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Gengenbach / *Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique*

Based on a True Story: Women's Life-Storytelling as Memory, Oral Traditional, and History



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**Author**

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

**Introduction** ★

Grandmothers

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Conclusion

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We're stuffed with famous men's lives; soft with the habits of our own. The quest to discover another's psyche, to absorb another's motives as deeply as your own, is a lover's quest. But the search for facts, for places, names, influential events, important conversations and correspondences, political circumstances—all this amounts to nothing if you can't find the assumption your subject lives by.

—Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*

One day, when you have time, we'll talk, and I'll tell you the story of my life. Because there are people here who might tell you lies about me, and if you want to know the truth you must hear it from my mouth.

—Rosalina Malungana, Facazisse

*Ungahleki xikoxa.*  
Do not laugh at the old woman.

—H. P. Junod, *The Wisdom of the Tsonga-Shangana People*

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**Introduction**

Toward the end of Anne Michaels's novel *Fugitive Pieces*, the character Ben is thinking about his father, who escaped from a Nazi internment camp before Ben was born and whose everyday adult life remains a monument to that harrowing passage. Ben is remembering being scolded as a child by his father for throwing away a rotten apple—"You throw away food?" When I read those words for the first time my grandmother, my father's mother, was suddenly in the room with me, a stooped old woman poking her finger into someone's throwaway chicken bones, chewing hurriedly on them when she thought no one was looking, her hands shaking, unable to let those bones lie. But this ghostly image was quickly surrounded by the other memories I have of her—the times when she tried to tell me her stories and I was too obstinate to listen; when she would talk endlessly on the phone in hushed, velvety Russian so all I could do was imagine the secret other life she led, I felt, behind our backs; when I would ask my father later on to repeat his mother's stories and some of his details would be vague (details not being the point anyway); when I saw her for the last time in her hospital bed in Windsor, Ontario, and she whispered "Go away," not knowing how inept I felt at that bedside, finally wanting to hear more and then the last thing she ever says to me, "Go away." She died, Jean (once Johanna) Sudermann, when was it—sometime in early 1993? Even this date is uncertain for me, although I have written it down somewhere, and I remember the drive from Minneapolis to Windsor, and the funeral with cousins and aunts and uncles suddenly restored, vividly enough.



Like my father, I remain vague about many of the facts of my grandmother's life. Yet the images from her stories—the ones I have clung to, though I tried so hard to stay aloof through their telling—have "branded" me, as Michaels would put it, and sent up "sharp green shoots" <sup>1</sup> of their own: the tales of servants and splendor, of a father's violent death at the hands of Bolsheviks in Berdiansk (south Russia), recalled not as a loss but as a turning point, a condition of exile, the beginning of a transatlantic adventure that ended up in Windsor, of all places. Here my grandmother eventually met my grandfather, an exile himself: two penniless immigrants driven by violence to an unwelcoming new world. My father and his elder brother and sister still explain their present lives in part by sorting fragments of this remembered past, in which they figure as children with overeducated parents and underclass lives (not to mention German

names) before and during the Second World War. The story, as they tell it, is a parable of hardship and triumph, of persecution endured and (painfully, with sacrifice and suffering) overcome. When I knew her, my grandmother's life was ruled by the belief that no circumstance, no politics could take away her birthright, her essential betterness than everyone else. Even her stories of endless suppers of boiled potatoes or flour dumplings, of sending her children to school in cardboard-soled shoes, of being scorned by lowly Jews and Catholics in that working-class border town, were offered as evidence tempering the steel core of her aristocratic inner self. I remember hating those stories, yet feeling bound to (or by) them at the same time, just as now I feel bound to retell them, not as an ethnographic confession <sup>2</sup> but as an illustration of Michaels' point about the relationship between biography and history—and as a way of acknowledging, before I present the life stories Magude's women told me, the assumptions about old women's storytelling I carried with me to Mozambique.

Looking back, I think my grandmother's death had as much to do with how I approached women in Magude as their tellings of their lives had to do with the state of their world when our interviews took place. Still feeling remorseful about the history I had squandered during my grandmother's lifetime, momentarily forgetting all I had read about the historicity of memory itself, I fussed at first over what I perceived as gaps and inconsistencies in women's recollections, determined to record their pasts as they understood them yet at the same time concerned (without realizing the irony) that these stories meet certain positivist standards of history. I was convinced that women who had lived through the better part of Magude's twentieth century would narrate memories that would both capsize the sturdy ship of southern Mozambique's historiographic orthodoxy and offer a compelling counternarrative—counter but still analogous in kind to the master narrative I knew from academic texts. I therefore listened to Magude's "old women" with an intensity that must have seemed strange to Aida and Ruti, who sometimes had trouble concealing their impatience with women they thought of as grandmothers, versions of whose stories they had heard many times before. As an audience, fortunately, we developed a corporate identity within which the more extreme edges of our respective autobiographies were blunted and balanced out, transforming us into a harmless trio of young(ish) women with endless amounts of free time for listening to elderly women reminisce about their pasts. And though we may have appeared odd to many people in the communities we visited, our priorities made perfect sense to the women themselves. For as we became a more familiar feature of the precarious postwar landscape, these women made it clear that there were things *they* wanted and needed to tell *us*. "Say, say, what you want!" Valentina Chauke urged us suddenly one day. "If you have questions, ask me! I won't hide my *mahanyelo* [way of life] from you, because you are my granddaughters." <sup>3</sup>

In the act of claiming this fictive bond, Valentina was reminding us of the limits—defined by gender, generation, and kinship—not only on what we were permitted to ask about her past but also on what she would admit to remembering in our presence. Yet she was also articulating, if obliquely, the importance of life-storytelling as history for women her age, especially in the circumstances under which they came to know me: after the war but not quite into the peace, not quite home, not quite sure what the coming years or months would bring them. The stories these women told about their pasts were, to a great extent, stories they had already told (or wished to tell) to their biological daughters and granddaughters, stories whose form and function they had learned by listening to the life-storytelling of generations of women before them. Driven, however, by a heightened sense of urgency in the wake of the war, and looking back on more than a century of changes they insist they did nothing to bring about, these women saw themselves at a critical juncture when memories of life before the "scattering," the series of upheavals associated with *kululeko* (independence) and the Renamo war, were the precious foundation on which the postwar world would be rebuilt. Change, then, was not the moral of their story. Instead, the purpose of women's life-storytelling, and the driving force behind their memories of the past, was continuity: keeping the world the same, or at least returning it to the way it used to be.

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Yet in narratives of continuity and persistence, of lives lived allegedly in humble deference to the laws of long ago, Magude's elderly women also voiced evidence of innovation and relentless agency—of adaptations, negotiations, and challenges that showed their refusal to let change simply happen to them; change had to be something they at least helped to bring about. Memory, of course, can be an ornery, vengeful companion. My grandmother, for example, for all her claims to upper-classness, could not keep herself from those chicken bones, because she remembered, in spite of herself, the hunger of the uprooted life that came afterward. But such apparent contradictions—the discrepancy between the self my grandmother conjured up through

her stories and the self I witnessed, like the discrepancies within the life stories of Magude's women (and between the stories they tell about themselves and the stories others tell about them)—does not make women's self-narrated lives any less historical or any less true. Nor, I would argue, does it make them mythical, as some Western oral historians, trying to understand tensions they identify in oral sources between objective and subjective experience, have come to view self-told accounts of individual lives: as memory's strategy, through narrative, for reconciling or making sense of the contradictions between what really happened to the teller and what his or her society dictates should have happened, what that person's experience ought to have been. <sup>4</sup> Where women's life stories in particular are concerned, mythical elements are sometimes said to reflect women's efforts "both to conform to and oppose the conditions that limit their freedom," because "part of what it means to be 'womanly' is to submit to a social system which often does not uphold women's interests." <sup>5</sup> But no one is master of her memory, and life stories are about more than gaining interpretive control over real experience. Life stories are memories that selves make, but they are also truths that situated subjects cannot help but express, truths that are voiced through the cultural and cognitive resources available to their authors and the myriad discourses, interactions, and material conditions in which those individuals have taken (and are constantly taking) part. Life stories, then, are not only no more partial than any other type of historical account; they are also, and more powerfully, constitutive of a complete "social world" <sup>6</sup>—a true history—in themselves.

### Life-Storytelling: Memory, Oral Tradition, History

To appreciate the historical meanings of women's life stories, however, we must first understand their status and function as a narrative genre—or, following Elizabeth Tonkin, as a "[convention] of discourse through which speakers tell history and listeners understand them." In Magude, life-storytelling is a feminine form of oral tradition, a narrativized interpretation of the past—a way of "doing history"—that is governed by gendered rules and expectations of authority, audience, language, occasion, and objective. <sup>7</sup> Women's life stories should be told, or are told to greatest effect, by the eldest women in a community, referred to in Shangaan (in the singular) as *xikoxana* or *nsungukati*. Although generally these terms are applied only to postmenopausal women, and *masungukati* in particular are described as women who have become "like men" and no longer "worry about" sex, reproductive or sexual status is not always the defining criterion for inclusion in this category. Rather, it is a woman's advanced age and *vutlhari* (wisdom), measured in terms of the quantity of her experience (what she has "seen") and her knowledge of the *mahanyelo* (customs) and *milawu* (laws) of *khale* (long ago), that give her the authority to share personal recollections.

This authority, however, is restricted to certain settings, typically feminine social spaces—the *xitiko* (cooking area), the swept yard in the middle of the homestead (*ndyangu*), the interior of women's huts (in locative form, *ndlwini*), the *ndzhuti* (shade) of a large tree at home or in the fields—where women of varying ages gather on an informal, everyday basis and where female voices command at least as much respect and attention as male ones, sometimes more. Aimed explicitly at unmarried young women and children, the stories old women tell about their pasts are prescriptive models intended to teach their audience how to live well (*kuhanya*—i.e., to live in good health) and how to avoid "suffering" (*kuhlupeka* or *kuvaviseka*). This ideal links social and physical well-being <sup>8</sup> and lays especially heavy stress on the need for listeners to behave with *xichavo* (respect), striving throughout their lives to fulfill society's expectations of them. Where young women and girls in particular are concerned, this narrative counsel focuses on their future duties as wives and mothers, drawing stories from the elder women's knowledge and experience and using them for the purposes of *kulaya*: instructing listeners in the rules of proper behavior. Women must follow these rules if they are not to suffer in their marital household—and if they are not to endanger the *vutomi* (life or health) of the *tiko* (land/country).

Yet women's life-storytelling accomplishes a good deal more than socializing girls into gender roles defined by domestic service and wifely obedience within patrilineal marriage. <sup>9</sup> First, in addition to conventions of authority and audience, women's life stories share certain properties of structure, content, and style—common plots and lessons, stock characters, patterns of language and performance—that reveal their generic role as a learned template for transmitting history, women's interpretation of their pasts, from one generation to another. Many of these properties bear a strong resemblance to those of women's *minkaringana* (fictional tales), and in

fact women often use the term *minkaringana* for stories they tell about their "real" pasts. This fact both highlights the constructed, imaginative quality of women's life stories and compels us to ask why they prefer this narrative form of remembering, what they can convey through it more effectively than through another. As the stories in this chapter illustrate, elements of narrative style themselves express truths about the past. For example, a teller's choice of subject pronoun in accounts of events in which she took part (*we* or *I*, the didactic *you*) speaks to the meaning of her actions vis-à-vis social norms, the possibilities for individual agency, and the relational networks in which her actions were embedded. The use of present-tense verbs to narrate memories of long ago, the extensive reliance on dialogue (allegedly recalled verbatim, even when the storyteller did not witness the conversation), and the use of analogies from the present to explain something from the past—these stylistic choices create the impression that the narrator is describing scenes that are still very much part of everyday life but in which she may be both actor and omniscient observer, central to the outcome and the accepted meaning of remembered events. <sup>10</sup>

Second, when the content of women's life stories is examined closely, it becomes clear that narrators are not merely seeking to teach listeners a timeless notion of conjugal respect. These stories contain a diverse cast of female characters, including but ranging far beyond dutiful wife, mother, subsistence farmer, domestic "beast of burden," and the other usual stereotypes for women in rural southern Africa. <sup>11</sup> The array of selves portrayed in one woman's collection of narratives is as manifold and varied as her collection of personal names, and it presents the young women in her audience with a pluralistic model for living well according to the needs and opportunities of their particular circumstances. Most importantly, this narrative model locates women's historical identity within multiple, female-centered affective communities in which both the rules women must follow and the avenues available for cushioning, circumventing, or defying those rules are mediated, in everyday practice, primarily by other women. Yet if women's life stories reflect their responsibility for individual and collective well-being, ultimately their behavior is held accountable to no higher authority than the impulses of their *mbilu* (heart). At the same time, the source of historical legitimacy for a woman's narrated actions is often a female character from the same cohort as she—one of the wise *swikoxana* who preserve and hand down the laws of the ancestors and whose teachings define what a woman's heart will allow.

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In other words, if older women through their life stories construct past experience with an eye to shaping the present and future of younger women, the gendered history set forth in these stories is one in which female hierarchies and affiliations, knowledge and power occupy central stage. The interest of their listeners—their interest in avoiding "suffering"—is presumed to lie in their reproducing precisely this aspect of the world of their foremothers. While this message is obviously intended to enhance the authority of elderly women in the present, it has broader significance for what it suggests about the relationship between gender and historical memory: What is (or should be) constant in women's lives—what, of the past, women must be sure to remember—is respect for the feminine attachments on which their survival and influence are based, given their role as custodians of the life and health of rural society.

As in the naming narratives of chapter 2, women in their life stories show relatively little interest in the sequential chronology of events, preferring instead to tell anecdotal, episodic stories either set in the timeless past of long ago or skipping back and forth across time according to a different (nontemporal) pattern of mnemonic association. Nor do these narratives show much concern with establishing specific geographic locations for recounted experience or even for the proper names of characters whose actions they describe. As the interview transcripts plainly show, I was initially far more intent on establishing the exact *when*, *where*, and *who* of women's life stories than were either the interviewees or Aida and Ruti. In the texts presented in this chapter, it is that type of detail that accounts for the vast majority of bracketed amendments to women's words. Women focused the weight of their narrative attention instead on situating themselves (along with legions of supplementary characters) within kinship networks rooted in their collective experience on the land. My efforts to pin down factual details of time or place typically drew a dismissive response—"Who knows when!" "Who knows where!"

Just as striking as the patterns in what women remember and narrate of their pasts is *how* women understand and "do history" through life-storytelling. Generally unconcerned with dates, Magude's elderly women sort experience according to a temporality that is calibrated in terms of female life-stages, climatic and agricultural seasons, and crises of agrarian survival—famines, floods, illness, natural and supernatural threats to community well-being. Casual and frequently

uncertain about anchoring episodes in their memories to named points on official maps, these women chart their experience in space according to *ka mani* (whose place) provides the setting for remembered events, and they plot their narratives in generic sites such as the *muti* or *kaya* (home), *nsimu* (cultivated field), *combe* (river), *ndlela* (footpath), *khwati* (woods), and in the less public places where the dramas of birth, illness, healing, and death are played out. Indeed, what women stress most consistently in their life stories is not when or where but with whom things have happened, and how the characters in a narrative are related to one another and/or to kinship networks beyond the storyteller's own.

Moreover, the experiential trajectories of the individuals accompanying the teller in any given story seem to matter just as much as what happens to the teller herself. A woman's account of a particular episode in her own life will be interrupted with the appearance of every new character, at which point she will offer a brief narrative of that person's life as well: "Lucia, she married so-and-so. She's the mother of that woman, you know, who married so-and-so. They're living in Motaze now. She's well now, but she was sick last year." The effect of such moves is to make the subject of women's life-storytelling less the heroic, ego-centered achievements of one individual than the collective experiences of a number of women, the affective community through which a particular woman has been able to balance her responsibility for the life and health of the community against the private, often contrary assertions of her heart. A woman's life stories, in other words, are concerned less with "what I have done, what has happened to me," than with how, with whom, and under what circumstances she has successfully sustained "life," as in bodily and emotional well-being—her own but also that of past and present kinfolk, friends, and fellow residents of her *tiko*. It is this theme more than any other that distinguishes and cements women's life-storytelling as a narrative form of historical remembering, one that documents and explains the past in no more (and no less) partial a manner than the written evidence examined in chapter 1.

### The Women

In this chapter, I present a selection of life stories told to me, Aida, and Ruti by Rosalina Malungana, Albertina Tiwana, and Valentina Chauke, three women in Facazisse I was able to get to know especially well. To a great extent these women were self-chosen as interview subjects. Through their regular invitations for us to "visit" (*kupfuxela*) and their storing up of recollections that occurred to them between sessions, they indicated their eagerness to "talk" (*kubula*). Their enthusiasm sprang, I think, from two related sources: their sense of personal solitude, which after the war was greater than any they had experienced before, and their shared concern about the deplorable state of the postwar world, particularly about the lack of respect that young women had for the teachings of their elders. Although of the three only Valentina had biological children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of her own, all were, in keeping with Shangaan kinship rules, considered *mamana* (mother) or *kokwana* (grandmother) by a wide circle of younger women for whose education in correct living they felt partially responsible.

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Yet in all the time I spent with them I can remember barely a handful of occasions when I witnessed or heard of these women sitting down to speak to daughters or granddaughters as they spoke to us, as solemn authorities on the lifeways of the past, "teachers" (in the pointed words of Cufassane Munisse) in the now empty classrooms of the "school of long ago." Perhaps the most telling commentary of all came at the end of our first interview with Valentina, when after I apologized for stealing so much of her time she laughed and said, "Oh! It's not hunger! I'm happy, because today I've grown fat. I've grown fat from talking! When you go home, I'll just sit here, eee [slumps her shoulders, crosses her wrists in her lap]." <sup>12</sup> What made these words especially poignant is that Valentina had spent much of the previous two hours recounting how visiting, talking, and food exchange among girls in her childhood—and between women and *valungu* <sup>13</sup> merchants during the colonial period—had made *maxaka* (relatives) out of strangers and contributed to a "healthy" life. She explained how the refusal of children to listen or give food to their grandmothers was symptomatic of the un-wellness of the postwar present. Visiting, eating, talking, and kinship—Valentina was not alone in implying that these cornerstones of well-being were all, literally or metaphorically, enfolded in women's life-storytelling. Nor was she alone in portraying as a kind of bodily impoverishment a woman's inability to speak her knowledge of the past. As the saying goes, *Xaka ra munhu i nomu* (a person's relative is her mouth), <sup>14</sup> and to live without "mouth" (i.e., talk or speech) is to experience the worst kind of kinless solitude of all.

Yet not all solitary "old women" were equally enthusiastic about being interviewed. Nor were elderly women who were surrounded by kinfolk necessarily less interested in talking to us. The attitude of one of my two closest neighbors, Juliana Kwinika, offers perhaps the best illustration of the circumstances that made a woman more or less likely to feel that her life stories contained knowledge or history that we needed to hear. Homebound by a broken hip that had mended badly the previous year, a retired nurse whose tentative efforts to obtain her pension were easily defeated by an unsympathetic (and bribe-hungry) district bureaucracy, a widowed junior wife whose children were either dead or for various reasons unable to support her, Juliana was without doubt the most isolated and destitute *xikoxana* I knew in all of Magude. I probably spent more time with her than with any other woman. She was the first person I greeted every morning and the last person I spoke with at the end of every day. We suffered through scorching summer afternoons under the same patch of shade. Together we watched the horizon for signs of rain, huddled through thunderstorms, planted corn in the tiny field behind her hut and monitored its daily growth, raging at the schoolchildren, herdboys, and *swintlewana* (polecats) who threatened her meager food supply.

During the countless hours I spent with her, Juliana "taught" me (as she laughingly called it) on every subject from farming to marriage laws to animal behavior, yet when we sat down with a tape recorder, she either giggled or mocked me as I tried to ask her about her life, insisting that she didn't know anything worth telling because "my mother died when I was very small, I didn't see my grandmothers—who could make me know these things?"<sup>15</sup> When it came to life-storytelling, in other words, Juliana was crippled by narrative uncertainty because of the absence, in her experience, of the key relationships within which this form of remembering is customarily practiced. While every woman we interviewed was capable of speaking in an interesting and informative way about her past, Juliana exemplifies how *authoritative* historical knowledge among women is embedded within feminine relational networks to which all women do not have equal (or unchanging) access. In the end, I selected Rosalina, Albertina, and Valentina for this chapter partly because they are "good storytellers," but ultimately because they consented to speak for long enough with my tape recorder switched on that I began to understand both the unique complexities of each woman's life and the many ways in which their experiences resonate with the life stories I heard from other women in Magude.

Just as in chapter 2, where I argued that women's historical identities could not be captured in a single name, the narratives in this chapter are organized in a way that I hope reflects how women used life-storytelling to construct historical notions of a female self not as a fixed, isolated subject who always occupies center stage in remembered events, but rather as a composite personality tied into and constantly moving among a number of intertwined relational networks. Preceding the stories of each woman is a brief introduction in which I explain our relationship and identify some prominent themes in her narrated life. Each woman's stories are presented in roughly chronological order. They begin with tales of grandmothers and mothers, which provide glimpses into the experiences of rural women in the Magude area between circa 1880 and the 1930s. Next are stories about girlhood, a time of life these three women, like all interviewees, recalled with enormous pleasure and energetic detail. A *mutsongwana* (child) becomes a *ntombi* or *nhwanyana* (girl) as soon as her breasts begin to develop, and it is when she is a *ntombi yikulu* (big girl) that she is ready to marry. For women of this generation, marriage typically occurred between the ages of 20 and 25.

Although the girlhood stories of these women cover a relatively small portion of their histories in temporal terms (circa 1910-35), the large amount of time Rosalina, Albertina and Valentina devoted to these stories—and the distinct narrative qualities they displayed—warrants that they be given comparable weight in this chapter. I also present girlhood stories somewhat differently from the others. Instead of combining each woman's many stories about this period of her life, I have clustered the narratives according to the themes that dominated girlhood recollections across the entire group of interviewees: work, schooling, travel, trade, dancing, and courtship. Elderly women represented their girlhood as a timeless era in which, while they may have had to work very hard, they also had endless opportunities to play, fight, learn, and visit. They described these activities and the multiple identities they inscribed in remarkably similar ways from one end of Magude district to another.

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Stories of courtship mark the critical transition out of girlhood into adult (married) life, and so conclude this section. From this point on it is more difficult to separate the stories thematically, for in their recollections of adulthood women's narrative identities narrow and merge, to a

certain extent, around a core self defined by their roles as wife, kinswoman, worker, caregiver and spiritual actor. These stories also convey a sense (largely absent from stories of girlhood) of the passage of time, a much wider and complexly interrelated cast of characters, and a sequencing of episodes, plotted in space and affective community, through which women's life trajectories become both more individualized and more interdependent as they move into old age. In the conclusion, I discuss the overarching themes, narrative meanings, and historical implications of Rosalina's, Albertina's, and Valentina's life stories, in the context of stories we recorded among their peers all over Magude district. My purpose here is to demonstrate that however exceptional or idiosyncratic these three women may appear, their accounts speak from and to a gendered historical consciousness that women of their generation broadly share—a memory of their place in history that is both the product of an indigenous epistemology and a powerful feminine critique of androcentric stories of their past.

**Introduction: Author | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)**

**Notes:**

**Note 1:** Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 218. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Cf. Kamala Visweswaran, "Defining Feminist Ethnography," in *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 21-30. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Interview with Valentina Chauke, 24 February 1996, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** See, for example, Ralph Samuel and Paul Thompson, eds., introduction, *The Myths We Live By* (London: Routledge, 1990). [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** Alexander Freund and Laura Quilici, "Exploring Myths in Women's Narratives: Italian and German Immigrant Women in Vancouver, 1947-1961," *BC Studies* 105-6 (1995): 179. See also Kathryn Anderson, Susan Armitage, Dana Jack, and Judith Wittner, "Beginning Where We Are: Feminist Methodology in Oral History," *The Oral History Review* 15 (1987). For a more penetrating study of the relationship between "mythical" narratives and women's life stories, see Julie Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990). [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** Ruth Behar, critiquing much of the literature on women's life histories, suggests the following: "Even as they occupy the role of central protagonists in their own life history narratives, women tend to be cast as Adamic fragments, part-people and part-societies, with limited and slanted views of their world. Certainly we need to go beyond this view of women's social action as supplementary, as reacting against a male world, rather than as creatively constructing a complete social world." See Ruth Behar, "Rage and Redemption: Reading the Life Story of a Mexican Marketing Woman," *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 1 (1990): 229. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** I am drawing here on *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History*, by Elizabeth Tonkin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2-3. [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** Women used *kuhlupeka* and *kuvaviseka* interchangeably to talk about suffering. But *kuvaviseka* conveys more fully the sense that a person's physical welfare depends on the quality of his or her behavior in society. This Shangaan term comes from the verb *kuvava*, meaning to feel hurt, to be sore or painful in body and/or spirit. *Kuhlupheka*, on the other hand, is of Zulu origin, derived from the root *-hlupha*, meaning worry or trouble. There is a separate word in Zulu (*-hlungu*) to denote physical pain. [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** Much writing on rural women in Africa has portrayed female responsibility for the socialization of children as a key site for the reproduction of oppressive gender ideologies and patriarchal institutions. See, for example, Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (London: J. Currey, 1992). For important exceptions, see Barbara Cooper, *Marriage in Maradi: Gender and Culture in a Hausa Society in Niger, 1900-1989* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1989), and Lila Abu-Lughod, *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). [Back.](#)

**Note 10:** Cf. Alessandro Portelli, "The Time of My Life: Functions of Time in Oral Narrative," in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State

University of New York Press, 1991). [Back.](#)

**Note 11:** For an overview of this literature, see Iris Berger, "'Beasts of Burden' Revisited: Interpretations of Women and Gender in Southern African Societies," in *Paths Toward the Past: African Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina*, ed. Robert W. Harms, Joseph C. Miller, and David S. Newbury (Atlanta: African Studies Association, 1994). [Back.](#)

**Note 12:** Interview with Valentina Chauke, 27 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 13:** The term *mulungu* (plural, *valungu*) technically means a person of European descent. However, people in Magude also used it to refer to all non-Africans with light skin, including South Asian (or Banyan) traders. According to Patrick Harries, these were usually "Portuguese Indians from Goa, Diu, and Damão . . . [who] were generically called 'Banians [the name for the Hindu trading caste],' although [they were] often Muslim or Christian." Banyan merchants played a critical role in the precolonial ivory trade in Mozambique and in the spread of colonial commerce throughout the southern Mozambican countryside. See Patrick Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity: Migrant Laborers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860-1910* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1994), 14 and passim. [Back.](#)

**Note 14:** Henri P. Junod, *The Wisdom of the Tsonga-Shangana People*, 3d ed. (Braamfontein: Sasavona, 1990), 241. [Back.](#)

**Note 15:** Juliana was orphaned as a child and raised by the nuns at the Catholic São Jerónimo Mission in Magude town. [Back.](#)

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1

The gender-neutral term *kokwana* encompasses a wide range of relationships. According to Junod, the "proper essential meaning" of *kokwana* is "first the paternal grandfather and all the ancestors on the father's side" and secondarily "all my [i.e., a man's] mother's male relatives." <sup>1</sup> Among the women I knew in Magude, however, *kokwana* was used to refer to a much wider network of male and female kin, including the birth mothers of their birth parents, their maternal and paternal great-grandmothers, the sisters and co-wives of their birth grandmothers, and their mother's brother's wives (and the sisters of those wives). Yet both in casual conversation and in the more careful speech context of interviews, the label *kokwana* conveyed an additional layer of meaning, a quality of kinship that was not equally shared with all female elders who technically belonged to this category. In this sense, a woman could know dozens of older women as *kokwana*, but only one or two of them—not necessarily the mothers of her birth parents—would be as emotionally important to her as the Western translation *grandmother* suggests. These particular "grandmothers," whether centrally involved in a woman's upbringing or known only through stories told about them by other women, were critical to interviewees' narrated identities and tellings of the past, and memories of grandmothers' experiences were preserved in story as deliberately as were the tellers' own. In many ways, narrativized lives of grandmothers provided a crucial foundational model for both the practice of life-storytelling and a woman's own evolving sense of self. They served as a medium for teaching—and negotiating—the acceptable parameters of feminine experience in both the present and the past.

The stories included in this section, which straddle the late precolonial and early colonial periods (circa 1880s-1910s), are taken from a larger pool of narratives that Rosalina, Albertina, and Valentina told about the *vakokwana* most important to their lives and their life stories. Valentina's recollections of N'waXavela Mazive, the *makwavo* (sister—so called because the two women were the daughters of uterine brothers) of Valentina's father's birth mother, stress the older woman's respectful deference to traditional kinship laws, represented above all by her compliance with the orders of her elders to leave her marriage home and become foster mother for the orphaned children of her "sister's" daughter. As Valentina makes clear in the stories she tells about herself, her own commitment to such laws, redefined through Christian training, is largely responsible for the economic insecurity she has battled throughout her adult life; yet her sense of self-sacrifice, similarly modeled on N'waXavela, is also central to Valentina's conviction that she now deserves respectful treatment in her old age.

In much the same way, Albertina's stories of Fahlaza Dzumbeni highlight her maternal grandmother's integrity, dignity, and self-determination through a series of events we might interpret as oppressive, even humiliating: a premarital pregnancy with a young man in Facazisse's chiefly family, which her parents refused to legitimate by allowing Fahlaza to marry the father-to-be; capture by Chopi soldiers after her marriage to Maguxe Tivane; enslavement and "marriage" to a Chopi man, with whom she had three children; return to Maguxe's homestead after the intervention of her brothers, whose main concern seems to have been to protect the bridewealth they obtained from Maguxe rather than to recover their long-absent sister. Albertina's life as well appears from the outside to be a series of hardships and disappointments, yet like her grandmother she narrates these experiences with her own decisions and actions at the fore. Portraying the landscape of her past as a field crowded with a range of male actors whose selfish demands and abusive behavior she has had to evade at every turn, Albertina, like Fahlaza, stresses her struggles to save herself even as she tacitly acknowledges the role of more powerful individuals in helping her to alleviate her suffering at the hands of a harsh and exploitative world.

In this regard, the stories Rosalina tells of her maternal grandmother, Kondissa Khosa, strike a dramatically different tone. The privileged chief wife of an Nguni warrior, "queen" of an enormous homestead in which she commanded the labor of "more than thirty" co-wives as well as of countless young male slaves, Kondissa emerges in Rosalina's recollections as a singularly influential woman whose sense of authority, entitlement, and specialness her granddaughter has certainly inherited. On the other hand, Rosalina's oft-repeated narrative of her grandfather's struggle to keep his many wives sexually satisfied and of the women's competitive efforts to

monopolize his sexual attention prefigure her own decision as a young woman, Christian-educated but with one foot firmly planted in tradition, that she would never share a husband, preferring the economic risks of single status to the dangerous jealousies of polygynous marriage.

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** See Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (London: Macmillan, 1927), 1:219 ff., appendix 4. For another detailed and similarly androcentric explanation of Tsonga kinship, see A. A. Jaques, "Terms of Kinship and Corresponding Patterns of Behaviour among the Thonga," *Bantu Studies* 3 (1929): 327-48. [Back.](#)

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1

If narratives of grandmothers' lives serve as models for stories women tell about themselves, narratives of "mothers" (singular, *mamana*; colloquial, *make*) function in even more explicit ways as historical justification for women's actions. Strictly speaking, for a woman the category of *mamana* embraces not only birth mother but birth mother's sisters, birth mother's co-wives (and their sisters), wives of father's brothers, daughters of mother's brothers, and so on. It does not include father's sisters (singular, *hahane*), a position that in the kinship hierarchy commands much greater authority and respect than does *mamana*. <sup>1</sup> Here, however, the tragic story Valentina tells of her *hahane*, N'waMbokhoda Chauke, is presented as a "mother story" because in Valentina's memory this surrogate mother figure, who was given Valentina's infant sister to raise after the sudden death of their birth mother, is held responsible for the worst maternal crime of all: letting a baby die while in her custody.

Orphaned as a child, Valentina has passionate, sometimes angry convictions about what a proper mother is supposed to be, and her emphasis on N'waMbokhoda's selfishness—her aunt, Valentina claims, resented her baby sister, because she was preventing N'waMbokhoda from returning to Hlengwini after colonial conquest ended the fighting there—stands in marked contrast to both the personal sacrifices of Valentina's adoptive mother, N'waXavela, and Valentina's own (in her eyes) stoic suffering through the rebellious youth of her eldest daughter. This story also illustrates how the Christian discourses surrounding Valentina since childhood—when her guardian-uncle, Jakovo Chauke, was a *muvangeli* (evangelist) for the Swiss in Makuvulane—have suffused her understanding of traditional kin obligations. N'waMbokhoda fails as mother because she is a *satana* (devil) who cannot "know children" and whose "soul" contains the poison of *vuloyi* (witchcraft), which Valentina claims N'waMbokhoda inherited from her own equally nefarious mother.

Albertina and Rosalina recall their birth mothers, Machun'wasse Khosa and Anina Tivane, in a much more positive light, although there are tensions and open conflicts (even violence) in these stories as well. Both women were widowed at an early age, and most often the stories their daughters tell about them focus on their mothers' sexual or conjugal fortunes in the wake of this unhappy event. Machun'wasse, every bit Fahlaza's daughter, defies leviratic remarriage until the angry son-in-law who seeks to "inherit" her, and who works for the Portuguese district military commander, has her locked up in the Magude jail. Anina, as proud and imperious as her mother Kondissa, reluctantly follows the recommendation of her brother-in-law, one of the Swiss Mission's earliest ordained African ministers, that she enter another sexual relationship to rid her and her children of *ndzhaka*, the pollution that she carries from the death of her husband and that can be cleansed only through ritual intercourse.

Both episodes have a lasting significance for the daughters, in Albertina's case because her mother's subsequent remarriage to another "convict" leads to the transfer of Albertina and her sister to the care of their maternal grandmother, and in Rosalina's case because her mother's boldly independent behavior causes trouble for her *mufundhisi* brother-in-law, setting a narrative precedent for the antagonism that will mark Rosalina's relationship with her uncle Dane later on. In Rosalina's story of her maternal uncle's wife Tavassee Ubisse, the mortal consequences of sexual betrayal are set more starkly against social tensions generated by colonial rule. A woman who has an extramarital relationship with the Portuguese-appointed *régulo* (chief), cheating on a husband who has been crippled by witchcraft as a result of getting rich through trade with Europeans—this story can only lead to disaster, although Rosalina ends it on a moral high note, contrasting Tavassee's transgression with Anina's virtuous devotion to her "only true brother."

5

A more subtle but equally important feature of the stories of all three women, whether the events they describe are comic or tragic, is the prominence of "offstage" social spaces as the settings for pivotal encounters: the convicts' field where Machun'wasse meets the man who enables her to avoid marriage to her brother-in-law, the drinking parties where Anina ridicules the jealousies of co-wives, the footpaths where Anina wrestles her lover Musoni to the ground and Tavassee is caught sneaking off to the chief's homestead with an illicit pot of beer. Such details

are significant in narratives that seem so centrally about women's efforts to subvert masculine authority within the context of colonial rule, and the effectiveness of these offstage strategies is perhaps best summed up in Dane Malungana's exasperated response to the aggrieved Musoni: "I can't tell my sister-in-law not to go . . . and play with other women!"

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** Many interviewees spent a portion of their girlhood living in a *hahane*'s household, considered a *hahane* a major role model, and/or maintained close ties with a *hahane* throughout their adult life. [Back](#).

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1

In tales of grandmothers, women's narrated lives are cast principally in terms of their embeddedness in extensive networks of consanguineal and affinal kin: as mothers and daughters, aunts and nieces, sisters and sisters-in-law, wives and co-wives. In tales of mothers, women's relational landscapes are expanded to include a key category of nonrelatives identified by the possessive adjective *kulorhi* / *kuloni* / *kuloby* (my fellow / your fellow / his/her fellow). This relation is defined by shared social age (i.e., membership in the same *ntangha* [age group]) and residence or interaction in a common geographic place. In women's stories of their girlhood, bonds of female fellowship assume center stage. As the stories in this section illustrate, *vuntombi* (girlhood), which officially begins with the onset of puberty and lasts until a *ntombi* or *nhwanyana* (girl) becomes a *nsati* (wife), is a critical phase of a woman's remembered life, oriented above all to training and preparing her for marriage. When elderly women in Magude recalled this chapter of their pasts (1910s-40s), they stressed the enormous pressure on girls to modify their bodies to conform to male standards of sexual attractiveness, particularly through the elongation of their *mitsingi* (labia), to discipline their "hands" and "hearts" to labor at home and in the fields, and to learn the laws of proper womanly behavior, whether from their female elders or in *xilungu* churches and schools.

