the

living. Within this framework, the living are able to exercise their agency and negotiate with spirit beings.

Mavurenvure took possession of the two children in a different way. Mavurenvure expressed himself initially through the illness of Adelaide's mother, the cause of which was interpreted by the *tinhlolo*. Mavurenvure's second demand was discovered during the process of identifying a proper name for Adelaide's brother.¹⁵ Asking for two children signified that the spirit aimed to rebuild his lineage. Adelaide became a *nsati wa svikwembu*, which means the wife of a spirit, and her brother became a *wanuna wa svikwembu*, a spirit's husband. A *ndhumbha* (a little house for the spirits) was built in the yard of their parent's house and the children would take care of it. They cleaned the house, brought food and drink, lit a lamp and sometimes slept in it.

In 1981, Adelaide got married. Adelaide's *lovolo* amounted to 60 000 MZM and a few presents¹⁶ for the members of the family. The money was divided: 45 000 MZM was used by her family, and 15 000 MZM was kept in the *ndhumba* with Mavurenvure's belongings. In 1983, both civil and Catholic marriages were carried out, followed by the *xigiyane* ceremony. Adelaide's husband, Rafael, was asked to live in Adelaide's parents' house, but he refused and they went to live in their own house. If Rafael had accepted her parents' request, Adelaide could have continued to take care of Mavurenvure. At that time, Adelaide did not know the implications that this would have.

The same year the war reached the Matola area, where Adelaide's parents lived. They had to leave their house and Mavurenvure's *ndhumbha*. In town, it was not possible to have a *ndhumbha* because of space constraints. A few years later (1989), Rafael was killed by the RENAMO soldiers.

¹⁵ See Chapter 2 the process of giving a name to a child.

¹⁶ Adelaide's husband offered a dress, two kerchiefs, and a blouse for her aunt.

Adelaide considers that Mavurenvure is largely responsible for her husband's death as she should not have been *lovoliwa* without Mavurenvure's consent. Adelaide believes that her father could have done something to avoid the problems promoted by Mavurenvure. She expresses her reproach:

If at the time of my marriage, my father had consulted Mavurenvure to find out what to do, maybe he wouldn't have killed my husband. When my father left Matola, since he knew of Mavurenvure's existence, he should have built a *ndhumbha* for the spirit somewhere else. He could also have asked him to stay with another one of my younger sisters (...). My father was not really in touch with the tradition nor with the religion. He did not give weight to these issues. Thus he didn't do anything to deal with Mavurenvure and died without having carried out any ritual to him. (Adelaide, interview, May 1998)

Similar situations are described as happening to most of the men and women who belong to a spirit. The spirit can possess children as happened to Adelaide and Samora, but children are also sometimes given to spiritual beings when they are young, in moments of great strain faced by their parents or relatives, and in answer to a spirit's request. In these cases, a simple *mupahlu*¹⁷ to the spirit is performed by the elders of the group to inform their ancestors and the angry spirit of this new arrangement. Nevertheless, the spirit is often forgotten and he is not asked for his opinion in relation to the life of the children who were given to him. This provokes the spirit's anger. Maintaining regular contact with the spirit seems to be the way to avoid dramatic consequences, since

¹⁷ The *mupahlu* is not only aimed at assigning individuals to spiritual beings and groups. It is mainly the means of communication between the living and spiritual beings about any issue related to people's lives.

compromises and negotiation can be entered into.

In the southern Mozambican context, the spirit can decide who he wants, or demand the family of the murderer to give him a woman, thus obliging the murderer's group to identify a woman and/or a boy to be given to him. I would like to stress, at this stage, that both young girls and boys are given to the spirit.¹⁸ It is not only a women's condition. I previously explained such aspects in relation to giving boys and girls to healing spirits.¹⁹ For a boy, it is easier to settle the angry spirit by performing a *lovolo* of a woman in the spirit's lineage name, while for a woman it is a matter of getting another woman to stand in for her as the spirit's wife. This option is generally not in her capacity.

In this chapter, I develop this issue further, basing my discussion on Adelaide and Samora's story, although it seems that the situation may vary from case to case, depending on the will of the spirit. In the Mozambican context, giving a woman to a vengeance spirit has been referred to in studies undertaken by Earthy (1934: 226),²⁰ Junod (1996: V1, 424) and Honwana (2002: 67-8). Junod (1996) writes:

A man from the Ndzindzi family had killed a Yao²¹ in one of Nghunghunyana²²'s expedition, before 1890. As three persons in his family have died, those remaining consulted the bones and the diviner asked them this

¹⁸ Widows or widowers are also entitled to replacements, who can be of either sex but normally are same sex siblings. Properly buried dead are replaced by a sibling or kin while the wrongly buried are replaced by non-kin. Not knowing their roots is the reason why angry spirits ask to be integrated into the lineage of their murderer.

¹⁹ In Chapter 3, I explain the reason why people usually give a boy instead of a girl. It is mainly because of the difficulty that a girl will have in future to get married as her spirit husband will destabilise her marriage as he considers himself her husband.

²⁰ Earthy explains that the medicine taken by the Ndau allow them to rise in the murderer, possessing him and killing him. Various diseases are associated with the possession by Ndau spirits. "Hence also, the votive offerings: the dedication of a young girl, the dances, and the other manifold ways of appeasing the ghost" (Earthy, 1934: 226).

²¹ The Yao are a northern Mozambican ethnic group also resident in Malawi.

²² Another way of spelling Gungunhana, who was the king of Gaza between 1884 and 1895.

question: "Didn't you kill a Yao?". Upon their affirmative answer he added: "You'll die, all of you,²³ because this dead person is pursuing you. The bones [*tinhlolo*] say that for you to avoid the destruction of your family you should offer a girl to the spirit of the dead man, as a living sacrifice. It won't be allowed for this girl to marry, and the boys won't have the right to court to her. If she had sex with a man she would need to be replaced by another. In this way you'll turn the enraged spirit propitious." (Junod, 1996: V1, 424)

This extract confirms the spirit's threat of eliminating the murderer's lineage and hindering it from multiplying if his will is not respected. It is the survival of the group, which is endangered.

Junod (1996: V1, 424) indicates that women given to the spirit cannot marry, but may be substituted if she has a sexual relationship with a man. Honwana (1996: 70), however, explains that the spirit can give permission for the *wansati wa swikwembu* (the spirits' wife) to marry someone else and to be replaced by another woman. Adelaide herself feels that she could have been replaced by another woman.

Adelaide believes that one of the main reasons why Mavurenvure got angry in 1992 was that Samora had started to live with a woman in 1991, but had not performed the *lovolo*. Before Samora lived with the woman, Mavurenvure had expected him to perform the *lovolo* to a wife for him. As Samora did not, Mavurenvure became violent, inflicting disease and pain on Adelaide. It is important to note that, for a woman, the issue of being possessed by a spirit of vengeance can be negotiated within the family as her *lovolo* can be used to *lovoliwa* another woman for the spirit or the spirit

²³ The spirit is threatening to kill the people of the lineage so that the group cannot multiply.

can be asked to accept another woman in substitution.

This differs from the spirits of healers, where it seems that possession cannot be passed on to another woman through *lovolo*, although this may have occurred in the past (Polanah, 1967: 71-91). Possession by a spirit of healer symbolises the special individual status of the future healer, whereas possession by a spirit of vengeance is a matter of family debt with regard to a wrong committed by an ancestor that the group has to repair. However, in both cases, individuals who want to escape the possession by these spirits can find support in different religious movements such as, amongst others, the Zionist Church (mainly for spirits of healers, as individuals possessed by such spirits become prophets) or the Jehovah's Witness religion.

When Adelaide consulted the healer to try to find a cure for her disease and disturbance, Mavurenvure came out and asked Samora to carry out the *lovolo* of his wife in his name. Samora immediately refused. Adelaide explains her brother's rebellion:

Samora started arguing violently with the spirit. Samora did not understand what all this was about.

He said:

- "The name that you gave me – I do not want it. I do not want to be called by this name any more. I am not going to *lovoliwa* a woman on your orders. I don't want to."

The *muhliwa* threatened Samora with not being able to have children until he "fixed" this woman within the *ndhumbha* by introducing his wife to him and, thus, "fix" his name. Samora and his children should have borne the spirit's name. All the children born would belong to the spirit. But Samora refused. He had joined the Jehovah's Witnesses religion. It is a strong religion and he faced the

muhiwa. (Adelaide, interview, May 1998)

Adelaide's explanation demonstrates the paramount importance of the *lovolo* for transferring a woman and her children to different types of spirit. The *lovolo* is not an isolated institution but is part of a total system of affinal relations that define filiation. If she is not *lovoliwa* by a man, a woman theoretically should only transmit her patrilineage's name. Nevertheless, in the case of a woman possessed by an angry spirit, who has children without having been *lovoliwa* by a living husband, unless another woman is given to him, the spiritual husband will tend to consider the children as his. He will possess these children by force, exercising violence on the woman or on her children. If a woman is *lovoliwa* in the name of the spirit, it is clearer; all her children will belong to the spirit.

To punish the lineage, the vengeance spirit will have to guarantee that the woman he possesses does not get married so that she can reproduce for him. In such a way, the lineage is unable to develop alliances with other groups but its survival is not endangered. However, when a boy is possessed, his children should bear the spirit's name. Thus, it is only through possession of boys, because of the patrilineage, that the survival of the lineage is directly threatened.

If a woman gets *lovoliwa*, she adds to her ties with her paternal lineage a new relationship with her husband's group (spiritual or not). Her children belong to the lineage in the name of which the *kuphahla* (the ritual to the ancestors) has been performed. To get rid of a husband spirit, the elders (male or female) of the woman's group have to consult the spirit and convince him to transfer to another woman. Alternatively, the woman's brother, if he is possessed by the same spirit, may *kulovola* a woman in the name of that spirit. The spirit passes from one woman to another and from one family to another with the *lovolo*. The *lovolo* is one of the means

by which women become possessed by spirits.