What girls made of these normative expectations—how they understood and acted on them, the meanings they committed to memory—is just as important to the unfolding of their life story as are the expectations themselves. Memories of "pulling *mitsingi*," for instance, highlight girls' diligence, secrecy, rivalry and the actual hand-to-hand combat they waged to establish a ranking of *ntamu* or *matimba* (strength) and *xichavo* (respect) among the "sisterhood" of fellow girls, a competitive but collaborative hierarchy such as they would need to manage the labor burdens of womanhood in later years. Yet the vocabulary of these exuberant stories, striking for its Zulu content and masculine (even military) overtones, suggests that girls' *mitsingi* battles were as much about challenging gender norms as about making girls into proper women—a vigorously physical demonstration that femininity was neither passive, subservient, nor weak and that womanhood was forged by women, not imposed on them by husbands' desires.

Essential to narrative constructions of girlhood in general, *mitsingi* "fighting stories" are important to women's life-storytelling in another way. More explicitly than any other, these stories serve as a foundational narrative for women's collective past, and establish a paradigmatic baseline for measuring social change during women's lifetime. As Valentina declares, "We understood each other through these things," "We lived by these things"—not simply the act of "pulling *mitsingi*" but the *risima* (value), respect, fellowship, and secret feminine knowledge surrounding the practice. It was the absence of precisely "these things" that elderly women were citing in 1995-96 to prove the deteriorated and "confused" (because not respectful) condition of that postwar moment. Indeed, without their *mitsingi* tales it is difficult to appreciate the rich historical commentary implicit in the other stories they tell.

I open this section with fighting stories, then, because other narratives of girlhood—stories of work, schooling, travel, trade, dancing, and courtship—all somehow stem from, and are shaped by, a gendered sense of self that is linked back in time to the ways of female ancestors and contemporaneously to a code of conduct among fellow girls that is first enacted when they "pull *mitsingi*" together in hidden corners of the *khwatini* or *nhoveni* (bush). When we start from *mitsingi* stories, it is easier to understand the interpretive frame through which women view their girlhood encounters with Christianity and colonial schooling, which are seen as a source of new laws of behavior that supplement rather than replace the rules taught by mothers and grandmothers. Memories of the serious yet essentially playful "fighting" of their youth also provide a poignant contrast for the stories women tell of their adult lives, when the heavy responsibilities of marriage and motherhood are made more painful by the violence—emotional and physical, private and public—accompanying male labor migrancy, colonial rule, and the warfare that preceded and followed Mozambique's independence.

Another paradigmatic lesson of the fighting stories, as relevant in girlhood as in old age, is that the intimate, embodied fellowship forged through girls' *mitsingi* battles teaches a notion of female kinship as something women must actively earn and create rather than a network of relatives handed to them at birth and automatically enlarged with marriage. Other kinds of girlhood stories dramatize the implications of this lesson more overtly, especially those in which Swiss missionaries, Banyan shopkeepers, Portuguese settlers and officials, or *mulungu* "husbands" and "in-laws" play a significant part. As in Valentina's memories of mission schooling, Albertina's tales of trade, and Rosalina's extraordinary story of her courtship by Agosto Capela and a parade of other *mestiço* and *mulungu* men, the narrative incorporation of nonindigenous actors into women's memories of everyday experience, including experience of the most private kind, stakes a bold female claim to agency in colonial society at the same time as it challenges the strict conventions of patrilineal kinship.

As always, it is dangerous for women to push these contests too far. Rosalina, for example, is not oblivious to the irony of her insistence that it is principally "long *mitsingi*" that enable a woman to hold onto a man of any "race." Defying her Christian uncle's wrath when he discovers her, along with his daughter and other nieces, indulging in this "heathen" pursuit is how Rosalina recalls liberating herself, with emotional fireworks and plenty of tears, from his oppressive control. But if it is her sexual attractiveness, forged in such self-consciously traditional terms, that brings Rosalina the attention of European men, it is also her sexual precociousness that ruptures her connection to many traditional sources of kin support and propels her into a life dominated by serial common-law unions, tensions with other women, and the unending pressures of economic solitude that impoverished her in the postwar years.

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## Lives of Women

1

In this final section, women's narratives of adulthood take us from the 1920s to the early 1970s. Although some interviewees (including Valentina and Rosalina) offered forceful opinions about Frelimo, independence, and the Renamo war, for the most part women's memories of the more recent past seemed too painful or fragmentary for me to prod them to speak about it at any length. These were also, of course, sensitive subjects as far as my own position in Magde was concerned, and because it was important that women not see me as attached to the government it seemed best not to impose questions about politics when women themselves did not raise political issues. Even when women did begin to discuss political matters more openly in my presence, most still became visibly uncomfortable, or dropped their voice to a whisper, if I pursued the topic with the tape recorder switched on.

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Others, less fearful, laughed at my presumption that they would know anything about this masculine realm to begin with, or they would shrug off inquiries about their political opinions with answers like Albertina's: "Oh, Renamo, they killed people. Frelimo, they killed people. We didn't know what the fighting was about." <sup>1</sup> More often, I witnessed men and women sitting together, gingerly (under the cover of darkness and around a pot of beer) drawing forth war stories from one another as they struggled to balance their belief that it was better to forget traumatic experiences ("So we can live together, and not always be thinking, 'He did this and this to me'") with the need to mend hearts, cool spirits, and purge the bitterness of loss. Memories of this awful time were still somewhat inchoate, still being cautiously and collaboratively worked out. In this sense, they were qualitatively unlike narratives of the pre-independence period. Women spoke about that earlier time in a way that made it clear they had articulated these memories many times before and had achieved a degree of closure with respect to their meaning.

I would argue that there is an additional reason for the reticence that elderly women exhibited on the subject of postindependence politics. Like their mothers and grandmothers before them, interviewees were extremely reluctant to grant the state, colonial or postcolonial, a role in their narrated life. The three women featured here all acknowledged various kinds of encounters with manifestations of official colonial power: Valentina through the villainous brother-in-law she blames for her husband's untimely death, whose envy of his brother's missionary and bureaucratic connections she claims drove him to murder her husband with witchcraft and then force his "animal" attentions on her; Albertina in the form of a woman friend's admonition that, if she tried to complete her overland journey to South Africa she would be apprehended by Portuguese authorities, "locked up in jail," and assigned to forced labor because she did not have a husband; and Rosalina (most intimately of all) through employment in a colonial hospital, as a vendor in the central market in Lourenço Marques, and in a string of ambiguously defined relationships with Portuguese men whose position in colonial society ranged from truck driver to radio announcer to "chief of public works" in Chibuto town.

Yet even Rosalina recalls her adult experiences as though she lived them, for the most part, in blithe ignorance of colonial government structures and legal controls, and she situates her most carefully tended memories in places (homes, yards, shops, fields) where the state was unlikely or unable to go. Like Valentina and Albertina, she throws her narrative spotlight on the domains of feminine community and authority that occupy the foreground in earlier categories of women's life stories: farming, mothering, domestic life, sexuality, spiritualism, care of the sick and the dead. If the physical landscapes of tales of womanhood seem more narrow than those of girlhood (the protagonists in these stories rarely venture to the woods, dance grounds, or "other lands" unless wifely or maternal duty obliges them to), and if the multifaceted identities of youth seem to have been replaced by a persona who has time for little besides work and familial concerns, it is also true that the affective networks women remember from adult life are substantially broader, more creative, and more emotionally complex than ever before. Implicated through marriage, work, the cash economy, worship, and other adult activities in an array of female-centered communities beyond their natal lineage, women's life stories by this point are crowded with "kin" of various kinds—even when they are biologically childless, like Rosalina and Albertina.

The greater depth of these communities does not, unfortunately, mean that women's adult lives are better cushioned against hardship or conflict. Indeed, the narratives in this section are laced with memories of bodily suffering and emotional pain, often the cumulative result of tensions that have informed their histories (and those of their foremothers) for as long as they can remember. Valentina's struggle to reconcile her traditional inheritance with Christianity's claims to moral and class superiority, Albertina's struggle to overcome *vusiwana* (poverty, solitude) without sacrificing her self-respect, Rosalina's struggle to defend her racially conflicted privilege whatever the social compromise or cost—these are life-defining tensions that mount for each woman until a crisis (or a series of crises) requires her to take decisive, sometimes radical action.

Sometimes even the most thoughtfully considered response can have unexpected, contradictory consequences, as all three women discover at least once in the course of their respective battles. *Kukarhata* (to be difficult), a term that appears frequently throughout the following stories, is what women are called, or what they call themselves, when they assert the desires of an independent heart against the social troubles that threaten them. A term with both flattering and pejorative connotations (to be "difficult" is to be brave and strong but also to be tiresome, refractory, and bothersome to others), *kukarhata* captures the ambivalent meanings of female agency in rural society before, during, and since colonial rule. In this regard, the retelling of stories by and about "difficult" women is a powerful historical statement in itself, a claim of feminine continuity and community over time—a claim that remains stubbornly indifferent to the details of masculine authority, indigenous or foreign.

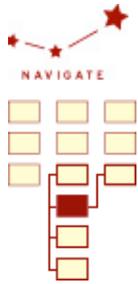
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#### **Notes:**

**Note 1:** Interview with Albertina Tiwana, 23 February 1996, Facazisse. The vast majority of interviewees, already in their fifties (at least) by the time Frelimo took power in 1975, had little to say (and even less that was positive) about the sweeping socialist reforms introduced after independence, even those directly aimed at "improving women's status." Many elderly women seemed to think well of "Samora" (Mozambique's first president, Samora Machel), but ill-fated Frelimo experiments with producer and consumer cooperatives and state farms and even the appointment of rural women to serve as local representatives of the OMM (Organization of Mozambican Women) were recalled with deep cynicism and, often, resentment, because they were accompanied by official attacks on the traditional practices that were still the pillars of women's identities and communities in the countryside. [Back.](#)

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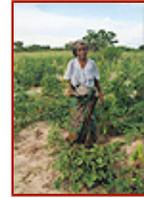
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## Rosalina Malungana

1

Rosalina Malungana was my other close neighbor in Facazisse. Like Juliana Kwinika, she devoted generous amounts of her time to my education in local culture, language, and history. Unlike Juliana, however, Rosalina was firmly convinced of the value of her knowledge of the past, and in our first few weeks together she missed no opportunity to remind me that she had fascinating stories to tell—when, that is, she could fit storytelling into her busy schedule. Awake every morning before dawn to kindle a fire for what she called, in Portuguese, her "breakfast" (a routine that on its own marked her as a person with an educated, urban past), Rosalina would, after eating, set off immediately down the path to her fields, teetering under the weight of the hoe slung over one shoulder. She never returned



home until dusk, long after women half her age had left off farming for the day; and she rarely arrived without an additional burden of some kind: firewood, manioc dug from the soil of her late mother's homestead, an interesting insect to show her new *mulungu* neighbor. As Rosalina and I were getting to know each other, there were three observations she was fond of repeating about me: first, that I reminded her of Miss Randin, her favorite teacher at the Swiss Mission girls' school in Lourenço Marques, which she attended from 1928 to 1932; second, that my mother must have "beaten" me a lot when I was young, since (like Rosalina) I was "not afraid of hard work"; and third, that John's quiet disposition reminded her of her own late "husband," a Portuguese truck driver named Agosto Capela.

Rosalina's comments were overtures to me, but they also revealed the principal motifs of a life she was determined to narrate, for reasons I initially attributed to her discomfort with her postwar status as a ward of the Antioka church. Alongside these nostalgic stories, though, Rosalina expressed a more embittered set of memories, beginning literally in our first conversation. These memories centered on the failure of her late brother's wife, another Facazisse resident, to ensure that her five grown children lent support to their childless aunt in her old age, a duty that should have been rendered in recognition of all that Rosalina had done to help with their upbringing during her years as a market woman in the colonial capital, Lourenço Marques. "I am all alone in the world," Rosalina repeatedly told me during our first weeks as neighbors. "Only God helps me now"—God and her faith in a lesson she had learned from her mother: that a woman's only guarantee against suffering was to "seize" her hoe, her one independent means of survival. Wanting, that is, to depict herself as someone whose experiences paralleled what she imagined of mine (education, a correct upbringing, marriage to a good man), Rosalina also felt compelled to explain why—through no failing of her own—her life had not turned out as she had intended.

Rosalina was born in 1914 into a prominent Swiss Mission-connected family in rural Guijá. One of the very few older women I met who knew and made a point of remembering the year of her birth, Rosalina in her life stories stressed her unique relationship to history in a variety of ways, many of them contradictory. She took just as much pleasure in recounting the exploits of her maternal grandfather, one of "Ngungunyana's heroes," as in reminiscing about her earliest interactions with Portuguese colonial society. She spoke proudly of her paternal family's long association with Swiss missionaries but narrated in animated detail the strategies she used to defy the strict Christian discipline of her uncle, Dane Malungana, a *mufundhisi* (pastor) for the Swiss Mission in whose household she lived after her father's death in 1920. Even her defiance took apparently contradictory forms. She secretly performed the female adolescent rite of *kukoka mitsingi* (to pull [i.e., stretch, elongate] the labia majora), which her non-Christian mother and aunts insisted she undergo, despite the risk of a beating from her uncle, but she also accepted the romantic overtures of Portuguese and *mestiço* men during her years as a student in Lourenço Marques.

It was during this time that Rosalina met Agosto, with whom she had her first and most serious intimate relationship. Neither colonial law nor her uncle would permit the couple to marry formally. Rosalina described Agosto as her only *nuna* (husband), recalling him as an ideal mate for reasons that drew on both Christian and Shangaan cultural norms: He was an "Adam" to her "Eve," because he was kind and never beat her, and he was a model *mukon'wana* (son-in-law)

because he always visited and helped Rosalina's maternal kin. After Agosto's sudden death from illness in 1940, Rosalina followed her mother's advice (and example) by refusing to commit herself permanently to another man, who might not treat her as well as her first husband. Unlike her mother, though, she did periodically enter other relationships—all of them with Portuguese men— because, she recalls, they helped her to obtain housing, nice clothing, an urban network of family and friends, and the latitude to pursue economic activities of her choice. These relationships also enabled her to forge a rather eclectic repertoire of spiritual resources combining Christianity, divination, spirit mediumship, dream interpretation, and a Portuguese dice-throwing game called *Napoleon Bonaparte*. <sup>1</sup>

5

Despite these apparent contradictions, the cast of selves presented in Rosalina's life stories fit seamlessly and unproblematically together. As Rosalina told me more and more about her life, her initial lament about being "alone in the world" was gradually eclipsed by a quite different refrain: that she had always done exactly "what [her] heart wanted" and that, all in all, she had led a relatively "lucky" life. Indeed, as Rosalina's neighbor I was able to witness the complex web of relational networks in which she was embedded. Rarely "alone" at all, she had a steady stream of visitors arriving at her doorstep—relatives who stopped by simply to pay their respects and women of all ages from Facazisse and the surrounding area who were engaged in (or sought) an arrangement of mutual assistance with her, usually justified in terms of some kind of real or fictive kinship. A single mother who helped Rosalina on her fields in exchange for a portion of the crop, for instance, was the granddaughter of the sister of the wife of Rosalina's uncle Dane's son. Another young girl who lived with Rosalina for a while, chipping in where she could with domestic and farm work, was a great-granddaughter of a brother of Rosalina's mother. Rosalina also did a fair amount of visiting herself when she could scrape up money for transport, riding by train or truck to Chokwe, Chibuto, and Maputo to spend time, and revive connections, with far-flung members of her extended family, including people she knew from her years living on the racially mixed margins of colonial towns.



Yet for all Rosalina's skill at juggling these dispersed pockets of kinfolk, it was evident when I knew her that her life choices had come at a certain cost. She had to struggle harder than other women her age to maintain support networks in Facazisse, where she moved in the early 1970s to look after her ailing mother. And her status as childless and never officially married encouraged some of her neighbors to refer to her as a *gelegele* (prostitute) or a *noyi* (witch), most predictably when her diligence with her hoe paid off in abundant harvests. In some ways, the fact that Rosalina and I were so often seen together, and that I spent more time interviewing her than anyone else, only fuelled the resentment of detractors whose criticism focused on her *xilungu* pretensions. Rosalina responded to this grumbling by becoming more determined than ever that she would be the one to tell me the truth about her life, "because there are people here who might tell you lies about me, and if you want to know the truth you must hear it from my mouth." <sup>2</sup> As these words suggest, life-storytelling was a practice Rosalina self-consciously engaged in, not solely with me but with anyone who might challenge her authority to define the meaning of her past.

**Introduction:** [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

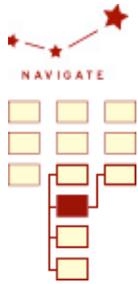
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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** Rosalina's account of her experiences with interracial relationships are discussed in Heidi Gengenbach, "'What My Heart Wanted': Gendered Stories of Early Colonial Encounters in Southern Mozambique," in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, ed. Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musingi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 22 October 1995, Facazisse. For a deeply self-reflexive study of a similarly motivated life-history subject in Mexico, see Ruth Behar, *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993). [Back.](#)

[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique](#)



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## Lives of Grandmothers (Rosalina Malungana) Kondissa Khosa

10 May 1995, Facazisse

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother ★

Mothers

Lives of girls

fighting story

work story

schooling story

travel story

courting story

Rosalina

(lives of women)

R: My mother's father, ah, since he was one of Ngungunyana's robbers, he had many wives. Eee! [laughs] Mmm. Even those who came running from Beira, up there. Now, when he went out there with Ngungunyana, they were traveling around, snatching up lands and lands—they had many wives. Because they say that my grandfather, the father of my mother, he didn't kill women. No. He just grabbed them, to go home with him. Some pretty ones, to be his wives. [laughs]

H: What was this grandfather's name?

R: He is N'waXumana, Tivane. He was one of Ngungunyana's heroes. . . .

H: Do you know how many wives your grandfather had?

R: Eee! Mm-mm. He had more than thirty, that one.

H: More than thirty?!

R: Eee! He did. The wives that came with him, yee! Kondissa, she was the first wife. And there was N'waMbalana, there was N'waMuyeketi, there was Dlandlaza, there was Dzimakaze. But each of them had to go home to fetch a *nhlantswa* [younger sister]. And these *tinhlantswa* weren't just taken, no. N'waXumana gave *lovolo* [bridewealth] for them, usually eight head of cattle [for each]. I even remember another wife of N'waXumana—Nyankalane. Mmm. And that one had two *tinhlantswa*. Mmm. They were VaChopi, from Inharrime, over there. . . . Because when, when he has here one wife ... that wife had to go fetch two more of her sisters, there at her house. To give to her husband. These are *tinhlantswa*. *Nhlantswa* is, the second or third wife from the same house. Taken by the first wife. Mmm. . . . It's obligatory, to do that. Whether she wants it or not, but when there are some pretty ones, ah! Heidi, imagine, [your husband says] "Why don't you go home and fetch a *nhlantswa* for me?" And so one day, I'm speaking with my father, and I say, "Eh, my husband wants a *nhlantswa*." "Ah, okay. Call your sisters. Look here, your sister says that her husband wants a *nhlantswa*. Now you, and you," or maybe one of them he wants. You take her to your husband. Mmm. That's why my grandfather had many children, eee! But later, when he died, who could have put up with that? Each one, each wife, had to go back to her home, with her children, and build houses to live there, with her sisters. Each one had to do that. She took her daughters and went to live with them, even there in Zavala, there in Muchopes, they have there the children of N'waXumana. . . .

The mother of my mother, who is my grandmother, she was the *nkosikazi* [chief wife] of my grandfather. She was Kondissa, Kondissa Khosa. Eh-heh. [laughs] Mmm. She was Kondissa Khosa. <sup>1</sup> And those wives, they worked for my grandmother. Her field, she didn't work it. They had to go [cultivate for her], because the *nkosikazi* was very respected, here at home. She was a queen! . . . But each wife, with her children, had to make her own house there, and her own granary for corn. . . . And there, in the yard, it was huge. [Kondissa] had a huge house, divided into many rooms inside. Mmm. And where she lived all alone. And she had there a room for bathing, where one of the wives, any one, would be called by my grandmother, to go pour water there, for her husband to take a bath. Ordered by my grandmother. . . . Meanwhile there in the yard, it is full of people, Heidi! Who came to drink *byala* [maize beer].

There was always *byala* there, for people in the area to come and drink, there

in Mazimhlopes. . . . But Kondissa Khosa, she wasn't of Ngungunyana's race, no. She was born there in Mazimhlopes. . . . And yet my grandmother wasn't . . . one of those who were grabbed in the war, no. Even, they even say that my grandfather, he was already very old when he courted my grandmother. Mmm. He saw here a pretty girl, he said, "I want that girl, because she is beautiful, I want her for myself." He said that to her family, her parents. [laughs] And since he already had lots of cattle, it wasn't difficult for him to give what her parents wanted. *Lovolo*. And later, he brought other wives home. . . . My mother used to say, "Hee! In my father's house we had everything! Meat, milk, everything. And he commanded slaves, those he brought home with him."

- H: N'waXumana also brought slaves home?
- R: Mmm. From the places where he apprehended them. Even, my mother, she even knew how to speak the language of Beira.
- H: How is that?
- R: Because she, there were other wives there from Beira, that they brought in the time of the war, in the time of Ngungunyana. Ho! They went to Beira, Sena. . . . And [N'waXumana] also had two women from Beira. My grandfather.
- H: And they taught your mother their language?
- R: Eee. They spoke there, with her. And they went around learning the language of here, and also when they were playing, they taught their own language.

### 3 June 1995, Facazisse

- R: Even, my grandfather, he used to use—have you never seen in photographs, from the time of Ngungunyana, they used this black thing, that they put on their head?
- H: The men, you mean?
- R: Mmm. It was like this [demonstrates coiling head-ring around head] And then, above it they put feathers, like chicken feathers, but those feathers came from the Tlulu-tlulu bird [Lourie], which had red wings, but beautiful! They even shone! . . . The women, they used to anoint their hair with red ochre, you know. They raised their hair up high, to show that they are, they are the wives of great people. Eeh. It's to show that they are the wives of the chief. It wasn't all the women. It was the wives of that, that chief, those heroes. Kondissa did it too. She had hair like that. And then, she had a cord, very fine, that she rolled thus, around her hair, there up above. Mmm. Then they put, with that red powder, here, in her hair. Mmm. They say it was beautiful. 2

### 25 June 1995, Facazisse

- R: They even say that my grandfather always had to drink that medicine [*murhi*] I was telling you about. 3 Mmm. Those wives, they had to keep their pots filled with that stuff, so that he would sleep here, in this hut, with that wife. And the whole *muti* [homestead] knew that, this week, he's sleeping in the hut of Kondissa, or he's sleeping in the hut of Dzimakaze, or wherever. Yah. But, here where he spends a whole week, in this hut, when he finishes this time, he has to leave. To go to [another] hut. One week. . . . Mmm. That's so that there will be no jealousy. But they say that there was one night, when he went around there, fulfilling his desires, with all his wives, because of that *murhi*. It gave strength, strength, strength, to go around with all of those wives! But when he woke up in the morning, he's here, because everyone knows that he sleeps here, this week. But at night, he went out there, knocking on the door to attend to that one. A little later, he opens the door, he goes over there. Later when he sees that the dawn is already breaking, he comes to knock on the door [of the hut where he should be sleeping]. But when he left here, he left after he had already done what he should do with that wife! Mmm. So there would be no jealousy, [with that wife saying] "With me, he did nothing!"

Lives of Grandmothers: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

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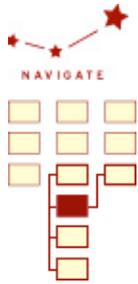
**Notes:**

**Note 1:** Rosalina later recalled that Kondissa also "went home to fetch a *nhlantswa*"—in this case, Kondissana, one of her brother's daughters (and her namesake). [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Liesegang notes that this royal women's hairstyle "reflected Nguni culture" and was called *xifoko* in Shangaan. Kondissa, married to an Nguni warrior, was not Nguni herself, and her adoption of the hairstyle may have been a conscious strategy to pass as Nguni, or it may have been a method of adornment she was more or less required to adopt because of her marital status. See Gerhard Liesegang, "Notes on the Internal Structure of the Gaza Kingdom of Southern Mozambique, 1840-1895," in *Before and After Shaka: Papers in Nguni History*, ed. J. B. Peires (Grahamstown: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 1981), 185. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Rosalina had just told a long story about men's use of *guxe*, a plant, to increase their sexual potency. [Back.](#)

[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique](#)



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Lives of Mothers: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Mothers (Rosalina Malungana) Anina (N'waXumana) Tivane

26 December 1995, Facazisse

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers ★

Lives of girls

fighting story

work story

schooling story

travel story

courting story

Rosalina

(lives of women)

- H: So if your father was always working as a policeman in South Africa, what was that like for your mother, wasn't it hard for her?
- R: Eh, no. Women long ago, they were really faithful <sup>1</sup> to their husbands. They just stayed like that, they could go many years, without running to look for another man. Eeh! No. You had to stay like that, with that one who is your husband. If he dies, well then, you can arrange another husband, to stay in the place of the one who died. Mmm. But ah! For my mother, it was very difficult. To arrange another man? Eeh! No way.
- H: She didn't want anyone else?
- R: No. Even, even that Dane [R's father's brother, Dane Malungana], he called her, along with the other women, [whose husband was] the minister's brother who died, Kuswane. Mmm. He called my mother, he called Muhlvasse, he called Ntongasse, to say this. <sup>2</sup> "Well. You, Ntongasse, you are already a woman of age. I don't know what you're thinking in your head, because what I want to say now, I say because my sister-in-law [Anina] is still very young. She might want to arrange a man, [and] be afraid of me. I, no. Because I can't manage to take you [to be my wives]. I am a *mufundhisi* [minister]. <sup>3</sup> I have my wife, I have my work. But if someone there outside, who is trying for you, so you can satisfy your body with him, he shouldn't be afraid, to come speak with me. To say, 'Look, I desire your sister-in-law, I would like to be able to play with her, to help her in some small way.' If someone wants that, you can tell me." And then, that *mamana* [mother], Ntongasse, who was the first here of the house, [the first] daughter-in-law of my grandmother, she said, "Eh, if it were me, no. You see that I'm already a woman of age. I don't want any man. It's enough that your brother died, he left me, right then I said, 'Ah, I don't want to be bothered with another man.'" Mmm. And that Muhlvasse too, she said the same thing. And then he said, to my mother, "And you?" She says this. "Me, I don't want a man. Mm-mm, I don't want one. It's enough that my husband left me with two children"—because one girl died, the one who came after me. "I will endure this. For me to go around, catch problems from others, no. I don't want it." And then, he said this. "But you should try to find yourself one, who can cleanse *tindzhaka* [pollution from death] for you. You can't remain with the *tindzhaka* of my brother, when they say that it's prohibited to remain with *tindzhaka* when you have two children. And you too, must get rid of this *tindzhaka*. It's not good, this way. You being very young, you can get rid of it, arrange a man to get rid of the *tindzhaka*." And then my mother said, "Ah, all right. I'll still think about it. It's enough that you've said this to me, because I'm young—I'll think about it. I know that there are many [men] who want me!" Because there were many men, eh! Even some of them [laughs]—since my mother sometimes went to drink *vukanyi* [liquor made from *nkanyi* fruit] and got a little drunk! Ah, the men came, saying "Hah! Heh! That one, since she's drunk, today! I'll see if she leaves here for home, I'll grab her, in the path! I'll do what I want with her!"

And then, there was one, his name was Musoni, Musoni Nhlongo. Handsome, that man! He had two wives. He was always going after my mother, always running after my mother. And later, when my uncle said that, she said, "All right. I can accept him, so he can get rid of my *tindzhaka*. But it's not so that later I'll continue with him! He can only cleanse me of *tindzhaka*, that's all." And then, she went to tell my uncle, that Dane. "In the Nhlongo family, there

is one who wants me, called Musoni." He said, "Yes. That Musoni, he already came to talk with me. To ask if he could go after my sister-in-law, because 'I like her very much. She's pretty.' I said, 'Ah! That, I don't know. It's up to you and to her. If she accepts, yes, you can continue with her.'" Then he went to tell my mother, "Ah, I've already spoken with Dane, on your behalf. To say that, I like you very much. And also, you won't remain with *tindzhaka*, while there is someone who wants you. But why don't you want men? You're always rejecting them, many men who want you, and you don't want them." She said, "Look. I didn't want to be bothered, because my husband, he really loved me. Now I'm going to arrange another man who could be a bandit? To beat me, to treat me badly, while my husband never treated me badly?" He said, "Ah! But me, I can't do that." "All right." My mother accepted him, to cleanse her of *tindzhaka*.

There, they did what they did, and later, my mother went to tell my uncle. "Look, yesterday, Musoni came, I accepted him, what he came to ask for, I accepted him, so he would get rid of my *tindzhaka*. He's gotten rid of my *tindzhaka*." "Ah, all right. If now you're clean, of *tindzhaka*—but the children of my brother, that's what I want, because you are still very young. You can't remain with the *tindzhaka* of my brother." Well. From there, they began to go on. We always went to sleep in the hut of our aunt, Ntongasse, the wife of the first son of our grandmother, so that my mother, with that Musoni, could do what they wanted, inside her hut. In the morning, he went home, sometimes he came here, and so on. Well. [R gathers her breath] Later, there at his house, there was noise with his wives! Because they were no longer seeing much of their husband! Because of my mother. He was always there, at the home of my mother, always coming here to sleep. And they too wanted him, you know! But they were never finding their husband, because of my mother. It was jealousy! He was always sleeping at my mother's house. Only sometimes he went home to eat, to take a bath in the river or whatever, or sometimes he ate at my mother's house. She made food, and put it there for him to eat. [R raises her voice] And already that man, he was already—what? He was crazy, because he liked my mother very, very much! But there at his home, there was trouble. And later, when my mother heard that those wives of Musoni, that there was noise with their husband because of her, one day she said, "Eh, Musoni. You [R smacks her hands together], disappear from here, from my house! You can stay there at your house, with your wives. Because, I'm already hearing my name, that people are speaking my name. Many people are coming to tell me—that 'Boy! There is jealousy. They're jealous, the wives of Musoni, because of you, because they say that they're no longer seeing their husband because of you. He's always at your house, and sleeps there, and everything.'" And then she said, "It's better if you stay there at your house." And Musoni said, "Look. You accepted me, because I liked you a lot, and you too, you liked me. Those women who are at home, they don't rule my life! And I already told them that now, I'm going to cleanse the *tindzhaka* of N'waXumana. And they accepted. If they accepted, well? Also, I'm going there to satisfy their needs." And my mother said, "That's fine. You can still come here. But some days you have to stay at home. To satisfy your wives. So they're not always speaking badly of me, of my name. That I'm going around snatching their husband. And that they no longer have a husband, because of N'waXumana." Ah! There was always noise.

Then, one day, they were out drinking *vukanyi*. And my mother was already, well, a little drunk. [laughs] There was a song, about jealousy. Eeh. There was a song that she, she was singing. And the others were clapping their hands. [R sings in falsetto:] "Eeeeh, eeeeh, uyo kelekeleee!" When my mother was drunk, ah! [laughs] And those, those fellow wives, they were sitting there. And she got up, because there were many there, who—when you wanted to dance, you danced. You sang, you danced—they danced, there! They're there, drinking *vukanyi*. Whoever is already happy, if she wants to dance, she dances, the others sing to accompany her. And one day my mother got up. Heh! I still remember this song. She says [R sings:],

<i>Uyo kelekeleeee!</i>	You're getting thin!
<i>Uondza uli tani,</i>	You're becoming emaciated [?],
<i>Uondzela hi wanuna!</i>	You're becoming emaciated because of the man!
<i>A nuna, a na mina,</i>	The husband, he's with me,
<i>Kambe wena, uyo kelele,</i>	But you, you're getting thin,
<i>Hi vukwele!</i>	Because of jealousy! <sup>4</sup>

And her friends, they already knew that, the wives of Musoni, they were going around very unhappy with her. And she, too, as a joke, she had to sing that song. And they sing to accompany her, the others. My mother's friends, they clap their hands. Eehh! [R sings song again] And the others, from being happy, got up to dance with her there. Eeh, they help her! [R sings song again] Ah, my mother was pretty, Heidi! [laughs] She was beautiful, my mother. . . . They said, "Do you see her, N'waXumana!" [R sings song again, imitates clapping/foot-pounding:] Xigum-vugum-vugum-vugum-vugum-vugum-vugum-vugum-vugum-vugum-vugum-vugum [R laughs, catches breath]-vuvugum-vuvugum-vuvugum! . . .

H: Were you there, on that day?

R: No, she was singing there, when she went to drink with the others. We sometimes could hear when she was singing, there where people were drinking. And we knew, heh! Mama is dancing, indeed, she's drunk! [laughs] But ah! She didn't stay long, with Musoni. Yee! They even came to blows. They fought, right there in the path! [laughs]

H: Your mother, and Musoni?

R: Eeee!! Ohh! Eh-heh! Because he was, he was so jealous, that man! If there was someone who said, "Eh, N'waXumana," there at the place where they were drinking *vukanyi*—because when they pour *vukanyi*, a man who wants to offer some to a woman he knows, when he wants to rest a little, from drinking, he gives it to her. Mmm. "Eh, here is the *ndzeko* [gourd]. Take it, have a drink." And the woman, she gets up, she takes the *ndzeko* from him, she thanks him, she drinks. The pots, they were big, you know! And whoever wanted to offer some to a woman, offered it. But without courting her! They just gave it, that's all. . . . And it wasn't only my mother who was offered drinks from men! But there were many who wanted to give them to her. But that Musoni, he didn't want that. If a man appeared, "Eh, N'waXumana! Ah, take my place, here is the *byala* [beer]" She gets up, she goes to drink it. If she doesn't want it, she says, "Ah! I don't want anymore *byala*." Especially when she already feels that it's going into her head, she leaves, she escapes, she goes home. Without saying goodbye to anyone, because when she says, "Ah, so long, I'm going," [she thinks], "it's possible that the men who want me, they'll go wait in the path, to attack me." Mmm.

And then one day, they were drinking *byala*. Musoni, well, he thinks that one man is courting N'waXumana. "Ah you, N'waXumana, why do the men want you so much? Because I see that you, when you're here drinking, many men are calling your name. And also, many of them don't like me anymore because they know that you're my wife. They don't like me because they thought that they would be the ones to get you. And they're always giving you something to drink! One of these days, I'll beat you!" Mama said, "Mmm. One of these days you'll beat me?" He says, "Eee." "You." He says, "Eee." "You beat me?" He says, "Eee. Because the men like you too much when they go for *byala*—because they want you!" [She says,] "Eh! Those men, they say they want me. It's the same thing as you said to me! You thought you were the only one who wanted me? There were many who wanted me. In the time that you cleansed *tindzhaka* for me, there were many who wanted to do this! And it was I who didn't want them. Now, I accepted you, that's it. You cleansed *tindzhaka* for me, and now, you want to order me around? In this way? You're even promising to beat me? Eh! My husband

never beat me, well, I'm going to be beaten by you? Ah! You're just playing. You can't beat me." He said, "All right. You'll see, one of these days it will happen." And he fell quiet.

Later, another day, there was one man, Mahachuyani, Mahachuyani Nhlongo. "Eh, N'waXumana! *Mulamu!* <sup>5</sup> Come and have a drink! They've poured for me." She says, "All right, Nhlongo, thank you. I'll drink it." She goes, she takes a drink. Eee! Musoni! They finished drinking. "Eh! I'm going home, I'm going home, I'm going home, I'm going home." And he says, "Eh, I'm going home, I'm going home, I'm going home, I'm going home." Mama leaves, she goes. Musoni, he waits, then he follows behind her! "Eh, N'waXumana!" Mama, she [stops]. He says, "What did I tell you the other day?" "What did you tell me the other day?" "Didn't I tell you that I would beat you?" "You'll beat me? Why?" "Why does Mahachuyani say, 'Take my place, drink for me!?' Weren't there many women there to [give] *byala* to? Were you the only one who wanted to drink? I said I would beat you!" So he hit her, my mother! [R laughs, makes sounds of punching, wrestling:] Tontola-tontola-tontola-tontola-tontola-tontola-tontola—the two of them, they fall to the ground, waaah! On the ground! [laughs] "You will listen, you!" "No, you will listen!" . . . Then he was underneath, and my mother was on top of him! Yeee! Eh-heh! "Heh, you say you'll beat me?!? You beat me?!?" With her fingernails, on his face, and his throat! She was smacking him, punching him, with her nails out like this! On his face! "Eh, N'waXumana, you're killing me!" Well, some other people were coming down the path. They said, "Why is N'waXumana on the ground, with someone underneath her? What's the problem, N'waXumana?" Hee! Heh, Musoni! She says, "Ask him! Why I'm on top of him, beating him. If it had been him on top, he would have killed me! But with luck I was able to make him fall." . . . [R describes how Anina tripped Musoni] "Heh, Musoni! Are you ordering around the wife of the *mufundhisi*? Hmm? You know that she's the wife of the *mufundhisi*. Well, even if she's not his wife, she's his sister-in-law, because she's the wife of the brother of that *mufundhisi*. She lets you cleanse her *tindzhaka*, so you start giving her orders? Heh, heh, heh! You're crazy, Nhlongo! You're crazy, crazy, crazy! Hah! Leave her alone, this Tivane, leave her, leave her, Anina." Then my mother says, "I, in front of all of you, I swear that he will never step foot in my house again! I'm swearing it, so you'll hear. Because he's already threatened me, 'I want to beat you!' Me, I'm not his wife! Me, I'm the wife of Jorge, the brother of Dane! He's dead. And he, because I let him cleanse *tindzhaka* for me, when I had it—because I couldn't be cleansed by Dane, he said [I should] accept him to do it for me. So he thinks he can beat me, because men gave me *byala*?! Many women, many women go to drink there—but me, I can't? Eh! . . . He's jealous of a woman, when she's not his wife? Me, I'm the wife of the Malungana family. I'm not the wife of the Nhlongos!"

Well, Mama, she goes home. She goes to tell my uncle, Dane. "You're the one, you said I should be cleansed of *tindzhaka*. So now, this has happened. . . . " And my uncle said, "Hah! I don't know, how this happened, because I was the one who obliged you to cleanse *tindzhaka* with him. But he can't beat you. Not even my brother beat you, and now he, he raises his hand against you? No. It can't be." And my mother said, "Look, from this day on, I no longer want Musoni in my house. Me, I'm not a prostitute [*gelegele*], staying with this man, this man, this man, this man. <sup>6</sup> Mm-mm. My husband, he died. I accepted [Musoni] because, he cleansed *tindzhaka* for me. Now he starts to beat me. Now I have these scratches in my face, that he gave me." Later, he called Musoni, that Dane. He comes. He sits down. Dane, he says, "N'waXumana was telling me that you beat her. Out of jealousy, from when the others give her *byala*, and you say they are her husbands. Don't you know that it was I who gave the order, to my sister-in-law, to [accept] you, to cleanse her of *tindzhaka*? . . . And now you're treating her like your wife—how is that? Not even my brother beat that woman. He really loved her. Yet now you, you're beating her, out of jealousy! Don't you have your own wives at home?" "Ah, I have two, yes. As you know." "Well, if you feel like beating someone, go there and beat your wives, at home! Not here in

my house. I don't want to hear that. And I also can't tell my sister-in-law not to go over there and play with the other women, drinking. Since it's the season for *vukanyi*, <sup>z</sup> many people are going out to drink, in the villages." [The same as if it were] the season for making *byala* with corn, that beer of long ago, *xinto*—because it wasn't for selling. In that time, Heidi, they didn't sell anything. It was just drinking. It's not like now, when it's only, when a person has *byala* [only] to sell. In that time, no. They made it just to, to drink to be happy! Mmm. To dance, whoever wants to dance. It was a time of happiness, truly! Now, I don't know. . . .

Well, N'waXumana—[Dane] called her. He said, "Call that N'waXumana, to come here." Well, they call her. She goes and sits with Musoni. [Dane] says, "Do you see this one? I was the one who called him. When you came to me, and told me that story. Then, I called him, to ask him, 'Why did you beat her?' Ah, he said, 'Yes, I beat her, because of jealousy, because I saw that those who gave her *byala*, it's because they wanted her.' 'Ah, if they give her *byala*, it's because they are her husbands?' 'Yes.' 'But you, when you ran after her, you didn't know that there were other men who wanted her?' 'Ah, I knew.' 'And then, when she's with you, you don't know that other men are always trying to pull her to their side?' 'Ah, I know it.' 'Indeed! So if other men court her, you will beat her? It was they who ran after her, it wasn't because she wanted them to.' 'Ah, I'm sorry.'" And then, [Dane] said, "N'waXumana, do you hear what he says?" She says, "Me?" He says, "Eee." She says, "This one, . . . I understand that he's apologizing now. I'll think about it some more. But for now, he'll stay home with his wives. To leave me in peace! If I decide to forgive him, it is I who will tell him, that he can return to my house. . . ." She said that. Then Dane, "Did you hear? What N'waXumana says? She says, 'Go home and wait there, at your house.' Until she says, 'Yes, I forgive you, you can come.' If she doesn't say this, . . . you cannot put one hand on her. I'll put you in jail, I will." He said that, Dane. "Because she is the wife of my brother—the widow of my brother. Leave her in peace, with her children. And I will look after her life." . . . After that, my mother didn't see Musoni anymore. She didn't want him. Because, I remember one day, my mother said that Musoni was drunk, and he said, "Look. Even though you don't want to accept me, because I like you, one of these days I'll take what I want, by force!" Then my mother said, "Eh-heh! Yes, when I am drunk, and I can't do anything. But what I will do to you, will [prevent you from] doing that. Because, at the time that you go to throw me to the ground, to force me, when you are taking off your pants, this hand of mine will be working! And you will feel it, you will scream!" That is, she will work with this hand by seizing his worm [i.e., penis] and pulling it! "Yaaah!!" . . . Mmm. And he never again said, "I want you," to my mother. And my mother, she never arranged another man. Mmm.

### Tavasse Ubisse

#### 10 May 1995, Facazisse

- R: Mmm, I always used to go there, to the house of my uncle, always. Until my uncle died, that brother of my mother, Patapata. I always used to go. But later, poor thing, he had pain in his legs, mmm. He went to the hospital, but they didn't give him anything, it just stayed that way. And he died, but he didn't die because of illness. He shot himself. Mmm. He killed himself. By taking a gun, doing this [R demonstrates holding gun to her head, pulling trigger]. That is, first he killed his wife, because his wife was no longer going around [i.e., sleeping] with him. And he knew that. Well, he takes the gun, and her too, he shoots her.
- H: What was her name?
- R: Tavasse, Tavasse Ubisse. And he had children because, eee! He had wives! But later the other wives went away, because of this one, who was so jealous. She was always going around talking against the other wives, here at home. And he really loved her. . . . So they went away. . . . And he said, "I left my

other wives, because of you. Thinking that you really loved me. And now that you see I'm a cripple, now you're going around like this, in this terrible way." Mmm. When he discovered it, well. He didn't say anything. Since he always had bullets, because he was a hunter, eee! Later, at night, he decided—[R pauses] they say that it happened around midnight. There, the wife of his son, she heard a shot, and she said to her sister-in-law, the daughter of my uncle, "Look," she said, "Eh, sister-in-law, sister-in-law, I'm hearing a shot, in the night! If it's father, ah, he's killed himself!" They were wondering about that, when they heard another shot. Eee! They went out. When they went there [to Patapata's hut], oh, it was already full of blood. And he was there dead, and his wife was there dead. And there was a little child there, maybe five years old. He was there because he woke up with those two shots, inside the house. When they went in, they found that my uncle and his wife, they were already dead. Later, many people came, in the night, those who heard the two shots. Many people came at night, those neighbors! . . .

- H: Patapata's wife must have done something very bad for her husband to react this way!
- R: Mmm, yes. It's because when he heard that she was doing this, with the *régulo* [colonial chief] of that area—his wife, she was the *régulo's* lover.
- H: His wife, with the *régulo*?
- R: Eh, my uncle's wife. She arranged a lover while my uncle was still alive. That's why my uncle was so upset, because he left his other wives thinking that it was she who loved him the most. Sometimes he got angry with them, because she was always going around complaining, complaining about the other wives, saying "This one did this, this, this, this. That one did this, this to me." And my uncle was always going around with a sore head, he didn't like that, all that shouting and screaming, he gave them beatings. And the others didn't like this, to be beaten because of her. So they left, and she stayed alone. And later, when she saw that my uncle—it began at night, that problem with his legs, that he couldn't walk. There in the hospital they couldn't cure him, they sent him to *tin'anga* [diviners/healers], but nothing. . . . People were going around saying things, that there are people who bewitched him, who arranged for *tin'anga* to harm him, because he had everything. There, the whites in the administration, they went to his place with money, to buy skins—he had money, he had everything. Later, they arranged someone [to make it] so that he couldn't walk. Well. I don't know if it's true, but [R pauses], there are things that happen in the world. Mmm. Later, those who saw that, eee, they were going around saying to my uncle, "Eh, your wife, she's already doing this, this, this. With the *régulo*."

And then, one day, [Tavasse] made some beer, and she hid it. So that at night she could take that pot, with the beer, and give it to the *régulo*. Later, she ran into a daughter of my uncle, on the path. While she was already on her way there, to the *régulo's* house. And the child, the daughter, she was only four or five years old, she went to tell her father. "Papa? Do you know that Mama took that pot, the pot of beer that was here?" He said, "Eh, you didn't tell me that there was a pot with beer in it. How could that be?" "Ah, Papa, come here and see. The pot was here, Mama took it." It was like that. And meanwhile on the path there, [Tavasse] ran into her husband's cousin. And when he arrived [at Patapata's house], he said, "Eh, listen here, how is it that I ran into Tavasse now, with beer? She said that she was going to the *régulo's* house, [but] this morning she already went there, to take *vukanyi*." And yet she had hidden it. . . . He saw, hah! For sure. And he fell quiet. When she returned, he said, "Eh Tavasse, come here." And she came. She sat down. "Wife, where did you go?" She says, "I went over there, to *ntlhaveni*, <sup>8</sup> to the *régulo's* place, Xikotli's. Because this morning, the pot that I took over there was small. And the other woman took big pots, yet the pot I took was small. I asked some people if there was still *vukanyi* there, for the people who were talking and drinking there tonight. And they said that there wasn't. [That's why] I go to the chief's place." [Patapata] didn't say anything, because he already knew what his daughter had said, what his cousin had said. Later, the next morning, he said, "Look, take this ten *escudos*, <sup>9</sup> go to the shop, buy two bullets. I want to go hunting, because I have no meat left to eat." She took

that ten *escudos*, she went to the shop to buy two bullets. Thinking that it was for hunting animals, to have *covelo* [sauce] at home. She returned home. She handed over the bullets. He said, "Ah, good. There are two. One for me, the other for her." He fell quiet. Later, around five o'clock, he said, "Ah, I would like some water, to take a bath." They heated up water, and poured it in the *xihiso* [wide, deep clay bowl] and he went to take a bath. He had dinner. Later, "Ah, now I want to go to sleep." He went. There inside, to go to sleep. They put a lantern, like people do, at night. She will sleep there, on that side, and the man will sleep on this side.

Then, I don't know if it was midnight or what, he woke up, he saw that his daughter, like his wife, were spread out, this way. . . . He got on his knees, to peer over there. That was so the bullet wouldn't hit his daughter. He got up, he pulled the trigger. Then, he shot himself, on this side [R points to side of head]. Just then his daughter woke up, she saw all this, that my uncle had done. He died, he died right there on the mat. . . . Then, his daughter-in-law, when she woke up, and his daughter, they went in there. They saw that the two of them were dead. And the child was already there outside [the hut], "Laaaah!" . . . [R imitates wailing] And they began to cry. And the neighbors, they ran, they came near, many of them—they say that many of them slept there, that night. And they said, "But what happened, how did this happen?" "Ah! I don't know. It's the *régulo* who's involved with this. Because she saw that her husband was already like that, he couldn't go out hunting anymore, all that. He was always sitting, poor thing, with his legs crossed [i.e., doing nothing]. So she took a lover, do you hear?" Mmm. That's why, there in the administration, when the administrator wanted to know what happened, some people who knew, they said "Eh! Truly this man was justified. Because the wife, it was she who did those things to provoke him. And now they're dead. It was her fate—to arrange another man while your husband is still living, oh!" Mmm. And later, my mother, they came to tell my mother, mmm, this happened. My mother cried, "That poor thing, he wanted to kill himself." Because he was the only brother that she had. Even though she had other brothers, who had the same father, but they had their own mothers. He was her only true brother.

**Lives of Mothers: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)**

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** *Rijo* (Portuguese): hard, unyielding, unswervingly faithful. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Muhlavasse and Ntongasse were the widows of Kuswane, the eldest brother of Rosalina's father. After Kuswane's death they lived on in the Malungana homestead, under Dane's care. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Dane Malungana was minister at the Swiss Mission church at Nsongeni (Caniçado) from 1922 to the mid-1930s. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** *Vukwele*: specifically, jealousy among co-wives. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** *Mulamu*, alternative for *namu* (sister-in-law). Mahachuyani addresses Anina this way because his own wife was also a member of the Tivane clan. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** *Gelegele* (like *nghwavava*, a synonymous term) refers both to women who exchange sex for money and to women who have multiple sexual partners, either at the same time or, if there is an inappropriately brief waiting period between each one, serially. Translated into Portuguese as *prostituta* or *puta* (whore). [Back.](#)

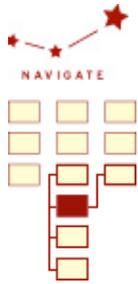
**Note 7:** *Nkanyi* fruits (*canhu* in Portuguese) begin to ripen in January in the Magude area. The *vukanyi* season, which can last through February, is a time of heightened labor for women and sometimes round-the-clock celebration for rural communities. *Vukanyi* preparation, communal drink-parties, and women's ceremonial delivery of pots of *vukanyi* to the chief (as a first-fruits tax) provide the setting for many of the liveliest stories narrated by women. Henri A. Junod, with

his characteristic blend of fascination and moral outrage, described *vukanyi* season as "the saturnalia, the bacchanalia, the carnival of the tribe!" (Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* [London: Macmillan, 1927], 1:397-404). [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** *Ntlhaveni*: literally, place of *ntlhava* (sandy, light-grey soil). [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** *Escudo* (Portuguese): unit of colonial currency. [Back.](#)

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## Lives of Girls (Rosalina Malungana) Fighting Story

**25 June 1995, Facazisse**

### Author

**Rosalina**

**Albertina**

**Valentina**

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

fighting story ★

work story

schooling story

travel story

courtling story

Rosalina

(lives of women)

R: But [laughs], there's another thing. . . . Eee! In our race, there was another thing, well, now, that came from over there, far away, [the land of] Ngungunyana, before we were born here. It already existed, that thing. It was [pause], we [pause], eeh, in the white race, there's no such thing. It doesn't exist. It's only in the black race, like here, Magude, Chibuto, Xai Xai, Guijá, Mazimhlopes, Bilene-Macia. . . . It's really, really, really [done by] the Shangaan. The Chopi, they don't have it. Mmm. *Mitsingi*. They don't have it. But in our race, the Shangaan race, even there, in Manjacaze. . . . I don't know if it still exists now, but there are some, yes, they say that there are some who are doing that. There was a story, that went this way. A woman—she has two membranes, you know? A girl is born, doesn't she have two little things that are there, by the clitoris? . . . Well, those *mitsingi*, in our race, you always had to be pulling those things, to make them grow. And then when they grew, well, there was a story, it said this. The woman who didn't have that, had no value for the man. She's not a woman. [laughs] Because the man likes that thing. Girls did that, to satisfy the man, because men liked it. . . . [laughs] Only the one who had that, hee! He really liked her! You begin when you're small, around ten years old. But especially around twelve, you start pulling those things. Twelve years, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen. As soon as you see that it's already, already a little long, well, you leave it. Eee! You've eaten, you're sitting there, and then, you go—that thing, you pulled it in the bush, in a hidden place, hiding by yourself! Mmm. [Each girl] had to find a hiding-place to do that! But afterwards in the river, those who were jokers, they say: "Yaaah, I'll show you, because mine are already big!" [laughs] Heh!! Ah, long ago, it had a story, you know! It was our mothers, who told us this story. "Eh, if you leave yourself alone, if you don't do that, ah! Your husband will think little of you, because you don't have that. Who wants a little hole covered up like that?!" [laughs] . . .

**28 January 1996, Facazisse**

R: Those things, eh, you have to be stretching them all the time. Mmm. There's even a medicine for that. To drink, and to burn, to put on them. It's made with those bats, mmm! [laughs] Those wings, that they spread. You kill them. To take off the feathers. . . . You spread out those wings in the sun. They dry. Then, you put them in the fire. You take the burning coals from the fire, then when [the wings] are dry, you put them there, to roast. They become like this, black. Then, you grind them, to make them into powder. Eh. But you have to find a place, very hidden! In the woods! Alone. And, there's a pot, a very small one, this size [R shows with her hands]. And there's a tree, called *ndzenga*. Mmm. You dig in the ground there. You dig, you dig, you dig, you dig. You pull the root there. You cut it. You put it [somewhere], it dries out. You grind it. . . . You put it in a little pot, where you pour water, to drink. Put it there in the bush, hidden! Cover that thing, the pot, with a *nkambana* [small clay dish]. . . . And then, it's to drink. It helps those things. When you're like this [R gets on her knees], you put that stuff on, your hands do this, and you work like this, to pull them. You pull, you pull, a little at a time, this way. Every day. When you finish eating at midday, you have to go out to the bush, to do that. In the morning, when

you get up, you have to get up, fetch water, wash, and then, you go there, to hide. There you have the powder, from the bats. There you have powder, made from leeches. . . .

When you see a leech, you get a little stick, you do this, and he grabs the little stick, thinking it's a person. And you go over there, in the sun, it dies with the sun. Then, you take it home, to burn it there. That thing is a good medicine!... One day, you use the bat. The next day, you have to do it with the leech. Eeh. Those things really stretch your *mitsingi*! Eeh. Even, until they're this long! [R indicates length, approx. 5-6"]. . . Well, you go to do it alone, to the woods. But when you have a friend, you know that she's my friend, and she too does this, sometimes we invite one another. "Eh, let's go out to the woods! Let's go out to the woods!" Maybe two or three of you. "Ah, let's go out to the woods, to play!" We go there, and one sits here, the other sits there. First, you have to do this, to cover, with your *nguvu* [cloth], like this. That's so later, we can show who has the biggest! Eeh. You pull, you pull, you pull, you pull, you pull, you pull, you pull. A lot of time, you're doing that! With powder, rubbing it on. Then, the time comes. "Eh! Let's show each other! I want to see if yours are bigger! Who wants to go first?" "Me, I want to show them!" [R lowers her voice:] You take off your *nguvu*. "Here they are." And then the other one looks. "Yee! Sheee! Hee! Hey! Yours are big!" [laughs] "Mine, they're very small! That Malungana, she really pulls!" "Ah you, [they won't grow long] if you don't pull them every day! Mine are big because every day I go out [to pull them]!" . . . At twelve years old! Eh-heh! Twelve, until fifteen, I was like that. . . .

One time, I was at home [in Caniçado]. We left from Guijá, on foot. I was there, and there was my cousin Christina, there was Prescida, the daughter of my aunt who died. . . . We left from Guijá, to go to Bilene-Macia, on foot. And then, in the road, we meet up with three girls. They say, "Eh-heh! Heh! They're coming, look, they're coming! And today, we want to see, who has big *mitsingi*! You, stay here, and let's go in the woods, to see who's biggest. But we want, we want this one!" That is, they called *mahuke*! to us, and they picked me! Not my cousin Christina, the eldest one. The one who wanted to do *mahuke* with me was of my age. And then, cousin Christina says, "Ah! We don't want to do that, because we're not heathens! We're Christians, we pray." "Eh, we don't care about that! Maybe you pray, or whatever. We, we want to *mahuke* you, that's all! With this one!" Hah! My cousin didn't want to let me. I say, "Eh, *tate*. I want to do it. Let them go, I'll go with them. If she beats me, she has long ones, that's fine. But I'm not afraid, because I'm also a girl like her, and she's my age. Let me, I want to go with her." "Heh, let's go, let's go!" Hoh! We took our bundles of clothing, that were on our heads, and we put them there, in the road. We went inside, there in the woods. And she, she sits on the ground. Her older ones, her older sisters, they are there, standing up. And mine too, they are standing up, at my side. I raise my *nguvu*, and stretch up my legs, then the *nguvu*. I'm here doing "xi-xi-xi-xi-xi-xi-xi-xi-xi" [pulling]. And she too there, "xi-xi-xi-xi." "Heh, all right, all right! They want to go. You, take it off!" And my cousin says, "She takes it off first, it was she who wanted *mahuke*! It's not [my girl] who'll take it off first!" And then she takes off her *nguvu*, with that pride! Eh! I say, "Hah! Mmm!" And in that time, if [a girl] provoked you, while she doesn't have big ones, she gets a beating! She was beaten, truly. You give her two smacks. And you have to take a headscarf from her. Because she bothered you, when she has nothing down there.

And then, I'm also there, peeking at her. [R whispers] "*Sacana!* <sup>1</sup> To bother me! To say *mahuke* to me, not let me go where I'm going, to take my time because of that?!" [laughs] And my cousin, since she already knew, she says, "Ah! Heh! You don't know Buxeni! She will beat you! Eh, eh, open up, open up!" Oh! And I take off the *nguvu*, I do this [R spreads her legs]. Well. . . . "Do you see them? Do you see them? What are you going to do? Eeh? You will grumble, when I take that scarf off your head! Because you, it's you who provoked me. Do you see them?" Well, she says, "Mmm." There was grass, spread out there. And then I said, "Ah you, let's measure them. Here it

is [a piece of grass]. Measure yourself." "Ah no, I won't measure, because I know that mine aren't big like yours." "So why did you tell me that, instead of going on ahead, I have to stay here, waste my time?" And she says, "Ah, I didn't know you had such big ones." "Well. But I have to beat you." "Ah, forgive me, forgive me!" And then, my cousin Christina says, "If we were heathens, if we weren't Christians of the church, she would beat you. But she's not going to beat you. She's going to take your scarf, that you have on your head. Because we're not heathens. But your scarf, ah, we have to take that." And I got a beautiful scarf! [laughs]

And then I say, "Sit, on the ground!" And she does this [R gets on her knees]. I say, "Take off the scarf." She takes off the scarf. "Give it to me, you. Put it here, in my hands, you." Then she takes her scarf, she puts it in my hands. And I [put it on]. Ah! Long ago! . . . And then to her older sister, I say, "Bring me a stick, you." And her sister, she goes and finds a stick. And then I do this. "You, you will not bother me anymore! Remember that I am greater than you! Do you hear? Ask forgiveness!" "Ah, I'm sorry!" "And say that you won't bother me anymore!" "Ah, I won't bother anymore those who are greater than I." All right. I take the stick, I throw it away. I say, "Look, this scarf, I'm taking it. But it's not for me to use on my head. I'll give it to my mother." I take the scarf, and I go. And I went home with that scarf. When I got home, I went to give it to my mother—"Mama! I brought this scarf. Do you know how I got it? . . ." "Do you see? Isn't that what I've been telling you? That you don't just sit, my daughter, sit there, without going into the woods, to do that? Knowing that men really like a woman who has those things, big ones? Mmm. You already met up with one who bothered you, you took her scarf. . . ."

But my uncle, he managed to find out that I, Prescida, Felista, Heidi, <sup>2</sup> [girls] in his own house, we had to go out to the woods, to do that. And there was one day that I got a beating, with Heidi. That day, we went to the edge of the river, with girls from my place [*mbangu*]. <sup>3</sup> Girls from that place, Ntoteleni, they came to invite the girls of Songeni, our place, to go to the woods. For what? To see whose are biggest! Mmm. Sometimes five or six came, and invited us. "Ah, let's go to the woods, let's go to the woods!" We went to the edge of the river, the river Limpopo—but in Shangaan it's Mimiti. . . . We go to the edge of the river, where it's full of trees, lots of trees. We sit down there, with them. We do that pulling, to see who has big ones, who has small ones, who has average ones. It was, it was a pleasure of that time! . . . Then, when we finished that, well, we went in there, to bathe, voom-voom, voom-voom, to swim. The ones who knew how to swim, they swam. . . . And then that day, there were boys, sixteen or seventeen years old, they see that group [of girls]! And they're interested to see what the girls have! They go to hide! Where there are many trees, where we were hiding. But we don't know that there's a man hiding there, to see those things. They were very interested, to know who had bigger ones!... And then, they see that, heh! Hmm! [R whispers:] "That group there, there is Rosalina, there is Heidi, there is Prescida, there is Felista. Daughters of the minister!"

Well. They went back, and they went to complain to my uncle. "Eh! Do you know, *mufundhisi*, there, in that forest by the river, they are hiding in those trees, in that long grass. With girls who come from over there, Ntoteleni, who came to invite the girls of this place." "What are they doing?" "Eeh! They're doing heathen things." "They're doing heathen things?" "We were going there, hunting birds. But then, we heard a noise, talking. And we went there, to look. We saw that, eeh! There were many there, sitting there, in the same place—but also daughters of this house, they're there." "They are?!" "Yes. Rosalina, Heidi, Prescida, Felista. And other girls of the church are there. . . ." "All right. Go there, [but] don't go right to where they are. Call Heidi, Prescida, Felista, Rosalina. That their father is calling them." And they arrived there. It was Jaime Massingue. Hah! [laughs] And he went there. "Heh! Heidi! Rosalina! Felista! Prescida! Your father, he's calling you!" Eh! Mmm! When [the girls] heard that, "Aaaahh! Let's get out of here! We can't let a

man see us! We don't want a man here! He's spying on us, he's spying on us! Let's go! . . ." And my uncle there at home. "Hah! It's true. Rosalina is there, Heidi is there, Prescida is there, Felista is there. My daughters. Who are not heathens! Shee! They're going to get a beating!"

Then, those girls from Ntotoleni, they went home. And our neighbors also, each went home to her own house. Ah. I, Prescida, Felista, Heidi, we went into the house. Then, he asks, "Where did you go? Ah! Get in here!" And then, no one answered. What could you answer? "You were doing what over there? But don't you know that is the work of heathens?! It's not the work of you who pray! Who told you to do that, that work of the heathens?!" Felista, she went out. Prescida, she went out. "Here, Heidi stays, and Racelina."<sup>4</sup> The daughters of his sister, they left. Because, if he beats them, he'll think of his sister, who died. . . . And he said thus. "I don't want to hear that you are doing that! Because that is the work of heathens!" And I was so afraid of a beating! [laughs] But also, I was very smart! When I see that he's going to beat me, I try to run out to the woods! He shuts the door. "Yeee! Yah-yah-yah-yah!" And Heidi, she was so defiant! She didn't care about being beaten. I, I began to scream. "Aaahhh! Papa, forgive me!"—he hadn't yet beaten me, but he was picking up a switch. How they hurt! . . . "Papa, forgive me! I won't do it again!" "Ah! Who is it who told you to do that work? It's heathen work!" "I know, Papa, that it's heathen work! But forgive me!" He says, "I'm going to beat you!" . . . And Heidi, I don't know what she had, but when she was beaten, she didn't cry out! She didn't cry out. He says, "When you don't cry, I'll keep going!" She says, "Ah, forgive me, Papa." . . . She comes out, on her throat, she caught two blows there, it was all swollen. Then he opens the door. He says, "Get out! You're a heathen!" . . . And that night, in church, he began to speak. "Look, you who during the day went out there, come and ask forgiveness from God. Because God doesn't want that. When he made two *mitsingi*, they weren't made for pulling! Now, you know this is a sin. Whoever is a believer, who has faith in God, cannot do that, because it's a sin. You have to beg God for forgiveness."

And later, when all that finished, well. My mother, she didn't want that. She kept quiet, it was two, three, four days. Then one day I was eating. The one who didn't continue doing it, was Heidi. But Prescida, she continued in secret. Felista continued in secret. Christina also continued in secret—but that one didn't get a beating, because on that day she wasn't there.

H: And you?

R: Hah, hah! My mother didn't let me stop! Me, not continue? Hee! After two, three days, it still hurt, where I was beaten. And then one day my mother said this. "Eh, Buxeni." "Mama?" "Hmm! You, are you going to be married, or aren't you going to be married?" "Mama, I'll be married." She says, "You won't be married. If you're married, your husband, he won't be happy with you. The one who takes you, he won't be happy with you. That one who beats you, that uncle of yours, he won't follow around behind you! You go out alone, don't invite anyone! Go there, continue with that work! Because you know very well that men don't like a woman without those things. And they call her, they say she's not a woman, she's a *dzingo*!"<sup>5</sup> A woman who doesn't have those things, she has no value!" . . . And for sure, I went out there, to the woods! I had to go. She even helped me, preparing medicines for me. . . . "Buxeni!" "Mama?" "Come here. You see this." "Ah! It's a leech, mama." "Go, burn it." . . . Or she picked up her hoe, sometimes she went to find an *ndzenga* tree. She dug, she took that root, she cut it up, she put it in the clay jar for me. "Here it is, go and drink it." And later, mine were very big!! Long, and a little wide. Mmm, I had them. But without anyone knowing. The only ones who knew were Prescida, because she didn't abandon it. And Felista, she didn't abandon it. Because our mothers—Heidi's mother, and the other one, my aunt, the other wife of Kuswane, called Muhlavasse, they say, "You, leave Heidi alone, she's the true daughter of the minister. If she doesn't want to do it, leave her alone. But you go out, secretly. Because you know that a man really likes those things. He could have more than five wives, but the one who has those things, he doesn't want to leave her side!"

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** *Sacana* (Portuguese): a person of low character, a kidder. [Back.](#)

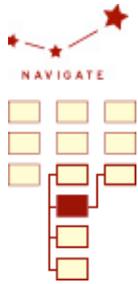
**Note 2:** Heidi Malungana, daughter of Rosalina's uncle Dane; she was named after a Swiss Mission teacher. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** *Mbangu* is a specific place or spot; however, it is also used to refer to clusters of homesteads within a chieftaincy. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Racelina was the name Rosalina received when she was baptized in 1927; she was renamed Rosalina by her Portuguese husband Agosto in the mid-1930s. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** A deep hole in a watercourse (e.g., in a river or a lake). [Back.](#)

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## Lives of Girls (Rosalina Malungana) Work Story

28 February 1996, Facazisse

Author  
Rosalina  
Albertina  
Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

fighting story

work story ★

schooling story

travel story

courting story

Rosalina

(lives of women)

H: What kinds of things did you do when you were a girl?

R: Ah, my work was to go to the field, come home, know how to pound corn, to grind that pounded corn, to cook, how to cook *nkaka*, how to cook *mbowa* [greens] and *vuswa* [thick maize porridge]. To learn those things, to grow up knowing these things. My mother taught me all these things, mmm, my mother. And also the hoe, it was my mother who taught me. . . .

Because, it's she who goes to her field, with that child, to teach her, right? From the time she's six or seven years old, or eight. That's when she begins to teach the child, to go with her to the field. In the morning, waking up, she wakes up the child. "Get up, go and wash!" She makes a hoe like this, this size, a small hoe. So that [the child] will go, "Tukutu-tukutu-tukutu-tukutu" [R imitates chipping at soil with hoe]. That, it's for her hands to get used to it. Mmm. To give strength, so she gets used to it. Now when, you go out a little, until over there, that little section, you cultivate it. When you finish, [your mother] says, "Shee! Who did that? . . . Heh-heh! You cultivated, my child, didn't you!" "Eee, I cultivated." . . . "Indeed, my child. That's good! Mmm. That's good. You strengthened your hands, my child. You go home now, all right?" "Eee." "You go home and play." Here [in the field], it's to get used to that work. Morning after morning . . . the sun comes up. "Mama?" "Let's get up and go to the field!" "Eee, mama, let's go!" You see the little part from yesterday, where you cultivated. Your mother arrives, she says "Eh! Well, my child, you can cultivate here, all right? And you stop over there. Mmm. . . . Cultivate, my child, all right? Like you did yesterday. . . ." "Eee, mama." She says, "Yah, I'm cultivating over there, you cultivate like you did yesterday, my child, all right? Here. When we finish hoeing, when there's rain, we'll sow here. . . ."

Mmm. You grow and you get used to these things. . . . Well, she goes. Yesterday, she was very happy! [R demonstrates child hoeing, with quick short strokes] Well, you really want to work. You hoe, you hoe, well, you arrive over there. The sun, it isn't hot yet. Eeh. "When I get there, Mama will be happy!" Well, it's getting hot. "Eh, let's go home!" "Eee!" . . . Mmm. She comes here, to see what you've done. "Hee! Today, do you see this? You cultivated more than yesterday! You worked, truly, my child. You really worked! Shee! Heh! You're a woman!" That is, if you work like this, you'll be a courageous woman. "When the rain falls, we'll sow here. When the corn ripens, here, you will harvest it. Well, we'll separate out those *tingumu* [defective maize cobs]. Well, those big ones, you'll go to the shop. You'll go and buy a little dress, all by yourself! Won't you be happy?"

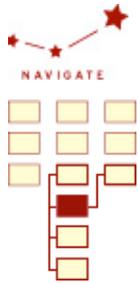
And I too, I was like my mother. I had that thing, that I have to be working. Me, I go to my fields, to cultivate, sometimes [my mother] says, "Eh, it's midday, go home!" I say, "Eee! I'm going home." I take the little hoe. I go "ee, ee, ee." [R imitates hoeing quickly] And I know that if I pass that place over there, where there are a lot of *tinhlampfurha* [castor oil bushes], with my basket [*xirhundzu*—the person who made that *xirhundzu*, it was the youngest sister of my mother, that Tenda. Eeh. I say, "Mama, I'm going home, it's midday, all right?" She says, "Go home! Go to the river, wash up, go home—there's *vuswa* inside, eat that *vuswa*. And sauce, it's there too." I say, "Eee, I saw it there." "Mmm, go home, my child. You've worked today."

Happy! I leave from here—but I see *tinhlampfurha*, when they're already

falling, those seeds. I go and gather them up, that *tinhlampfurha*, I fill my basket, I put it on my head. When there is a lot, my mother can fill a *gogogo* [4-gallon tin], she'll take it to the Banyan's shop. Mmm. She'll buy me a dress. Because, I already told you that my uncle was pretty feeble about helping us. . . . Well, my mother, she was already used to it, she had to cultivate, and sell *tinhlampfurha*, and those *nkuhlu* seeds. Well, my mother returns, she finds that there is *tinhlampfurha* there, in the can. "Heh, Buxeni!" "Mama?" "Are you the one who harvested that *tinhlampfurha*?" I say, "Eee! I gathered them." "Heh! Thank you, my child! You really worked! You left the field, you gathered *tinhlampfurha*?" I say, "Eee, I gathered them. Well, I went to the river. I returned home, I got that corn, I ground it." To help my mother. Then my mother was always happy with me. She says, "They will help us, those things, You did well, my child."

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[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique](#)



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## Lives of Girls (Rosalina Malungana) Schooling Story

**28 February 1995, Facazisse**

R: Ah, my mother told me everything. Eee, everything! She too was curious to know everything! [R laughs] . . . I was always there at her feet—sometimes she said, "Ah! But why do you want to know all this?" "Ah, Mama. Why can't I know? You, some day, you'll die, and I, I have to know your whole family." "Ah, you're really tiresome!" And she begins to tell, and I hear, all that she is telling. . .

Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

fighting story

work story

schooling story ★

travel story

courtship story

Rosalina

(lives of women)

**3 June 1995, Facazisse**

R: Well me, some things, when I want to know them, I say "Hah! I'll ask Mama!" . . . "Mama," I say, "your *kokwana*, this one who gave birth to your husband, who is she?" She says, "Eeeh! You want to know everything!" I say, "Heh, Mama!" She says, "Heh! Truly, to die is to sleep." <sup>1</sup> Me, I want to know. Well, she tells. She says, "Truly, my grandfather, this one who gave birth to my mother, he's Xihundzulana. Of the Khosa clan. And [my grandmother], she's N'waManyisa." She says, "Do you hear? Because one day, they will trouble you, they will bother you." Well, I say, "Yah, I know them, the grandparents of my mother. They are Xihundzulana and N'waManyisa. I know them. . . ." Then I say, "Those who gave birth to your mother, well, I know them. Well, those who gave birth to your father, who are they?" . . .

**28 January 1996, Facazisse**

R: But here at home, ah! She was very difficult [*kukharata*]. But, she wasn't difficult, because what she wanted, was to see me working. Mmm. Not sitting with my arms crossed. "What are you going to do when you're with a man? If you marry? Are you going to sit like that? A man wants to eat, [wants you to] wash his clothes, to work in the field. And for you not to leave anything undone in the house. I want to see you working!" We—she beat us! That's how she was difficult, because she beat us, when we didn't want to do anything. There was I, and there were those nieces, the ones who lost their mothers, whom she went to fetch—they were Clara, Raudina, and Zilda. <sup>2</sup> . . .

H: Did your mother teach you other things besides that you had to be a good worker? For example, about proper behavior?

R: Eee-yeee! For sure! Mmm. She told me, those *gelegele* [prostitute] ways, they aren't good. Mm-mm, they aren't good. They dirty the name of a person, your name. You'll have a bad reputation, in the mouths of others, they'll say that the daughter of so-and-so is a *gelegele*. That isn't good. A girl has to find a man, a boy, whom she can fall in love with, and marry him. Because my mother was hoping that I would find a boy I liked, and he also would like me, and we would marry. . . . What she wanted was for me to find a boy of my race, to marry him. Maybe a boy from Chibuto, whom I like, maybe from here in Magude, I can marry him. If I like him, and he likes me. . . . That's what she hoped for. Because she too, her house wasn't near my father's. My father was from Guijá, there at the foot of Chokwe. While she's from here,

Mazimhlopes. But they found each other, there at those dances, or whatever. He liked her, my mother. He always ran after her. Even, my father even had to send my aunt, his sister, to court her for him, because they were friends. That [aunt] was always talking with my mother, [persuading her] to come and be her sister-in-law. Mmm. That's how it was. . . . Ah, that stuff about *kugangisa* [courting], courting—they talk about those things, our mothers, when they're sitting, and we're there next to them, talking. "Heh, that boy, he courted this girl, so-and-so." Or, if it's a girl, they say, "Ah, she accepted that boy so-and-so." Because that thing, *kugangisa*, it comes from the man. Mmm. Not from the woman. . . . Maybe you, when you see a boy, eh! "That boy, he's beautiful! He's really beautiful! Heh, I want him to be my husband!" But you can't court him, no way. Only he, when he sees you, he says "Eh! That girl, I really like her, she's beautiful! I will court her!" Mmm. . . .