Generally, in spirit-related *lovolo*, the family who gives the *lovolo* hides the fact that the woman will be a spirit's wife. People do not want their daughter to belong to a spirit, as spirits are considered very hard to please and have to be humoured to avoid problems. Not giving a daughter to marry a spirit or not marrying a son to a wife who has got a spirit is always a big preoccupation²⁴ of the bride and groom's families. This is the reason why the families try to get to know each other and why sometimes a diviner is consulted to find out if the union is desirable.

By giving a woman to a spirit of vengeance, a whole lineage is saved from destruction. She is offered as a gift to protect the life of her kin group. She does not benefit anything from this transaction; it is a gift of life. In all cases, being married out of her lineage presents the woman with the chance to integrate into another lineage and to act as a mediator in a relationship between two groups. Thus, being given to a spirit of vengeance does not change her situation. For a man possessed by a vengeance spirit the situation is quite different, as he has to surrender some of his rights over his children. The spirit wants children who bear his name and a man usually transmits his own lineage to his children. By performing a ceremony to the ancestor, the man can offer his wife, and consequently his children, to the spirit of vengeance. In addition, a man can acquire another wife to give his children his name if he engages in a polygamous union. But, he cannot get rid of the spirit by transferring him to another person as a woman can do.

This situation is similar to the one described in relation to a woman who was *lovoliwa* to a healing spirit.²⁵ The lineage of the children depends on

²⁴ Witchcraft is generally considered to come from outside, from an affine group through the women who inherited this power from their mother (Feliciano, 1998: 354-5).

²⁵ On this issue see Chapter 3.

the spiritual beings to whom the woman has been united, and to whom the *mupalhu* has been performed. The money from Adelaide's *lovolo* should have been used for the *lovolo* of Samora's wife. In this way, Samora's wife would have taken Adelaide's place as the spirit's wife. Samora would have "fixed the name of the spirit" performing the *lovolo* in the spirit's name. This means that Samora's children would have borne the spirit's name, re-establishing the spirit's lineage, which was interrupted by his death. In such a situation, a mundane lineage, which is assumed by the biological father, is generally maintained while a second spiritual lineage prevails in all matters related to resolution of misfortune.²⁶

Although Adelaide and Samora had their lives subordinated to the will of the spirits, this impacted differently on them. Their family was decimated. Adelaide's husband had been killed, and Samora was asked to perform the *lovolo* ceremony in name of the vengeance spirit for the woman he was living with. Adelaide was dependent on her brother's marriage to get rid of the spirit. Samora's refusal to comply with the spirit's request and his involvement with the Jehovah's Witnesses obliged Adelaide to find her own way. Samora's strategy of joining the Jehovah's Witnesses²⁷ can be seen as an attempt at freeing himself from the power of these spirits and other social constraints. But, if Samora seems to have decided to rebel and break the spirit's domination, Adelaide's response is more like an adaptation than a clear decision. If for Samora the spirits' powers were fading while his commitment to the Jehovah's Witnesses was increasing, for Adelaide the spirits were still very powerful.

To deal with the vengeance spirit, Adelaide rebuilt Mavurenvure's *ndhumbha* in her mother's house to venerate him. In it she stored the 15 000 MZM that had been kept by her parents from the 60 000 MZM her

²⁶ For more details on this issue, see Chapter 3.

²⁷ Norman Long's work on the Jehovah's Witnesses in Zambia demonstrates how religion can be an instrument for individuals' agency in breaking free of kinship obligations (Long, 1968).

husband had given them for her *lovolo* in 1981, and the white bolt of cloth which belonged to Mavurenvure. Even if Adelaide and Samora were dependent on each other because Adelaide's *lovolo* had to be used for the *lovolo* of Samora's wife, Samora was more autonomous. Whatever happened to his sister did not influence his relationship with the spirit, as the spirit wanted him to marry a woman.

Rituals could have been performed to avoid the extreme consequences experienced by Adelaide. She believes that her father could have informed the spirit of her marriage and in such a way could have avoided her husband's death. She feels dependent on others, particularly her father and her brother, to alleviate her suffering. The inter-linkage of individuals subject to the same power, in this case the foreign spirit of vengeance, gives to this power a strength that would not be achieved if it interfered with single individuals. This shows the possibility of negotiation with the spirit, but also the fragility of individuals who are unaware of the spirit that threatens their life and who are dependent on their relatives' behaviour. Even if spirit possession and *lovolo* impacts differently on men and women, both are subject to cultural constraints. *Lovolo* and spirit possession are practices that are integrated in a wider religious, political, and economical context, through which power is exercised on individuals.

During her childhood, the girl possessed by the spirit occupies the place of her brother's wife; as such Adelaide occupied the position of Samora's future wife. Her *lovolo* and the money left in the spirit's house were the means with which to communicate to the spirit that another woman would come to substitute the daughter of the house. The *lovolo* operates as a signifier of belonging. It is the ritual by which groups transfer an individual from one lineage to the other, transforming physiological ties into social ties. The circulation of the *lovolo* money or cows from one *lovolo* to another, was frequent in the past. The *lovolo* given by the groom's group to the woman's kin was generally used in turn to establish a marriage for

the woman's brother both in the Mozambican context (Junod, 1996: VI, 470-4) as well as in other groups of the region (Krige, 1939: 398).

According to Adelaide, when the *lovolo* was handed over in this way, the vengeance spirit always had a wife. The *kuphahla* ceremonies could have been carried out by calling the spirit's name as well as the other family's name, and nobody would have noticed. Only a few people would have known of this strategy. Adelaide believes that if in Maputo City there are a lot of women heads of household, it is because of vengeance spirits that are no longer transmitted with the circulation of the *lovolo*. Women are unable to stay with a man because of the spirit of vengeance. She comments:

When a woman has a spiritual husband, the spirit can leave the man aside to have sexual relations with the woman. This creates problems with the men and they leave. There are a lot of women of my generation without husbands. It is because of these spirits. (Adelaide, interview, May 1998)

Such situations require divination to understand the will of the spirit. From Adelaide's experience, the woman's sexuality is affected by the spirit who makes her life with a husband very difficult. Female possession by different types of spirits has been reported to have deep consequences on female sexuality and reproductive capacities. In the Kalabari religion, in western Africa, women may be possessed by spiritual husbands,²⁸ who have sexual intercourse with them to prevent them from having children and make them uncontrollable and thus bad wives (Horton, 1969: 38-40). Janice Boddy (1989) in a study entitled Wombs and Alien spirits, Women,

²⁸ In Kalabari thinking, the marriage between the woman and the water spirit has been contracted in the world of the water spirits before birth, but offerings are performed to acknowledge the ties and the obligations that go with it (Horton, 1969: 38-40).

Men and Zar Cult in Northern Sudan explains that Zar possession is associated with the loss of virginity of Hofriyati women and thus directly linked with sexual issues. She stresses that:

In holding *zayran* responsible for procreative mishap, whether real or feared, a woman asserts that her fertility is negotiable. Yet she bargains not, or not directly, with her husband in the mundane human world, but with *zayran*, capricious existents of a different plane. If having kept her part of the contract, negotiations with spirits fail, she cannot be held liable for consequences to her reproductive potential. Possession thus lifts from her shoulders a measure of the responsibility for social reproduction she is continually schooled to accept via the process of socialization (...) Zar illness contains an oblique admission that fertility, though socially regulated and vested in women, is not humanly governable, for beings more powerful than Hofriyati may intervene at will to obstruct its proper course. (Boddy, 1989: 188)

As in the Zar cult (Boddy, 1989) or the water spirit possession (Horton, 1969: 14-49), possession by alien spirits, in southern Mozambique, is expressed by a certain range of female experiences. Spirit possession is one means by which women exercise their capacity to manoeuvre through those of life's vicissitudes that are mainly related to marital life and reproductive issues and is the cultural response to the constraints exercised on women. Because in some African regions women are more likely to be possessed than men, this phenomenon has been understood by several authors as a way for marginalised people, especially women, to change their situation (Horton, 1969: 14-49). However, it is important to stress that both men and women are subjects and agents within the same hegemonic culture, where men might appear as the privileged but where

they are also victims.

As indicated above, the possession by spiritual beings is invested with a gender-specific characteristic because of the social gender constraints under which a woman lives, and which do not allow her to easily *lovoliwa* a woman as a substitute wife for her spiritual husband. However, I showed previously²⁹ that a female healer was able to, on her own, *lovoliwa* a woman to offer to one of her spirits in healing. I believe that this is possible because a female healer holds a specific status in society and that as an androgynous being, which contains both male and female characteristics, she has the power to do this.

In discussing the relationship between healers and the spiritual beings that allow them to practise their activity, I have shown the complementarities between masculine and feminine and the prevailing notion of marriage between the spirit of healer and the practitioner³⁰ (Horton, 1969: 38-40, Southall, 1969: 269; White, 1991: 158). Fewer authors, however, refer to the offer of women to other spiritual beings. Krige describes the offering of women to the Lovedu queen as part of a social and political process of integration (Krige, 1975: 237; Krige & Comaroff, 1981: 149). Schoffeleers (1985: 175), analysing the Mang'anja³¹ of Malawi, reports the offering of women to the Mbona,³² a spirit with power over the rain, as part of the Mbona's cult.

²⁹ See Chapter 3 for the discussion of this case.

³⁰ See Chapter 3 for a full discussion about the relationship between spirits of healers and their hosts.

³¹ The Mang'anja belong to the Chewa-Mang'anja complex, which is settled in parts of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia.