They told us that we have to guard ourselves, because if you marry and your husband finds you are not a virgin, ah! There's trouble. The husband, he goes there, to the old women, the *masungukati*. And the *masungukati* too, yah! Because they too, when they wake up in the morning [after the wedding], they want to hear what the man is going to say. Eeh. They call the man. "Eh, good morning, good morning. Eh, we woke up well, we have nothing [wrong]. Ah! What about you, maybe you slept well?" Slept well, heh! That's to discover what he has to say. "Eh, we slept well, what about you? . . ." Well, he says, "Yes," if he found that his wife, if he found her virginity. "Eh, we slept well!" Ah, mmm. "That business of yours, is it in order?" "My business, it's in order. I found everything all right." "Ah, thank you. So nothing's wrong?" He says, "Ah, nothing. I slept well." Well, they already know that, there is this—there's another thing, they ask for the sheets, those *masungukati*. [To see whether] they have blood on them. . . . When they see that there's a little blood there, ah, they're happy. They even have to give some money, that money is for the mother [of the bride].

H: What happened if they found no blood?

R: Eeh! That was a problem, they want to know who took her virginity. Mmm. She has to say. They have to call that girl, to tell them who did it. Because she found shame, for not being a virgin. . . .

[. . .]

R: My uncle Dane, that one who worked with the Swiss Mission, he's the one who sent me to be raised with the Swiss, the *Misses*, the *madrinhas* of the Swiss, there in Lourenço Marques, at the Internato, at Nkovo. <sup>3</sup> . . . We were twenty-three students there, girls. Some from Lourenço Marques, some from Xikhumbane. Even one girl, called Natália, she was the daughter of—in that time we called it daughter—she was the daughter of *Misse* Porta and *Misse* Reva. They took care of that girl, her parents died, and they took the children—there was Natália, there was Masomulo, who is a dwarf. And later, they took this Natália to, to Nkovo, those *Misses* Reva and Porta. They took her there to study. . . . When we got out of school, we came to lunch, and afterwards we picked up our hand-work. Whoever wanted to do crochet, did crochet. Whoever wanted to make socks, made socks. Whoever wanted to make, mmm, a nightgown, made a nightgown. Mmm. And we were twenty-three there. . . . When I was at the Internato, my friends there, they were Andina, Andina Tembe. Mmm. There was Leonora, who was the niece of my teacher, Aldasse. . . . These were two friends that I had there. Later, that Andina got married, when I was still in the Internato. And when I left from there, Leonor was still at her parents' house. But afterwards, later, I heard that she got married to, to that teacher. Later that teacher became a minister [*mufundhisi*]. Mmm, that *mufundhisi*, ah! He died, it was terrible. He was beaten—have you never heard this story, that there was a minister here, a minister who died from a beating, called Manganyela? <sup>4</sup> . . .

Menstruation, it attacked me when I was there at the Internato. Even—[laughs] at two o'clock, I was teaching a class. Because I was already in the third form, with my teacher called Aldasse. He was a *misto* [person of mixed race], a Muslim. And then, since that [teacher] Filimone had many students there, in the second form, he came to ask my sister, my *maezinha*,

*Misse* Elizabeth Randin, if I could help, to teach the students who come at two o'clock. . . . And then, that Leonora, sometimes she came to play here in the Internato, because she was my friend. And then, when I was sitting, giving classes, I finished, and she was already there. [Suddenly] I felt my pants were wet! I said, "What is this?" . . . [R describes her surprise and confusion] How I was crying, when I saw that blood! And then *Misse* Randin, she heard the crying. "Who is that crying in there [in the bathroom]?" "It's Racelina! Because, I'm bleeding!" And the others, who were there, they said, "She's bleeding! She's bleeding!" And then she came in. "Racelina?" "*Misse*?" "Why are you crying?" "*Misse*, I'm bleeding!" "But don't cry! We all get this. The time has come, now you are a woman! Now you can marry. A person who doesn't bleed, can't have children. It's a sign that you, if you marry, you'll have children—don't cry!" And then she came in, with rags, [the kind] she also used. . . . [R explains how Miss Randin showed her what to do]

H: So before this moment, you didn't know about menstruation? Your mother hadn't told you about it?

R: Ah, no. She couldn't say anything. She was just waiting, thinking that I would start when I was at home. She too would have taught me how to do those things. *Misse* Randin, she explained everything. "Now Racelina, remember that your menstruation has started. Mmm. You have to behave well. Because you, if you don't behave well, if you find boys who want to play with you, you will become pregnant. And that way, you won't marry." And she gave me a little box, for me to put those rags in. . . . For us, students at the Swiss Mission, they really insisted on that, that girls guard their virginity. Hee! Even when we girls were talking about that, all of us, together, we say, "Eh, me, no way! I can't marry if I don't have my virginity! No way, he won't take that from me, when I'm not married! No way." . . .

And then, there was one month, when I went for fourteen days, while I was menstruating. And then my mother said this. "Look, this is because you started your menstruation there. If it were here at home, I would have done something, to reduce the days, I would have prepared a medicine to reduce the blood." That is, *kukombonya*. "If it had started when you were here at home, I would have done *kukombonya* for you." 5 . . .

H: Did your mother know how to do that?

R: Ah, no. It's known only by the *tin'anga*. Well, I don't know, maybe my mother learned from her mother. They say that you take a *ximbitana* [small clay pot], 6 they put the medicine in here. They put it on the fire. You sip that medicine, you sip it for three days. Then they take that *ximbitana*, they go find a tree, they scratch in the soil here, on the ground. They dig, maybe with a hoe. They dig, they dig, they dig. Well, they take that *ximbitana*, they go "eee." Well, they pat the soil down, they cover it up. Well, they'll open it up, they'll smash [the pot], when it's your time, when the time arrives that, it's all right for you to bleed. Mmm. That's what they do. But when they don't open up that *ximbitana*, ah, your menstruation is finished, you won't have children.

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#### Notes:

**Note 1:** *Kufa kuetlela*, which can also be rendered as "death is sleep." Henri P. Junod translates this proverb to mean that "Death is like sleep. Therefore do not worry about a dead person. He does not feel pain anymore but rests" (Henri P. Junod, *The Wisdom of the Tsonga-Shangana People*, 3d ed. [Braamfontein: Sasavona, 1990], 289). Many women used this phrase when recalling how their mothers and/or grandmothers used to talk to them about family history, less in the sense Junod describes than to reassure them there is nothing wrong with talking about their ancestors. [Back](#).

**Note 2:** Clara and Raudina Tivane were the daughters of Tavasse Ubisse and Patapata Tivane, the eldest brother of Rosalina's mother; Anina took responsibility for Clara and Raudina after Patapata killed himself and his wife. Zilda Mangwana was the daughter of Movanyani Mangwana, whose mother (Nsenganyana Khosa) was the elder sister of Rosalina's maternal grandmother, Kondissa Khosa. Rosalina's mother also raised Zilda, first as a daughter and then as a de facto daughter-in-law after she conceived a child with Rosalina's brother Bernardo. Although the cousins never officially married, Zilda had seven children with Bernardo and spent her adult life as an accepted junior wife in the Malungana homestead. [Back.](#)

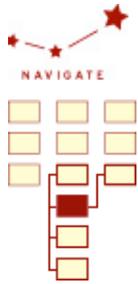
**Note 3:** The most common meaning of the Portuguese term *madrinha* is godmother; like *maezinha* (little mother), which Rosalina also uses for the European women who presided over African girls studying at the Swiss Mission girls' school in colonial Lourenço Marques, it explicitly constructs the female teacher-student relationship as a mother-daughter bond. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Rosalina explained how this man, accused of spying for Frelimo in the war for independence, was imprisoned and beaten to death by the Portuguese. According to Rosalina, a delegation of Swiss Mission officials came from Switzerland to exhume Manganyela's body in order to determine how he died. Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 28 May 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** As Rosalina and other older women explained, *kukombonya* (also *kufunengela*) was done when a girl began her menstruation too early, when she was considered too young to marry. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** *Ximbitana* is the diminutive form of *mbita*, the generic term for clay pot and also the name of a particular type of clay pot used mainly for cooking. The *ximbitana* has great ritual and symbolic importance as the proper vessel for preparing and storing infant medicines. See chap. 4. [Back.](#)

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## Lives of Girls (Rosalina Malungana) Travel Story

10 May 1995, Facazisse

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

fighting story

work story

schooling story

travel story ★

courting story

Rosalina

(lives of women)

R: We used to go there, to visit, always! Mmm. Before going to the Internato, I always went there, to the home of my mother's brother [Patapata]. Because he had lots of cattle there. And I went there to eat *masi* [milk]. [laughs] Do you know what I did, when I arrived there? Eee! Hmm. In the world, everything comes to an end, Heidi. . . . If I arrived there, from Caniçado. Eeh! I have to go to Mazimhlopes, to visit my uncle, right? We called him *kokwana*, but he's an uncle [Portuguese: *tio*], the brother of my mother. I took the truck that went [between Mazimhlopes and] Xinavane, to pick up migrant workers who were coming from South Africa. . . . I arrived there at my destination, and I got out. I went—even, sometimes, one or two other girls went with me, we went there as three friends, because of *masi*! To go and eat *masi*. . . . We went there, waiting in the road, the trucks came, we got in—long ago it wasn't much money, it was [twenty] *escudos*. I went from Caniçado to here, at the foot of Chokwe. I got out there. But there, there was a cow, a big one! I remember that it had some blankets, it had a black blanket, a white blanket, black blanket, white blanket, that cow. And that cow, they gave it to me. So that I could suck the milk! Hee! But one day, do you know what this daughter did? They gave it [to me] because, I went and fell with a boy who was there, holding onto me. All right, I'll tell the story.

She was coming from the woods. She went out in the morning, to go eat grass, to drink water, in the ponds—because in the past there was a lot of rain, you know. . . . And later, one day, she came, that cow, they took her daughter out of the curral. Because there was a big curral, for the adults, for those cows and oxen. But there was also a curral with the little calves, the ones that are suckling. . . . And then, they open that [curral], for [the calves] to go suckle from the teats of their mothers. Mmm. Each one had his own mother [laughs]. Eh-heh! And later, when that cow arrived, my uncle, my mother's brother, [said] "Do you see her? This cow"—he was telling the boy, who looked after the cattle—"this cow, it's Buxeni's. If she arrives here, you have to give her milk, that thickened milk. First, she must suckle the milk from the cow, until she fills her belly. And later you will give her that thickened milk, *masi*." [laughs] And then, that boy, he sat this way, and I went in here [R laughs, indicates how she sat between his knees], with his knees, he secured me. And the cow—when you do this, the tail has to go there, as usual. She already knows, that because he's doing this, it's because he wants to take milk. And I'm here, opening my mouth, "Ahhh" [R demonstrates]. And he did this, "Rrrr-rrrr-rrrr-rrrr" [R mimics pulling teat]."

My mouth was full of milk—fresh, and hot! [laughs] Ay!! I swallow, I swallow, I swallow. Until I filled my belly, "I'm full! I'm full!" [laughs] When I finish, that calf, poor thing, he wants to suckle, and I—[laughs] Heh! I get out [from under cow], and that poor calf, he comes to suckle. Meanwhile I was the one who went first! But later, there was a kind of pitcher—they sow them, in the countryside, and when they are grown, they open them, take out the fruit inside, it's called a *xikutsu* [calabash]. They pour milk inside there, they count two, three, four days, they open it here [at the bottom], the water goes out, that thickened milk stays inside. They mixed it with *vuswa*, for the children to eat. Mmm. I really liked to go the house of my mother's brother, because of that milk. . . . The one who gave me that cow, it's the father of my mother, . . . What I remember is that, when I was a child of, I don't know, four or five years, I don't know if it's true, they said that the spirit of my mother's father came out, of the spirit medium. To say that "You, you Patapata, you have to

take a cow, give it to Buxeni, to suckle. So she will grow up here in my home, with milk!" Eeh. And he was obliged to give me that cow. . . .

### 8 May 1995, Facazisse

R: Ah, there at my uncle's house, I ate many things! I even ate those ostrich eggs—I even ate that! Eh! I liked them, but they have a little smell. But I liked them. Because, since he was a hunter, that brother of my mother, he gathered them. They say that when she lays an egg, she does like this—they say this, I don't know if it's true—but they say that, when she lays an egg, she has those wings, she takes dust, sand, and then, she goes to fetch grass, that rotten grass, with her wings, she comes and puts it there, on top of the eggs, to warm it up. The time arrives, those eggs break open, and little ostriches come out alone. But she has to be near them, to open [the eggs]. . . . Sometimes, when she leaves, to go and eat, the husband is the one who stays there, embracing the children, to let his wife go and eat. When she's filled her craw, she comes back, the husband goes out and eats. That's how it is. Mmm. Well, when my aunts, his wives, when they go to the fields, I stayed there at home, to eat the *vuswa* from yesterday—so I wouldn't sit there hungry.

And they went to the fields. And [my uncle] grabs that egg, and he makes a hole [in the ground]. He puts the egg here, and he calls, "Buxeni! Come here! Come here!" I go. [He says] "Sit here" [R pats mat]. And he takes that spear, he does this, to pierce a hole in the egg [R demonstrates rubbing spear shaft between palms to drill hole in eggshell]. And then he takes a pot, the one called *mbhota*. <sup>1</sup> . . . And then he pours it here in the pot, he pours in salt, he puts it there on the fire, it cooks, it cooks, it cooks, it cooks. Well, it's ready. Then he takes a plate, he pours it from the pot to the plate, he goes to get *vuswa* from inside, he comes and puts it here, for me to eat. Eh! And then they return from the fields, eh! I already have a belly fully of *vuswa* and egg. Eeh. He really liked me, truly, the brother of my mother, that Patapata. . . . And, he had a bottle, this size, it was full of honey from the bees! Mmm. For me to eat. . . . With that honey, he poured in some *masi*, mixed them together, so I could eat [the honey] when it's sweet, not bitter. It was there, kept there for me. Mmm. The others ate [bitter honey], they didn't care, but I, it was too bitter, he put *masi* in, for me. Ah! The past, it's a good time, truly.

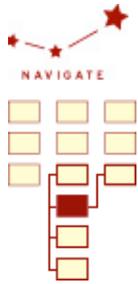
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#### Notes:

**Note 1:** *Mbhota*: cast-iron, four-legged cooking pot. [Back](#).

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## Lives of Girls (Rosalina Malungana) Courting Story

Facazisse, 28 February 1996

### Author

**Rosalina**

**Albertina**

**Valentina**

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

fighting story

work story

schooling story

travel story

courting story ★

Rosalina

(lives of women)

R: When [a boy] he sees you, he says "Eh! That girl, I really like her, she's beautiful! I will court her!" Mmm. . . . Well, he'll give you a note, to say that, "I want you." He writes a little note. He sends, maybe he has a sister, he sends her. He'll say that, he'll write your name thus, Rosalina Jorge Malungana. "I am sending you my note. I want to say that, I want you very much! To marry you! Now you, what do you say? . . ." He gives it to his sister. "Go, give this to your friend." Well, we're sitting, playing, she comes, she says, "I've come to play with you." Then, she says, "Come here!" But it's a secret, because you're afraid that your mother, that other people will see. . . . But what is hardest, is to say "yes" right away! Ah! That's hard to say. You don't say it, that day, when he writes you a letter, [saying] that he wants you. You tell her, "Go there, tell your brother," or when you want, you write a little note. "All right, I received your letter. But for now, I don't want to tell you my answer. Yes, or no. You wait for my answer."

Then, she'll bring it to him. Mmm. He sits, he cries, because you don't respond. If you wait too long, he writes another letter. "I want to hear your answer to my letter. What do you say? Because I really want you very much, I want to marry you. When I'm sitting here, I'm shrivelling up from thinking of you! What do you say? Because me, I want you so much!" Well, if you like him, you'll say, "Yes, I accept you—I want to marry you." Mmm. "That's good. But I want to meet with you, in a certain place, so we can talk." Well, you'll look for a time, maybe in the afternoon, maybe at night, when you're going to prayers. Well, you find each other. "What you wrote, is it so?" You say, "Yes, it's so. I want to marry you, that's all! Maybe you'll go to South Africa, to work in the mines, [but] I accept you, to marry you. Even if another [boy] wants me, I'll say no." He goes to South Africa, to work, he finds money. And he tells his parents, "I was accepted by this girl, so-and-so." Well, that money, it's so they can talk together, the parents of the boy and the parents of the girl. . . .

My mother, she was waiting for a boy to appear, whom I liked. She already knew that I had many boys who were running after me, she already knew! Especially the neighbors, because there, there was Silva Muhambo. There was Jaime Massingue. There was Jeremia Muhambo. There was Johane Nhlongo. They were neighbors of the same church, who were always sending me letters. To say that they want to marry me. And there was another one, I was forgetting, that one isn't from the same church, he was a little farther away. He was from the other church, the Methodists there, at the foot of the town, Caniçado.

H: What did the church think about all this letter-writing?

R: Mmm! It was hidden! Eee! Those of the church, they didn't allow that, sending letters, to court each other! But they couldn't stop it, because when a boy likes a girl, he has to send her a letter! But they didn't want it. All they wanted was for a boy to appear, who came from the church. Mmm. Sometimes they are boys who come from another church, come here to [talk with] the ministers here. To say that, "Ah, we've come here to find girls to marry." They sent a letter, the superiors there, for the boys to bring, to deliver to the superiors of this church. Then, they called girls, many girls, to come here to the church, to meet with those boys, so they can choose. Mmm, this happened a lot.

And then, many girls came from the villages, here to the church. "Ah, we've come from there, because we were called, [they said that] young men were

arriving, they want girls, to choose. Then, "Eh, the girls, there they are. They've arrived." The girls are here, and the boys. "Ah, [the boys] have come from church so-and-so"—Methodist, maybe Assembly of something. "The girls, here they are. And they, the boys, they're here. You can choose the girls, the laws for you to court [in church] are this way. Isn't it so?" "Eeh, it's so." Well, some of them will sit down, and others, he'll choose, he says, "Ah, me, I want that one." And another one will say, "Eh, I want that one." Well, when they're finished, maybe four of them, then they'll ask the girls. "Well, what do you say? Because that one chose this one. And you, do you want him?" "Eh, I don't want him."

H: So the girls could refuse?

R: Eeh. But another one, if she wants, she says, "Yes, and me, I want him." . . . Eee! Me, I really despised all that! Hah! To be courted [that way]—I refused! Hoh! Heh-heh! [laughs] Me, courted when I don't know him? I meet him in the church, he says, "I want Rosalina, I want that one?" Yee! Some girls, they accepted. . . .

But me, I don't want it! There's a teacher, called Filimão, when I was at the Internato. He always passed by the Internato. We were twenty-three. Sometimes he came inside the house, it seemed that he came to greet *Misse Randin*. . . . He was a teacher at Rikatla. <sup>1</sup> Mmm. And he had a friend here near the hospital, called Simião, he worked in the hospital. When he came from Rikatla, he always had to go to the house of that boy. But he passed by here, at the Internato. It turns out, he was pursuing me! Of the twenty-three girls who were there, he only liked me. But he didn't say anything to *Misse Randin*. . . . But later, when I went, during vacation, I went home, he sent a letter to my uncle, that Dane. "Receive my letter, I don't know, maybe I'm annoying you, excuse me, it's because I want your niece. I want to marry her—I really want that girl! I didn't say anything to *Misse Randin*, that I like that girl. I had to write a letter first, to you. . . ." When they received that letter—it came by post, [my uncle] opened it, he read that letter, he said, "Ah! It's the teacher from Rikatla."

There was Arturo, the brother of my father, who is the son of N'waMagweva. <sup>2</sup> . . . There was Gabriel, who wanted to marry the sister of Arturo's wife. There was my uncle, that Dane. They called me, when they read that letter. "Eh, Racelina!" . . . "Papa?" "Come here." Eee! "Sit on the mat." I arrive, I sit down. "Eh! Here, I find a letter, it comes from Rikatla, over there. Do you know the teacher at Rikatla? Filimone Nyankale." He was Filimone Nyankale. His father was Zamboke, he was a MuChopi, from over there in Zavala. "This one who writes the letter, he says he wants you." "Yee! He wants me?! Eee! I know him, because he's always coming to *Misse Randin's*, to visit her. . . . But he never said anything to me." "Ah! He couldn't court you, because here there is no *kugangisa*, we don't want these things! We want that, this one who wants you, he takes his parents, he talks with your parents. Isn't that what you want?" I say, "Eee!" "That business of *kugangisa*, ah! It's the work of the heathens!" "Oh! Eh! Me, I don't want him." "But you know him?" I say, "I know him. That he, he wants to pressure me, eh! I don't want him." "Eh! Heh, you." It's Dane, this one [who speaks]. "Eh, Racelina." "Papa?" "Here. João Mabunda. He bothered me with a letter, for you. Jeremia Muhambe, there in Joni [i.e., Johannesburg]. I sit here, I receive letters—didn't you see that day I was crying? Because he'll look for a *n'anga*, they'll kill me, if you don't want him." "Mmm." "Eee! Jaime Massingue, you don't want him. There's Silva Muhambo, you don't want him either. Well, daughter. You want to be married by whom?!" I say, "Eh, when I have [the right] age."

Indeed, here I'm sixteen, seventeen years old. Because Agosto, he married me when I was eighteen. "Me, I still have time, I still have years, until I'm twenty! [Until] he can choose me, this one I want, me. To [let] any boy who wants me—I say 'Eee [yes]' to him? Hah!" "Heh, indeed, Racelina, you're troubling us! Maybe you want a white man?" I say, "I didn't say that I want a white man!" "And yet *valungu*, they're coming to me, because they long for you." "Me, I don't have anything to do with *valungu*! Me, I said that, Filimone,

I know him, and I don't want him!" Mmm. I say, "This one, whom I can marry, he'll appear. And me, I want him, and he, he wants me. I don't want anyone yet!" Mmm. "I'm still studying. When I've finished the fourth class, I'll come out and I'll sit at home, this way." . . . Gabriel, he says, "Hoh, you, Racelina! These things you trouble us with! Many boys want you, but you don't want them, you want to sit and mistreat men, you!" I say, "I don't mistreat men! Because me, I'm not sold, truly!" Well, I begin to cry, indeed. "Because my father, my father died! You want to force me that, they say they want me, those men, they'll marry me! Because my father, if he was living, he wouldn't sell me! Yaah-aah-aah! You want to sell me!" . . . [Dane] says, "We're not selling you, daughter." "I don't want him!" "Don't cry, don't cry. Because if you cry, we'll think—," especially Arturo, he said, "Ah, Racelina, don't cry, we're not selling you. It's that, what we want is for you to be married by a person of the church. . . . So that you'll live a good life. Don't cry, don't cry, because if you cry, I think of your father, who really loved me. . . ."

Mmm, they say, "All right, leave it. Go and think about it. Well, when you've thought well, you will give us your response." I say, "Eee." I'm not thinking anything, because I don't want him. Well, when I go outside—[laughs]. There was Heidi, Dane's daughter, my cousin. There was Prescida, who is the daughter of my aunt, Guqeyana . . . And there was the niece of [Dane's] wife, who is Zelina. She lived here, in her aunt's house, she came to go to school. . . . And then, there was Joana, that Joana who was my friend, but was from another family. When they heard that a letter came, to court Rosalina, "The minister said that he wants Rosalina, that teacher from Rikatla!" There were four girls. I went out, eh! Full of tears. "You've come out." I say, "Mmm, I've come out. Hee! These problems! Ah! It comes from the teacher, at Rikatla, that Filimone. You know him, Heidi?" She says, "Eee, I know him. He's ugly, right? Eee! He's really ugly!" I say, "Eee! He's ugly, that boy!" "Well, does he want you?" I say, "Eee!" [laughs] "He wants me. Hah!" "Well, what did you say?" I say, "Ha! Ha! Ha! Me, I don't want that thing!" "Hee! Teacher Filimone!"—they see that I might marry him because, so I would be the mother of the church, "She'll be the *yefro* [minister's wife]!" "Hah! I don't want him. They said, 'Go and think about it.' I say, 'Eee.' And yet I'm not thinking anything, me!" I sit.

A week passed. Then on Sunday, we went to church. Then, when we were leaving, they called me. . . . It was the *mufundhisi* [Dane], it was Gabriel, it was Arturo. To know if I, during that whole week, if I had [decided] something. Mmm. I went in, I sat down. . . . "Ah, we were the ones who called you," it's this *mufundhisi* [who speaks]. "It's me who called you, my daughter. Maybe you've thought about it, decided a little something? That you want to be married by this teacher?" "Eee! Uncle. Didn't I say that day, I say 'You won't sell me'? Because my father died? My father, if he were living, he wouldn't insist this way, on things I don't want. Me, I don't want him! I don't want to be married by someone ugly!" "Oh! An ugly husband, my daughter? He might be ugly, in his face, but he has a good heart." I say, "Ah, that's with him!" I refuse. "I don't want him." "Racelina!" This one who is insisting, it's Gabriel. "My daughter! You, you'll be the mother of the church, heh! You'll be the *yefro* of the church! Because this one, he's a teacher today, but he will [later] be a *mufundhisi*. Now you say, 'Ah! I don't want to be married by this one!,' indeed." "Why doesn't he look for girls at Rikatla, or there in Lourenço Marques, the church there? There are many pretty girls there! . . . Me, I don't want him, I don't want him, truly. I don't want you to insist when I don't want him! Because my father, if he were living, he wouldn't do this to me." Mmm. I hid behind my father! [R chuckles] Mmm. Then Arturo says, "All right, I understand. Today, she speaks of her father, the one who died. She says that [we] want to sell her to that teacher. Me, I see that, I say thus. Let's leave her alone, she'll be married by the one she wants."

**22 October 1995, Facazissse**

- R: The Portuguese, they were very used to the women here. They gave *lovolo* for a lot of girls from here. They saw pretty girls, they went to talk to their parents. Mmm. The parents, [they say], "I can't say no, since you want my daughter. If she wants you—," eh, they gave *lovolo*, truly. Mmm. They took out money, those who had cattle, they even took cattle. Eight, eight head of cattle. They gave it to the man, they took the girl home. Mmm. . . .
- H: You told me before that you had a husband, Agosto?
- R: Mmm, he's my husband, Agosto, Agosto Capela. He was a *mulungu*. The one who took my virginity, he was white. Mmm, the first man.
- H: You never mentioned before that Agosto was white.
- R: [laughs] I've never sat down with you to tell you my whole life, to tell you everything! Never. And therefore, if sometimes you meet up with other people who—who else can tell you my life? Because am I not the only one who knows my life? My life, to tell it—I haven't yet told everything. I—I don't know what I had, my star. I can say that, it's been my luck, that only white men wanted me, since I was a child. Mmm. I don't know, if God when I was born had already—well, I don't know! He'd already given me this luck, 3 that my whole life would be the life of the whites.

It happened this way. When I was about ten or eleven years old, sometimes I went to Mazimhlopes, to the house of my uncle, Patapata. And there, sometimes I stayed with my mother's oldest sister, Xintomanyana. Mmm. Sometimes we would go to the shop, with . . . Carolina, Sofia, Domeyana—we were all in the same family. We used to go to the shop to sell *piri piri* [hot peppers], so we could buy salt. And there, a Portuguese man named Cartaxana used to come to that shop. Albino Cartaxana, that was his name. . . . And then, there was one day, when I went to the shop with those sisters of my mother. Tenda, the one who had spirits. And Mapfuxana. . . . Later, when I went into the shop [R raises her voice], there was that white man, always going around and spying on me, because he wanted to buy me! So that when I grew up, I could be his wife. Because there were some [whites] who bought girls, so that when they grew up they could be their wives.

- H: When you say "buy," what do you mean?
- R: Buy, I mean give *lovolo* for them. Later, another day when I went there, with my aunts, my mother's sisters, that one, Tenda, and Mapfuxana, there he was, sitting there and writing his business, and when I went in with my aunts, he began to look at me! And he did this, with his eye! [R winks] He did that! And I didn't understand! I said, "Heh! So that *mulungu*, he's doing that, he's insulting me!" Because since I was a small child, sometimes when you were annoyed with another child, you would do that. That thing, that's an insult! Eee!! . . . Ah! He's insulting me! And me, I'll say 'eee' to him!" [R demonstrates winking back] . . . That *mulungu*, when he did that, closed his eye, it was to tell me that he liked me. And I said, "Hmm! Mm-mm! Eh! Hah, he's insulting me! Mama, mama," I said to Tenda. 'Do you see him? Do you see that *mulungu*, how he's insulting me? He says 'eee' [i.e., winks], so I'm saying 'eee' right back to him!" [R winks both eyes, squeezing them tight] . . . Because I wanted to show him, "I'm insulting you too!" [laughs] Ah! And then, my aunts, they began to laugh, saying "Heh! You, Cartaxana! You're insulting our daughter, what are you insulting her for?" "I'm not insulting her at all!" But then, "Mmm!" [i.e. he winks at her again] So I said, "Mmm!!" [R winks both eyes] "Eh, Buxeni!" [Tenda says.] "Truly, that *mulungu*, he wants you, that's why he's doing that." "He wants me, what does he want? He's insulting me! So I'm doing it back to him!"

And she began to laugh, because she knew that I, poor thing, I didn't know that he was courting me! Well. I went home, because I had to go to school. . . . Later, I went back to the shop with Xintomanyana. And when he saw me, he said, "Heh!! That girl has already grown big! Isn't that Patapata's

granddaughter?" It was him, that Cartaxana. . . . So he said, "Mmm. I'm going to talk to Patapata, to see if he'll let me give *lovoló* for her." Another day, Patapata went to the shop, to drink wine, because he always used to go there, to sell animal skins. Mmm. . . . So he said, "Heh, Patapata! I saw your niece—she's already big, and so pretty! Eh! Won't you let me buy her? . . ." And Patapata said, "Eh! I don't have a daughter for you to buy, to give bridewealth for. Because that girl is my sister's child. Only if you speak to her uncle, her father's brother, the one who is the minister. . . ."

Well, that passed. When I was already fourteen or fifteen—I was fourteen when I started at the Internato. . . . That's when it started with Eduardo Capela. . . . That Eduardo, he was Agosto's boss. He had a shop, up there in Chibuto. And later he called his cousins to come work with him, in the shop—he was the first one [in his family] to come here from Portugal. And his truck, Eduardo's truck, it was that truck that always picked us up from home, to drop us off at Xinavane, so we could catch the train to Lourenço Marques. This was in '28, '29, '30. That's when he began to talk with my uncle, to tell him he wanted me. Listen well, Heidi! This is what he said to Dane. "Eh, *mufundhisi*. I want your niece, the one who is at the Internato." . . .

H: He spoke Shangaan?

R: Mmm!! He spoke Shangaan. That whole family spoke Shangaan, perfectly! . . . And then that Dane, he said, "Eh, Capela! You're married! Yet you still want my niece!" <sup>4</sup> . . . He was the first one to ask my uncle, to tell my uncle he loved me. Agosto already wanted me, but he was still afraid, because I was the daughter of the *mufundhisi*. . . . Meanwhile Eduardo had already spoken to my uncle. But my uncle said, "Eh, Capela. You have Sofia at the shop. In Lourenço Marques, you have Lucia, and Maluissia. And now you want my niece? Why? Eh! No. I don't want to have a white man in my house, taking my daughters. I want them to marry men of their own race. That's what I want." . . . And later, we were coming home for the vacation. That Agosto, he was very quiet, very shy. It was hard for him even to tell me, "Look Rosalina, I want you." All he did, he sent me a little letter. He gave it to his assistant . . . "Go, to the home of the Malunganas, but in secret, you know? I don't want the *mufundhisi* to see you. He'll want to know what you want there at his house. . . . You must hide, do you understand?" And he came, in the dark, with his bicycle. . . . He came from Chibuto, in Capela's truck. Because, when Eduardo married Sofia, then her brother Agosto came [to Mozambique], to be his driver. . . . And at that time, Agosto, he wasn't well, because of Eduardo.

He went around wondering, "How will I ever get that girl? I love that girl, I don't know what I'm going to do!" And on the holidays, when we got off [the train] at Xinavane, we met Agosto, who was there with his truck, waiting for migrant workers, because we always went home on Saturdays. . . . We always met him there, in his car, it was the car that we always rode in! Well. Capela [Eduardo] was already going around to my father [Dane]. And later, Agosto also began to come after me. Sending letters. . . . And me, when I found those letters, I had to send them back, saying, "Look. I don't want to go around with a white man. Because I want to get married, I want to put the veil over my head, to see many people behind me singing. No, I won't marry you, you're a *mulungu*, and I'm black, I'll find a black man to marry."

Well. It was '30, when he started to insist, and began to write me letters. '30, '31, he kept it up. '32, that's when I left the Internato. And he was already, you know, with my uncle, because he had already said, "I want Rosalina." And my uncle said, "Eh! What will I do?! Capela also is beginning to threaten me about Rosalina! Now you too!" Look, there at home, I had that Patrício, . . . the brother of João Leão, who has a shop in Caniçado. . . . And he too was coming after me, so I'd be with him! And Raul Emilio, who was coming after me, he was a *misto*. And there was Ismael Panishandi. He was a *misto*, his father was Indian, from India. He had a black wife, who had six children with him! . . . And my uncle was going around like this, eh! I don't know, he was so upset. But what am I going to do? Sometimes he called me, "Call Rosalina, to come to me!" And I went into the house. "Sit down. Rosalina." Or, sometimes he called me Buxeni, or Racelina. . . . "Uncle?" "But what am I

going to do with you? So many *valungu* are coming to threaten me—one of these days I'll get shot! What am I going to do with you? I mean, here at home there are many girls, but you—I'm not very pleased with you! Because there are all these white men and *mistos* who want you!"

And I said, "Eh! Uncle. I don't know, uncle. There was that man, Jaime Massingue, who wanted to marry me. You didn't accept him. He was black. You said you didn't like him because he belonged to that race of people from Beira. Then came Jeremiah. He wanted to marry me. You said, 'I don't want him, he's a heathen, he just joined the church a short time ago, and certainly he came into the church because he wanted you! Because as soon as he started coming to church, he sent me a letter asking to marry you!' And then came Silva Mohambe. He wanted to marry me. And you said that he was no good because his mother is a heathen, his father is a heathen. He was black. That's already four! Because there was another, called João Mabunda. From over near Caniçado. But it's always the same thing! Now I too, I don't know what my uncle wants! Because those men, for sure, among those four, I could have married one of them, I could have loved one of them! But you, you didn't let me. Now, if these white men are coming, threatening you that they want to give *lovoló* for me, whatever they want—I'm not to blame for that!" And he said, "Yes. I see, for sure, I see that one of these days I'll be shot to death. I'm afraid of these Portuguese men! . . . They'll kill me. I don't know, but one day you're going to disappear from here, from my home, so that I can live in peace! Just because you're the prettiest one in the house!" And I said, "Look, I don't know, that is my luck." He said, "Uh! One day soon, I'll decide what I'm going to do with you."

Later, I went to tell my mother. "Mama. Uncle called me, to tell me that one of these days, I'm going to disappear from this house, because he's unhappy with me, because all the time—first it was Capela. And now it's Agosto. Now it's Patrício, and Raul, and Ismael Panishandi. All of them, they're all white, or *misto*. But it wasn't me who invited them! They're the ones who want me. . . . Now he's saying that I'm going to disappear one of these days!" And then my mother, she said, "All right. This is what I see. One of these days, for sure, I know that you'll go to get firewood, and he'll go and kill you himself, so that he can be at peace, and he won't have to see those *valungu* in his home. It's better for you to go to Mazimhlopes, to my brother's house. There's a church there, you can go to church, and for sure you will find some boys who will want to marry you. . . ." I said, "All right. I see that I must do as you say." But there was a girl, the niece of my uncle's wife, called Virginia. She heard everything, and then she went to complain to my uncle. She said, "Rosalina said this and this and this . . ." And later, Dane came to make trouble with my mother. "If you want to disappear, disappear—I don't care. Because my brother, when he died, I took you in to live with me, to look after you and your children. And now, I see that you want to take your daughter away." Mama said to him, "No, that's not what I said. She is suffering! And those four boys, why don't you let her choose one of them, to marry him? What fault does she have? She's a girl here in your home! And with her luck, she's pretty—it wasn't she who invited those men!" . . .

And later, there was one day, I got up in the morning and I packed my things. So that I could get the boat, António's boat, that crossed [the river] to go to the shop, so I could catch the train to Mazimhlopes. And later, I don't know who told him . . . he got on his bicycle and came after me. Dane. He found me in the street. I was just about to reach the boat, to cross the river. He took the bundle I was carrying on my head. Mmm. And he said, "Look. I know that you're going to those Capelas, or somewhere. In my house, you will never again enter my house." And he took the clothing that I had on my head. . . . And I was already near the house of Ismael Rigonanti, who was with my cousin, Joana. He had two wives, Rosana and Joana, who was my cousin. 5 . . . When my uncle took my clothing, he went home. I was left with just the clothing that I was wearing. . . . I went to Joana's house, crying. . . . Joana and Rosana, they told me, "It would be better, since you weren't able to get away, and he took all your clothing, we have to go and tell Agosto."

Luck, Heidi!! That day, Agosto was leaving from Chibuto, from the Capelas' place. With his truck full of sacks of corn, to distribute to [Eduardo's] shops at Xibabela, and Javanyani, and Ngomane. And when he heard what had happened, eee!! That the *mufundhisi* went by, carrying all of Rosalina's things, saying that Rosalina was going to [Agosto's] house. That he [Dane] ran after her because of him. And he said, "Ah, I see. But I just came from there, I didn't see her." Later, there was another boy, who was in the shop, buying things. He said, "Eh, it's true. I know that she's at Ismael's house now. Without her clothing! She has only the clothing she is wearing, he even took the scarf from her head!" Eh! This story! But God exists in this world—God exists in this world, in the heavens! God saw everything that my uncle had done!

Well. . . Later, Agosto said, "All right. She's at her cousin's house. He [Dane] ran after her because of me. All right. That's fine, that he did so. I wanted that girl, so much, and now he's done this! Well. The clothing that he took, I don't care about that." And I was [at Joana's house], crying. But Joana said, "Look. If Agosto knew, that he had done this, taken your clothing, because of him, and said that you were Agosto's wife. . . . If this were Patrício, no. But Agosto, that's a different matter! Because . . . Agosto Capela, '30, '31, even '32 he's still coming after you!" And later, when [Agosto] returned from Ngomane, he came to the house of Ismael Rigonanti. On that same day, when he had finished distributing the corn. . . . We saw the truck, pulling in. Everyone said, "Shee!! Here comes Capela's truck! Did someone already tell Capela, or what's going on?". . . . Agosto came in, he met the owner of the house, Ismael Rigonanti. They greeted each other [in Shangaan], "Hey, ho, *mulungu!*" "Heh, welcome, Capela! Welcome, Capela!" Well! . . . "When I passed through Javanyani, I heard about this. In Ngomane too, I heard it. That Dane ran after Rosalina, because of me. There was a boy, he said 'Yes, I saw that girl, she was even crying, she went into Ismael Rigonanti's place, crying. He took all the clothing that she had.'" . . .

Well. [Agosto said], "What I'm going to do—it's already been many years that I've wanted that girl, now she can't be with any other man. Not white, not black. Because everyone knows now that she's my wife. Her uncle abandoned her—he ran after her because of me. Not because of the others. I have been pleading since '30 until now, '32, going after that girl, because she's the one I want." And later, I said, "No. I'm going to [Patapata's] house." He said, "No. I know that if you go to Patapata's house, I'll never be able to be with you, and I love you. Don't you love me?" I said, "Mmm! Even if I love you, I'm preparing to marry, to find someone of my race, to marry. It's not because I don't want you! What I'm worried about, the thing that bothers me, is that you could leave me!" And he said, "Look. I promised you that I wouldn't leave you. I want you to be my wife! It's already been four years that I've come after you, Rosalina. So many years! And do I have a wife at home? No! There you are. It's because long ago I promised that you would be my wife. Many Portuguese men here have black girls, living with them, but not me. But you think that you, Rosalina, you can run to your uncle's house, and I'll see you with another man? No, better I kill myself! Because [Dane], he insulted me too. Saying that you're already my wife, when you're not my wife, not yet. No, it can't be. You are here, you're coming to my house." And Rigonanti, Ishmael, he said "Yes, for sure. Rosalina, there's no alternative, except for you to go with Agosto." . . .

And so, he took me there, to his house. And I was crying, Heidi. Because what I wanted, was to marry in the church! Like I'd seen other girls marry, that way. I wanted that. But I had to go with him. And I was afraid, ah! . . . Because I knew he would want [to sleep with me], and I had never been with a man before. And they say that, it hurts, the first time!

H: But how did you feel about him then? Did you love him?

R: Mmm, eee. I loved him. But I was afraid, I was afraid that he would leave me. But I loved him, I loved him. Much more than any of the others. . . . And so, I went to live with Agosto. Ah!! Heidi. This story!

**Courting Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)**

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** Rikatla was the Swiss Mission station, and later seminary, about 15 kilometers north of the capital city. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** N'waMagweva, a junior wife of Rosalina's paternal grandfather, "became angry" with her husband and fled her *vukatini* when her only child, Arturo, was very young. Arturo was raised by his father's other wives and was especially close to his elder brother Jorge, Rosalina's father. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Here Rosalina was speaking Portuguese and used the word *sorte*, which can mean good luck, fate, destiny, fortune, chance (but not bad luck). At other times she used *dyombo*, a Shangaan word that principally means good fortune rather than fate or destiny. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Here, as an aside, Rosalina told the story of Eduardo Capela, who had two African wives in Lourenço Marques but had to marry his Portuguese cousin (Agosto Capela's sister, Sofia), because she was pregnant with his child, and bring her to Mozambique. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** Rosalina considered Joana a cousin (Portuguese: *prima*) because Joana's mother and Rosalina's mother had the same *xivongo*, Tivane. [Back.](#)

[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique](#)



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## Lives of Women (Rosalina Malungana)

22 October 1995, Facazisse

- H: So you came to love Agosto, when he was your husband?
- R: Eeh!! Eee! He too really loved me, very much! When I was with him, I was eighteen years old. He was about twenty-nine or thirty, mmm. Eh! But he was really my friend. Eee! He was so quiet, indeed he was a little like your husband. . . . And he was really a friend of my family, the family of my mother. Shee! He really loved my mother, and my brother, that Bernardo. . . . And truly, he loved my family, because sometimes he even went to the home of Patapata. Mmm. To visit him. . . . And sometimes he fetched my mother's sisters, to visit us in Chibuto. Especially on Sundays, when he wasn't working.
- H: So your family accepted him?
- R: Hee! Eee! Oh! They really loved him! Eee!! Even, he was a *mukon'wana* [son-in-law], for my mother. Mmm. And to Patapata, he said *kokwana*, because I too called Patapata *kokwana*. Because he was the brother of my mother. Eh! Sometimes my uncle killed, maybe a reedbuck, maybe a duiker, took a wagon, to go put it in the road. When [Agosto] came from Xinavane, going to pick up migrant workers, he met the brother of my mother, there with that duiker, or reedbuck. For him to give me, to make sauce, to eat meat at home. . . . Eh! That Masukesuke, and his father [Patapata], sometimes left Mazimhlopes to come visit me, in Chibuto. It was [Agosto] who took them in his truck when he came from Xinavane, when they want to visit me. Mmm. They ate, they drank wine—[laughs] how they liked him! Mmm. . . . I was also a very good friend of his brothers. He had brothers, Armândio, Guilherme, Ilídio. They came here, to work here in Africa. They were good friends of mine. They were family, truly.

28 January 1996, Facazisse

- H: Did you farm, or do other work, while you were living with Agosto?
- R: Me, I don't like to sit, 'eee,' with my arms crossed! Eee! No way. Long ago, I still remember—maybe I already told you, one day here. I was with my husband Agosto. I had everything. But there was a day, my mother, when she comes to visit me—sometimes she came in the truck to visit us, in Mohamu [Chibuto]. And then one day *mamana* says, "Ah! Eh, Buxeni." "Mama?" "Eh! You're just sitting there, 'eee!'" I was sitting here, Agosto was there. I don't know what he was doing, he was writing something. "Eh! Heh, Goxita!" Because well we, we say "Goxita"! [laughs] Eh, Agosto! Because she couldn't pronounce it well! "Heh, Goxita!" "Mama?" "Eh! Your wife, she's just sitting there, 'eee!'" He says, "Eeh. But what do you want her to be doing?" "Hoh! She doesn't cultivate?" "Eh, cultivate? Cultivate for what? Oh! She has everything at home, everything is there. Cultivate for what? She cultivated at your house, not in mine!" . . . "Hmm." My mother. "*Swifake* [fresh green maize ears], <sup>1</sup> where does she find it? Doesn't she eat corn anymore, now that she's been married by a *mulungu*?" "Oh! She eats it. They'll give it to her. Many people come [to my shop], they'll give her *swifake*." "Eh, eh, eh, eh! Do you hear that?" She says to me. "You, one day, they'll come indeed, they'll bewitch you! They'll come with *swifake*, wife of a *mulungu*, they'll bewitch you, with that *swifake*! Pick up your hoe, cultivate yourself!" He says, "Ah! Me, I don't want that, I don't want it."

Well, the sun rises, Agosto takes his truck, he goes to Xinavane, to pick up migrant workers. . . . [My mother], she stays, she says, "Eh, Buxeni." I say,

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

fighting story

work story

schooling story

travel story

courting story

Rosalina ★

(lives of women)

"Mama?" She says, "Your husband went to Xinavane, out there, far away. Here, there's a place you can sow, over on that field—," because there were fields . . . [belonging to] Muslims there. There was one man called Ismael, who had two wives. Even, one of them was a cousin [Port. *prima*], because my mother and the mother of that girl had the same *xivongo*, Tivane. So she was considered my cousin, my sister [Sh. *makwavo*], that Joana. She was in the company of that Ismael, with the other wife, Rosana. . . . They didn't live at that place, they were already in Javanyani, at the shop, their husband opened a shop there. And then [my mother] says, "Since they're in Javanyani, you can take this hoe, he's not here, he went to Xinavane. You stay and cultivate. He won't know that you're cultivating here. Buxeni! Cultivate, my child, all right? Don't tell him anything!"

Well. When he goes to Xinavane, Agosto, I take that hoe, I go to the fields.

H: You did!

R: Eeh! To the fields. I hoe, I hoe, I hoe, I hoe, I say, "Eh! The time! It's time to go home." We'll find him around five o'clock, when he comes back. Or three o'clock, he comes back with migrant workers. . . . And then, the rain falls. He didn't know! He thinks that it's Joana and Rosana who are cultivating there. But it was I who did it. It rained, I sow corn. I sow beans. I sow millet. I go, "tshwee!" [i.e. work very fast] I told the women there, "You can't say anything, that I'm doing this!" Well, [the crops] are already coming out. Ah! He sees it, but he doesn't worry about it, it's the field of Rosana and Joana. Well, another day, he sees me take the basket, I'm going to the field. The beans were already like this [R indicates size]. Well, he begins to see, "Eh! Heh, you!" Because he spoke Shangaan very well! "Heh, you!" I say, "What?" "Eh! You're stealing from people!" "Oh! I'm stealing from people?" "Eeh. I'll tell Ismael, truly. What are you doing there?" I say, "I'm harvesting beans." "Oh! Beans, of Rosana and Joana? You'll be in trouble, you!"

I say, "Eh, they're my beans." "Heh? What do you mean?" I say, "They're mine, those beans. And that's my corn." "Ah, you're lying." "Truly! They're all mine, I sowed it all, it's all coming out, it's mine." "Ah! So what your mother said, you did?" I say, "Oh, you were taking your truck to Xinavane. And me, I come here." He says, "Eee! Mmm. That woman, she has *qondo* [common sense, knowledge]! Eh! So your mother has *qondo*, much more than you!" I say, well I reject [what he says]. "My mother has sense, mm, more than I have. But you didn't let me [cultivate]! Now, am I not here cooking beans, sowing things that I like? One of these days I'll be eating *swifake*. Mmm. My mother wouldn't leave me alone. Now I've already cultivated, I sowed corn, I sowed beans, I sowed millet."

He was so happy, truly, when he saw what I did in the field! Heh! When my mother comes, "Eh, *mamana*! Truly, you have good sense! Even more than that wife of mine!" I say, "She has sense, but didn't you refuse me? You say your wife doesn't have sense?" Well, my mother, she says, "Ah, you're happy, aren't you?" He says, "Eee, I'm happy! Because she's my wife, she cultivates well." She says, "Mmm. That's what I want." You, sometimes you'll want peanuts. Your wife will harvest peanuts for you, she'll cook them, you'll sit and eat. Isn't that nice? That's it. This one. I didn't let her be lazy, this one! I began to beat her, when she was a little child! When she didn't cultivate well, I beat her! She gets used to cultivating—this one, she really knows that hoe! That's her fortune. When I die, she'll stay with her hoe, it will help her."

### 10 May 1995, Facazisse

R: I, and Agosto, we weren't married, we didn't manage to marry. We just lived. I got pregnant three times, I had three children, they all died. They were all boys. . . . They died just when they were born, when they were being born. They died outside [of my womb]. That is, two, one was aborted, at six months. He was a boy. And the other, he was being born, mmm, he died. The other too, he came out, then he too died. From here I went to get injections,

that traditional medicine, that washes you [inside], but ah! It's a person's luck. To have children, is luck, because God wants to give them. Mmm. . . . Agosto, he had this illness, asthma. He was already about thirty-five years old when he got it, he didn't have it when he was small. But since he was a driver . . . and he smoked many cigars, it attacked his chest, that was it. It didn't last very long—he went to the hospital, he died. He was very young. He was very young. Mmm. . . . Indeed, when he died, his brothers went around looking for me, to give me something. Mmm. That Armândio, and Ilídio. . . . Even, that one said, "Ah, me, I want to cleanse the *tindzhaka*, of my brother." That Ilídio! [laughs] "Eh, you, you cleanse *tindzhaka*, no! Stay there with your wife. I too will find another man, if I want." And he said, "Ah! I'll be jealous, very jealous! When I see you with another man, knowing that you were the wife of our brother. He died, but you can stay with us!" I said, "Ah, mm-mm. If I can, I'll find work."

## 22 October 1995, Facazisse

R: And later, I found work. That [job] I told you about, that I had in Chibuto.

H: As a midwife, at the hospital.

R: Mmm. And the one who found me that job, was a doctor, Marcelo Branchi [?].

2 The doctor there, in Caniçado. . . . He took my name, that is, there was a nurse, called Damião, who said, "Look, here are girls who were in the Internato. But that one I know, her husband died." And he took my name to the Central Hospital [in Lourenço Marques], for me to learn to be a midwife. . . . Then that Dr. Branchi, when he spoke with Damião, the nurse, "Look, we can talk with Rosalina. To see if she wants to learn a little about being a midwife. . . . Let's call her to see if she'll accept." And they called me. I went to the hospital. That nurse Damião, when he saw me, he went and told the doctor. "Ah, she's arrived, Rosalina's here." Then [the doctor] said, "Look, Rosalina. We want to talk to you. Maybe you'll accept. Since you, you have no one to help you, your husband died. You're here at home with your parents, that is, your mother. Can you accept to come and work here in the hospital?" I said, "Eee! It would be a great pleasure for me. Me, find work with the state! Eeh! I know that I'm, I'll be very well, in my life. I accept." "Well, all right."

He wrote, "Rosalina Jorge Malungana, born in Guijá-Caniçado." They sent it to the Central Hospital, there. And a note came [back], "That Rosalina Jorge Malungana, who you're asking to come and take a course here, to be a midwife—she'll go to Xai Xai. Because here it's full. Now in Xai Xai, there's still no one. There are only two midwives, who are Laura and Emília. There, she'll be very well. . . . " Well. Then, that Dr. Branchi, he telephoned Xai Xai. He asked—there, there was a Dr. Demoranjo [?], in that hospital. And Laura, and Pereira, who is a nurse, and *dona* [mistress] Emília. Laura, she's the wife of Pereira, Emília doesn't have a husband. Her husband was in Portugal, but she was in Xai Xai, working. . . . [Dr. Branchi] telephoned there, to see if they had a place for me there, to go and learn. And then that Demoranjo said, "Ah, yes, here there's no one, she can come here. . . . " Then they called me, they said, "Look, there's a place for you. Pack your clothes, and then we'll give you papers for the journey." And he took my *bilhete* [identity document], he went to the hospital, . . . and then he went to the administration, to see the administrator, who was a white man. Not like now, when there are black administrators. . . . And there, I too went there to [get] his signature, and a stamp.

On the following day, a bus came from the train station. The driver was Alfredo, I knew him. I got in, I went to sleep in the Chibuto hospital. The Chibuto doctor, he was Albino Castanheira. Mmm. They gave me a bed, they gave me blankets and sheets, and I went to sleep. Then, on the following day, I caught the truck, for Xai Xai. And I arrived there, I delivered all my documents. They gave me a room, and they gave me teacups, they gave me plates, pots. . . . "Look, your house, it's here." It was the Sixth Infirmary. I slept there. But, the following day, as it was a big house, an infirmary for the

parturients, for pregnant women, I asked to take my bed so I could sleep there where there were pregnant women, so I could talk with them, and play with them. [The doctor] said, "Ah, all right. . . ." There, I began to learn very fast. It was only one year, only. Twelve months. Then, they gave me an exam. Dr. Castanheira, Emília, and Laura were there. They gave me a pregnant woman, who had pains, to give birth. I did the job alone, while they were standing there, seeing what I was doing. Mmm. . . . [R describes each step of delivering the baby, bathing it, giving it to the mother] Well. I had done everything. Then, they telephoned to Guijá. "Look, Rosalina has passed. Because she already knows how to do everything. . . ." And then, they gave me all the papers, I went to sleep in Xai Xai. From Xai Xai I went to Guijá . . . and from there to Chibuto. Now, in Chibuto there was a big hospital. And there, many women came! Eee! How I worked, alone! Mmm. Even, they even sent a midwife called Sara, Sara Carvalho, a *mista*. . . . They asked her to come and help me. And then I stayed there, mmm, five years and six months. . . .

### 19 November 1995, Facazisse

- R: There in your country, do you have *tin'anga*? Because in Portugal, they have them. And there they say they're "*bruxas*" [witches]. It's only, divining bones [*tinhlolo*], I don't know. What I know is that there is—because there's a little book, "Napoleon Bonaparte," it's written "Napoleon Bonaparte." And it has everything written inside. . . . It's like this, with [dice], that are put in, in a little thing with a lid. And then when you want to divine, you do this: "Will I have luck?" You do this [R demonstrates shaking dice out]. They come out. And then, "Will I have luck?"— if you want to ask about luck, or you want to ask about a journey, if you'll . . . have a good journey, or not. . . . Then, when it's odd—if it's 7, it's odd. If it's 8, it's even. Odd or even. . . . [R explains that there are eight dice, two each numbered one through four; and that even totals are lucky, odd unlucky] Then when you've consulted two, three times, you have to open [the book]. . . . And then you find there what you're asking. Mmm. It's written in a book, that book with the name "Napoleon Bonaparte." There, at the [Chibuto] hospital, there was a nurse who had that book. Mmm. . . . But it has everything there, if you want to consult about a journey, or for luck, or will I have a good husband or not . . . a question that you want to ask, you'll find it there.
- H: Who used this book at the hospital?
- R: It was Manuel Sigava. Eeh. He died. He was a nurse, and he bought it. He found it in Lourenço Marques. But that little book was made in Portugal. The owner who made it, his name, it's Napoleon Bonaparte. . . . I said, "Eh! Manuel, so you have that book?" He said, "Yes, I have it." . . . Sometimes, if I wanted to know my life, if it will go better or if it won't go badly, sometimes I went there, to consult. Since his wife, she was the *cunhada* [sister-in-law] of my cousin, she was my sister-in-law. <sup>3</sup> . . . I consulted to know, if I'll have luck or I won't have luck in my life. How my life is, I don't know. If I'll die in disgrace, or not. . . . As a game, I went to consult. And sometimes they came out well! [laughs] Because there was one day that I consulted this way. As a game, I went there to visit, I said, "Eh, Manuel, give me that Napoleon Bonaparte." And he said, "Eh! You! What do you want to know?" "Ah, let me, give it to me, I want to know something." Then he gave it to me. . . . Then, I did this. "Will I be happy in my life, or unhappy? Will I be happy in my life, or unhappy? Will I be happy in my life, or unhappy?"

Three times. And then I did this—[R mimics shaking dice out], those *tinhlolo* came out. I found even. Even, not odd. And there in the book, it was written. "You won't be rich, or poor. You'll stay in the middle." I don't forget that, those words! "You won't be rich, in your life, but you'll stay in the middle." Then I said, "Manuel! Manuel!" He said, "Eh! But you're annoying, truly! What is it?" I say, "Come here! Do you see in your book, what it's telling me? . . ." And he said, "Well then! It means, you won't be poor, you won't be wearing a sack! You won't be rich, you won't buy a car, or an airplane. But always, you'll eat

and you'll dress yourself." And it's true. I had, [what I needed] to eat and to dress myself, what I wanted. Mmm. I had everything at home. Eeh. That wasn't poverty. And here I am, eighty-one years old! I didn't suffer much. I was happy. . . .

And there, when I was working in Chibuto, there I had a lover [Port. *amante*]. That lover, he was married in Portugal. With children. He was the chief of Public Works, named António Campo Amorim. He was already a man of, of age. Mmm. And he was, it was I who arranged—well. He was running after me, but, since I also needed a man—mmm. I arranged him. . . .

H: How did you meet him, in the first place?

R: Amorim, he saw me when I went to spend the holidays at home. In Guijá. Where my family was—that is, my mother, and my sister-in-law, and the other one also, that second wife of my brother. . . . Amorim, he saw me in town, at the house of my friends. When I went there to visit Saquina. Because my house, it was a little outside of town. Where my mother lived, it was Nsongeni. <sup>4</sup> . . . Saquina, she was a Muslim, she was a *mista*. Her mother was African, but her father was Indian. Her surname, I never knew, well, those names of India. But the surname that the women gave her, they said that she was N'waKuoma, for being thin. Her mother was Muhlotini, of the Khosa clan. I met that family because Dane, he always sent our clothing there—because her father was a tailor. . . . Amorim saw me when I was going around there, to the shops to buy things. Eeh. And that Amorim, he already knew Saquina, and Isaura. Isaura is a girl from Inhambane, she was a friend of Saquina. Her husband was white, they came from Inhambane, he was transferred from Inhambane to come work in Caniçado, that white man. . . . And Saquina, she was in the company of a Muslim, a *misto*. Then, when [Amorim] saw me with them, he began to ask, "Who is that girl?" And they said, "Eh, she's a midwife from Chibuto." "And her husband?" They said, "Ah, we don't know if she has a husband there in Chibuto, but here no. . . . She came to visit. She's there in Nsongeni, with her family." Eeh. And then he said, "Ah, but I would like to talk with her, because that girl, to me, she seems good." And then, Saquina said, "All right. I'll go talk with her. If she accepts, I'll tell you." And then she came to tell me, "Eh-heh! Rosalina, you have a lot of luck! That great person wants you."

H: "Great person"?

R: Eeh! Great, because he was chief of Public Works. Mmm. "He said that he wants to talk with you." "Talk with me? Yee! I came here to visit you, I didn't come here to arrange a man." Then she began to convince me, "Eee, Rosalina, you have luck! That man likes you. He said he would treat you well, you can be well with him." And she began to convince me! "Eh, this is great luck that you have, because that man, everyone says that he's a good person. . . ." "Eh! All right. I can't give an answer now. . . ." Then, I went home. And he went to Saquina's house to ask her, if she had already said something to me. They said, "Yes, we did, but she said that she didn't come here for men. She came to spend Christmas with her family." "Ah, all right, you go there, you talk very well with her, I'll give you a good *saguate*." A good *saguate*—he'll give them money, for talking to me. . . .

Then, Saquina and Isaura, there was one day, it was Sunday. I'd already come out of church. I was at home, talking with my mother. Then my sister-in-law said, "Eh! *Valungu* are coming." "Valungu are coming? Hah!" It was Saquina and Isaura. [laughs] Hah! Eh-heh! Because I had already told my sister-in-law something about it. "Heh! Welcome, welcome!" "Eh, thank you, thank you." "Heh! You've come from Caniçado, why?" She says, "Ah, we've come to visit you!" . . . Then we gave them a *sangu* [reed mat]. My mother said, "Ah, you have to kill a chicken, and cook *vuswa* for them, because we don't have rice. . . ." They kill a chicken. We cook for them. They eat. We give them tea. They drink. Well, she begins, Saquina. She said, "Heh! Rosalina. We didn't come today to visit you. We were sent by that Amorim. To know the truth, why you won't accept him. Don't give up that man, because that man is an important person, he's not a little boy, who has no good sense! That man is already old, with sense!" . . . "Ah, he'll treat you well, he'll treat

your mother, your family well! [Better him] than a young boy who has no sense, who has a head [that], you know, doesn't work well!" . . .

They began to talk this way, my mother was there, sitting. And my sister-in-law was there, and that one also, that Zilda, she was sitting there too. And then my mother said this. "Eeh! Did you come to visit your friend, or did you come to court her for the men? I thought that you came to visit your friend, like she too goes to visit you. Get out!" Eeh! They're afraid, you know? "You came for that?!" [laughs] And Saquina, she was a friend of my mother. Heh! "You leave that Rosalina—she wants someone with sense, that one, he has no sense!" They say, "Ah, this one, he has a lot of sense! Eeh." And my mother, she began to say, "Ah, he-he-he-he! I don't know about Rosalina, if she wants to rest from working. Well. That—no. That's up to you. I'm saying this because she could arrange a man who won't treat her well. There, in her work, she's very well there. . . . I would like her to stay with her work, there, if she wants to dress herself, she has money, if she wants to eat, she has money, she has everything. Now, to arrange a man who has no sense, ah! I don't want it. [Better] she stays there at work. Mmm. The doctors, the nurses, whoever, the other midwives, they treat her well." . . . Well, it's the time when they're taking leave, to go home. Mmm. "Eh, we're going home, we're going home . . . thank you, thank you!" "Eh, greet them at home, greet them at home!" Because the mother of Saquina, and my mother, they were friends. Eeh. My mother got very sick, very very sick. When she went [to go to the hospital], there in Caniçado, she didn't stay in the hospital. Saquina's mother said, "No, your mother won't go to the hospital. Because I'm seeing that the illness she has, it needs traditional medicine. 5 . . . And from then, they were very good friends! Mmm. My mother always used to go to visit her. . . .

Well, my mother said, "Eh!"—she was playing, you know? But she wasn't angry. Mmm. . . . "Even I, here, I'm not going hungry . . . because sometimes Rosalina comes here, she gives me everything, when she has it. She has money, I don't lack anything in my house. She already had a good husband, my *mukon'wana*—a good, good, good man. God took him, now she's going to arrange another, who has no sense? . . . " Then, when I went to accompany them, I said, "Look. I'll come. But I want to talk, very well, with that man. Since you know that he's a good man. . . . I'm seeing that he's already a man of some age. But it could be that he doesn't have sense." [Saquina] said, "No, we know, that that man—everyone says, "good *mulungu*, good *mulungu*, good *mulungu*." "Eh, I'll come."

Then, I found a good day, it was a Saturday. I said, "Eh, *mamana*, I'm going to visit Saquina." "Ah, all right, go ahead. I can't say no, because you're used to living in town. Chibuto is a town, here it's the bush. . . . " Well, I said to my sister-in-law and to Zilda, "Eh, I'm going. I'm going to arrange a *mukon'wana* for you!" I said it, playing, to Zilda and Albertina. Eeh. . . . Then, I went to Caniçado. And at night, when he left work, he came to talk to me. He already knew that I had arrived, here at the home of Saquina. Because they sent a little boy, to tell him at work. . . . And then when he arrived there, they said, "She's here, Rosalina. You must speak the truth. Because she could leave her work, while you won't treat her well. . . . " Then he said, "All right. I, Rosalina, I couldn't call you, to talk to you, [if I were just] making fun of you. No. I need a woman. Because my wife, she's in Portugal. With four children, studying. They can't come here. And she also suffers, from that illness of the heart. She can't be always going around upset. . . . And I want a woman here. Because to go around to those [prostitutes], I don't like that, because I'll catch venereal diseases. . . . Now, I want a fixed woman. That is good. Mmm. I prefer you. Here, I'm already here more than three months, here in Caniçado, working. With those men, [building] the hospital. I hadn't yet found [a woman] who satisfied me. Now I, when I saw you, I really liked you. I know that you, for sure, since you had the idea to arrange a job, to stay with your work, not run around looking for a man, since your husband died, for sure I can trust that you have a good life. You're a woman who understands, you think very well. And I won't mistreat you, you'll have everything from me. You'll be my own wife, here. I won't make you leave your work, to treat you

badly. . . . "

Then I said, "All right, Amorim. I am a woman. Who also needs a man. Mine died, very young. Now, if I arrange a man who won't be my friend, I won't like that, because for sure, [Agosto] was really really really my friend, that man! He never beat me, he even—ah, he didn't even know how to insult a woman! . . . He really loved me. And he was a great friend to my mother. The whole Malungana family loved him very much." He says, "Rosalina, but you see that I'm no child. I already have children who are studying. I know what it is to love a woman. If I, if you see that, it's not what you [want], you can return to work. What I want, I want a woman, since I love you, Rosalina, don't give up the luck that you have in your hand!" I said, "Luck that I have in my hand?" [laughs] . . . Well, Saquina, she says, "Yes! What he's saying, it's true! You, truly, you have luck in your hand! Because that man, we know that he's a good man, he's good!" "All right. I accept." I accepted. And then, he said, "Look. Since she accepted, I'm asking for her to sleep at my house."

H: That same day?

R: Eeh! [laughs] I said, "Hah!" [He said], "Ah, how will I know that you've accepted, that you'll be my wife? You accepted, and I'm happy. I'm asking you to accompany me to my house. To my room." Then, Isaura said, "Ah, all right. He's saying the truth, you have to go there, to sleep at his house, in his room. . . . And that's when I also said to him, "Look. If you want me to go with you, to go in your company, I want you to build me a house. 6 Because some day you'll leave from here for Lourenço Marques, because you came to work here, on the hospital. . . ." Because he was a draftsman, he made drawings of houses. . . .

Then, I went there [to Amorim's], to sleep. Then he began to tell me everything, that he'll do for me. Mmm. And then, in the morning, I said, "Look, tomorrow, I have to go home, to my mother. So I can explain all of this. Because I don't want to hide anything from my mother." He said, "I too want this, I don't want you to hide anything from your family. . . ." And then, he went shopping for my mother. [laughs] He bought a *rihlelo* [winnowing basket], he bought a *xirhundzu* [cone-shaped basket], he bought a *mukumi* [extra-large cloth], and a blouse, and a scarf. Mmm. To give my mother! [laughs] My mother! Hee! And then, when I returned home, I had all of that, I had rice, meat, for us to eat. [laughs] And when I arrived there at home, first, since I knew my mother! She's so wild—she's difficult, *mamana*! I called my sister-in-law, "Albertin-oo! Come here!" . . . "Eh, Zilda!" Then she says, "Hee! Truly, you'll be in big trouble!" "Me, this *mulungu*, I like him, truly! I accepted." "You accepted?!" [laughs] "I don't know what *mamana* will do! Look at these things. *Mukumi*, two cloths, a scarf, a blouse. They're for her. Heh! Well, here. I have rice, sugar, oil, everything. For her to eat, these things. And the *xirhundzu*, here it is. I want to give them to her." Zilda, she says, "Hah!" I say [to Zilda], "Heh, *mamana*." She says, "Eee." I say, "Me, I have a *mulungu*. Well, I accepted him!" [laughs] [Zilda] says, "Indeed, she can't return these things! Indeed, she has to take them. If she makes noise, you, leave her alone, keep quiet. She'll take them." Albertina and Zilda, they'll oblige [my mother] to take them. Because when I've already accepted the man, and he, poor thing, he sent all this for her. But heh! I was afraid! [laughs]

Well, that Zilda, she called my mother. My mother comes, she sits down. Then I say, "Eh, *mamana*. It's I who called you. Because when I went to Caniçado, I went because of that matter that Saquina and Isaura came here to tell me about. When I arrived there, he began to talk, [saying] he'll treat me well, he'll give me everything that I want, if I go in his company, because his wife is in Portugal. . . . Since I know that, he's already a man of some age, he's no child, and everyone knows that he's a good person, I accepted. To go in his company. But I said first, what I want, is for him to build me a *barraca*, for me to leave [Chibuto], come here with my things, to live in my own house. But he won't build it right here, it will be in town, in Caniçado. . . . And if he leaves me, if he doesn't take care of me, since there's a hospital here, I'll return to work in the hospital. . . . And he accepted. He even said he would do it right

away, so I will come to live here, in town. . . . And then, this morning, he bought these things. He said they're for you, these things. . . . "

She says, "Hmm. Eh, Buxeni." I say, "*Mamana?*" "Do you mean, you want to leave your work because of men? Aren't you very well there, in your work?" I said, "Ah, *mamana*. It's because I too, I'm not an old woman who can live without a man. Don't you know? Even those whose husbands die, there in South Africa, or die here, don't they find another man? . . . I have to have a man. Everyone says he's a good person. If he doesn't treat me well, when he's already made a *barraca* for me, a house for me, well. I'll live in my house, go to work." Well, Albertina and Zilda, [they say], "Eee! She's speaking the truth! And that man, he's old, he has sense, that one! . . . If he weren't a good person, would he have bought these things? . . . " Then [my mother] said, "Mmm. That's so. What will I do? You already accepted! And these things, I can't return them. If I do, then he'll say that I don't have sense! Well. Do what you think. If he doesn't treat you well, don't forget that you have to return to work in the hospital!" . . . Well, I took my mother's words to him. I went to Caniçado, I said, "My mother accepted. . . . She says, thank you very much, for what you gave her. And when I said that you were a man, you weren't a young boy, without sense, she said, 'Yes, if he's like [Agosto], I'll be happy. . . . Now, I don't know if he'll be like Agosto.'" He said, "Look, tell your mother, she can rest." And it was this way.

But then, when I went back to Chibuto, I began to think. Eh! But what do I want to do? . . . Here, I'm very well, because I'm working. Leave my job because of a man? Ah! I prefer to arrange a, a lover, since I'm still young, I need one. To arrange a lover, to live with him here, in Chibuto, while I'm at work. Now, I'm going to leave work because of a man that I don't know, what his life is like, I don't know? He began to insist, he too was always sending me letters. . . . "So, our agreement, Rosalina, I'm here waiting for you." Here [i.e. Chibuto], he even came, with his driver. They came to the hospital. When I saw the red car, I said, "Eee! It's Amorim. He already sent many letters!" Poor thing, he sent letters with money. For me to buy things that I want. Well. I didn't return the money. I bought some things to eat. While I was still thinking. Then he said, "Some day I'll come to know the truth. If you love me or not. Because I'm here waiting for you, but my promise to arrange a *barraca* for you is stalled. Because I don't see you." Eeh. He left Caniçado with his driver, he went to Chibuto.

And there in Chibuto, he began to talk with the doctor, he was Ilízio Dias Miranda. . . . And then he said, "*Senhor* doctor, I, when I come here, excuse me for saying this. It's because here, of your workers here, I have one who is my lover. . . . But I would like to take her to accompany me. But now, she's afraid. Of coming—she thinks I'll mistreat her." And then the doctor said, "Eh, Rosalina!" [laughs] When they called me, the fear I had! . . . When I went outside, I said, "Heh! It's Amorim. I can't hide. I'll explain what happened." The doctor, he said, "Rosalina. Do you know this man?" I said, "Yes, I know him." "You know him, how do you know him?" I said, "I know him because he's my lover. Because when, sometimes I go to visit my mother, he found me there." "But he has already asked to take you in his company?" I said, "Yes, he's already asked many times, but it's that I'm afraid because, I could accept, and I already accepted! What I wanted—yes, I accept, his promise to take me in his company. But what I'm afraid of is that he could take me . . . and then treat me badly. Because I'm not used to that. . . . That's why I, I had to arrange this job, because if a man leaves you while you're working, it doesn't matter, because you're working to earn your bread." And he said, "Ah, all right. But how do you know that he won't treat you well? If he doesn't treat you well, you'll return to work, because we know that you're a very good worker. It's better, since you two agreed. . . . " Eh, how happy [Amorim] was! [laughs] Then I say, "All right, *senhor* doctor. Since *senhor* doctor is saying this, I too accept, to go with him." Then I went to Caniçado with him. But I went when he had already [arranged] my *barraca*. I said to the doctor, "Yes, I can go in his company, but my promise was that he first would build a house. Mine! In Guijá, in my land, where my mother is. For me to put my things there." . . .

Later, well, [Amorim] finished his work in Caniçado. I went with him to Lourenço Marques . . . I was lucky, you know, Heidi, because this one too, that António, it was the same thing. He was a good man. The only thing that he has, he's a little jealous. . . . I was with him—'47, '48, '49, '50, '51, '52. That's when his brother-in-law, also called António, the brother of Amorim's wife, he sent her a letter. But [Amorim] always sent money there, he sent money to his wife and his children, to pay for school. And then [his brother-in-law] said, "Look. Your husband here, he has a *preta* [black woman] who lives with him. You should know that. Some day you'll lose your husband. It's better if you bring the children here. Because here too, there's a school for them to study in." And then the wife, she sent a letter to her husband. "I am here, with your children, so they can study, and you there with *pretas*? Because António already told me that you're there with a *preta*, who is always with you. I know she's from Caniçado, Guijá. Called Rosalina." Then, when he found that letter, he was very angry.