³² "Representatives from the various chiefdoms may come to the shrine at any time to make petitions on behalf of their area, but once a year, just before the rains, a sacrifice is offered on behalf of the entire cult region. In the past it was customary also for the king to provide Mbona with a woman, who would be known as his wife, and who would live at the shrine until old age or death. That custom has now ceased in that form despite repeated attempts to have it revived. After the death of a spirit wife another would be installed, but often enough years went by before this was done. The usual procedure seems to have been to wait until a major drought occurred, which would mean that the new spirit wife was obtained from the king every twenty or twenty-five years on average." (Schoffeleers, 1985:175)

In the Shona context, Gelfand (1959: 116-120) describes the case of a spirit of vengeance to whom a wife is offered and who wants to integrate himself among the ancestors of his murderers. Where a family is willing to avenge the murder of a relative, the family of the victim seeks a *chikwambo*³³ (Gelfand, 1959: 118), who is a healer named after this type of spirit, which possesses him or her. In the case described by Gelfand, the healer sends the *chikwambo* to the family of the murderer who will start to experience all types of disease and death until the *chikwambo* possesses a person of the family and expresses his will. He wants to be integrated as a *mudzimu* (an ancestor) into the family. When ceremonies to the family spirits occur, he wants to be addressed before the other ancestors. (This is considered a punishment for the ancestors.) Four cattle are named after the spirit. In addition he wants a woman, as well as a person to bear his name:

“I want a wife and I want someone to be named after me. I also want five cattle. Then I shall go away, but I am going to remain in this village where I shall be your great medium because you killed me without reason and you have paid me with your own people. So I cannot take away these people away from you” (...) The wife that is demanded is still a girl, and when she is old enough she is permitted to marry. A boy is named after the murdered man and the girl chosen for the *chikwambo* is known to him as his mother. When he marries he receives a head of cattle from her and this is used as part of the *lobola*.³⁴ The four head of cattle belonging to the *chikwambo* are given to the boy, and when they multiply the relatives of the murdered man appear and drive off the offspring to their

³³ I am using here the orthography provided by Gelfand (1959: 118)

³⁴ The *lobola* is the name given to the bridewealth among the Shona and is similar to the practice in use in Mozambique.

own village, but leave the boy with the original four.
(Gelfand, 1959: 119)

Although lacking in detail, it seems that the account given by Gelfand is similar to what occurs in southern Mozambique. The spirit wants to be integrated into the family of his murderer. In the Shona context, the *lobola* also seems to play an important part in the transfer of the status of the first girl given to the spirit to the woman *lovoliwa* by the man named after the spirit. The fact that the offspring of the cows belonging to the spirit have to be brought to the relatives of the murdered man shows the need to pay a tribute to the family of the man who was murdered. What Gelfand does not clarify is whether the children born from this union will belong to the spirit's lineage, as in Adelaide's case.

Possession of women by foreign spirits of vengeance can also be seen as the result of political tension. For example, in Northern Somalia, women's possession by Ethiopian spirits (*saar habashi* or *menghis*) is considered the most serious type of possession and has to be understood within the prevailing context of tension between the Ethiopians and Somalis (Lewis, 1969: 118-219). It is sometimes explained by the Somali as a type of "mystical scourge sent against them by the Ethiopians" as retaliation (Lewis, 1969: 205). Similarly, in Mozambique, possession by Ndaou spirits might express tensions between Tsonga and Ndaou from past and recent conflicts.

Lovolo performances can thus express the social tension and latent problems that result from local and family histories and that are embodied in the living. Victor Turner's (1974: 23) notion of social drama that enables social contradictions to be expressed in terms of socially acceptable manifestations is of great relevance. Here *lovolo* is a moral transaction aimed at maintaining relationships between individuals and foreign groups.

With the *lovolo*, women are integrated in two groups: the Tsonga group and the foreign group. Women are divided into a mundane belonging and a spiritual belonging, articulating in this way the social contradiction. Men, like women, can be involved in the same double belonging, but cannot be given to a foreign spirit of vengeance as women can through the performance of the *lovolo*. Men, as the mundane beneficiary of their descendents by way of patrilineality, appear to have to renounce their spiritual filiation for the benefit of the vengeance spirits. In this way, the Tsonga group is dispossessed of some of its children as a way of paying back the debts of their ancestors to alien groups. Enabling the spirits of vengeance to build their own families allows people to avoid having the whole of their own lineage decimated by the spiritual beings. Through the *lovolo*, spirits of individuals that belonged to foreign groups (Ngoni and Ndaou) and were killed in a violent way by the Tsonga ancestors find a way to integrate themselves into the society of their murderers.

Wife of a spirit stolen through witchcraft: the *kutlelisa* ritual

Spirits stolen through witchcraft can also possess women. These spirits ask compensation to be given to them as well as to be brought back home. In such cases, people refer to this ceremony as a bringing back of the angry spirit (*kuheleketa muhliwa*), a payment of a debt (*kutlelisa nandru*), or as a *lovolo* (*kulovola muhliwa* or *kulovola nandru*).³⁵

Alberto's description of such a situation that occurred during 1994 and 1995 allows me to highlight the ambiguities of the *lovolo* ceremonies and discuss this type of ritual. Alberto, a 32-year-old man working in the

³⁵ Feliciano writes that different things can be given to a spirit such as: "a house (*ndhumbha*), a person, generally a woman who takes care of the fire lit during the night, a *lovolo*, money, a bracelet, a ring, a safety-pin or, even only some spittle" (Feliciano, 1988: 375).

Ministry of Health as a human resource officer, was born in Maputo. His parents come from Vilankulo in the province of Inhambane. His wife, Luisa, is from Magude in Gaza province. In 1994, Luisa became very sick. She had asthma, pains in her back and was as thin as a board. She used to scream during the night that there was a man who wanted to kill her. Along a similar vein to Adelaide's experience, Luisa's relationship with Alberto deteriorated and she suffered from sexual disorders. Alberto explains:

She started to look at me like any man, not like her husband. We could not have sexual relations because if we did, the day after she was swollen and had to stay in bed for a week. (Alberto, interview, May 2000)

Her disease did not respond to treatment with allopathic medicine, so Luisa and Alberto decided to seek out a diviner. The *tinhlolo* were consulted in Maputo and the healer explained that Luisa was a spirit's wife. The diviner recommended going to Magude, to Luisa's parents' house. They complied with these recommendations, and in Magude they consulted three different healers. The last one, a woman, gave voice to the spirit that perturbed Luisa. In Alberto's words:

The healer established contact with the spirit possessing my wife. The first thing that the spirit said is that he wanted to drink because he walked from our house in Maputo to Magude and was thirsty. Then, he looked at me and said:

- "How dare you take my wife?"

I said that I did not know and that when I started to court Luisa nobody told me anything. Thus, he stared at Luisa's father and asked:

-"You don't know that your three daughters are my

wives? I told you clearly what they had to do if they wanted to marry a man.”

The father said:

-“I made a mistake. I did not take this into consideration.”

(Alberto, interview, May 2000)

Like in Adelaide’s situation, the spirit manifests his will by sending disease to the person that he possesses. The father knew about the existence of the problem but had not taken the appropriate measures.

Alberto carried on:

The spirit spoke to me:

-“As you took my wife without authorisation you face a fine”.

I said:

- “I can pay, but I am not responsible. Who are you to take three women in the family?”

- “He [referring to Luisa's father] knows me” answered the spirit.

-“His aunt killed me to use me. The aunt's son used me during the war, during his grandfather's life. The aunt killed my whole family to use us to work in the fields.”

As a way to get rid of this problem, Luisa's father offered one daughter, but the spirit said no, I want all the women that will be born. (Alberto, interview, May 2000)

To forgive the family whose ancestor had killed him, the spirit wants all the daughters, and to forgive the husband who has taken his wife, the spirit wants him to pay a fine. Giving something or/and someone in exchange for the guilt allows the guilty to obtain forgiveness. The group of the murderer is involved as individuals and as a whole in the suffering that has caused the anger of the spirit. Similarly to the preceding case, the

women are punished even if they are not directly responsible; they are given as a gift, as a payment to cancel the group's debt.

The mechanism by which paying a fine can obtain the forgiveness of some type of guilt is not restricted to the relationship with foreign spiritual beings. The same logic applies to ancestors and also to the living. For example, if a man discovers that his wife has a lover, the man has the right to ask the lover to pay a fine. Adultery as well as impregnating a woman without the performance of the *lovolo*, are considered theft and a man guilty of any of these can be asked to pay a fine. Fines levied for loss of virginity, fines for impregnation,³⁶ and fines for adultery belong to the customary norms in practice. Presents or payments allow the giver to be forgiven. However, the fines for loss of virginity and for impregnation are different than the *lovolo* as the former do not create a stable link between two groups as in the performance of a *lovolo* ceremony.

As I explained earlier, different categories of spirits can be identified. Alberto called this spirit *muhliwa*. This denomination is consistent with the definition given by Honwana (2002: 58) who consider *muhliwa* the spirit of a person who was killed through sorcery³⁷ (usually referred to as a person that was "eaten"). The process by which a person acquires special power is called *kukamba*, which implies the use of drugs to achieve one's will. It is believed that during the night these spirits steal the crops from the neighbouring fields to accumulate in the granary of their owner. They can be used to perform other activities, as Luisa's spiritual husband did, working in the fields or fighting in the war. People do not openly acknowledge that their ancestors acquired wealth using magical power. They keep these issues secret for fear of judgement. As Alberto explains:

³⁶ In the event of loss of virginity and impregnation, the man can also be asked to marry the woman and thus to give the *lovolo* in addition to the fine (Bagnol, 1997: 53).

³⁷ Colson, in her study of spirit possession among the Tonga of Zambia, also refers to spirits under the control of sorcerers (1969: 71).

This is a very restricted ceremony. Few people know about it. It is called *kuheleketa muhliwa*, meaning to bring back the spirit. These things happen. The problem is that people are ashamed and hide it. (Alberto, interview, May 2000)

As with spirits of vengeance, after a few generations the *muhliwa* might want to be brought back home and to seek indemnity. Alberto explains the spirit's requests and how he dealt with the issue:

The spirit said:

- "if you want to send me back, for each daughter you have to give me a goat and money".