He looked for António, to ask him about it. And he said, "Yes, I told her, because—why don't you tell my sister to come here? So you can live with her here? The children will study here. Because you're here with that *preta*. And my sister, there far from you." And then [Amorim] said, "Are you interested in that? You want me to sit, being a man who needs [a woman], without having a companion here in Moçambique? First, she's an invalid. Second, the children are in school, . . . I want them to study there." . . . And then, [Amorim] sent a letter. "Yes, if your brother told you that I have here a *preta*, it's true, I do. Not I alone, there are many who have *pretas* here, who have children with them, in Moçambique. . . . And how would I live, being a man, I too need [a woman]. Living here alone. Only if I were a bull, that was already castrated, all right, I no longer need a cow. Now, I'm not castrated. I'm a man who needs [a woman]. It's true, I have one. But what I want, is for my children to be in school, studying. . . ."

Then he said to me, "Eh, all right." [I said], "We'll see. Some day, if she appears here, I don't want to be killed with a pistol. Because for sure, she'll want to come here. . . . For sure, if she kills me with a pistol, she has reason, because you married her, and had children with her." I said, "If she comes here, I'm going to Caniçado. I can't live with you, because she's your proper wife. If she wants to kill me, she can. With a pistol. Mmm." . . . Well, he was always sending her money. In the end, that money he sent, she saved it. She decided to come with all the children. Without telling her husband—the one who knew was the brother, and he too didn't say anything. Then, when she reached Beira, she telephoned. To tell her husband. "I'm here, in Beira, with all your children. I want you to arrange a house for me, because I won't live with a *preta*."

She traveled with the money that he sent her, she came by ship, without telling her husband. [laughs] Eeh! Love! I was hunted, Heidi. I was hunted. God, God really loves me, though. I was hunted, by her brother, and by her, herself. She found the house that he was renting, where he kept me. Because he arranged a house for me to live in, it was in Xamankulo, at the foot of the Xamankulo hospital. And his wife, and her brother, they were going around hunting me! Because that man too sometimes didn't stop at home. He always came to my house, sometimes he came to my house to satisfy me, sometimes it was so that I wouldn't arrange another man. . . . Just that he couldn't always sleep there because of his wife. But he always came to visit, sometimes he stole time when he was working at night, he lied that he had work there, for the railroad, when he came to sleep at my house. . . .

But how I came to know that she was hunting me, there was a day when he took me in his truck, he wanted to show me where she lived. He picked me up at home. I went with him. She was a little old woman, thin, his wife. With white hair. Her hairstyle, it was like this, in a bun. She was sweeping here on the veranda. Me there sitting in the truck. Looking at her. He said, "Look, that one is my wife." And the children were on the veranda, with a light. There was Guilherme, with the girl beside him, courting. Mmm. And me there sitting. . . .

"Amorim. I don't want to lose my life." "But why?" "Eeh! That, for me to be hunted like an animal, I don't like it!" . . . "She's not going to kill you, no way! Do you think, to kill a person, it's not difficult?" I said, "Your wife is going around asking where Rosalina lives, 'That Rosalina, she was our maid.' Was I ever your maid, in your house? While she's going around hunting me! She did that to learn where I live! . . . Saying that, 'Ah, we're looking for a girl, called Rosalina, who was our maid. She left, and I would like her to return to my house, where I live in Madlhangalene.'" . . .

And then when I returned from the market, they told me, "Eh, a *senhora* came here, she was with a man. . . . And they said that they came here looking for a Rosalina who they heard lives here, in this area, who was their maid." And I said, "What did she look like?" "Eh, she's already old, thin. And her hairstyle is like this, for sure there are none like that here"—when you see a person with a bun here, it's in Portugal that they do that. Now here, it was just, the hair was cut, just [kept] like this, the Portuguese, here in Lourenço Marques. I said, "Ah, I know who it is. It's the wife of Amorim!" . . . I had already told Amorim that I want to go home. For sure, since she already knows that I live here, they'll come here. Some day, if it's not the brother who kills me, it will be the wife. Then, I called [Amorim at] work. "Amorim, when you leave from work, you have to stop at my house. Don't go directly to your house. Stop here, because I have something to talk to you about, because your wife and your brother-in-law, they came here. Searching for me." Then when he left work, he got in his truck, he came here. . . . [R recounts what she told Amorim] "And I, I don't want to be killed, because I'm the only daughter of my mother. I'm going. If you want me, you'll call me, for me to come here to be with you. You can arrange a place where they don't know, or I'll go to the house of my relatives, of the brother of my father, that nurse called Arturo. Now, for me to be hunted like an animal in the bush, I don't want it."

Eee! But when he went home, he made a great uproar, with António, and his wife. "What were you going to do, at Rosalina's house? . . . Has Rosalina ever worked here? No. Look, if you kill Rosalina, it's I who will go to prison. Because Rosalina, when she came to Lourenço Marques, it was I who went to fetch her there at her parents' house, to come here. The girl isn't at fault. Well. If it were a white woman that I had here, you could kill her. Because here, even though there are houses for *brancas* [white women], in that life, there in Araujo [Street], I don't go there, to those *brancas* who are there to earn money!" z . . . Then he came to tell me, the next day. When he was going to work. "Look, at home, this and this happened. . . ." Eh! I, since he always—he always came with money, he always gave me money to eat, to buy things that I wanted. Poor thing, that man really liked me. Well, I went to tell Arturo, the brother of my father, who is a nurse at the Swiss Mission hospital. . . . "I intend to go home. Because here, I'll die. If he wants to continue with me, I too will continue with him, because he likes me, and I too like him. And he's a man who helped me a lot. Or if he wants, he'll . . . say 'I'm going to work there, in Caniçado,' when he's coming to be with me. . . ."

Then my uncle said, "Yes, you're speaking well. Because that man is her husband. Since she left [Portugal], ready to come to see what's going on with her husband. She's hunting you like a rabbit—even if it's not she who will kill you, but her brother, he can kill you. Mmm. If you're thinking of going home, all right." . . . While [Amorim] was at work, I packed everything. . . . When he left work, he stopped [at my house]. I said, "Amorim, I don't know what I'll do." He said, "Eh! This is bad. You, I'll take you to Missão São José. <sup>8</sup> Near your father's brother. There, it's far, they won't go there. Now here, in Xamankulo, it's too close . . ." "All right. We'll do that. . . ." And later I said [to myself], "No. I'll lose my life. Better I live than die. If I manage to arrange work in the hospital, like they said—even if I don't go to the hospital, but I'm going there, to Caniçado."

Do you know what I did, Heidi? I packed my things, I called a [taxi], it took me to the station. I took all that, I put it . . . on the train. When he came from

work, he found an empty house. How he cried, poor thing. The neighbors said that. Eh! Not even in the house of my father's brother. [Arturo told him], "Ah, she went to the train station, with her furniture, she went home. And she said that if you want her, you'll visit her there. Because there, [your wife and her brother] won't go. You'll have your house here in Lourenço Marques, she'll have her house in Caniçado." It was this way, indeed. Mmm. . . . He always came on Saturdays, then he returned on Mondays. But then, later, I don't know if it was, [because] his wife was always sad, they said that there was one day, that she fell. With that illness that she had, in her heart. . . . They took her to the hospital. At the hospital, they said to take her to Portugal. That there, she would get better. And so, he took his wife, and his children, he went to Portugal. Mmm. This was in, in '64. And I stayed like this. Mmm. . . .

### 22 October 1995, Facazisse

- H: So while you were with Amorim, you were also working in the market in Lourenço Marques?
- R: Mmm. I was living alone. With my family, those children of my sister-in-law. Mmm. Because it was to give me company, when they were children. . . . Then—that's also when I arranged two stalls in the Xipamanine market. To sell things. Ah! I was doing very well, with my life! I had two stalls, sometimes I made *byala* at home, I sold it. While I'm in the market, there, there were girls who sold the *byala*. I had money in the market, I had money at home. That's when I began to support the children of my sister-in-law. . . .

### 10 May 1995, Facazisse

- R: The children of my brother, they grow up with me, there in Lourenço Marques, when I'm working in the [market] stands, for them to eat and to go to school, to learn and things. But today, ah, they don't remember their aunt. . . . I gave them food, I sent them to school, I paid for their books, I bought them clothes, until they were grown, married. Sometimes I paid the tax, because my brother, he was this way, very weak for helping the family. Ah, he went to work in the mines, but he wasn't, well, very good about helping the family. . . . He was very quiet, I don't know what he had, he only came back to make children. In the time of hunger, my mother went there, to Lourenço Marques, she said, "Look Rosalina, there at home we're hungry." And I gave her money, she bought food. Sometimes, always, any time they were hungry, I had to go home, on Saturdays, with food to give my mother. Mmm. I gave clothing, I gave food, to my mother and my sister-in-law. While the children were with me.
- H: All five of them?
- R: Mmm! Mmm. Well, the one who knows, Juliana [Kwinika] knows, very well. . . . Eeh. When I was in Lourenço Marques, it was '47, '47. Settled in Lourenço Marques, working. To help my mother, to pay the tax. Mmm. My brother, since he had that illness, asthma, he stayed five years without going to the mines. He stayed at home, because it always attacked him, always that asthma. I said, "No, now, since I'm also there in Lourenço Marques, I'm well because I have two stands there, selling things, tomatoes, onions, cabbage, other things." And here at home, I made *byala*. And then here at home, when I was there, the girl who was the lover of my nephew, it was she who stayed at home, selling *byala*. While I was coming from Xipamanine [market], finding money here at home. Put away. From those who bought *byala*. And then I came with [the money] from the market, joined it with that [money]. And that's why we never suffered from hunger in my house. I really worked for my family! For my mother, for my brother, and his children. Because I couldn't sit with what I have, alone, this way, while I have family who don't have what they need, no. I had to give, something. Mmm. Especially, I didn't want to see my mother suffering. No. Because she suffered to raise me, when my father died. Eh. I couldn't abandon my mother, no. . . .

**19 November 1995, Facazisse**

- R: And later [after Amorim returned to Portugal], I said, "Eh, I'm returning to Lourenço Marques. That's when I entered Xipamanine again. I arranged two stalls there, I stayed there, since it was the time of the Chinese, they brought tomatoes, onions, kale, cabbage. They brought those things, to sell. I stayed there, from '64 to '71. That's when my mother began to lose her vision. . . . But I worked hard, I did very well with my life!
- H: You've said to me before that many people have envied you, because you did so well.
- R: Hee!! Hee!! Hee!! Hee!! Envy! If it wasn't for those strong *tin'anga*, I would have died, truly! Hoh! Heidi. I was well treated, well treated [with protective medicines], so that no one could harm me. Only when my time arrives, for God to take my soul, because here in this land, there is a lot of envy, Heidi. This land, it has so, so, so, much witchcraft! . . . Here in Mozambique, I'm not saying here in Magude, but here in Mozambique, Nampula, Beira, everywhere. There are people who, who know how to envy a person, and who know how to harm a person. Hoh! Do you know, even my family, they're very jealous, they say that I have a lot of luck. Because I never lived badly. Because, I know how to look after my life. I don't like to be sitting like this, without working. To help my life. When my mother was living, if I left from Lourenço Marques, I came to visit my family here, my mother. I got up in the morning, went to the field. Mmm. If I came here, I had to find a person to look after my things. Eeh. So that when I return I'll pay the money that we agreed. Mmm. I left her with food, I said to her, "Look, I'm asking—," because there are many poor people, you know? "I'm asking for you to take care of these things. When I come back, I'll give you 'x.'" "Ah, all right, go on. I'll look after these things." She stayed in my house, taking care of my house. I had to visit my mother, to help her in her fields. [R pauses]

Heidi, it even happened, there were people who arranged a bad *n'anga*, a Makua! A man. To do me harm, to put a medicine [*murhi*] here in my yard. So that if I went out there, went outside, it was to make me fall. If I fell, I couldn't get up, or I would get up all, crippled. This medicine, it's called *swiphoso*. 9 It's a medicine that kills a person right away.

- H: But who did this to you?

R: It was a woman called Lídia, from Chaimite. She was a neighbor, I knew her, there in Lourenço Marques. . . . Well, this Lídia, she came here one day. Because I, I had Xipamanine, two stalls there. And at home, I made *byala*, while I was in Xipamanine, here at home there was a woman who was selling *byala* in my house. There in Xipamanine, I did *xitique*. That is, we got together, ten women, or maybe five, or whatever. We combined our money, to give to one person. Then, another day, we combined our money, we gave it to another person. . . . That person did what she wanted, sometimes she went to buy a table, or she went to buy clothing, or whatever. . . . Like me, when I received that money I combined it with my money from Xipamanine. And from home, from the *byala*, do you know what I went to buy? I went to buy a freezer. And that freezer, it was the kind that worked with kerosene. . . . And then, in that freezer, I put wine, beer, Coca-Cola, and Fanta. The one who sold that, it was that boy, the father of Alcídio, before he married. Manuel, the son of Albertina [R's sister-in-law], and Vasco, this one in South Africa. . . .

It was they who stayed here at home, selling. I returned from Xipamanine, with the money from Xipamanine, I found the money from the freezer at home, and [the money] from that Beatriz, the one who sold *byala* for me. Isn't that a lot of money? And then with that money I went to buy stuffed chairs. Mmm. Sofas, four of them. . . . I bought a table, and I bought a gas stove. I had a beautiful house, truly. Eeh. [R pauses] Sometimes, if I think of that, if I'm sleeping, all of my sleepiness disappears. From always thinking about that. . . .

And then one day that Lídia came. It seemed that she came to visit me. She found me there at home, I said, "Eh, welcome! . . ." "Heh! That Malungana, she's really rich! . . ." "Eh! Rich? Me, rich?" "Mmm! . . . I'm seeing here a stuffed chair, a freezer, a gas stove, a table—a beautiful house! And they say that you have here a girl who works for you. Earning money." Then I said, "Listen. A person who works, to earn money, you know very well that I don't drink. I never went to restaurants, to sit there, drinking. I have my life, I have my mother, there at home. Sometimes when she's sick, I take money to her. . . . If my mother, when she's sick, where will I find money to fetch my mother? Sometimes there at home there's hunger. Who will give food to my mother? If not I? My father died. My brother is very feeble for that! I have to help my mother. Now that, when I receive money from *xitique*, I buy things that have value. I don't take that money to go drink." "Ah, then, you always have luck." "Ah, I know how to work. And I have luck."

Well, when she left here, she went to talk with that *n'anga*, to do me harm. Mmm. Later, she did that at night. Then when I went out, at night, I felt—it seemed that I was seeing a light, it seemed like a flashing light! And I fell on the ground. When I fell, that girl went to tell Manuel and Vasco. "Aunt fell there, on the ground!" . . . And then they went to pick me up. "Aunt, what happened?" I couldn't speak. And then, the voice that I found, I answered, "Go find a car, a taxi, and take me to Saidi." A *n'anga*, from Nampula, there near Tanzania. . . . "Because I already know what this is."

Then they called the taxi, they took me, they went to knock on the door, they woke up that old man, that *n'anga*. And he told me to sit down there in the chair. Right away he went to fetch a big book. He began, first he asked my name. "What is your name?" I said, "Rosalina Malungana." "And your father?" "My father is Jorge Malungana." "Your mother?" "My mother is Anina Tivane." Then he began to write—he had glasses. He wrote, and he went to get a big book. It's that book, it's called, it's "*Korani*." *Korani* [Koran?]. A big book. Then he began to open it, he said, "Heh!" He began to read. "Eee! Look. A fat woman came to your house?" I say, "Yes, she came." "That woman, she's very envious of you. She said many things about you, about those things that you have there in your house." I said, "Yes." "But do you know this woman?" "I know her." "What's her name?" "She's Lídia." He wrote her name. Then, he opened the book, he said, "Look. That woman, she went to a *n'anga* of my race, one from Nampula. To harm you. So that you would fall, die right away, because she's saying that you, you have much luck. You have a lot of money,

and things that you buy, many beautiful things, there at home. But now, God helped you, because what you have, you didn't steal. You work for that. And your spirits, the spirits of your mother, they don't let you die."

H: The spirits of your mother?

R: Mmm. That N'waXumana, Kondissa, and those spirits of the Malunganas, who are my grandparents. "They don't let you die. They fought to help you." And then, he went into [another] room. He took some things, they look like stones, yellow, red, and blue. Shiny, that really shine, they are medicines, there. He asked for some charcoal. Then, he took a white cloth, a sheet. He covered me, with that sheet. And then, with that smoke, I began to sweat. I'm sweating, sweating, sweating. Then, a lot of snot began to come out! . . . I said, "Look, it's coming out of me." He said, "Let it come out. Because that, that was to kill you."

H: I don't understand.

R: It was to kill me, I was attacked with that medicine, that she buried, in the ground. And it made me fall, that medicine. When I went out, I fell, I breathed that thing that she buried there. Then, that *n'anga*, he took water, he put another medicine, a powder, there for me to drink. He said to his daughter, he had four daughters, "Take her, give her a bath." . . . Then, he took a bottle. And he poured that medicine, that liquid, in the bottle. He said, "This is for you to smell, to get rid of what she put in your head. And then, when you go to sleep, put this all over your body." And then, he also made me, it's called *hirizi*. That's their own medicine, for strong protection. You put it inside a white cloth, then you roll it, that cloth. And then they sew it here, and put a string on it, so you wear it here [around your hips]. And then he gave me a medicine for me to burn, in the fire, speaking her name, so that she would disappear, and never come again.

H: You mean Lídia?

R: Eeh. And she disappeared, she never came again.

### 3 March 1996, Facazisse

R: My mother began to lose her vision in '71. I said, "Ah, I can't abandon my mother. I have to take care of her." They send a letter, there [in Facazisse]. They say, "*Mamana* can no longer see, here. *Namu* [sister-in-law], we're writing to tell you that truly, Mama, her eyes no longer see." It's my sister-in-law, Albertina. . . . Indeed, she was going to the hospital, they gave her a little medicine, and there at home, they look for a *murhi*, a traditional one, to put in her eyes. Eh! I don't know if it was that *murhi* that ruined her eyes, I don't know, because [the medicine from] the hospital, no. Then, I said, "Silva," he says, "Yes?" <sup>10</sup> "I received a letter. They say that my mother can no longer see. But she went to the hospital. She can only see a little bit." Then he said, "Go on, go there and get her, so I can send her to the hospital here [in Lourenço Marques]." Well, I come here [to Facazisse], to fetch my mother.

In '71. I don't know the month, but it was in '71. I take her, I go home with her. Well, I arrive, at night, around eight o'clock. I telephone [Silva], I say, "I want the announcer Carlos Silva." Well, they call him, "There's a telephone call for you." Well, he goes, he says, "Who is it?" I say, "It's me, Rosalina. I returned yesterday, with my mother. But you have to take her to the Central Hospital." "I was waiting for you, I'll come tonight, to sleep there, so tomorrow we can go to the hospital." He comes, in the night. He goes, "te-phoom!" His car, when it arrives. Well, he comes in, he greets my mother. And he asks her, "Do you see me?" She says, "I see you, a tiny bit." Mmm. "Do you see a black man, or do you see a white man?" She sees, "I see someone light-colored." "You see someone light-skinned?" She says, "Eee." He says, "Rosalina, that's good. Because, someone light-skinned, she sees that, because I'm white." . . . "You'll go to the hospital tomorrow, right?" She says, "Eee." "Rosalina will accompany you, all right?" She says, "Eee." "That's good.

I'll give her money to take you." She says, "Mmm. All right." Well, he goes to sleep, he didn't go home. . . .

Well, early in the morning, he takes us in his car, my mother and I. He accompanies us to the hospital, around eight o'clock. He arranges an appointment for her. He turns around and leaves, to go to work. Me, I saw a nurse, he sent us in to the doctor. Well, they take her, *mamana*, they sit her down in a chair. There was a lantern, a really tiny one! So small! . . . "Open your eyes, *vovo*." She opens them, they go "eee," they shine it in her eyes. They see everything there inside! Mmm. They saw the veins in there, that they were already ruined. They say, "Do you see that?" She says, "Eee." "What do you see?" She says, "I see a fire, there." Her vision was gone, poor thing. . . . They take her, they return her to the chair. They take a little tube, they pour, they go "eee," they dab [ointment] on her eyes, they pour, they dab, they pour, they dab. They take another thing, a second thing, they pour, they dab, they pour, they dab. They say, "Close your eyes." She closes her eyes. They take some gauze, they put it on her eyes. Well, they take her, there's a little bed there, they take her there. Me, I'm sitting over there. They wait an hour. They're treating other people who come, me, I'm just sitting there, waiting for my mother. Because many people come in there, with ruined eyes. . . .

The hour finishes, they come back to examine her. Well, they wake her up, there was she's sleeping. They sit her in a chair. They take that little lantern, they take off those things, they clean her eyes. They say, "Open your eyes." She goes, "eee," she opens them. They shine that lantern in—those veins that are ruined, the medicine they put in, it had no effect at all. It doesn't do anything. . . . Well, they say, "Look, your mother, her eyes have died. And they put that traditional medicine in her eyes—it was that that killed her eyes. That *murhi* outside, from the trees, that's what did it, it wasn't medicine from the hospital that killed her eyes." . . . Well, [the doctor] says, "All right. Take these tubes." He had two tubes there. "When she goes to sleep, you'll put it in for her, all right?" I say, "Mmm." "You'll finish one week. The second week, you'll bring her back to the hospital here, for us to see what happens." Well, we finished a week. The second week—that is, when we returned home, he came, Silva, he came to my house. I explain everything to him, that we found at the hospital. I say, "They looked at her eyes, [they said] they died because of that traditional *murhi*. When they began to hurt, instead of going to the hospital in Magude, she looks for a medicine, from those people who know these things, they say, 'Put this in your eyes,' . . . and they ruined her vision." "Ah, all right." . . .

Well, we finished a week. The second week, we go back. They examine her eyes, ah, it's the same thing, she doesn't see anything. They say, "Nothing. She won't see anything anymore." . . . I say, "Do you understand, *mamana*?" She says, "Mmm." I say, "They say you won't see anything anymore." She says, "Mmm, I understand, I too know that I won't see anything anymore." Mmm. "The only thing that I want—," those words, I don't forget it, what my mother said! She says, "Listen to me, my child. My eyes, they've died. You, you won't any longer eat things cultivated by me." Because sometimes when I'm in Lourenço Marques, which is Maputo now, there are peanuts here [in Facazisse], she sends a sack of them to me. . . . Well, she tells me this. "My child. My eyes have died. Now, don't expect that you'll receive anything more from your mother. Because I was sending you peanuts, I was sending you beans. These things, you won't have them anymore. Your sister-in-law, she won't do these things! She doesn't do them—they're sent by me! . . .

You have to know, that now it's finished. You, when you're sitting here like this, you must think of farming. When you're not sick. So you can eat what is yours! Because another person can't always be giving to you. Pick up your hoe. If it rains, you'll have [what you need]. . . . "All right, *mama*." Well, I returned her here, in '72. I say to that one, Albertina, "*Mamana*, she wants to return here. She doesn't want to stay [in Lourenço Marques] anymore. Because when her eyes are dead, she has trouble at night . . . on the street, she doesn't see the cars. Well here, she's inside her own hut, with her things.

We'll help each other. Me, I'll send you sugar, when I can, and rice, for her to eat." But sometimes when she's here, sometimes she said, "Ah, I miss my daughter!" [Albertina] sent me a letter, "Ah, your mother longs to see you. She wants to go to see you again." I had to come and take her again, to Lourenço Marques. . . .

### 10 May 1995, Facazisse

R: Even when she died, my mother, she was in my hands. Mmm. Even when she died, in that time, and I too, I was in Lourenço Marques, . . . when I saw that she was already very ill. I said, "No, I'll go to see my mother. She could die, while I'm here." I found a woman. She stayed in my house in Lourenço Marques. And I gave my market stalls there, so that no one would take them, to that woman who was in my house. . . . And I came here [to Facazisse]. I saw that my mother was already very ill. She was no longer speaking much. And then, when she arrived, my sister-in-law said, "Mama, mama, it's Rosalina." And she said, "Eh, Buxeni." Because my other name, I'm called Buxeni. Mmm. And I went close to her. "Mama, mama?" "Eh? Is that you, Buxeni?" "Eee, it's me, mama." "All right, my child. Now, I'm going away. And you, don't forget to hold onto your hoe, so you don't suffer! Those things in Lourenço Marques, it happens sometimes that they end, they [no longer] give you life, do you understand? But my field, my land, your sister-in-law has her field, and mine will stay with you. Don't forget! Even though you are in Lourenço Marques, when you come here, you have to pick up your hoe! So you don't go hungry. And don't wait for someone else to give you food, while you're still living." Mmm.

And then, another thing she said was this: "If you have money, buy a she-goat. Don't forget to buy this, to breed her. That's so you'll have many goats, if she gives birth, and they will help you. And with these goats, when you have them, sell them, and then buy a young male calf, and put it there with my nieces, in Mazimhlopes, all right? Because they have a curral. That's so it will breed, it will help you, because you don't have a single daughter. You don't know whether those children that you brought up, that you fed, whether they will remember you later! They could abandon you, because each person has his own heart. If they remember you, that "Oh, our *hahane* helped us," if they give you food, or give you a blanket to cover yourself, that's good. But those who don't remember you, it doesn't matter. You pick up your two hands, to help yourself. That's all, I've said everything. I'm going away now, my time has arrived." I don't forget that, Heidi! I don't forget. It's always in my heart, what my mother said to me.

### 25 June 1995, Facazisse

H: What place do you think of as "home" now, *vovo*—as your *tiko* [land]?

R: If I returned to Caniçado, I would have a good field, that used to be my mother's. [But] it's already a long time since I was there, for sure there are other people on it now. But if I arrived there and asked, they could give me half, because I'm a daughter of that *tiko*. I can't be without a field there, no.

H: So why do you stay in Facazisse?

R: Oh, what will I do, when I have the grave of my mother here, and my trees? [laughs] . . . There in Chokwe, they don't want me here, in Facazisse. Sometimes, when they hear that I sometimes fall, if I'm coming from the Nkomati—that wife of my cousin, that Raudina, and Jaime, <sup>11</sup> they say, "But you, there, you have no child, you have nothing. You raised children who now don't want to know you. Why don't you decide to come here, near us? Here, water is drawn for you. Because our daughter Prescida put a faucet here. And if you don't want to stay here, you could be off to the side, if you don't want to stay here inside our *muti*. You can build a little hut, at the side. When you're sick, we're here close by, we'll look out for you. Sometimes, you don't have

the strength to cook, or whatever. We have food here, that we'll give you to eat. Mmm. But you want to be there, knowing that there you don't have relatives who are looking out for you. Because of the trees, only?"

I say, "Eh, one day I'll come." And indeed, if I go there, I wouldn't like to stay here, inside their *muti*. Because here, in our land, envy is a great witch. Envy, Heidi, it's a great witch. And it's not good this way! A person thinks about tomorrow, what I'll do. If I do this, I do that, tomorrow, it will help me. Mmm. And now, I won't always be thinking that that one has to give me something. Or, that one is rich, that one has to give me what she has. She's rich, didn't she work? To earn that? She worked. And God helped, to give her the sweat to work. And then that one who didn't work, who was lazy . . . She wants to feed from the blood of another. It's not good, this way. It's not good. You have to find some way for you to work, to find what you need to live. God will help you. Mmm.

Me! I had many things, many things, Heidi! Many things! I was a very good woman for my family. . . . It's true. Many people now are talking about me, "Eeh! Rosalina. It seems that your sister-in-law didn't benefit from you helping her family. Today she doesn't want to look out for you! They moved away from you, they ate, they filled their bellies, then they flapped their wings, they flew away. She's the one who should tell them, 'Let's go see *hahane*, because she doesn't have any children, how will she live?'" . . .

I say, "Ah, that is nothing. It doesn't happen to me alone! The world is big, the world—there will be others who were good people for their family. And then, when they see that ah, their family ate everything that they had, beat their wings, flew away—because they were like flies! Who wanted to suck the blood that fell in front of them. Then, when they sucked the blood, well, they flew away, and went to stay over there." . . . But me, no. If they ate, abandoned me, if my sister-in-law is my enemy, well, it doesn't concern me. While I'm here in the world, what God wants to give to me, is enough for me to live. And I work, I work with my arms, so I can live. It's this way. Mmm. And I go on, this way.

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** Farmers highly value *swifake* (singular, *xifake*) because it is available only for brief periods, once or twice a year. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Rosalina says this doctor was Italian or French. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** A brother of Manuel's wife was married to Felista Khosa, who was the daughter of the elder sister of Rosalina's father. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Site of the Swiss Mission church in Caniçado where Rosalina's uncle Dane Malungana served as minister. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** Here Rosalina told the story of how Saquina's mother treated Anina, who had *xikuna* (bloody diarrhea, perhaps dysentery) in her home, with a powder she prepared herself; Rosalina then called a nurse to give her "an injection to make her strong." [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** Rosalina used the Portuguese word *barraca*, which generally means hut or shed. In this context, it refers to a particular style of house: rectangular, with walls made of reeds and poles, which are plastered and covered with corrugated metal sheets for a roof. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** Rosalina explained that during this time many single young women came from Portugal to work as prostitutes in Lourenço Marques "because they knew they could earn a lot of money." She recalls a large concentration of these women living in compounds on Araujo Street. [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** Missão São José: a neighborhood in Lourenço Marques. The neighborhood, near a

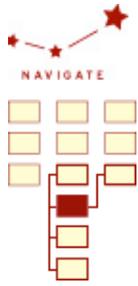
Catholic church of that name (Missão São José), is where Rosalina's uncle Arturo was living. [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** *Swiphoso*: a dangerous medicine of Zulu origin, used for witchcraft. [Back.](#)

**Note 10:** In a later interview, Rosalina told me that in the mid-1960s she began a relationship with another Portuguese man, Carlos Silva, an announcer for colonial Mozambique's Rádio Clube. Silva, she explained, "stepped into Amorim's place" and offered to "take care of her." It was with his financial assistance that she was able to obtain her two Xipamanine market stalls in 1964. Unlike Amorim, Silva was unmarried, although it seems his "arrangement" with Rosalina was much like Amorim's: He "helped" her by giving her money for food (and perhaps for rent), but he encouraged her to keep her market stalls because he "couldn't provide for everything." Rosalina recalls that "he looked after me very well" and she "didn't lack for anything" while she was with him, and, although he "drank a lot," he was a great favorite with her female friends. (Interview with Rosalina Malungana, 3 March 1996, Facazisse). [Back.](#)

**Note 11:** Jaime Tivane (who passed away in late 1996) was a grandson of Rosalina's maternal grandfather (i.e., Anina Tivane's father) with one of his junior wives. Raudina was Jaime's wife. [Back.](#)

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Author  
Rosalina  
Albertina  
Valentina

Introduction ★

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

work story

schooling story

trading story

dancing story

courting story

Albertina

(lives of women)

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## Albertina Tiwana

I first met Albertina Tiwana on a Sunday morning in June 1995, while Rosalina and I were filing out of the Antioka chapel together. A thin, slightly bent woman leaning on a walking stick as tall as she was, Albertina turned in line to greet Rosalina and then looked at me with a crinkly smile and said, "Good morning, *mulungu*." As we walked back to our huts, Rosalina



Albertina Tiwana explained to me that Albertina lived on the plot of land just across the footpath from the homestead of Rosalina's late mother and Audio Interview that, like her, Albertina had no biological children and was "all alone" in the world. Yet, Rosalina added, Albertina did enjoy one "lucky" advantage: One of the nephews she had raised helped her once in a while, most recently by rebuilding her hut when she wanted to return to Facazisse after the end of the war. Repeating emphatically that Albertina was a "good person" and her "only real friend" in Facazisse, Rosalina urged me to interview her, offering to act as go-between when I wanted to schedule an appointment.

When I accompanied Rosalina to her mother's burial place a few days later, we paid a visit to Albertina and, after a long conversation comparing the condition of the two women's fruit trees, I arranged an interview for the following day. That session, which I conducted with Ruti, lasted nearly three hours; we stopped talking only when Albertina said she needed to prepare the evening meal for herself and a very young girl who had been hanging around her cooking fire all afternoon. Somewhat to my surprise after what Rosalina had told me about Albertina's scarcity of relatives, this child—the granddaughter of Albertina's (half) sister (i.e., the daughter of a daughter of the second wife of the second husband of Albertina's mother)—was staying with Albertina so that she could help her "grandmother" in the fields while also lightening the responsibilities of her mother, a still-displaced, unemployed young woman living in the war-swollen town of Boane. <sup>1</sup>

I spent more time interviewing Albertina than I spent interviewing any other woman in the district except Rosalina. For a variety of reasons, an amiable relationship quickly developed between Albertina, Ruti, and myself. Albertina was an avid storyteller with deep roots in the Facazisse area and many years of experience patching together sources of material, social, and spiritual support to compensate for her childlessness. Although her identity card put her birth (in Facazisse) in 1922, Albertina did not show us this document during our first meeting. Instead, when we asked her in what "time" she was born, Albertina protested heatedly that she "did not know years" and estimated her age in the following way:

- A: In that time, this person who was governing, he was the first *hosi* [chief], he was Chuchuza. <sup>2</sup> In that time.
- H: Was there anything else that happened in that time?
- A: Mmm, *fole ra murimi*, they were doing that, when we were small. . . . Our mothers, they grabbed these fingers, this one [index] and this one [fourth]. Well, they pour a little *fole* [snuff], they go 'eee' [demonstrates pouring snuff into palm of hand, while two fingers are held, then inhaling through each nostril]. They pour snuff for us. They give it to another person. Eeh. They give it to another person, well, we were playing, we children. Yah. They, they were curing us, by themselves, they go 'eee.' . . . Mmm. They pour it, they dance that *xipenda* of theirs. We didn't dance, we were small. Mmm, they *dance*, those big [adult] ones. . . .
- H: Was this a special kind of snuff? Where did it come from?
- A: It was the same [as ordinary snuff]. He, that person who went around curing us, he's a *n'anga* [diviner] <sup>3</sup> from that other place. That's how it is. It's known by him, since they gave us the snuff, we didn't know. And they, our grandmothers, they didn't know. It was given to them, he didn't sell it. . . .

[raises voice, remembering] It was taken by the chief. The same as that [chief], Facazisse. Yah. *Kuhanyisa vutomi* [To give life], over there. We don't know, because we were small. And those big ones, ah—those things were known by the chief, only.

- H: Do you know who this person was, who gave out the snuff, or where he came from?
- A: It's him, the owner of those things. Because the chiefs, they were taking those things that were giving life to *his* country. A very good life. So that they don't envy us. Mmm. I don't know the place, his country. He was going to *all* the countries! Mmm. Not only here, *every* country, he was going all over the place, doing those things . . . . It's they who know, the chiefs. Eeh. They know it . . . . Those people there, they were living *well*. That's all. But we were very small, we didn't know anything. [4](#)

5

Scholars have based their analysis of the phenomenon Albertina describes here primarily on the written account of Swiss missionary Henri A. Junod, who referred to it as the "Mourimi movement." Junod dates the movement's spread from the famine-stricken Hlengwe lands along the Save River south to the outskirts of Lourenço Marques between 1913 and 1917, and he casts it as a revivalist pagan response to an agrarian subsistence crisis (*murimi* means "farmer" in Shangaan). [5](#) Albertina, who stressed that she was "very small" when *fole ra murimi* reached the Magude area (perhaps circa 1915), would therefore have been born around 1910. But in addition to dating her birth, Albertina's memory of this event is interesting in the ways it differs from Junod's telling and for what it reveals of her qualities as a life-storyteller. Instead of explaining *fole ra murimi* as a ritual response to an immediate environmental threat, Albertina stated that the Magude area was not suffering from drought or floods at the time. She portrayed the movement as driven by the desire of chiefs to make sure their own subjects were living as well as people in other places—a political strategy and preventive treatment, then, rather than a ritual cure.

Whether Albertina's account is "correct" in some absolute sense (in fact, her meteorological memory is not consistent with archival sources for the Magude area, which refer to drought-induced hunger in 1915 and flooding in 1917) [6](#) is less important, I would argue, than what it implies of women's rather cynical perception of chiefly power in the struggle to survive on the land. As mothers, farmers, and everyday guardians of social health, women played a central role in enacting the *murimi* movement: *Fole* was given to them, and they were responsible for ritually treating the fields. Yet according to Albertina, these same women, like the children, "didn't know anything" about the movement. In their competitive quest to retain control of their subjects in a precarious time, chiefs (a category in which Albertina also includes the Portuguese administrator) appropriated female authority over agricultural knowledge and made the women literally dance the *xipenda* for them. Just as important, Albertina's memory of *fole ra murimi* also illustrates the distinctively feminine historical epistemology underlying the stories she tells about her life. Insistently keeping narratives of past events within the bounds of her experiential vision, Albertina offered penetrating commentaries on social change by identifying her limits as a situated subject—by illuminating what she and other women could not know about events around them and why they could not know them. Unlike Rosalina, who took pride in her boundless knowledge, Albertina used lack of knowledge as a powerful truth claim in itself.

Albertina's father died while she was still being breast-fed. When her mother remarried, Albertina and her sister were taken in and raised by their maternal grandparents (first in nearby Machambuyane and then in Xihluku, across the Nkomati River), an event that had a significant impact on the course her life would take. Because of her grandmother's opposition to *xilungu* education, Albertina grew up in the shadow both of the Swiss Mission at Antioka and of the Catholic São Jerónimo Mission in Magude town and yet never set foot in a school. Instead, hovering on the fringes of the colonial economy, she spent her days farming alongside her grandmother and elder sister on some of the richest agricultural land in the district, until a wave of settler expropriations displaced them from their riverine fields. Albertina recalls being aware even as a girl of the advantages to be gained from careful involvement with commercial capitalism and of the need for her to work harder than anyone else so that she would not "suffer" when her grandmother died. As it turned out, these were lessons worth learning. Although Albertina married twice, she eventually left both husbands and returned to live first with her mother and then with her sisters, having decided that she "no longer wanted men." Because she was never able to become pregnant, Albertina turned her maternal energies to raising children of her several siblings. In fact, Albertina's siblings, notably the circle of women she identifies as her sisters (daughters of her birth mother Machun'wasse Khosa and her mother's co-wife with Machun'wasse's second husband), have been her closest family throughout her adult life. While she does not describe herself as dependent on these women, it is clear from her stories that much in Albertina's past has been determined by her need for their social and economic support, especially since a series of farming accidents has left Albertina with chronic medical problems.



Yet Albertina's narratives reveal another critical network of female support—friends (singular, *munghanu*), like Rosalina, with whom she shares no consanguineal or affinal kinship but has fostered affective ties through agricultural and commercial cooperation, participation in various religious communities, and resolute neighborliness. This aspect of her history became more important than ever in her old age and seems to explain, at least in part, Albertina's unflagging enthusiasm for our visits. Quicker than were most women to claim Ruti and I as "daughters," she lost little time negotiating a mutual-aid arrangement with Ruti, offering her seeds in exchange for assistance with some of the heavier labor on Albertina's fields. Albertina was also the only person to refer to my post-interview gift of tea and sugar as a *basela*, the Shangaan term for the small "gift" traders throw in at the close of a sale—casting me explicitly as a successor to the *valungu* merchants on whose "help" she was dependent throughout the colonial years.

And yet, although in Facazisse our involvement with Albertina was public knowledge as much as my relationship with Rosalina was, Ruti and I never heard a murmur of disapproval about Albertina's behavior in relation to us. The only time I felt our association might be problematic was when Ruti and I, trying to understand the elaborate routes through which Albertina had acquired her several plots of land, stumbled one day into a furious quarrel between this well-liked *xikoxana* and a younger woman over the proper location of a field boundary they shared. Cited by Albertina's opponent as evidence that the older woman was summoning the dark forces of *mulungu* power against her, our presence on the disputed field that day was the only occasion on which I was ever aware of ill-feeling against Albertina in Facazisse. Even this episode was atypical, however, for popular opinion about this particular land conflict was solidly on Albertina's side, and the younger woman in this case was the target of much criticism for "stealing land from an old woman" (see chapter 6).

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#### Notes:

**Note 1:** Field notes 1 (22-23 December 1995), 98-99; Interview log 1 (24 June 1995), entry 014. Boane is the administrative capital of Boane district, located about 20 kilometers west of Maputo along the main road linking the Mozambican capital to the Swaziland border. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Pedro de Mesquita Pimental, who was Administrator of Magude Circumscription until 1912. [Back.](#)

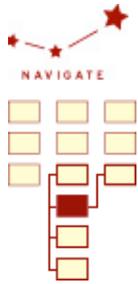
**Note 3:** A *n'anga* (diviner) uses herbal medicines to heal physical and psychological ailments and *tinhlolo* (divining bones) to diagnose the social, physical, or emotional roots of health problems. The term *n'anga* is typically translated as "traditional healer" (in Portuguese, *curandeiro*) and is often used also to refer to a *nyamusoro* (spirit medium), whose spiritual and medical practices are quite distinct from those of *tin'anga*. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Interview with Albertina Tiwana, 29 November 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** According to Henri A. Junod, the "Mourimi movement" was a "revival of Thonga paganism" and was provoked by a severe famine in the lands inhabited by the Hlengwe in 1913-14. He describes two Hlengwe "messengers" traveling to what was then Rhodesia to consult the Mwari high god of the Shona; the messenger returned home with a pouch of "magic tobacco" and instructions for ritually distributing it in all areas afflicted by the crisis. When in 1915 torrential rains caused devastating floods in the Bilene area of the Limpopo Valley, local opinion there attributed the disaster to the anger of "Doumapansi" (believed to be the Shangaan term for either Mwari itself or a comparably powerful god who controlled agricultural productivity), and the *murimi* movement surfaced there as a ritual effort to appease him. By late 1916, according to Swiss missionaries, it had reached nearly as far south as Lourenço Marques, by which time Portuguese authorities were imprisoning men they caught dispensing *murimi* tobacco because they "suspected some hint of revolt in this strange movement," which seems to have lasted through the following year. Junod's description of the "rules" and "taboos" surrounding the distribution of *fole ra murimi* is more detailed than Albertina's and focuses on the male figure who brought the tobacco into the community and doled it out to women; whereas Albertina focuses on the women who in turn distributed the *fole* to children. The broad outlines, however, are very much the same, particularly in the emphasis on women's responsibility for treating their fields with the special tobacco. See Henri A. Junod, "Le mouvement de Mourimi: un reveil au sein de l'animisme Thonga," *Journal de Psychologie* 10 (1924): 865-82; Sherilynn Young, "Fertility and Famine: Women's Agricultural History in Southern Mozambique," in *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, ed. Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 76. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** Sherilynn Young summarizes this evidence in her valuable indexing of weather, crop, and food reports from southern Mozambique from 1850 to 1959 (Sherilynn Young, "Climate and Famine Data from Nineteenth-Century Southern Mozambique: Does the El Niño Southern Oscillation Model Help?" (annual meeting of the African Studies Association, Boston, Massachusetts, 3 December 1993). [Back.](#)

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## Lives of Grandmothers (Albertina Tiwana) Fahlaza Dzumbeni

19 December 1995, Facazisse

Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

Introduction

Grandmother ★

Mothers

Lives of girls

work story

schooling story

trading story

dancing story

courting story

Albertina

(lives of women)

H: I don't understand something, vovo. Last time you said your mother's father was Mafavaze Khosa, but now you're saying that the husband of Fahlaza [Albertina's mother's mother] was Maguxe Tivane?

A: This is what happened. So you will know the story. *Kokwana* Fahlaza, she accepted Mafavaze as a lover. When he hadn't married her. And he, he was just a young man, and she was a girl. Her mother, she forbade it. She says, "If you go and marry at the chief's place, because he is the chief, you will suffer!" And yet, Fahlaza was pregnant, with my mother. They ask her, they say, "That pregnancy, where did you find it?" She says, "It's Mafavaze's." They, they say, "We don't want you to go and marry there. You could suffer, there at the chief's place. <sup>1</sup> Me, [i.e., Fahlaza's father] I'm the *ndota* <sup>2</sup> over there, I see the suffering there. . . . You could suffer, because it's the chief's place." Well, later she accepted Maguxe as a lover. He takes out what they ask for, for *lovolo*. She goes and marries at the Tivane's, at Maguxe's place. Mmm. . . . She goes to marry at Maguxe's, and she, my mother, she stays at [Fahlaza's] home, at the Dzumbeni's. She grew up with her grandparents. . . .

*Kokwana* Fahlaza, she didn't *kutlhavela tinhlanga* [cut tattoos]. <sup>3</sup> They do it, the ones who capture her, there in Chopiland. In the time of the wars. They deceive her, they go to the river, they cut her there at the river. She refuses, it doesn't matter. They were just little ones, right here [A indicates stomach]. They hurt! They really hurt, she even gets sick.

H: How was Fahlaza captured?

A: They seize her [during] the wars over there. It was like this war, now. They arrive, they take her, even though she has her own husband. My mother, she was staying at her grandmother's place. Well, they go with [Fahlaza], to Chopiland. That's where they cut her tattoos, over there. . . . Those VaChopi, they cut her!

R: She was captured in whose war?

A: Since I wasn't yet born, I don't know. . . . She gave birth to my mother. [My mother] stays with her grandmother. They seize [Fahlaza] there at Maguxe's place, there! [A hits the ground] Those people in the war, they go with her. And her child left behind, Maguxe's child. My mother was small. And me, I wasn't yet born, my mother hadn't yet married. She's staying at her grandmother's. They go and seize her! For slavery! They went with her, those of the war, those ones. Fahlaza, she goes and stays over there. . . . They [i.e. Fahlaza and other captives] go with them, over there. They go, they give them out [i.e., the female captives] <sup>4</sup> to the men. They marry there. She gives birth—she comes back with three children. From over there. Because of the war. . . . They arrive at her *vukatini* [marriage home], at Maguxe's place, those VaChopi soldiers. They take her, meanwhile the others run, because they are afraid of being killed. . . . Her husband, they call out a warning to him, from here in the pumpkin field. They were in the pumpkin field, he goes "eee" [A indicates direction of Maguxe's flight]. He runs. He goes to hide. His wife, she takes a cloth. She wraps up her child, [the child] follows over there, with her husband. They arrive here, where they are building a hut, right here where they are finishing the hut wall with reeds, they go "eee." They flatten themselves to crawl through, until they go "tswoo!" They run. She, Fahlaza, she gets them outside, that wife there. She goes outside, [the soldiers] go off with her. Mmm. They arrive over there, in Chopiland, they divide everything

up. They give her a husband. She gives birth to three children. They return with her. He goes to take her, her brother, he storms over there. He returns home with her, he accompanies her back to her husband, Maguxe. He was a policeman, for the *xikanikiso*.<sup>5</sup> He went with his brother, that older one. They go, two people. They cook food for the journey, they go. On foot. And she, Fahlaza, she goes to show them her children. They take them, they return with them.

- H: I don't understand, first the brother took Fahlaza home, and later Fahlaza went back to fetch her children?
- A: Mmm. She goes to visit, to see whether maybe they're living, maybe they died, from the war.
- H: But *vovo*, how did Fahlaza get home the first time?
- A: Mmm. They say, "Leave the children." She leaves the children there. They say that if she takes them, she will never return.
- H: Okay. So later, when she went back to fetch the children, what happened then?
- A: He [Fahlaza's Chopi husband] says, "I'm going with you, to your house. So that I will know that place, I'll be able to find it again, I'll visit you." Well, he goes with them, this man. . . . [When they arrive at Fahlaza's family home], her brothers say to him, "This one, she's no longer going home [with you]. She was married with *lovolo*, and we ate it, our wealth. The money, we ate it. You, go home! Anyway, don't you have a wife? We went to war, truly, now there is no war. She is the wife of someone already." He says, "I will hang myself!" [laughs] They say, "This child, do you see him there? You take her to Chopiland, and she has this child. This child has its father, even if it wasn't born here [A slaps the ground]." He says, "I will hang myself. I will kill myself." They say, "Go home! If you don't go home, we will report you to the authorities, they will say, 'Lock him up over there, at the *xikanikiso*!'" Well, he leaves, he goes, he goes home. Maybe he died over there at his home, I don't know. He never returned. . . .
- H: How did Fahlaza feel about all of this?
- A: She wanted to live with her husband of long ago, this one, Maguxe, with him. He's the one she wants, [she left] because she was captured, she didn't want to go.
- H: Do you know how long she stayed there, in Chopiland?
- A: I don't know, I wasn't born yet. We hear these things from when they are talking, talking, talking. Yah.
- H: Do you know how Maguxe reacted when Fahlaza returned home?
- A: Fahlaza's brothers accompanied her back to her *vukatini*, her old one. They, they had eaten the cattle, she was married with cattle. They accompanied her to where she was married. Maguxe and Fahlaza, they loved each other. Because when she leaves, she [had given] birth to one child. Well, she stays, she gives birth again. . . . Those children there, of the Chopi man, they are three. Those of Maguxe, four. Mmm. Well, they are eight, put together, the children of Fahlaza [including her first-born, Albertina's mother]. When they grew up, they were called by the *xivongo* [clan name] of Maguxe. Mmm.
- H: Did Fahlaza ever talk about her life there, in Chopiland, or what the people there were like?
- A: Hah! [laughs] Mmm, she says things. Oh, when they go out, they drink *byala* [maize beer], they dance. And she, she danced that way of over there, that way of *ku kapa-kapa* [hanging down on both sides; A mimics dancing with arms waving around at her sides; laughs]. She takes the songs, the women sing to accompany her, she dances that *xichopi* way. She doesn't know how to dance, well, she learned the way over there. . . . She learned the dances of over there! [laughs] Later, she returns here, and they, her fellow women, they dance, and she, she sings to accompany them, they lure her, she dances that *kapa-kapa* way, of over there, for the women here. Over here, in Magude, they danced with their bellies. Well she, she goes and takes the songs, she dances that *xichopi* way for them. They made their navels dance, our

grandmothers, here.

- H: Were there other things that Fahlaza brought back with her, for example a different way of dressing, or different foods?
- A: Well, there was food there, she cooks, and she cultivates her own fields. Mmm. She harvested, she has a corn-crib, she has peanuts, beans. Her brothers when they arrive, she cooks those things for them. Yah. They stayed a month there, those brothers. She cooked many things for them, they eat, they fill themselves, her brothers. [Fahlaza] says, "Maybe they will finish these things that I harvested." Sesame, peanuts, they eat, she prepares *xigugu*, 6 they eat. It is more than enough food. . . . When Fahlaza returns here, she cooks our way of cooking. But she shows them, at her *vukatini*, at Maguxe's, the way of cooking of over there. She taught them, they see these things when she is cooking. . . . She cooks manioc—[the VaChopi] pick *nkaka*, they mix it with manioc. Here, they don't want these things. [The VaChopi] shell corn, that wet [i.e. green] corn. They grind it. They pick *nkaka*. They mix it together, those VaChopi. Well, they mix those things together—[laughs] they eat it! Well we, we don't do these things. We cook *xiginya*, 7 stiff! . . . We learned those things, but we weren't really used to them. Mmm. And she, because she sees that we don't like those things, we aren't used to cooking these things, we cooked the *xichangana* [Shangaan] way, our way. . . . [A explains in detail how to prepare and serve *vuswa* the proper Shangaan way]. Even now, even now, we know these things. . . . And over there, they cultivate with little hoes. But she, she cultivates with the long hoe, the way we cultivate here. She doesn't want their way, mm-mm. And they grab, they grab the grass. With that little hoe, they go "hmm" [A demonstrates cutting grass bundle at root]. They take away that tussock! [laughs] But here, we don't do it that way! And she, she cultivated our way, you grab the hoe with your two hands, you go "hmm"! [A demonstrates wide arm-swinging motion]. Mmm. Our way. And she, she doesn't accept to be taught that way, over there! [laughs] That shows that she didn't want that *vukatini*, in Chopiland. She wanted here, Maguxe's place, here. Mmm.

**Lives of Grandmothers: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)**

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#### Notes:

**Note 1:** Mafavaze Khosa was one of Magudzu Khosa's younger brothers. In 1898, he became regent-chief of Khocene for Magudzu's young son, Xongela (see chap. 1). [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** *Ndota*: from *ndoda*, a Zulu word that means a middle-aged man and that used to refer to men who served as assistants of the chief. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** *Kutlhavela tinhlanga*: see chap. 5. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Here Albertina used the verb *kuphakela*, from *kuphaka*, a Zulu verb meaning to serve (as in serving food) to describe how Chopi soldiers distributed her grandmother and other female captives among the men. [Back.](#)

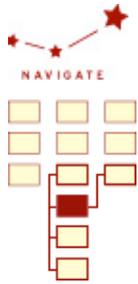
**Note 5:** *Xikanikiso*: Shangaan speakers use this word is used to describe any site or structure associated with government administration. No Portuguese officials were stationed in the Magude area until 1891. Walter Rodney notes that Chopi soldiers, emboldened by their alliance with the Portuguese at the time the Portuguese were waging war on Ngungunyana, began to raid areas (specifically, those under Gaza control) and to capture women, just as Ngungunyana's armies had done when fighting the Portuguese. The story of Fahlaza's capture, then, probably took place circa 1895. See Walter Rodney, "The Year 1895 in Southern Mozambique: African Resistance to the Imposition of European Colonial Rule," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 5, no. 4 (1971): 525. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** *Xigugu*: a thick paste of roasted corn and peanuts stamped together and mixed with

honey or sugar. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** *Xiginya*: a thick mixture of boiled, mashed manioc and ground peanuts. [Back.](#)

[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique](#)



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[Email this citation](#)[Lives of Mothers: Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Mothers (Albertina Tiwana) Machun'wasse Khosa

26 January 1996, Facazisse

Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers ★

Lives of girls

work story

schooling story

trading story

dancing story

courting story

Albertina

(lives of women)

A: My mother, when my father dies, she goes and marries at another place. She wasn't taken by that other man—she refuses to be taken by that *ntukulu* [grandson], <sup>1</sup> because she would be mistreated. <sup>2</sup> Because, he really harasses her! He's very difficult, because he was the secretary of the commander over there. And her father, he says, "Don't you dare accept him! If he takes you, he could mistreat you." Mmm. He says, "Any other man, you can accept him if he courts you. I don't want him to take you, and hear that he is oppressing you, making my children suffer!" She doesn't leave Boho's [i.e., Boho Tiwana, A's father] place, well, she's locked up in the jail. She was locked up for refusing, for refusing to accept that *ntukulu*. Well, he lays a complaint with the authorities there, he says, "Why am I refused?" This one, he is Malawu, Malawu Chavango. He built over there, in Rikatlana, <sup>3</sup> he's the father of N'waBotini.

Well, the other man, he was also locked up over there, he worked together with my mother, they worked on the commander's field. When they let them out, to work on the field. They worked there, all of them, all of the convicts. Well, he courts her. She is able to love him, she says, "Eee! I'm tired of working!" She accepts him [Vuduya Muhlanga], that other boy, of the Muhlanga family. Well, he takes out some money [for bridewealth]. Over there, where we were born. He gives it to this *ntukulu*. <sup>4</sup> In the time when she [wants to] go marry him, well, they discuss her case. The commander, he says, "You, *ntukulu*, you take those children [i.e., Albertina and her elder sister]. You take them, you feed them, you look after them, with the money [given by Vuduya]." He refuses. This *ntukulu*, he says, "I'm not going to take them, they're full of snot, they'll bother my wives." Well, the commander, he says, to grandmother Fahlaza, "You go and look after them." He writes her a little note, he gives it to *vovo*. He says, "Come with the little note, you will find the money, for those snotty children. Because he doesn't want them." Well, my mother goes to marry in Mavavaze. She gives birth to another child. He dies. But they look after each other, she gives birth to another child. She's still here [i.e., living], over there in Machambuyane, my sister Nyankwave.

Lives of Mothers: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

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**Notes:**

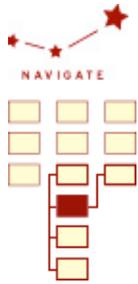
**Note 1:** *Ntukulu*: grandchild or sister's child. Here, Albertina is referring to the son of one of the sisters of her late father; this son was eligible to "inherit" Albertina's widowed mother. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Albertina uses the verb *kuxaniseka*: to be mistreated, oppressed, troubled, persecuted. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Rikatlana: Today it is a suburb of Magude town; at that time, it was part of the rural chieftaincy of Machambuyane. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** To compensate his family for the bridewealth that Boho Tiwana had given for Machun'wasse and thereby end her obligations to the *ntukulu's* family. [Back.](#)

[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique](#)



[Email this citation](#)

Work Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Girls (Albertina Tiwana) Work Story

24 June 1995, Facazisse

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

work story ★

schooling story

trading story

dancing story

courtling story

Albertina

(lives of women)

- A: When you were a girl, they didn't let you go around from place to place. We were taught work! To cultivate, everything, to cook, to draw water, to smear the floor with clay, to plaster the hut with mud. That's what they taught us, our grandmothers. . . . Yeeee! Hee-hee! I didn't like to be surpassed by my fellow girls! At work? Yee!
- H: Why did you like work so much?
- A: Because when grandmother dies, what will I eat? If I can't work. What will I do? . . . We girls, we had our fields. And grandmother, she had hers. We did it by helping each other! Mmm. In the time when we were children, we cultivated with our grandmother. She taught us. We had our own corn crib. We'll eat from there. We buy goods, we buy things, with the stale corn. Yah. We buy for ourselves. When we finish [our corn], we eat from grandmother's crib. . . . When I was a girl, my *ndzima* [field], <sup>1</sup> it was bigger than those of my fellow girls! Me, really, I go "tswoo!" [A spits in her palms, rubs them briskly together] Grandmother, she wakes us up in the hut, here where we're sleeping. She takes the door—[back then] we closed the hut with a door made of woven reeds—she throws it away! "Get out! The other girls, the women, they're not sleeping! Go! Go!" She goes and takes a *khuwana* [clay pot for carrying water], she'll put it here on her hip. I get up and dress myself, I take my *nguvu*, I wrap myself up. I take my hoe. I take the *khuwana*, on my head, "swee!" [A whistles, to indicate setting off quickly for her field] Well, she's there at home, she stays, she takes the *vuswa*. She cuts it into pieces, she cuts it into pieces, she puts it into a pot, she pours sauce into it. She comes here, she carries it on her head. She comes to find us, while we're cultivating. She'll come to look for us here, to check on us. Maybe we're talking in the field, maybe I'm playing, I'm not working. She says, "You're poor, you could suffer!" [There will be] trouble, if we don't cultivate, if she finds us and we haven't cultivated to here [A smacks the ground]. Isn't it so? [chuckles]

She'll arrive. She puts down that *vuswa*. She kneels, she kneels, on her knees. She pours tobacco, she goes "ntu-ntu-ntu-ntu" [A imitates inhaling tobacco through her nose], she goes, "eee." She leaves with her hoe. She marks out a little section. She goes, she'll reach [i.e., cultivate until] way over there! She hoes out to there, we follow behind her. We hoe, we hoe, we hoe, we hoe. We'll finish there where she cut the section for us. We take our hoes, well we follow her, there where she is. When we arrive here, she turns around, she goes and gets the food. We sit down, she says, "Eat!" She kneels, she kneels—[laughs] do you see this! We'll [offer tobacco in the name of] our father. She kneels, she kneels, she takes one part for Boho [A's father]. She eats. She gives us [food]. We eat, we eat, we finish. We finish eating, she pours some tobacco. [A sniffs three times] She goes and cuts another section of the field for us. [laughs] Grandmother, she was difficult, truly! She arrives, she cuts a section for you, she runs! She goes and reaches way up ahead, she says, "Heh!" She cultivates, all that field up to way over there. I run, on my section. We cultivate until we finish there where she's sitting, where she's finished. . . . Well, when we go, when we reach there, she says, "Go on, look for *nkaka*," mmm. Well, you take the *khuwana*, you go to the river. You get there, you bathe, you draw water. You go home. My sister over there, she's taking the stamped corn from the water, she grinds it. Me, I pound the corn, for tomorrow. I work and work, my hands get used to it, and this heart, it gets used to working! . . . Mmm. Our grandmother, she says, "Work, work!"

Because when I die, what will you eat? You're poor, your father died, when you were small." . . . It's because of these things that I can work with strength, because we're afraid of our grandmother. . . .

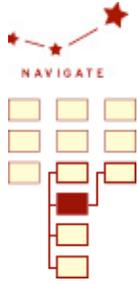
**Work Story:** [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** *Ndzima*: land, field under cultivation, or garden; also, a part or division of a larger unit. Here it refers to the section of her grandmother's field that Albertina cultivated as a girl. [Back](#).

[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique](#)



[Email this citation](#)

Schooling Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Girls (Albertina Tiwana) Schooling Story

27 June 1995, Facazisse

- H: What else did you do when you were a girl, besides fighting?
- A: Well, you pound corn, you grind corn, you cook, you go to your fields. Mmm.
- H: Did you enjoy this work?
- A: Cooking? Ah, what do we know? We might suffer at our *vukatini* if we don't know how to cook. If we don't know how to cultivate. They teach us to cook, they teach us to cultivate. Me, I had my own field! There with my mother. . . . [A explains size of this field, in relation to landmarks around us] We found peanuts, we found corn, we found *maxalana* [sorghum]! Even, *xikombe* [millet], we found it.

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

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work story

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trading story

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courting story

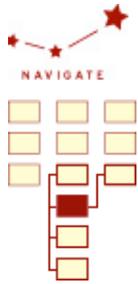
Albertina

(lives of women)

Schooling Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

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[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Maqude, Mozambique](#)



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Trading Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Girls (Albertina Tiwana) Trading Story

24 June 1995, Facazisse

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

work story

schooling story

trading story ★

dancing story

courting story

Albertina

(lives of women)

A: Truly, long ago, these other things that we wear. We abandon these bad habits—these breasts! [A grabs her breasts, flaps them up and down, laughs] The boys at home, you go to put the food here, you give it to them, you say, [in meek voice:] "You will eat some food." [laughs] You didn't wear anything! It's these things we lived by, we didn't wear anything! . . . But these things made us happy, because they are our *ntumbuluko* [old custom]. . . . We were taught to wear *xikhatawana*, <sup>1</sup> we were taught by the Banyans. We were taught to be clothed by *xikhaṭawana*, those things you chop. They cut those cloths, they sew *xikhatawana* by hand, they stop there, they stop there [A indicates dimensions of measured cloth]. They put them in a line. Well, when you want to buy something, they show you, this one is so much money, this one is so much money. They take them, they say "Try it! When you dress yourself, you'll look good!" Because they close up your breasts. Heh! Those children! I'm happy. Well, she [i.e., another girl] sees a fellow girl and she's clothed, yee! "Me too, I'll buy one!" Mmm. We were taught by them, here. Well, things go on, things go on, until this time. We didn't have—on our heads, we didn't use a *nturhu* [veil]. <sup>2</sup> You dress yourself in an *nguvu*, it stops there [A indicates waist]. They take that *nturhu*, they tie it, they go like this [A demonstrates, laughing, tying two ends of scarf around throat, then two ends behind back, below breasts]. Well, we go on, we get used to it, we go on, we'll buy it, we'll buy this garment for ourselves, for our breasts. Aye! We lived well by those *xilandin* ways, you know! . . .

H: Where did you buy these things?

A: Ah, from them, the [Banyans] in the shops here in Magude. They arrive here, from their land, that, where is it?

R: From India.

A: Mmm, India. Well, they go to work for themselves. They bring some things, they come and put them in order, they sell to us. . . . When you get used to store so-and-so, you're a customer! You come and buy here, you arrive, he takes a loaf of bread. He gives it to you [A claps hands together]. He takes sugar, he comes back and pours it [in a piece of] newspaper, he takes maybe two, big loaves of bread, he puts them here. He puts them there, he wraps them up for you. He gives it to you! When you go to buy goods, maybe with an *mpondo* [100 *escudos*], <sup>3</sup> he comes over, he takes a basin, a plate, this big one of the Banyans. He pours sugar. He takes loaves of bread, he puts them in there. He calls a boy, he gets water, he says, "Give it to *mamana*. The bread, she'll eat it. There is hunger." . . .

H: But why did they do this for you?

A: Ah, it's because of their *tintswalo* [kindness]. They feel our poverty. Well, when you're buying, you finish spending this money, maybe an *mpondo*. He says, "Take down a scarf." They give a *basela* [small present]. He takes those loaves of bread, he wraps them up with the sugar, "You'll give them to the children at home, go home with these things, they're hungry too, at home." He takes matches, he cuts [a piece of] soap. These are all presents, they're not sold. . . .

Mmm. When you come, maybe with your husband, they pour a litre of wine. They give it to your husband. Because you're customers of theirs. Even if you're a woman, they can give it to you. . . . [When I was a girl], we bought things with corn, that we cultivated with these hands. If there was hunger,

there's drought, the corn doesn't come up. Well, you don't have anything to wear. . . . The life of long ago, it was good. Mmm. Of long ago! We didn't feel poverty, even if you're suffering! We were living, the life that was there. When you go to the store and you have your *escudo*, they did something for you with that. Mmm. They governed us well. A kilo of sugar, it was three and a half *escudos*. You buy a kilo. A kilo! Three and a half *escudos*.

H: When you were a girl?

A: Mmm!! Hoh! We didn't care about tea, because we knew that that servant [at the shop], they'll give you sugar. The Banyans. They went and cooked soft porridge, they poured it for you. . . . Eeh, they give it to you, "Ah, you've come, customer, you've come!" He goes over there where there's sugar, over there. He scoops some out, you hold out your hands, you clap your hands together, those things for us in the shops, [you think] you're drinking tea! [laughs] You lick your fingers, hoh! But he sees you, [you say], "Son of a *mulungu*!" He says, "Oh, *mbuyangwana* [poor thing]!" He goes and wraps up more sugar, "Go home with it, feed [the children]!" [laughs] At home! [A is laughing hard] Well, we leave, we go into another shop. Well, you believe you'll eat again! They pour for you, they wrap it for you, they give it to you. Ah! You'll pour it into your porridge at home. . . . When you buy at the *valungu* shops, when there's hunger, eh! They didn't let you buy many things. When you have a *cheleni*, or maybe a *dzuka*, <sup>4</sup> they measure out a little flour for you, a *dzuka*'s worth. They measure flour out for you. For a *cheleni*, when you want a *cheleni*, they say, "Stop! Leave some for your brothers and sisters. So they'll come and find some here." He gives it out a little at a time. And they, when they arrive they'll find a little, and they'll buy it. . . .

H: How much was corn worth, in that time?

A: Two *cheleni* [laughs], you fill that *gogogo* [4-gallon tin] to the top. You want them to cut this *nguvu*. They count that, heh! This *gogogo*, it's two *cheleni*. A sack, inside of a sack—that was really a lot. It's an *mpondo*, one sack! Six *magogogo*.

H: Could you buy a lot with that?

A: Yo-wee!! [laughs] You found many things! Maybe you want to buy a *mukumi* [extra-large *nguvu*] you buy it with that corn. This *nguvu* to wrap yourself in. You buy three measures of cloth, <sup>5</sup> they [sew them together] to make a *mukumi*. Yah.

Trading Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

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#### Notes:

**Note 1:** *Xikhatawana* seems to have been a very simple style of blouse or halter top for women, stitched together out of segments of patterned cotton cloth. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Albertina is referring to a kind of headscarf, although the word more commonly used for this is *faduku*. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** *Mpondo* (from the English *pound*): the Shangaan word for 100 *escudos*. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** *Cheleni* (from *shilling*): a monetary unit that equalled 5 *escudos*. *Dzuka*: half a *cheleni*, or 2.5 *escudos*. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** Each measure of cloth is a *vemba*: a length of cloth, measured from the fingers to the top of the sternum when one's arm is fully extended straight in front of the body. [Back.](#)

[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique](#)





[Email this citation](#)

Dancing Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Girls (Albertina Tiwana) Dancing Story

24 June 1995, Facazisse

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

work story

schooling story

trading story

dancing story ★

courting story

Albertina

(lives of women)

A: Mmm. When I think of [my girlhood], I'll think of playing! Those things! [laughs] We finish cooking, well, we tell each other, we girls, this place, we'll come and play here, at this *muti* [homestead] on this day. We play *xingombela*, we play *xipenda*, <sup>1</sup> we go home. Oh! I think of these things, I know that we dance! Indeed me, I surpassed them in dancing! Eeh! [laughs] And I dance *muchongolo*. <sup>2</sup> It was I, I make my body quiver <sup>3</sup> there, with the others who are dancing. When I wasn't there, they aren't happy! . . . Yee! [laughs] It's many days [i.e., long ago]! We said, "Yeh, yeh yeh yeh!" [A claps, R joins in] "*Hiheleketa ka Pareji!*" We dance! Pareji, he was, mm, he was a secretary or something, a *mulatto*. It's this one, we sing for him. And he, he'll come, he'll dance. This *mulatto*. [A resumes singing, R joins her:]

<i>Yeh, yeh yeh yeh!</i>	Yeh, yeh yeh yeh!
<i>Hiheleketa ka Pareji!</i>	We're accompanying [the beer] to Pareji's place!
<i>Yeh, yeh yeh yeh!</i>	Yeh, yeh yeh yeh!
<i>Hiheleketa ka Pareji!</i>	We're accompanying [the beer] to Pareji's place!
<i>Yeh, yeh yeh yeh!</i>	Yeh, yeh yeh yeh!
<i>(A) Hi wa swigeje!</i> <sup>4</sup>	(A) The one with the fur kilt!
<i>Heleketa ka Pareji!</i>	We're accompanying [the beer] to Pareji's place!
<i>(A) Hi wa swigeje!</i>	(A) The one with the fur kilt!
<i>Yeh, yeh yeh yeh!</i>	Yeh, yeh yeh yeh!
<i>(A) Hi wa swigeje!</i>	(A) The one with the fur kilt!
<i>Heleketa ka Pareji!</i>	We're accompanying [the beer] to Pareji's place! <sup>5</sup>

Dancing Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** *Xingombela* and *xipenda* are dances. [Back.](#)

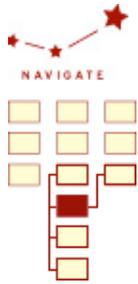
**Note 2:** *Muchongola*: another kind of dance. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** *Kuchachula*: to dance with rhythmic quivering of the body. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** *Swigeje*: a man's kilt consisting of several strips of skin, in layers. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** As she subsequently explained, Albertina is recalling how as a girl she watched her mother and other adult women carry pots of *vukanyi* to the chief's place for the official opening of *vukanyi* season. Once all of the households in his jurisdiction had delivered their contribution of *vukanyi*, the chief would sample from the pots, select some to keep for himself and his people to drink, and set aside a portion of it to be carried (again, by the women) to the Portuguese administrator and other officials such as Pareji. [Back.](#)

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## Lives of Girls (Albertina Tiwana) Courting Story

**14 October 1995, Facazisse**

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

work story

schooling story

trading story

dancing story

courting story ★

Albertina

(lives of women)

A: How did I meet my husband? The distance [between our homes] is the same as from here to Magude, it wasn't far. And they, they build in their place, and we, we build in our place. Well, when we go to the place of playing, the *xitikini*, the place of those things, *muchongolo* dances there, I used to go, we went to sing. And he, he went. Here, we play here in this place, there in Xihluku. Well, he sees me. He courts me. I refuse. When he understands [that I'm refusing him], he chops off a switch! He beats me, I run! [laughs] I don't want him! I don't want this, him beating me, I refuse this man. Well, he says, "Why are you refusing me?" I say, "I said, 'I didn't want you!'" Ah, I was still at home, I was still a girl. Well, to court me with these things [i.e., by hitting], I refuse. Ay! [laughs] Well, he leaves me alone. Later, I accept him. . . . Eee! And me, I was still young. He, he was big [i.e., older]. I was small. [Everyone] said that they're selling me, I say, "I wasn't sold! We courted each other out of love." . . .

When I met him he had his first wife. She was Manchasse, of the Josina clan. Well me, I'm the second. Mmm. I was the small one there. . . . He gave *lovolo* for me, [but] he didn't finish it. Heh! [laughs] It makes me laugh! Ay! It was, it was, four *timpondo*! 1 [A laughs, R laughs] Well, it was because of love, for him! Well, I go home. While he's in Joni. I stay, I go to his home, I go and stay. He sends this money, to my home.

R: You go to stay [at his place] when he hadn't yet sent the money?!

A: Mmm! Because of love, only! In my heart. Yah. I go and stay there. [Thinking] if he, if he wants me, he'll work, he'll give them [the *lovolo*]. Suffering 2 because I loved him! [laughs]

R: For just four *timpondo*!

A: Eh, long ago, that money worked.

R: Mmm, *vovo*, it was a lot.

H: What did men normally give for *lovolo* in that time?

A: Eight head of cattle. For *kuqoma*, two *timpondo*. Mmm. And a 5-litre jug of wine. That's all. It's to show that, this girl is mine. Well, the person goes to marry. Eight head of cattle, it's money! It's money. Eight *timpondo*. Because you could find cattle [that cost] a *sumbulana*, 3 you could find them for one *mpondo* [each]. Mmm. Well, this money, [when it is given], they tell him, "Take this woman, go home with her!" [laughs] And yet, you'll find a witch! . . . Well, grandfather, the brother of my mother, he's the one who eats this money. Mmm. The brother of my mother, he was born from the same mother. Because, we grew up at our grandmother's place. Yah, with his mother. I and he, when his father hadn't yet died. Well, it's here where we marry and *lovolo* is given for us, when we were at our *kokwana*'s home. Well, this money, it's eaten by our grandparents.