I gave the father 350 000 MZM for the goat and one million Meticais (MZM) and asked him to solve the problem. (...) Instead of solving the problem, my wife's father kept the money that I left. Thus, a few months later the problems with Luisa started again. By that time I was fed up and I sent her back home, alone, just with money for transport and a message saying that if they did not solve the problem they could keep their daughter. (...) They went to another healer to confirm once again the problem. The spirit said once again that he wanted a goat and one million Meticais for each daughter. He also wanted a virgin and a house. The girl should not get married and would have children who would bear the spirit's name. (...) The spirit also asked to build a house in Luisa's parents' place until the debt of the other two daughters was paid. Thus, my wife's family went to the Copi area, where the spirit came from. The healer had told them that they would find a child and to follow him. But there, they found only chickens. They followed the

chicken to a village and there they asked for the house of the spirit's family. While in the spirit's house, once again they consulted a healer. The healer explained:

- "these people are bringing back the spirit that belongs to this family". (Alberto, interview, May 2000)

These procedures are called *kutlelisa*, *kuheketa*, *kuheleketa muhliwa* (or *matlhari*), which mean to return and to send away the *muhliwa* or the *matlhari*. People might also speak of *kutlelisa nandru*; that is, to pay back the debt. The first ceremonies are carried out as the result of the pressure exercised by different spirits of vengeance, mainly men who suffered abnormal death, were not properly buried and were never given the opportunity to marry and have children. The last ceremony (*kutlelisa nandru*) broadly refers to any type of debt (usually caused by sorcery). By bringing the spirit back home and satisfying his demand the debt is cancelled and the violence against the members of the group stops. These ceremonies, as mentioned earlier, are also referred to as *kulovola muhliwa* or *kulovola nandru*, which mean to perform the *lovolo* for the spirit of vengeance and to pay back the debt respectively.

Usually, if the woman offered is from the guilty group, she is the "*lovolo*", the present given to obtain forgiveness; she is the offering. But, if the woman given to the spirit is from another group, a *lovolo* to acquire the woman has to be performed in benefit of her group. If money is offered, the group of the spirit might use this amount to give the *lovolo* money to acquire a wife for the spirit. Here, in the *kulovola muhliwa* or *kulovola nandru*, the main objective is to get rid of the debt to stave off the spirit.

Some people consider that while the *lovolo* ritual opens a new relationship or solidifies an existing one, the *kutlelisa* ritual ends a relationship. In the *kutlelisa* ritual no exchange is established as it is in other types of *lovolo*, where the husband guarantees his wife's fertility and the healer his/her

healing capacity. This distinction is not completely clear as the payment of a debt and the obtainment of peace and forgiveness can be viewed as another type of exchange. The relationship established depends on the group of origin of the woman. If she is from the group who owes the debt, a new relationship of affinity is opened with the group to whom the debt was owed. If the woman offered to the spirit is from another group, a *lovolo* will have been given to her group by the group to whom the debt was owed and the relationship between the group in debt and the vengeance spirit is effectively ended.

The possibility of closing or opening a new relationship with the spirit of vengeance thus depends on the potential for giving him a woman from the group who owes the debt, and not on the type of ceremony performed. Possibilities of establishing an affinal relationship between the guilty group and the group of the victim are not limited to the relationship with the angry spirit. Similarly, in cases of sexual abuse or impregnation, both a fine and the *lovolo* to marry the woman with the guilty man can be requested. The transgressor or sinner might then be accommodated in the group of the victim, thus expressing forgiveness for his action.

Giving a woman, through *lovolo*, to a spirit of vengeance, or giving wealth to the group of the spirit of vengeance and bringing him back to his home are ways of guaranteeing that this spirit will no longer harm the group who owed a debt. The notion of payment of debt is of particular interest as it recalls the discussion of the permanent indebtedness felt by the living towards their ancestors,³⁸ who provide fertility, health, and wealth and healing capacities. In the light of this, something is always being given to guarantee the accomplishment of plans. The notion of the payment of debt raises certain questions, such as how it is possible to distinguish between an offering, a bribe, a permanent debt, or a simple debt, as is the case with

³⁸ On this issue, see the discussion in Chapter 2.

the vengeance spirit, and whether it makes sense to name the various ceremonies *lovolo*.

There is no clear distinction between exchange and payment of the debt. There are only nuances in the circle of relationships that link the living with individual spirits. These relational positions depend on the type of relationship previously held between the groups involved. Obviously, the aim of paying a debt is still to obtain something in exchange; in this case, it is relief and health for the members of the family in debt with the spirits and their affine. Good relationships between wives previously possessed by the spirit and their respective husbands are also expected. The reestablishment of harmony or maximisation of the fruition of plans is always desired and aimed at in all the types of *lovolo*.

Giving *lovolo* always implies a return, a circle of exchange, a gift to someone and to oneself. What people desire in giving the *lovolo* to another group are the personal relationships that the exchange creates and the benefits that accrue in return (happiness, wealth, children, health, etc.). A family offers a daughter to an inimical spirit to transform the enemy into a son-in-law so that he will not kill the family members. It is always, to a certain extent, a selfish act. In performing the *lovolo* ceremony, individuals are paying back the original debt that they owe to their own ancestors. With their namesakes, and thus to themselves, they are creating solidarity and a harmony for themselves and their own group, including the dead, the living and future generations.

Conclusion: The economy of justice and the *lovolo* economy

In describing two rituals performed for spirits of vengeance, I placed the characteristics of the *lovolo* in the foreground. I identified its use in distinct

situations and pointed out the essential similarities of the different *lovolo* rituals. By discussing the performance of the *kutlelisa* ritual, I highlighted the ambiguities surrounding the practice of offering: offering to propitiate, offering to pay back a debt, and offering to establish harmony. Women can be *lovolowa* for a spirit of vengeance, in which case the spirit stays in the house of the people who owe him a debt. But spirits of vengeance can also be brought back to their own group, in which case the ceremony performed is similar to the *lovolo* and also aims at providing fruition and at interrupting the scourge promoted by the debt owed to the angry spirit.

The afflicted reminds the descendant of the sinner of the crime committed against them. The sin and the crime of an ancestor are embodied in the living of his or her group. Sin and crime are part of the identity of anybody in the group of the transgressor, and are collectively and individually assumed and expressed. Offering to interrupt the scourge is for the living sinners a collective act of self-love, of narcissism, which involves economic and spiritual wealth. Self-love is expressed in different forms, which may not be only selfish as they imply that if the individual stops loving his or her own goods, he or she also stops loving the goods of the others. In seeking love for him or herself, a person seeks love for the other and vice versa (Caputo, 1997: 145). Giving and exchanging are expressions of love for oneself and for others. By transferring wealth and women to the other, the law is applied, the crime is punished and the sinners extinguish their own sin. The sin and the law are different perspectives of the same phenomenon. In customary law, crime and sin are not separated while in western law they are distinct. *Lovolo* has to be understood within an economy of the symbolic and as the ontology of individual identity. Giving and exchanging allows the laws to be applied and justice to be done. However, one needs to ask: whose justice and which law is applied?

The giving of presents or wives to appease enemies recalls Mauss' (1954: 80) opposition of general exchange to generalised war. Like the philosopher, Hobbes, he understands exchange as a contract that allows peace.

[In societies] There is no middle way: either complete trust or complete mistrust. One lays down one's arms, renounces magic and gives everything away from casual hospitality to one's daughters and goods. (Mauss, 1954: 79)

The gift is understood as reason, as a political contract. It is the triumph of an established law that guarantees the contract because reason is not sufficient. Similarly, in the southern Mozambican context, the acquisition of women by means of the *lovolo*, or the offering of a woman, appears to work as a political contract to alleviate past and present tensions. However, defining the offering of the *lovolo* as a gift seems to emphasise the free, generous and loving context in which the ceremony is performed. But as *lovolo* is characterised by a great deal of compulsion or force on individuals and groups, it can be considered payment of a debt to living and spiritual beings, compliance with a law, or a bribe.

On this issue, Gasché's reflection on the gift is pertinent, as he points out that Mauss's study on the gift falls victim to ambiguities that he aims to clarify in that he sees reciprocity instead of rivalry, generosity instead of interest and free repayment instead of obligation (Gasché, 1997: 9). For this reason, I agree with Derrida (1997) who argues that Mauss writes of everything but a gift as, by definition, a gift interrupts the circle of exchange and is free of intention:

If there is gift, the given of the gift (that which one gives, that which is given, the gift as given thing or as act of

donation) must not come back to the giving (let us not already say to the subject, to the donor). It must not circulate, it must not be exchanged, it must not in any case be exhausted, as a gift, by the process of exchange, by the movement of circulation of the circle in the form of return to the point of departure. If the figure of the circle is essential to economics, the gift must remain aneconomic. (...) For there is a gift there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counter-gift, or debt. (Derrida, 1997: 124-8)

For Derrida, the gift is the impossible, as it would interrupt the circle of exchange. The gift only exists in a short moment, during which time it is not recognised as a gift because as soon as it is seen as such, it activates the circle of exchange. The receiver has to return it to the donor unless he feels in debt to the donor. Similarly, for Derrida forgiveness is impossible; it can only be supernatural. In the Mozambican context, both the gift and forgiveness can be achieved at symbolic level through the circle of exchange that links individuals and spiritual beings.

In this circle, the economy is activated. Although one could ask: which economy? The economy includes the value of law (*nomos*) and of house (*oikos*). The law includes the law of distribution, the law of sharing, the law as sharing, and participation. As soon as there is law, there is sharing and economy and there is no possibility of choosing between the gift and economy. Agent/subjects are always to be found somewhere between the two. The gift is what drives the economy, so there is never a pure economy or a pure gift. There is also no clear distinction between narcissism and non-narcissism, only degrees, gradations or economies of narcissism (Caputo, 1997: 151). Between these ambiguities, *lovolo* is both a gift, "if there is one" (Derrida, 1991: 18), and economy, and allows the circle of exchange to be activated and maintained between individuals, and between individuals and spiritual beings.

One of the characteristics of symbolic exchanges lies in this ambiguity. The debt must never be cancelled, as this would interrupt the circle of exchange. On the contrary, the debt must be balanced by another gift to maintain the relationship and by making both partners debtors and creditors. The time between the gift and the counter-gift aims at hiding the objective reality of what is happening. A kind of self-deception allows individuals and groups to sustain this duality. Offering is never a pure gift; it is the mechanism that creates social cohesion. Since birth, people are involved in this symbolic economy, in which they are indebted to some and creditors of other. Everybody is involved in this exchange and every day new debts and new credits are established. What people aim at is the social relationship that the exchange of the gifts allows. The debt is the relation.

Giving the *lovolo* to the angry spirit or giving a woman to the angry spirit of the group of the sinners are different ways of respecting the law and of doing justice. But which justice is referred to? Both justice and gifts share the same condition of the impossible because as soon as justice is calculated, that we give something to make justice, it is not justice, as we cannot give back to the other what is owed or what belongs to them. In this sense justice, like a gift, is something that cannot be re-appropriated (Derrida, 1997a: 18). For this reason, *lovolo* is not justice, the justice that should be given without calculation, like a gift. *Lovolo* is the law:

a calculated balance of payments, of crime and punishment, of offense and redistribution, a closed circle of paying off and paying back (Caputo, 1997: 150).

Lovolo is performed through necessity, compulsion, and force. The law is an economy. To put oneself outside this economy is to be asocial or antisocial. Is it possible to imagine a world without debt, where everybody

would be self-sufficient and independent, neither debtor nor creditor? No, because sociality is based on the obligation, exterior to individuals, which guarantees the transcendence of social relations (Marie, 1997b: 250).

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Conclusion

Challenging conceptions of *lovolo*



Figure 15: The white wedding dress to be used for the religious and/or civil marriage is displayed in the same manner as the *lovola* presents when brought by the groom's representative to the bride's house.

This thesis links together gender, self, multiple identities, violence and magical interpretation in *lovolo* practices in southern Mozambique. I demonstrate how violence is exercised on individuals and/or groups to oblige them to comply with the *lovolo* ceremonies by the different spirits that constitute the fragments of their identities. I argue that it is within this apparently male-dominated symbolic order that individuals of both sexes and of different groups exercise their agency and contest their position. I draw a genealogy of female power on the basis of their supernatural force and I show that *lovolo* is not a monolithic structure but that internal contradictions exist within it and that women exploit these contradictions to transform their situation.

My thesis re-examines the conceptions of previous scholars about these ceremonies (Comaroff, 1980; Krige & Comaroff, 1981; Kuper, 1982), which viewed *lovolo* as a marriage between a man and a woman and provides new evidence that Tsonga *lovolo* ceremonies are used in three contexts: *kulovola wansati*, *kulovola nyanga*, and *kulovola muhliwa*, which refer to *lovolo* rituals for a living or dead woman's ancestors, for spirits of healers, for a healer master's spirits, or for vengeance spirits. I demonstrate that *lovolo* ceremonies aim at magically transforming situations and people, and at bringing about positive influences. The thesis stresses that *lovolo* ceremonies cannot be viewed only as a mundane marriage between a man and a woman, and that its spiritual dimension and its relation to different kinds of spiritual beings need to be acknowledged.

***Kulovola wansati* (to conjure the bride's maternal and paternal ancestors' benevolence)**

The *kulovola wansati*, the *lovolo* of a woman, allows individuals and groups to be bound through marriage relations that establish a set of obligations

and rights. The *kulovola wansati* is, thus, the most popular and well known form of *lovolo*.

The Tsonga *lovolo* institution is not a single and monolithic practice; it is a dynamic institution that has been through many transformations and has incorporated a wide range of contemporary influences.

Lovolo defines the lineage, the patrimony, the inheritance and the status of the children. It establishes the status of the couple in their own group and in their partner's group. Widow and widower's customary inheritance rules also depend on the performance of the *lovolo*. *Lovolo* inscribes the individual in a set of kinship and affinal relationships both with the living and with the dead. The woman is the link between two groups (her husband's and her father's), and it is through the *lovolo* that this alliance is established.

The valuables offered by the groom to the bride's kin aim to conjure the bride's maternal and paternal ancestors' benevolence to the couple and their progeny. Woman's fertility and health is associated with the performance of the ceremony. For this reason, there is often a certain level of symbolic pressure and violence exercised on the living, mainly on the woman, to oblige her partner to perform the ceremony.

The *lovolo wansati* can be performed generations later by the descendants of a couple that did not perform the ceremony because if they do not perform the ceremony they will suffer ill health or social problems. To remedy past omissions and to satisfy spirit beings, the *lovolo* can be carried out in the name of the lineage of these spirits. The woman is officially married to a man but she is spiritually married to an ancestor of her mundane husband. Her *lovolo* and her union with these spiritual beings aim at bringing about benevolence from the spirits of the woman who was not *lovoliwa* in the past. Her children will belong to the lineage of this dead

woman and, in this way, the omission that occurred generations earlier is repaired. This situation shows that the non-performance of the *lovolo* creates a long-lasting debt that can have expected consequences on the descendants of the person responsible for this mistake.

Lovolo is a living institution, a sphere where conflicts, negotiations and compromises, creativity, family relationships and love take place. It varies according to group, family and individual points of view on all the issues to which it relates because it is negotiable and interpreted differently. As part of a reflexive process that connects personal and social changes, *lovolo* has a strong impact on gender relations and processes of identity construction among men and women. *Lovolo* is both a result of and a paradigm of gender relationships. Hence, it is a dynamic institution.

Therefore, despite the existence of religious and civil forms of marriage, *lovolo* survives because it transcends marriage, and covers areas that are not dealt with by the other forms of union, such as the spiritual relationship with the ancestors. It is precisely this characteristic that makes it unique and that explains much of its persistence. It is also this relationship with the spiritual worlds that explains the existence of other forms of *lovolo* to appease other kinds of spiritual beings.

***Kulovola wansati* (to conjure the spirit of healers' benevolence)**

In acknowledgement of the support that the healer receives from spiritual beings to carry out his or her activity, a union is established between a woman and one of his or her male or female healing spiritual beings. This ritual is also called *kulovola wansati*.

These spirits were healers in their former lives and now allow the living healers to perform different techniques. The Tsonga spirits teach healers

how to use herbal remedies; Ndaus enable them to do the *kufemba*; while the Ngoni permit the *kuhlahluva*. The spirits of healers of foreign origin are generally integrated into the lineage of the group for whom they work and are transmitted to the living from generation to generation.

This *lovolo* challenges the traditional notion that the *lovolo* of a woman can only be performed by men to acquire women. Because of their specific status in society and their cross-gender behaviour, female healers can assume roles that are considered masculine. The healer, regardless of his or her sex, is called husband by the woman who is *lovoliwá*. The children born from the woman who has been *lovoliwá* carry the patrilineal name of the healer independently of their biological father who, in the case of a female healer, can be the healer's husband or brother. In addition, the children are integrated into the lineage of the male or female spiritual husband of their mother.

Kulovola nyanga and kulovola gona (to conjure the spirits of the master in healings' benevolence)

The long and harsh process of the integration of the individual with his or her spirits of healers is considered a rebirth under the protection of the master and his or her master's spirit during which the student's spirit grows and develops. The *lovolo* is crucial for the solidification of the novice's transformation during the training (*twasisiwa*). It establishes the relationship with the master and his or her spirits in healing and allows the trainee to obtain the *ntwaso*, the secret to get students, or the *gona*, the most powerful medicine, which are generally given after the performance of the *lovolo* ceremony. By performing the *kulovola nyanga* or *kulovola gona*, the novice is trying to ensure the symbolic strength of fragments of his or her identity. Within the fragments that constitute human identities, the *kulovola nyanga* targets the spirits of healing that he or she is possessed by.

The training (*twasisiwa*) and the *kulovola nyanga* allow the transformation of this passive situation, in which the individual is continuously disturbed by the “calling illness” or “election disease”, into a positive one in which the new healer works in harmony with these spirits.

As a result of this transformative process, the student (*mathwasana*) becomes part of the *bandhla* of his or her master, which is the group from which the master's healing capacities arise. This organisation is articulated around a kinship relation, where the master is considered a *bava* (father), independently of sex and age, and the *mathwasana* are the *vana* (sons and daughters). This kinship extends to the trainees' children, who call the master *kokwana* (grandparent), and the trainee's relatives, who name the master according to their relation to the trainee. Such a *lovolo* ritual does not make a union official, nor is it aimed at reproduction, and no woman is integrated into a new group. It is the trainee himself or herself who becomes a member of a new group, his or her master in healing's *bandhla*.

Healer cross-gender identity is reinforced by the performance of the *kulovola nyanga*. As those who perform the *lovolo* for their master and who, at the same time, are integrated into the groups of their masters, the male and female novices simultaneously perform a male and a female role. The man is in charge of carrying out the common *lovolo* of a woman, but in the *kulovola nyanga* or the *kulovola gona* the novice, regardless of his or her sex, performs a role usually attributed to men. However, in being integrated into a new group (the *bandhla*) the novice, regardless of his or her sex, is in a female position as women are integrated into new groups through marriage.

Kulovola muhliwa and kulovola nandru (to appease vengeance spirits)

The spirits of vengeance (*muhliwa* or *matlhari*), whether foreign spirits or not, seek reparation for the offences they have suffered from the

descendants of the sinner. (These spirits are generally male individuals who were murdered or were spirits stolen to perform various activities.) The members of the sinner's group are affected by the vengeance spirit in various ways, both collectively and individually. After killing most of the sinner's lineage without identifying himself, the vengeance spirit usually takes possession of a male and a female child of the group to exact his vengeance.

The price to be paid for reparation is a ceremony referred to as *kulovola muhliwa*, *kulovola nandru*, *kuheketa muhliwa* (bringing back the angry spirit) or *kutlelisa nandru* (the payment of a debt). Giving a woman to a spirit of vengeance, or giving wealth to the group of the spirit and bringing the spirit back to his home are the means to appease the spirit and stop the vengeance.

This ceremony shows the interrelation between the wife and husband of a vengeance spirit as, in this case, a man who is the husband of a vengeance spirit performs the *lovolo* of a woman and frees his sister from the relationship with the spirit. He cannot free himself from the relation with the vengeance spirit. The symbolic violence is more clearly exercised on men because a man's sister can be freed while he cannot. The mundane husband is the biological father of the children while the spirit is the spiritual husband of the woman *lovoliwa* and the spiritual father of her children.

In this context, the possibility of establishing a new relation, through the *lovolo*, between the two groups involved in the ritual depends on whether or not the woman offered to the vengeance spirit is from the group of the sinner rather than on the type of ceremony performed (the *kulovola*). If the woman is from the sinner's group, a relation of affinity is established with the group to which the vengeance spirit belongs. If she is not, the sinner's

group is freed from any type of relationship with the vengeance spirit's group.

By offering the *kulovola*, the guilty group abolishes the debt and promotes the return of peace and happiness in the whole group. In this case, the ceremony is carried out as a collective practice, which involves the entire group willing to extinguish the sin perpetrated by their ancestor.

Magical interpretation and religious practice

In the southern Mozambican context, the appeal to the spirits to perform the *lovolo* has to be seen as part of the cosmological and religious belief of the individual. Recalling Durkheimian sociology, the *lovolo* celebrates a social obligation with a transcendental component, which holds the society together. People, since their birth, are part of a chain of debt that constitutes the fundamental element of social solidarity. Without the communitary debt the social cohesion could not be guaranteed and men would be enemies to other men (Marie, 1997b: 251).

Belief in the spirits can be considered a religion that is a powerful expression of self-identity, the embodiment of a local history and a worldview. Belief in the ancestors and other spirits, spirit possession and divination methods stand on their own as a religious model of explanation of various social phenomena and practices. The relationship between the living world and the spiritual world is permanent. These worlds are interdependent. Spiritual beings form the core of the individual's identity. Individuals and spirits are ontologically linked. The spiritual world allows the living to have access to principal resources such as children, harvests, wealth, or healing capacities. It is from the spiritual beings, whether ancestors or alien spirits, that people obtain both positive and negative influence in all matters related to their life. Any displeasure by the spirits

or the living will have negative repercussions on the living. The supreme beings are senior figures of the lineage; thus, the rules of respect for elders also apply to spirits.

In southern Mozambique, people fall into a situation of permanent dependence and debt if the gift they receive from the spirits is not reciprocated, or their offence is not forgiven. In different situations, different types of spirits have to be worshipped, thanked and appeased. The *lovolo* can be performed for ancestors to promote a woman's fertility, her or her children's health and the happiness of a couple. It can also be performed for healer spirits, which can be for the master healer (*kulovola nyanga* or *kulovola gona*), or for the healer's spirit to ensure a harmonious relationship and success in the healing activity. Lastly, the *lovolo* can be performed for foreign and vengeance spirits to obtain their forgiveness and to re-establish peace.

All kinds of spirits can be propitiated by the *lovolo* ceremonies. *Lovolo* is thus a means to worship all types of spirits and to demonstrate respect, and the recognition of their power and their interdependence with the living. It constitutes a particular form of reasoning, a specific construction of reality and theory of knowledge that constrains social action. The *lovolo* performance is placed within the philosophical understanding that individuals have of their lives and of their own capacity to influence their lives. Inscribed in the different religious practices that individuals perform, *lovolo* participates in the construction of the symbolic power over individuals (Bourdieu, 1998: 7-8). *Lovolo* is part of a symbolic system; the analysis of this system allows one to understand its underlying logic and the inherent forms of symbolic production. *Lovolo* is related to the spiritual world not only because spirits are part of all the activities of the living, but because *lovolo* is one of the most important ways to re-establish a good relation with the spirits and with oneself. *Lovolo* symbolises a specific ethic of reciprocity that dominates all the exchanges. Schrift (1997: 3) explains

that for Nietzsche "to be able to give rightly is an art" and thus, paraphrasing him, *lovolo* is an "art" and great capacities have to be exercised to establish harmony between all the beings involved and with oneself. As an instrument of knowledge, communication and integration that gives meaning to the world and allows social cohesion, the performance of *lovolo* contributes to the construction of symbolic systems.

The spirits of the bride, the spirits of the healer, the spirits of the master in healing are thanked and asked benevolence for the future of the couple or for the healing activity. The *lovolo* of a spirit of vengeance restores peace. The *lovolo* is a propitiatory rite or a ritual of affliction. This practice is one of the rituals, such as the big offering (*mhamba ya hombe*) and the little offering (*muphahlu*), used to establish a positive relationship with different kinds of spirits and to allow individuals and groups to ensure social cohesion and a common worldview.

In this worship, different people and goods are exchanged, which relates individuals to things and things to persons, but which aims by analogy at acquiring symbolic capital. Using Bourdieu's (1997, 1998, 1999) terminology in a broad economic sense, people are offering economic capital (wealth and money) in exchange for symbolic capital, such as children, peace, well being, achievement, health, clairvoyance and social capital (being married or being a healer). The goods or rituals offered to living and spiritual beings are symbolically transformed into people, crops, goods, and positive socialisation. Social reproduction and production are the result of the same symbolic chain.

The *lovolo* is one of the cultural performances that have the practical and metaphorical capacity to guarantee and re-establish the social order, redistributing wealth and symbolic capital. It is a means by which individuals and groups establish a good relationship with the spiritual beings that belong to their lineage and to other groups. The *lovolo* is seen

as having the symbolic power to promote distinct phenomena like healing powers, reproductive capacity or well being, as it favours the spiritual beings' positive intervention. Appeasing spirits by the performance of the *lovolo* aims at guaranteeing the continuation of current and future generations.

Relationship

The *lovolo* ceremonies celebrate the integration of a person, independently of his or her sex, into a new lineage group. The *lovolo wansati* allows the formal introduction of the woman to another group of belonging (the one of her living or spiritual husband). The *lovolo* performed for a *nyanga* allows the integration of the newly trained healer (male or female) into the *bandhla* of her or his master in healing. Such *bandhla* function as new kin groups. In all cases, the person maintains his or her relation to the first group he or she belongs to, but this passage marks deep transformations in his or her identity.

The *kulovola muhliwa* can achieve two distinct relations. First it allows a spirit to return to his own group when the vengeance spirit is brought back home and removed from the group of the sinners. Secondly, a woman from the sinner group or from another group is given to the vengeance spirit. If the woman is from the group that owes the debt, the vengeance spirit is integrated into the group of the sinner as a son-in-law. If, however, the woman is from another group, the *lovolo* given by the sinner group is only the wealth that will allow a marriage to be performed and the debt to be cancelled.

All types of *lovolo* transform the person or the group that offers and the group that receives it. The *lovolo* ceremonies carried out by a chief to acquire a young boy to be his son and heir (Junod, 1898) or by a miner to

obtain an adolescent boy who will be his wife (Harries, 1990, 1994) also confirm the transformative capacity of this practice.

The passage of a person (the woman, the healer student, the spirit) from one group to another is communicated to the ancestors of the groups involved. This communication aims at promoting the well being of the individual who is moving from one group to another, success in reproducing (in the case of the *kulovola wansati*), success in the healing practice for the novice and peace for the vengeance spirit. The existence of different types of *lovolo* that do not involve the marriage of a man and a woman shows that *lovolo* aims at linking individuals of both sexes and their respective spirits with individuals and/or spiritual beings of other groups. The *lovolo* ceremonies are an expression of the way in which a group or a person acquires something, both material and/or spiritual. The groom's group acquires a fertile woman and happiness in the new union; the novice obtains the most important healing secrets; the sinners obtain forgiveness. An exchange is being sealed.

To assume that the *lovolo* ceremonies define the patrilineage of children is an over simplification, as three different forms of establishing kinship relationships can be identified (*lovolo*, *kuphahla*, possession). The most important for the establishment of the belonging of the children is the lineage in the name of which their mother has been *lovoliwa* and to which the *kuphahla* has been performed. The woman may be given through the *kuphahla* to a lineage that is distinct from the one who performs the *lovolo* ceremony. In this case, the man that takes up the role of mundane husband is only there to allow another union, a spiritual one, with the husband spirit of the woman. The children born from this union generally have two lineages: the mundane lineage of the biological father and the spiritual lineage of their mother's spiritual husband. When the *lovolo* is performed by a female healer, she does this as the female husband of the woman and the children of the union call her father. In addition to

belonging to the lineage of the spirit of healing in whose name the *lovolo* was performed, the children also belong to the female healer's lineage.

While *lovolo* and the associated *kuphahla* aim to integrate women or men into a new group of belonging, *kuphahla* is performed alone when a young boy and/or girl that belong to the group that has to satisfy a spirit offer the children as wife and husband. In addition to these ways of being integrated into a new group of belonging, a person (male or female) can be taken through possession by a spiritual being, who obliges him or her to carry his lineage and satisfy his request by force.

The *kuphahla* allows individuals of both sexes to be assigned to spiritual beings, while the *lovolo* allows the transfer mainly of women but also of men to living and spiritual beings. Only in the case of *kulovola nyanga* or *kulovola gona* can trainees of both sexes be integrated into a new kinship. It is because *lovolo* is mainly aimed at integrating women in a new relationship that it becomes a symbolic mechanism by which gendered identities are built. It is also for this reason that it is commonly regarded as a male practice even if in specific cases it can be also performed by women.

***Lovolo* and gender**

But, then who is *lovoliwa*? Who *kulovola* whom?

It appears that such performances are not only a male prerogative, in which a man acquires a woman, but can also be used by women to acknowledge a relationship with a spirit or can be carried out by men to acquire men (Harries, 1994: 200-208; Junod, 1996: V1, 441-443; Bagnol 2003: 16). *Lovolo* ceremonies do not always imply that the female is *lovoliwa* (passive) and the male *kulovola* (active).

Groups and individuals of both sex can perform *lovolo* ceremonies to acquire women for all kind of spirits: spirits of vengeance, spirits of healing, and ancestors.

Men and women healers can *kulovola* or, rather, can practise the ceremony for their master and his or her spirits. In addition, women, like men, can also *lovoliwa* a woman to give as a wife to a spiritual being who promotes their healing capacities. These ceremonies are held less frequently than the *lovolo* of a woman for a man or for any kind of spiritual being. However, the fact that a woman can perform the *lovolo* for a spirit of healing challenges the notion that *lovolo* is the “exchange of woman” performed between men. In certain contexts, women are “men” too. The female healers’ exceptional situation, which places them above the level of others, gives them a distinct gendered power.

The conception that only women can attract *lovolo* implies gender inequities that should be recognised and analysed. The three types of *lovolo* are based on the same metaphor of transformation, rebirth, or changes. The woman is fundamental to this process not only because she is one of the elements exchanged, the others being wealth, agricultural produce or animals, but because she symbolises this transformation. The woman is the personification of this transformation as she is the only one who can reproduce the human species. It is from this reproduction and this transformation that other transformations and productions are made possible. Human reproduction is played against animal reproduction and agricultural production and vice versa. For this reason men and societies, with both the complicity and the resistance of women, control this reproductive capacity and the marriage economy as central elements of social reproduction. The *lovolo* is the symbolic capacity to exercise social control over the transformative powers not only of the women but, through the women, of the other aspects of social production and

reproduction. The *lovolo* expresses the role of sexuality in society and the different social experiences of men and women. It is the recognition of the woman's power that has generated the need to control it and to forge a defensive masculine identity and an ideology of masculine superiority (Chodorow, 1989).

However, it is in the need to control the woman's reproductive power that a contradiction is found. From one side, the reference to a woman's reproductive capacity, femininity, and motherhood as a global symbol that encompasses the human, social and agricultural reproduction prevails and encapsulates a powerful homage to woman's power. Women are given or they give themselves as a fertility symbol, as a sacred offering. From the other side, those who offer the gift (the *lovolo*), be they people (generally men but also women) or spirits, are considered the owner or the beneficiary of the process that denies female power. However, if we look deeper into people's understandings of this process, those who transform the gift into peace, fertility, healing capacity, rain and wealth are actually spiritual rather than mundane beings. As the social organisation among the spirits is similar to the social organisation of the living, the relation of power between men and women in both worlds is the same and for both worlds it is dynamic. This construction of exchange and transformation impregnates social relations and is the central element of the gender symbolic order. It is within this specific construction, which at the same time increases and usurps women's power, that the gender relations and symbolic violence that men and women assimilate are established.

The viewing of *lovolo* as a male practice is the result of the predominance of the *kulovola wansati* over the other practices. This is also a partial vision or a misunderstanding of the practice. The invisibility of ceremonies such as the *kulovola muhliwa* or *kulovola nandru* can explain the non-recognition of these practices as collective institutions. On the other hand, by

performing the *lovolo* on their own, as do female healers, they occupy new roles, including those that were considered masculine in the past.

The *kulovola nandru* or the giving of goods or a woman to a vengeance spirit implies that women are the most important individuals to appease tension and establish a positive relationship between enemies or potential enemies, whether they are from the group of the sinner or from another group. However, to accept the above statement unconditionally is to underrate the role of men, as it is by possessing men and not women that the vengeance spirits threaten the lineage by forbidding men to transmit their lineage to their children. By binding the future of a daughter to her brother, by taking a couple of children as wife and husband, the vengeance spirit shows that sin has a collective dimension. Sons like daughters are given by means of the *kuphahla* or are taken by possession by the vengeance spirits. While women can be substituted through *lovolo* by other women, men cannot.

One may ask whether this is an inconvenience or whether it is an advantage for men and women. This limitation is the result of a gender role that is socially determined and signifies that men seldom can get rid of a vengeance spirit that has taken possession of them while a woman can. Surely it is the woman's fecundity that spirits seek, as it allows them to gain descendants. It is the woman's role to replace the dead with new life. On the other hand, because economic power is in the hands of men and because the *kulovola wansati* is a male prerogative, it is possible for men to *lovoliwa* a woman, while women depend on their fathers, brothers and husbands to *lovoliwa* a woman who will be their substitute as the wife of a vengeance spirit.

The female healer stands in a specific position in regard to her role in the *kulovola nyanga* as she propitiates both the spirit and because she is the beneficiary of the work. In contrast, the married woman can be either

perceived as passive (she is *lovoliwa*) and as having to share the control over her children in a context that is not always favourable to her or as empowered and able to develop her womanhood by complying with the social norms. A female healer who is also a married woman can play on the two levels of power relations. As such, *lovolo* establishes relationships of power between men and women and between people of different ages and status, and participate in the construction of gender relationships. Female healers, even in a traditional context, are able to challenge gender stereotypes and transform their status and condition by adopting roles that are usually viewed as masculine. Being a healer gives a woman the chance to enter a new sphere of the symbolic world and material world. She can do this because healers are, more than other beings, the symbiosis of masculine and feminine attributes and can through their role and position in society adopt trans-gender behaviour.

Comparing the *kulovola nyanga* and the *kulovola wansati* it can be noticed that it is the person or group that offers the *lovolo* that is rewarded. The *nyanga* (male or female) is *lovoliwa* when someone (male or female) wants, in exchange, to obtain healing capacities and prestige to attract novices. Women are *lovoliwa* when an individual or a group wants children who will have their patrilineage. Women are also *lovoliwa* to pay a debt or to appease a spiritual being. In all cases, it is assumed that the person (the *nyanga* and the woman) does not have the desired capacities, and that spiritual beings have to be solicited to obtain them. The *muhliwa* is *lovoliwa* when peace and forgiveness are required. The *lovolo* transforms a person of the feminine sex into a wife able to conceive without spiritual support. It turns a person of either sex into a successful healer and a male vengeance spirit into a benevolent spirit or son-in-law.

Healers' spirits are essential to the practitioner's identity; however they are not sufficient in themselves. A diviner's identity depends on the existence of healer spirits pushed forward by training and mainly by *lovolo*. In a

similar way to a woman who is infertile (she cannot see the children) because her *lovolo* has not been given, a *nyanga* cannot 'see' what he wishes without *lovolo*. Both are "sick" (Berglund, 1976). The healer who accepts the "calling of the spirits" wants to recover from the "calling disease" and for that he or she has to qualify as a healer. The interrelation between spirit and health, between healing and self-recognition, is clearly defined and explains the dependence on the performance of the appropriate ceremonies to fully develop a fragment of individual identity. Even if the healer works for the community, by going through the training process he/she expresses his or her self-love. Participating in the training enables individuals to gain health but also to obtain the full development and satisfaction of a spirit living in his or her own body. Being a healer is the result of a social action by which the spirits of healers that an individual possesses are developed. In the same way, being fertile is not an intrinsic capacity of the woman. It is a cultural practice in which the living and spirits have their contribution. The *lovolo* ritual expresses a particular conception of individual capacities.

Women and groups, as well as male and female healers, are believed to become fertile, to obtain peace and achieve vision, respectively, as the result of the positive effects of the *lovolo*. This cosmological understanding of biological and spiritual phenomena contributes to the symbolic power exerted on the individuals that unconsciously or consciously compels them to perform the *lovolo* ceremony. As such, *lovolo* ensures the domination of spiritual beings over the living, and legitimises an established gendered order, although this is an order that is always subject to negotiation.

Ambiguities, violence, self and multiples identities

The role of the money and the wealth given by means of the *lovolo* is seen, by participants, either as a gift, a present, an offering to praise the living

and/or the spirits, a payment, or a compensation for something that is given in exchange. People are not able to express the exact differences between these concepts and at given moments in the same conversation or over a period of time convey apparently contradictory interpretations using the terms: *kuxavisa* (to sell), *kuxava* (to buy), *kuhakela* (to pay), *kutlelisa* (to pay), *kuriha* (to compensate or to pay a fine) or *kunyika* (the kindness, the virtue of giving).¹ It becomes impossible to find a clear and unequivocal synonym in Portuguese or English for the term “*lovolo*”. Ambiguities are related to the context in which *lovolo* ceremonies are performed, their aims, and to the variety of living and spiritual beings involved as well as the type of relationship established. While political and religious influences in southern Mozambique in the last several decades have had a great influence on the multiplicity of contradictory interpretations, they cannot explain the broad semantic field of the term “*lovolo*”.

The ambiguities of the concept of the gift have been explored in detail, not only in terms of anthropological literature but also in terms of contemporary interdisciplinary discourses (Schrift, 1997). In *Gift, Gift*, Mauss stresses the unclear semantic derivation of “present” and “poison” in different Germanic languages (1997: 28-31). Emile Benveniste (1997: 33-42) demonstrates the ambiguity between “give” and “take” in Hittite and the ambiguities of the terms “to buy” and “to sell” in Germanic languages. He shows that in Greek “expense” also implies an expense for display of largesse and might be expense of rivalry and prestige. Bourdieu stresses the different meanings of “the French verb *louer* (to rent, from *locare*) and *louer* (to praise, from *laudare*)” (1991: 39). It is no surprise therefore that *lovolo* is gift, bribe, economy, law, thanks, offering, debt, and forgiveness.

¹ All terms have been translated using Sitori's Xichangana/Portuguese dictionary.

As the forces on the individual to perform the ceremony are multifaceted and come from different sides (from the ground, the ancestors; from the living; and from the fragments of the self shaped by the namesake and the different spirits of healing or ancestors), *lovolo* improves the qualitative relationship between the living, the living and the dead, and between the different fragments of the individual's identity. Because they have different spirits (ancestors, healers or foreign) or because they are involved in several kinships people are dividual. They are complex constructions with multiple identities, and the ceremony has to be performed to respond to the request of one or some of the individual's several fragments. *Lovolo* is a self-present as people are giving both to the other but also to themselves. In offering, individuals give part of themselves.

Lovolo cannot be analysed only in terms of the quantitative relationship between the objects exchanged; it has to be understood in relation to others and to oneself, in which the influence of the gift always has to be calculated, but can never be calculated. The *lovolo* is possible because of some kind of collective and individual self-deception.

Lovolo is gift, it is passion with a "certain beneficial transcendental illusion" (Caputo, 1997: 145) but at the same time *lovolo* is law, which is complied with through compulsion and force. It is necessary to give to maintain the productive and reproductive process. It is necessary to give to be forgiven. *Lovolo* is the economy in which the act of giving is calculated in terms of its expected return after a certain time. But this return is not always guaranteed and not easily measurable in economic terms. How can we value health, happiness, wealth, children, harmony, and social integration on an economic scale? Those values are social constructs and can only be analysed within a specific context. *Lovolo* is ambiguous, as it cannot be easily distinguished between gift and economy and between law and justice (Derrida, 1991: 18, 1997a: 18; Caputo, 1997: 151).

Individual and group agency is, thus, framed within this world conception, and compliance with the *lovolo* ceremonies depends greatly on adhesion to these views. The ontological security rooted in the reproduction of established conventions constrains people to carry out the *lovolo* ceremonies. In this process, however, they subordinate themselves to the power that has oppressed them at different times and in different ways. Refusing to conform to a particular paradigm, people stop benefiting from family support and place themselves outside the security of their family group. They become autonomous persons, whose linkages with kin are eroded.

As people are multi-constituted personalities they are able to negotiate in different periods, over several generations, the relationship with the spiritual beings they are involved with and which constitute fragments of their identities. Each of these spirits, be they ancestors, healing spirits or vengeance spirits, interact within certain patterns of relationship and display complexities of problems that have to be analysed collectively. The behaviour and the requests of each category of spirits follow a certain paradigm that changes according to group, time, and area. In their relations with spirits, people negotiate and perform their histories and their relation with the world.

However, *lovolo* is the symbolic process by which transformations can happen. It allows social harmony to be maintained. Household harmony, the health of a wife and children, and the good relationship of a couple are sought. Forgiveness from victims of death, be the death as a result of war or of individual sin, is asked. Healing practice capacities that express all the social knowledge as representation of the world, its conflicts, its history, its present and display its force of intervention and of transformation are promoted. People perform *lovolo* to establish harmonies in the present and in the past, but also to promote harmony in the future. The relationship with spirits is dynamic; it reflects human

relationship and integrates all its aspects, including embodied past histories and spirit identities, and allows the construction of present narratives and identities.

Compliance with *lovolo* is thus inscribed in a dynamic way in the individual's identities. Its performance depends on a variety of factors in which community, kinship, and mainly religious belief are sources of normative authorities. Even if carrying out the *lovolo* does not exclude fears and uncertainties, its non-performance increases them or requires the adhesion to another form of authority. For this reason in urban areas people usually prefer to rely on several different forms of authority by performing a combination of marriage ceremonies, healing practices, or propitiatory practices that mobilise a multiplicity of identities and relationships with the world.

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When the *mathwasana* comes following training to *kulovola nyanga*, the teacher has to take him to the bush to show him the plants that allow one to prepare the *gona*. If the novice doesn't know how to undertake the *gona* he cannot have students. The son⁵⁰ also learns how to teach so that he can have his own students. He has to be able to perform examination. It's necessary to perform the *lovolo* because the *gona* has plants that allow one to get clients and to work. (Velemina, interview, June 2000)

The *gona* medicine protects an individual when a bad spirit is evoked.⁵¹ It is a defence and the most important medicine. Melding both phallic and feminine shapes, the calabash recalls the androgyny of the diviner and his power to symbolise the complementarity and synthesis of both genders.

The *gona* is only for the healer who has spirits. The healer who *doesn't* have spirits (*nyangarume*) doesn't need to carry out this ceremony [the *lovolo*]. On the contrary, even if the training processes are different, both the *nyanga* and the *nyamusoro* have to perform the *kulovola nyanga*.⁵² The *gona* symbolises the spirits, as the spirits need the *gona* to be able to work. Every time that I work I put on my special clothes. I put the money given by the client to one side of the *gona* and evoke my spirits, the spirits of my *bandhla*. (Velemina, interview, June 2000)

The money earned by the healer is the result of the power of the spirits

⁵⁰ The teacher calls his or her students son (*n'wana*) and they call him or her father (*bava*), irrespective of the teacher's sex.

⁵¹ The medicine, a type of oil, is sucked, applied between the fingers and the toes and on the earlobe or mixed with other medicine.

⁵² The *nyangarume* (a category of healer) works with herbs, minerals, and animal components.

her brothers' children (especially if she is the eldest sister) that a woman's status can evolve. She tries to gain power through her sons, guaranteeing their material support and controlling the work of her daughters-in-law. As an eldest sister, she also has religious and political roles in mediating conflict and is a major influence on her brothers' children's socialisation. As it is from this social organisation that women are able to achieve some kind of power, women are party to the system.

Although *lovolo* is concerned with far more than fertility, because it promotes health, wealth, harmony within the couple and good luck, the focus of *lovolo* is on procreation. During the *muphalu*, associated with the *lovolo* and the *lovolo* ceremony itself,¹⁷ constant reference is made to the need to reproduce and to maintain the cycle of "reincarnation". The complementarity of female body and symbolic ritual needs to be achieved to allow reproduction. As Moore phrases it, rituals can be seen:

as moments or events, where images and narratives about the nature of gendered identities, the relation between women and men, and the powerful nature and sexuality are being reiterated and repeated. (Moore et al., 1999: 28)

Through the performance of the rituals, individuals and groups find a space where their agency can be exercised and where their experience and interpretation of the body and the world is enacted. Through *lovolo* rituals a symbolic order is displayed that establishes a connection between knowledge, social practice, and the cultural symbols within which individuals and groups have been socialised. The symbolic aspect of social practice plays an important role in the subalternity of women, which establishes certain powers such as the power to carry out the *lovolo* ceremony and the power to negotiate and to receive *lovolo*. The performance of *lovolo* is the expression of a biological and social world in

¹⁷ See Chapter 1 for a description of a *lovolo* ceremony.

There are different types of *lovolo*. There is the *kulovola wansati*, the *lovolo* of a woman. But, there is also the *kulovola nyanga* or *kulovola gona*, for the teacher in divination. These *lovolo* are similar because if you don't comply there will be all sort of problems and diseases for you and your children. (Velemina, interview, June 2000)

Velemina, a 68-year-old female diviner, opens a new perspective on *lovolo*. When she speaks of *kulovola wansati*, the *lovolo* of a woman, she describes a ceremony that she performed for her healer spirit. With this *lovolo*, she symbolically offers a woman to three Ndau healing spirits, which possess her and allow her to exercise the *kufemba*, to thank them for 'working' with her and to signify her willingness to care for them. This *lovolo* ceremony is thus different from the one that establishes a union between a living man and a living woman. It is, in this case, a union between a woman and the male and female spirits of a female healer. In addition, unlike the *kulovola wansati* for the marriage of a woman, which is performed by a man, this *lovolo* is performed by a woman. The sex of the diviner is largely irrelevant in this kind of ritual, which emphasises the complexity of gender constructions in the society and the particular position of the diviner.

Velemina also speaks about the *kulovola nyanga* or *kulovola gona*. *Kulovola nyanga* means to carry out the *lovolo* ceremony for the *nyanga* (the healing practitioner). *Kulovola gona* signifies giving *lovolo* to obtain the most powerful medicine: the *gona*. This ceremony is performed by Velemina's students of both sexes to thank her and the spirits of diviners she possesses for their training. It also aims at promoting good luck in healing practices, expressed both in terms of clients and successful healing.

In this context, *lovolo* ceremonies transcend the notion of marriage

The main finding of my fieldwork is that *lovolo* still constitutes an important practice in urban Mozambican society. It inscribes the individual in a set of kinship and affinal relationships both with the living and with the dead. Therefore, despite the existence of religious or civil forms of marriage, *lovolo* survives because it transcends marriage, and covers areas that are not dealt with by the other forms of union, such as the spiritual relationship with the ancestors. It is precisely this characteristic that makes it unique and that explains much of its persistence.

As a dynamic construction crucial for the establishment of marriage (and the rights and obligations that flow from it for the wife, the husband, the children and relatives); for the definition of social relationships expressed mainly in terms of kinship; and for the affirmation of individual and regional identity, *lovolo* is not a single and monolithic practice. Instead it varies according to group, family and individual points of view on all the issues to which it relates because it is negotiable and interpreted differently. *Lovolo* is a living institution, a sphere where conflicts, negotiations and compromises, creativity, family relationships and love take place. As part of a reflexive process that connects personal and social changes, *lovolo* has a strong impact on gender relations and processes of identity construction among men and women. *Lovolo* is both a result of and a paradigm of gender relationships. Hence, it is a dynamic institution.

This thesis links together gender, self, multiple identities, violence and magical interpretation in *lovolo* practices in southern Mozambique. I demonstrate how violence is exercised on individuals and/or groups to oblige them to comply with the *lovolo* ceremonies by the different spirits that constitute the fragments of their identities. I argue that it is within this apparently male-dominated symbolic order that individuals of both sexes and of different groups exercise their agency and contest their position. I draw a genealogy of female power on the basis of their supernatural force and I show that *lovolo* is not a monolithic structure but that internal contradictions exist within it and that women exploit these contradictions to transform their situation.

My thesis re-examines the conceptions of previous scholars about these ceremonies (Comaroff, 1980; Krige & Comaroff, 1981; Kuper, 1982), which viewed *lovolo* as a marriage between a man and a woman and provides new evidence that Tsonga *lovolo* ceremonies are used in three contexts: *kulovola wansati*, *kulovola nyanga*, and *kulovola muliliwa*, which refer to *lovolo* rituals for a living or dead woman's ancestors, for spirits of healers, for a healer master's spirits, or for vengeance spirits. I demonstrate that *lovolo* ceremonies aim at magically transforming situations and people, and at bringing about positive influences. The thesis stresses that *lovolo* ceremonies cannot be viewed only as a mundane marriage between a man and a woman, and that its spiritual dimension and its relation to different kinds of spiritual beings need to be acknowledged.

***Kulovola wansati* (to conjure the bride's maternal and paternal ancestors' benevolence)**

The *kulovola wansati*, the *lovolo* of a woman, allows individuals and groups to be bound through marriage relations that establish a set of obligations