**Courting Story:** [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** 400 *escudos*. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Albertina uses the verb *kucumela* here (meaning to suffer from constipation), instead of more common terms (e.g., *kuxaniseka* and *kuhlupheka*) for suffering. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** 50 *escudos*. [Back.](#)

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[Email this citation](#)[Lives of Women: Author | Albertina | Rosalina | Valentina](#)

## Lives of Women (Albertina Tiwana)

### 14 October 1995, Facazisse

- H: So your *vukatini* with Vuma, it was also in Xihluku, where you grew up?
- A: Mmm. It's there we courted each other. Well, we left, in that time when the water overflowed. Because the water overflowed, in that flood, the flood called "*ndhambi ya mulungheza*." Well, we flee from that water, we come here, to Facazisse. We sleep up high, in the trees! [laughs]
- H: Do you know why the flood has that name?
- A: Oh, I don't know how to say it in Portuguese, how many kilos of water, there was water over there, water here, the Nkomati, it spread! Over the whole country! Huts, they fall. Cattle, they go! Yah! Lots of water! . . . We come to Facazisse. They give us fields, they give us a place. We arrive, we stay in the hut of that second wife of [chief] Facazisse, N'waGwelha, there at the chief's place. . . .

### 26 January 1996, Facazisse

- H: What kind of work did you do while you were living with Vuma?
- A: [laughs] It's the work of cultivating, and cooking. There's no other *xilandin* work, it's only that! You cultivate, you cook, you wash for this husband of yours. Yah. It's better if you can iron—I was taught to iron. There's no other work than cooking. You know the belly of your husband, that he eats at what time. That's all. . . . We sow corn, we sow pumpkins, we sow sweet potatoes, in our fields. Truly, when you were suffering, you look for corn, you go and buy what you need to help you. Maybe a dish, maybe a winnowing basket, maybe a *xihiso* [clay grinding bowl], maybe an iron pot. We bought these things with corn, because where did you find money? You didn't work for money. We worked by cultivating, only. We bought things for ourselves with that corn. I go, I exchange—I give corn, I take a winnowing basket. When the rain didn't fall, heh! We didn't find those things. . . . Me, I made *xinto*, <sup>1</sup> at my *vukatini*. I pound corn, I cook *xinto*. Mmm. And [my husband], when he comes home to his *muti* and he finds it, he's happy. [laughs] Even though he didn't drink, Matlangane. Me, I didn't drink, and she, that co-wife, she didn't drink. But we cook *byala*, to make people happy.

### 14 October 1995, Facazisse

- H: How long did you stay with Vuma?
- A: Yee! Years, I don't know them, because I didn't study. I lingered a long time. Even [I could have had] a child, I was there that long. But *Xikwembu* [God] didn't give me the things you need to give birth. Well, my heart was weak, I say, "When they mistreat me—"
- R: You hurry, you go from there!
- A: Eeh! I was suffering, to save myself—to go, I run away out of madness. I'm going over there, I'll work.
- H: What happened to cause you to leave Vuma?
- A: Hmm. The way of life there, it didn't make me happy. I find [my co-wife] when she has a child, her first-born. She gives birth to the second when I was with her. But, she didn't understand me well. These children, I'm the one who washes them. They grow up, I make food for them, I take their clothes, and

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(lives of women)

hers, the mother's, I go and wash them—I served them well! Well, these things, they go and start with him, the master of the *vukatini*. Well, we quarrel with this man, I leave from here. These things came from her, the woman. . . . The *pongo* [noise], it comes from the woman, it goes to the husband.

R: And the husband, he accepts it.

A: Eh-heh! When you don't give birth, truly, ah! They don't love you. . . .

H: So was it for this reason that your co-wife didn't like you?

A: Oh, these things were inside her heart. And, I liked her, because I took care of her. Well! Water, I draw it for her. I warm it up, [so she can] bathe at home. Clothing, I took it from my hut, and from hers, I washed it for her. Isn't that love?

R: It is.

A: Well, the children, they were looked after by me. Her children, they weren't mine! Mmm. They were looked after by me. . . . Well, I knew that, she didn't think I was working for her, in the end. Why? I don't know. Yah. Well, she says, "I can't make her go away. It's better if I take this dirt, I tell our husband, so he'll leave her."

H: Did you do anything to try to cure your problem getting pregnant?

A: Aah! He sent me to *tin'anga*, four of them. This one gives me a medicine, or maybe he cleans out my insides, he finds that there's nothing. One time, I drink that medicine, to wash out my insides. I drink it, I grow fat! Yah. I say, it's pregnancy, it's pregnancy, but nothing. I go on, ah, we don't find anything. Mmm. Well, I just stay this way, I end up this way. And now, I've never given birth to a child, even pregnancy, I don't know it. Mmm. . . . Yee! I suffered, truly! When [my period] arrives, I say, "tswaa!" I just sit in the woods, I cry. At my *vukatini*, again. I sit, I cry, I finish. Well, I look for firewood, I go home, I cook. Yah. I go and cook. This soul, it wasn't happy. Well, these things, when I start to bite [my food], well, my heart, when I eat, I go "eee!" [A mimics throwing food away] Food, I couldn't bite it. I spit it out, I throw it away, I go to sleep, that's all. Because of suffering. I go around thinking of those [women] I play with, they have children, they're peaceful. I say, "If I'd known that I wouldn't give birth, I wouldn't have married, I would have gone to stay at home. . . ." [My co-wife], she's saying I'm practising witchcraft.

And my husband, he believed them, when they were saying I was a witch. Well, these things made me angry, hah! And it goes on. . . . Well, I'm sitting and suffering! Years and years I finished there, and I'm working for her. Because I do what she tells me there. Hoh! No way. Well, this woman, when I was with her, and this husband of ours he wasn't there, he was in Joni [i.e., Johannesburg]. Heh-heh! She was always quarreling with me about these things. She tells me, "You're casting spells!" I say, "Ah! And yet those problems, they're coming from you!" [I think], it's better if I go to a tree and hang myself, I die! Forget everything. When you sit in suffering? I'm there three years, and I'm eating tears. Aah! I say, "I want to be at peace." Well, I leave, I go home, I go to my mother's place. I go and sit there. <sup>21</sup> I take these things that are mine. Mmm. Well, my heart is angry, I say, "*Mamana*, it's too much, I'm going to Joni. It's better for me to go and look for work." Mama, she says, "No way. And them, they'll look for you. Because you might leave and they won't know it. They'll come, they'll find you here at home." [But] my husband, he doesn't come! He doesn't follow me. They leave, they move, they go to Motaze. And me, I'm at my mother's place, there. He didn't follow me. . . .

H: So you still loved your husband?

A: I loved him! Hah! I leave because of this one [i.e., A's co-wife]! Me, I want to go and work for myself, only! I didn't want a man anymore! You work for someone, and you sit, you're despised! I didn't want anyone anymore! <sup>3</sup>

**26 January 1996, Facazisse**

A: Well, I'm angry, I go over there. I go in search of work. . . . [A raises her voice] It was angry, my heart! I was going to Joni! I didn't want here, I wanted to find people in Joni, I'll go to work there! I'll go and find the work of men! [laughs] Heh-heh! . . . Well, I arrive at the place of this woman, this MuSwazi. She was married by a Muslim. Mmm. Well, I arrive, I stay here. I didn't get to Joni, she didn't want it, this woman. She refuses, she says, "Stop, stay here at my place! I'll give you work, I'll take care of you. Your relatives, when they go out looking for you, they'll find you here." . . . She says, "Don't work! Because, there in *manghezeni* [place of the English], in Joni, they have workers. You could be killed by bandits, stay here! You need a man [to go], because when you don't have a man, they'll capture you, to lock you up in jail. Do you see?" [laughs] Eee! They were captured, truly! At the administration? I saw that they were captured, and that MuSwazi, she tells me. Mmm. She says, "Understand what I'm saying to you. I don't want to let you be captured. Those people there, they were captured. They, they're working there, at the administration. They work! Because they don't have husbands. It needs money, you'll pay the tax there. You're a woman, you don't have a man, you pay the tax. You take out your money, you pay, there in the office. If you have money, you pay, you go home. Where will you find it?" <sup>4</sup> Well, I stay there.

#### 14 October 1995, Facazisse

H: What was the MuSwazi's name?

A: Ah, this MuSwazi. Poor thing. Well, she's Margarida Ngomane. From there, Namaacha. Well, she's here in Moamba, she goes and marries with him, she wants to be married by the Muslim. Mmm, she took care of me well! This woman? Mmm. . . . Well, the husband there, he sold things in the shop. He was a Muslim. . . .

H: What was his name?

A: Simaye. He was a Muslim. I don't know his *xivongo*. He was a Muslim, a *mulungu*. He had a shop, it wasn't his, he just worked there. There where they gave us a place, it belonged to the owner of the shop. Well, he marries this black woman, this MuSwazi. . . . Heh! [laughs] She used to fight, truly! Her [first] husband, there in Namaacha, it didn't go well. She shows me the scars, where they stitched her. She beats her husband. Well, [her arm] is dislocated, they cut her, cut her [to repair her arm]. Heh! Ah-heh! She was difficult! But me, she loved me. . . . Her husband died, the one she was always fighting with. Mmm. He finds he's with other boys, out there drinking. They gather together, they beat him. Finally, he dies. Well, her heart is sore, she leaves home to wander, she comes here to Moamba. Well, she comes to accept this Muslim as her lover. Yah. . . .

This MuSwazi, ah, she courts another man for me. Well, eh! And he, he has his own *timhosi* [flaws]. <sup>5</sup> [laughs]. Eh-heh! When I go and cook *byala*, so that I can buy clothes for myself, [A claps hands], nothing!

R: You don't find anything.

A: And to feed myself, I take these two hands, I cultivate for myself, I feed myself! And then, when he comes back—he's off drinking, hoh! He traps you, like this! [laughs] I was beaten! [laughs] . . . It's she, she's the one who courts that man for me.

H: How did she do that?

A: Ah, I was there a few months. It was from, I got used to them, those young men. Well, he used to come, this man, he comes to [Margarida's] place. Well, he comes to court me—it's those two, they arranged it together. Well, she tells me. I say, "No way! I don't want to marry! I'm tired of working for those men, when they don't do anything for me. Me, I want to go and look for work, that's all!" She refuses! She says, "No, you shouldn't go. Because they'll seize you, when you don't have a man." In the end, I accept, I don't go. I come to

an agreement with her. . . . Yah! I didn't do any work there. This one, [the man] I accepted, he didn't allow me to go out to work. This, this *mamana*, Margarida, she buys [things to sell], I arrange the *tinguvu*. This one, she looks after me! When I was quarreling with this husband, I went to her. "Heh, *mamana!*" [laughs] When we quarrel, I go and complain to her. . . . Mmm, and him, I quarreled with him. When I don't want us to argue, I want us to sit and talk. Well, he leaves me, he goes drinking, he gets drunk—and me, I'm defiant too. It's because of that problem of his, when he's drunk, he'll quarrel with me. He follows me, he says he wants to beat me. I run! I sit with a stick [laughs]. . . .

Then, they transferred this husband of mine. <sup>6</sup> They sent him to Movene. Well, [Margarida] says, "Go with him, and you'll cook for him." I refuse. I say, "If he starts beating me over there, how will I come back here?" She says, "He won't mistreat you, if he mistreats you, come back to my place. And me, I'll fight with him. Because I don't want my daughter, the one I took care of, I don't want it this way." She buys pots, wooden spoons, a winnowing basket, so I can go work with these things. She packs them up well. . . . Well, I say, "No way! It's better if you build a house for me, at home, I'll cultivate there." I say, "Send me home, build me a *muti*, I'm dying from quarreling. My relatives, they're at home, it's me who left home to wander. Me, I'm used to cultivating. I'm not used to this buying everything." Mmm. Well, he accepts. He puts me with his sister. He builds a home for me, here in Xihluku. Near my mother. They give me a field, I cultivate there. Indeed, I sit, I cultivate, we visit each other. I prepare food, I go with it, and I cook for him. When it's time to cultivate, I go home. And he comes to visit me, and I go to visit him. . . . Well, he was used to things being this way. He was always out drinking, wherever there was *byala*. When he drew his wages, he spends it on *byala*. Me, I grow corn for myself, I sell it, I find things to wear. I find things to feed myself, and I feed him. I clothe that *muti*, that one called by his *xivongo*. From my own seeds. I look after the child of his sister, [because] she couldn't. I say, "Ah! I don't want a man anymore!" I leave, I return to my mother's place, I'll stay with her.

H: How long did you stay with Nduma?

A: Yoo! Many years, I can't count them. Well, he died, too. And Matlangane, he died. It's the same thing. You suffer, it's no problem. Mmm. And now, here I am. Now, I'll die. [laughs]

H: Did you stay with Nduma until he died, then?

A: Mm-mm. I left him long ago, truly! They all died when I'd already built [my home] here. They all died long after I left them. Eh, I'm used to it now. . . .

H: It sounds like you didn't have luck with men, *vovo*.

A: For sure! Mmm! Again, ah! But, I gave them everything, I worked for them!

R: Eh, *vovo*, don't you know that it's always this way?

A: Eh, he's human. You, you use up all of your strength, you work for them, but they turn around and beat you? Mmm? I say, "Yee! Well, I'm tired of it. I don't want a man! Truly!"

#### 24 June 1995, Facazisse

A: Well, when I'm at my *vukatini*, I go and clutch these oxen. Well, it's because [we see] land should be cultivated by oxen.

R: Mmm, it's better.

A: He goes, he comes, my husband [i.e., Nduma], because he's working there in Moamba, for the railroad. Well me, I stay here at home, with the cattle. He arrives, he takes these oxen. He teaches me, truly! To cultivate with oxen. Well, he teaches me. I say, "Eee! Me, I won't get used to it, because they'll beat me, these cattle!" He says, "No way. What it wants, they need to feel, to feel your spirit. When you're working with them." Indeed! When they're hitched up together, to cultivate, I drive them, I drive them. I hold the plow

here in my hands. And he lets go, he gives it to me. I clutch the plow. I let go, I hold on with one hand. I hold onto the bar. And I drive them. . . . Well, I got used to it. . . . When [one ox] cuts the rope in its *munkhalo* [nose-lead], here, this *munkhalo*, it goes "eee" [A demonstrates how ox cut nose-lead]. I pick it up, me. A man comes, he teaches me, he says, "Eh, what's the problem, *mzai*?" <sup>7</sup> I say, "It cut the *munkhalo*." He says, "Is there any rope in the house?" I say, "Eee." "Go and get it." I go and get that rope. He says, "This [ox] in front, I'll stand over there, you stand here. Stand here." We drive them, we throw that *munkhalo* away. This child, she takes the rope. And me, I go over there. . . . [A demonstrates how they roped the ox-team together by the nose and throat] Well, we finished.

R: You tie the horns.

A: Eh-heh! We tie the horns. We take—[laughs] this rope. Well, when we tie the horns [of one ox], well we settle down his friend. Well, we take [the rope], we do it again. Well, when I've harnessed them, they're together, I take the cord, this long one. He shows me, this man there. "Ah," he says, "come here. If I [drive] them, they'll run, because they're not used to me. They're used to you." Well, I pick it up, I take this cord, this one he gives me. To tie them up, he helps me tie them. He says, "When it cuts the rope, you do this and this." I know it. . . .

All of these things, I was taught by this husband of mine. Heyeh! Heee! He goes and fools me, he leaves, he borrows a head of cattle. It was savage! Heh! [laughs] He returns home with it, he says, "If you take this one, [you'll be able to plow] in those deep trenches." Me, I say, "Heh! The cattle of another, I don't want them. Because, I know that each head of cattle, it's used to its owner." Mmm. He refuses to return it. This man, he doesn't care about the problems of a woman. "Eh! It will beat me, that cow!" [laughs] Eh! When it beats me, that cow, [it was] at this time we were unhitching [the oxen], well, we were going to go home. We were going home. Ah! It goes "ngu-ngu-ngu!" [A, R laugh very hard] It was on top of me! It and I, "thu-tha!" [A mimics being knocked over] Ay! This shoulder blade, it's hurt, it goes "eee!" . . . [A shows how her shoulder was dislocated] It runs off, that animal. You go to stuff the arm [back in place], but you don't know how to do it, you don't know these things well. And that arm, it wouldn't work. Well, we find an old woman, she knows a medicine. She arrives, she cuts me, she cuts me, <sup>8</sup> she straightens me, she straightens me. Here on my arm, it bends, it gets stronger. It gets better, it no longer hurts. I cultivate.

### 26 January 1996, Facazisse

A: Well, I leave that husband, I go to live with my mother. My mother, she too leaves her *vukatini*, she goes to live with her mother, there in Mawebele [Xihluku]. It's here she dies. I stay with her, she gets sick, finally she dies. I'm the one who buries her. Long ago, truly, [the men] only dig the hole, you carry [the body to the grave] by yourself. You get there, you enter the hole, you're carrying her. . . . When they dig, they go "mmm," they turn around and dig, they go "mmm" [A goes through motions of digging]. Well, they go home. I enter the grave, I take her belongings, I fold them, I fold them, I fold them [A demonstrates]. It's finished, it's finished at last. I suffered from this. Yah. Well, I no longer have a place. Maybe I'll get sick, oh! They'll come, I'll be disintegrating there in the *ntsonga* [shack]. <sup>9</sup> [laughs] . . . I'm tired. Well, I leave and go back to *bava* Palati's place, over there, with N'waBoho, this sister I'm born after. <sup>10</sup> I stay there. Eh! I rest!

### 23 February 1996, Facazisse

A: Well, my mother dies, then we were just two staying together, I and my sister, Maria Muhlanga. <sup>11</sup> This N'waMuhlanga, and this husband who married her, they went over there to Joni, to Nelspoort [i.e., Nelspruit, South Africa],

over there. Well, she dies while they're in *manghezeni*. . . . Well, then she dies. I write a letter, I tell them that mother is no longer there. Well, when they come here, back home, they find that our mother is no longer here. Here at home. They find me, when I'm in solitude, I'm just sitting here at home. Well, that's why we leave here, from Mawebele. Maria says, "Let's go over there to *mamana* Nkotassane's place. Isn't she our mother? She's the senior one. Mother died, we don't have a mother. Well, she's our mother, Nkotassane. It's no problem, we'll go to Palati's, he'll look for a place for us. . . . " Indeed, he put us there, he shows us a place, we sleep there. This husband of [Maria], he builds a *muti*. . . . <sup>12</sup> Mmm, I go home to Chobela, I look after the children of my sister. I brought up those children, those five. Hoh! I still had strength then! Eh, it's gone. [A slaps her biceps]

They were the children of my sister. Yee! Not all of them. I began with the child of my sister, this one who is born after me. <sup>13</sup> A girl. They send her to [my] mother's place, there. Well, I raise her, me. While we're staying together with [my] mother. Well, and there's [the son] of Maria Muhlanga, this Albano, Albano Nhlongo. Maria, she finds a child there. And she weans him, she leaves him. They go to Nelspoort, they go to work. I stay with these children. I look after them. . . . Mmm, Albano. He was brought up by me. Well, at first, he stays with my mother. She dies, I stay and I raise him. . . . Mmm. He was still a little child. I carry him on my back, here. He grows up. I cultivate corn, I buy clothes for him, I wash him. He grows a little, I send him to school, at the priest's place. <sup>14</sup> Well, when we leave from over there [Xihluku], we come to Chobela, in poverty, he studies in the school here [at Antioka]. Mmm. Indeed, he grew up here, he was raised by me. Until he leaves, and he takes a wife. Well, that girl, I accompany her back to her home. Well, she goes out with young men, she gives birth while she's still at home, with her mother. She's here, even now, in Machambuyane. [laughs] Mmm, they're living, all of them. Well she, this daughter who I raise, of this sister who is born after me, she gives birth to a child. A girl. And she, the third one, they bring her straight to me, at my mother's place, because my mother, she died. Well, they send her, again I raise [this child].

They say, "Go and raise her, we know that you raise children. And yet at this time you don't have anyone. Let's take the child. You can go with her, go and raise her—her mother, she doesn't have a husband at home." Indeed, I carry her on my back, I go home with her. . . . And she grows up. She goes home, to her mother's place. When she was a girl. She accepts a man over there. And now, she's with her mother—she leaves to marry, she sees that, aah, since it's my *vukatini*, I'll take my mother. She's staying with her mother. She cooks *byala*, she sells it for herself, that granddaughter. . . . Mmm. Well, her husband, he was killed by Renamo. . . . Aah! These things, they subside, [but] this husband is no longer here. Yah. And she bore four children. . . . And now, she's here, she's here with her mother. Yah. And she was raised by me. She grew up, she became a girl. When they leave, they leave when they're girls, they can marry. Mmm. They're living.

Well, there's still this one, this one who built a hut for me. A boy. [His mother] weans him—he's Abílio, [the son] of my brother. <sup>15</sup> He sends him to me. Well, his mother, she's pregnant. I'll raise him. I send him to school. [laughs] Well, he grows up, he goes off to work. He's here, even now he's here at home. . . . Yah. I finished with him, he's the last one. But there's [another] here at my *vukatini*, when I was still there. There was a grandchild, he's the grandchild of my husband, he was born of the sister of my [second] husband. . . . And him, I raise him. I send him [back to his mother] when I'm at my mother's place. . . . They're living! All of them. I raise this one, he leaves. I raise this one, she leaves. Mmm. Two boys, Albano and this one, Abílio, who builds my hut. Girls, three. Yah. . . . And now, Maria, she's there in Chobela. Well, that we separated, it's because, when you're sisters, you sit and you quarrel a little. Well, I say, "That's not right. It's better we scatter, and me I'll have my own *muti*." Yah. I'll have my own *muti* again. . . .

I was staying with Abílio. Mmm, this one who builds my hut. I left Maria's place

there, well he was a little boy. I cut the trees to clear the land, with him, when he was still small. <sup>16</sup> I say, "Learn! One day you'll grow up. When you've grown up, you'll take a wife, you'll bring her here, I'll cut a piece [of land], so you'll have a field, and I'll have a field. Because to keep feeding you, I won't be able to endure it. What will you [and your wife] eat? You'll eat here." Yah. I stayed with him. He's the last one! I say, "Yee! Well, I've grown old." [laughs] "I won't endure it!" To carry a child here on your back? On your shoulders? And you're here cooking? Well, eh-heh! You can start cooking in the afternoon, you'll still be cooking at night! . . .

#### 14 October 1995, Facazisse

- A: Maria, mmm, she's a *n'anga*. Well, now, she's not well. She says, "Eh! I've grown old. I can't endure this work anymaore, this witch-smelling [*kufemba*]." Well, there are her children, the children of her spirits, the ones she teaches, they go and work for her, they take care of the sick people.< <sup>17</sup> She was a *nyamusoro*! And me, I went around with her. I carried her *muthundu* <sup>18</sup> on my head. I say, "Say truly, if you no longer want it. Because if you no longer want it, since we used to pray, I want to go back to church." They obligated me [to work with her]. . . .
- H: When did you start going to church?
- A: We began, we entered the church—and she, I was introduced by her, to the people praying there. Well, she finds out about her spirits there. She didn't have to have her spirits drummed out for her <sup>19</sup> at the *n'anga*'s place, she didn't have to do the drumming, her spirits just come out, there in church. Well, her husband, he goes and looks for a *n'anga* to give her the medicines for her spirits. She goes to the *n'anga*, she just finishes her treatment and *kuthwasa* [to complete rites of healing and training for spirit mediumship] <sup>20</sup> there, well, her husband, he arranges everything for her to *kuthwasa*. She returns home and begins to work. Mmm. Well, they say, "Work with her. Serve her, you're her sister." I don't want to. Indeed. Well they say, "If you abandon your sister, she might find trouble, in those places where she goes." I say, "Eh! I won't be able to do it." I say, "When she begins to speak those things, those spirits, I don't know it!" She says, "You'll know it." And her husband, he was alive. He goes with her, we three. Yah. I didn't like it, it was forced on me, "You abandon your sister, she goes alone—when she meets up with trouble?" She'll go, she'll find trouble, and people will speak disparagingly of me. Eeh. . . . She says, "You'll know it! Accept! Accept." Indeed, I accept when I didn't want to. Mmm. Then, these things, I get used to them. Mmm.
- H: What did you do for her?
- A: To help her? [laughs] Ay! That work, when they call her, people, those who want to be made well. Well, she packs her things, her clothing, the things she works with. Well, that's finished. She comes and tells me, "We're going back to the place of so-and-so, there where they're calling us." I carry [her things] on my head. I help her by going around with her, and I work with her. Well, this work of *kufemba*, when [the spirit] comes out, she grabs the *xizingo* [pouch] <sup>21</sup>, she smells, she smells, she stops, she catches these things [that are troubling the patient—i.e., harmful spirits]. I take the *xizingo*, I hold it to her nose. I make her name [the spirit]. Mmm. Only that. That's it, the work I do for her. I serve her by [doing] these things, as her *nyauthi*. . . . <sup>22</sup> When it's all finished, they express their thanks, that she has worked well. Mmm. And truly, when she worked well, they stayed in health, maybe the spirits ask for medicines, to set the house right, they set right everything that [the spirits] want. Well, they show their gratitude . . .
- H: Did you get to know Maria's spirits?
- A: Yeh! I know them! There's Muthema, he's a man. Muthema, Muthema Muhlanga. His wife, she's Nyankwawe. Mmm. They're VaNdau, they speak Ndau. They come from over there, Musapa. They run from the war, the war like this one, now. They come here, those VaNdau. Long ago. Well, this

Muthema, he says, "You, my wife, Nyankwave. You're really stupid, you're too slow, these things we want to catch [i.e., harmful spirits], they run! Let me do the *kufemba*." Well, the husband, he does the work of *kufemba*.

H: Did Maria also have Nguni spirits?

A: Mmm. Phande, Phande Muthetho. He's a man. The woman, she's Tandhosse, his sister. Mmm. They're brother and sister. Mmm. He was a bachelor, he didn't have a wife. And she, this girl, she hadn't yet married. Eeh, long ago, they did this work, before they died. Well, when they've died, well, the children of Muhlanga are born. Well, these children, they reach for N'waMuhlanga [i.e., Maria]. [Through her] they do this work that they do, in that time long ago. They appeared, they're looking for work, they were *tin'anga*, when they weren't yet married.

H: Do you mean that someone in the Muhlanga family had these spirits before Maria?

A: Ancestors of long ago, of the Muhlengas. Those ones, they had spirits, [but] they died when they hadn't yet gone to *kuthwasa*, they didn't *kuthwasa*. These things, they want to make *kuthwasa*, well, they died, those ancestors. Mmm. Well, they begin to make [Maria] sick, when she's with her husband. Well, those dead ones, every day she was suffering. Her husband looked after her, he sent her to *kuthwasa*. Yah. Those *tin'anga*, the ones who trained her, they say, "He can't carry her *muthundu* on his head." Mmm, they refuse. He's the *mukon'wana* [son-in-law], her husband. <sup>23</sup> "She needs you, you're her sister. You go, you'll see how she works." Yah.

H: So did you work as a *nyauthi* for many years?

A: Eh! Many years. Mmm! We went to Boane, there are *mathwasana* [students] <sup>24</sup> of hers there. To Maputo, Marracuene, Mapulanguene, Macaene, out there! To Macia, even to Nkaya! We go everywhere, to Ukalanga, everywhere, we went. We go and make people well. And there was never any uproar about her! Mmm. She's written down there, they know her in Magude. At the [Frelimo] party office. When she arrives, "Oh, Maria Muhlanga!" . . .

### 23 February 1996, Facazisse

H: How did you start participating in the Antioka church?

A: The war, we were hearing a little that, a war is arriving, it's coming from over there. Mmm. . . . Me, I ask some of these people. I say, "Eh, I want to return to church again, here." I say, "We had a church, where we do these things, this laying-on hands, there." Yah. We had a church there at home, in Xihluku. Well, it stopped because her spirits came out, Maria. . . .

H: What church was this?

A: It was at her home, when she hadn't yet been possessed by spirits. Yah. They go off to Joni, they leave me, well, I held the church in my hands. She [cures] people with her hands, they live. . . . It's the church of *kuchayisa* [?], they say it's *cheche* [church]. Eh, I forget. That's how they say it. But it's [the church] of clapping, with your hands. And [Maria], she takes the hymn, she claps her hands. She silences [everyone], they witness the things that come out there.

R: You don't know the name of this church?

A: I know it this way. Mmm. <sup>25</sup> When they're over there, in Nelspoort, the time they call me. Well, I hurry there. They say, "You take some others." They baptize us, in the river there, the Ngwenya. Mmm. There where I'm baptized, they say, "You stay with this paper, take it and show it [in Magude]." Yah. Well, and they, they're baptized in the river. . . . [It's called] "laying on hands."

You pray for the sick one, the person who is sick. Mmm. You ask *Xikwembu* [God] for her. And you, you stretch her [arms], stretch, you stretch her, you stretch her. Mmm. The sun rises tomorrow. She's well! Mmm. I gave her strength. It's this way we taught the things of the spirits. It's here that Maria's spirits come out. Mmm. I say, "Say it, you've been made strong." We say,

"You won't be abandoned, you'll return from the place of suffering." . . . Well, I ask some of these people [in Facazisse], I want to enter the church again. She says, "Ah! They won't refuse, when you come back to worship." Because I was used to it. Eeh, I was used to praying. Because my heart—when I sleep, I used to sleep when I was in church. Well, when Maria left her work as a *nyamusoro*, I looked for the people in the church where I was living. In Mawebele, Xihluku. There weren't many of them. Well, I [moved] and we were here. I couldn't bear to go over there. Well, [I think], "Ah, I'll go here." It's close to home. And this God, it's the same.

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#### Notes:

**Note 1:** *Xinto*: the oldest kind of maize beer that women remember making, often fondly called *byala bya khale* (beer of long ago) or *byala bya ntumbuluko* (original/ancient beer). *Xinto* contains no sugar and is fermented for much longer periods than are newer forms of homemade maize beer. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** The second *vukatini* of Albertina's mother was in Machambuyane. However, by this point, she had been widowed again and had left her late husband's home and returned to live with her elderly mother, Fahlaza, in Xihluku. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Albertina later explained that her mother's brother found Vuma in South Africa and returned the money Vuma had given for *lovalo*, to make their separation final. Vuma then gave back two *timpondo*, telling his former in-law to give it to Albertina "because I didn't quarrel with her. It's because of suffering, from the arguments of the women. Give it to her, so she can buy something for herself." Although Albertina laughed at the image of Vuma claiming he knew nothing about the source of conflict between his wives, and ruefully admitted that "we didn't understand each other—if we did, he would have followed me, when I went home," Albertina and Vuma clearly continued to harbor feelings for each other long after they separated. Albertina later told us another, more recent story about Vuma sending a man with ten *timpondo* to give to Albertina so that she could visit him in Motaze—"because she really worked for me, this woman!" But since their separation Vuma had become a powerful *n'anga*, and, although her "heart longed for him," Albertina says she was afraid he would "kill" her if she went, so she "just ate that money" (i.e., used it for herself). Vuma died not long afterward. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Albertina here is referring to *chibalo*, forced labor required of women in colonial Mozambique if their husband had not paid their taxes on time. See Jeanne Marie Penvenne, *African Workers and Colonial Racism: Mozambican Strategies and Struggles in Lourenço Marques, 1877-1962* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1995). [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** *Timhosi*: clumsiness, ineptitude, lack of skill. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** This man's name was Nduma (aka Sabonete) Sitei. He worked for the railroad. Albertina never referred to him by name and seemed embarrassed when I asked what his name was, saying that because he wasn't the husband who gave *lovalo* for her, he "didn't count." Yet their common-law, largely long-distance marriage (see below) lasted more than ten years. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** *Mzai*: respectful way of addressing an elder. [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** *Kutlhavela*: here, meaning to cut incisions so as to put medicine below the skin. [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** *Ntsonga*: small shack used as crop-watcher's shelter. [Back.](#)

**Note 10:** N'waBoho is Nkotassane Tiwana, Albertina's (late) older sister (same birth parents). Her husband, Palati Khosa, lived in Mulambu, which straddles the present-day boundary between Chobela and Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 11:** Maria Muhlanga is the daughter of Albertina's birth mother and her second husband, Vuduya Muhlanga; she is at least ten years younger than Albertina. [Back.](#)

**Note 12:** Albertina, Maria, and Maria's husband built for themselves a *muti* adjacent to Palati's

homestead in Mulambu, although Albertina was counted as a member of Palati's *muti* and was considered his responsibility. [Back.](#)

**Note 13:** Hortencia Muhlanga, another daughter of Albertina's birth mother with her second husband. [Back.](#)

**Note 14:** Missão São Jerónimo, in Magude town. [Back.](#)

**Note 15:** José Muhlanga, brother of Maria and Hortencia. [Back.](#)

**Note 16:** In the early 1970s, Albertina left Maria Muhlanga's *muti* and moved to a plot of land, on the eastern reaches of Facazisse, that she was given by the Facazisse Land Commission. Albertina had farmed in this same area in the early 1940s, when she first moved to Mulambu, but was then removed (along with hundreds of other Facazisse residents) when a Portuguese commercial farmer named Ferreira obtained a land concession there. Around the time of independence, when most Europeans had left Facazisse, the Land Commission was given permission by the new Frelimo district government to redistribute the land to local people who needed it (see chap. 6). [Back.](#)

**Note 17:** *Vana va swikwembu* (children of the spirits) are the women (and occasionally men) whom a *nyamusoro* treats for spirit possession and, in the process, trains to be *vanyamusoro* (spirit mediums) themselves. Relationships among spirit mediums, both across and within "generations," are constructed in kinship terms, with an interestingly gendered twist: The senior medium (here, Maria) is "father" (*bava*) to her "children," and the fees and "gifts" a medium-in-training (or her sponsor) supplies to her *bava* in order to complete her *kuthwasa* are called *lovolo*, thus setting up affinal kinship between the senior medium, the person who pays for *kuthwasa*, and the spirits themselves. [Back.](#)

**Note 18:** *Muthundu*: the sacred basket of a *nyamusoro*, in which all of her medicines, instruments, and costumes are carried. [Back.](#)

**Note 19:** *Kuchayiliwa* is derived from *kuchaya*, which means to play a musical instrument, usually as accompaniment to singing and dancing. Albertina is referring to the long drumming session in which a person who has been diagnosed with spirit possession and whose spirits have not yet come out will practice, inducing the trancelike state necessary for her spirits to emerge, identify themselves, and go to work. *Kuchayiliwa* is the passive form of the verb, meaning to have *kuchaya* done for or to one. Albertina is saying that Maria did not need to go through this stage, as her spirits came out on their own during a church service (see below). [Back.](#)

**Note 20:** *Kuthwasa*: to be cured of spirit possession through exorcism rites and to become a fully qualified diviner by completing a course of instruction and another series of initiation rituals. The *kuthwasa* process must be completed with a payment, referred to as *lovolo*, to the medium in charge of the training and cure. [Back.](#)

**Note 21:** *Xizingo*: a small pouch made from the skin of an antelope. [Back.](#)

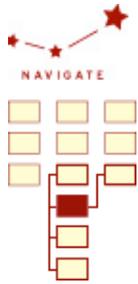
**Note 22:** Albertina was somewhat reticent on this subject. As a *nyauthi* (assistant) to a *nyamusoro*, Albertina's main responsibilities (in addition to carrying the *muthundu*) would have been to prepare the necessary medicine for the *kufemba* ceremony and then to immerse the *xizingo* in it. In the actual process of "witch-smelling," the spirit medium enters a trance until her Ndaus spirit emerges (normally only Ndaus spirits do *kufemba*). She then begins circling the patient and shaking the wet *xizingo* over all parts of his or her body. Every few minutes, the medium suddenly stops everything she is doing (including breathing), and it is the job of the *nyauthi* to take the *xizingo* and hold it to the medium's nose until she sneezes once or twice, thereby releasing whatever she has caught from the body of the patient into the *muthundu*, which the *nyauthi* holds ready for this purpose. It is also the *nyauthi's* role to question the Ndaus spirit about whatever she has found—for example, asking her to name the harmful spirit the *xizingo* has discovered and to disclose what that spirit wants. See Henri P. Junod, "Les cas de possessions et l'exorcisme chez les VaNdau," *Africa* (1934): 270-99. Cf. Alcinda Honwana, "Pratiques et rôle social du Nyamusoro en milieu urbain—Maputo: premiers éléments," *maîtrise de sociologie*, Université de Paris VIII, 1988. [Back.](#)

**Note 23:** Because Maria's husband paid the *lovolo* expenses for her to *kuthwasa*, he was considered the *mukon'wana* (son-in-law) of her spirits. That meant they had to treat him with the utmost respect. Consequently, he could not serve as Maria's *nyauthi*, because he would have heard the "insults" uttered by the spirits in the course of doing their work. [Back.](#)

**Note 24:** *Mathwasana*: here, mediums who were treated and trained by Maria Muhlana, whom she considers her "children." [Back.](#)

**Note 25:** Ruti noted that this church was also called *chazandlai* (clapping hands), whose meaning is similar to that of *kuchayisa*. [Back.](#)

[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique](#)



NAVIGATE

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Mothers  
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fighting story  
work story  
schooling story  
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## Valentina Chauke

I met Valentina Chauke through Aida, who was a more consistent churchgoer than Ruti and who initially wanted to introduce me only to women with lifelong connections to the Swiss Mission church (women unlike Albertina, who joined the church late in life). When Aida took me to visit Valentina for the first time, in June 1995, at the homestead where she lived with her grandson and his family, the elderly woman's welcoming words were, "Why have you brought a *mulungu* to my home?" Having known Valentina since childhood, Aida was used to her sparring




 Valentina Chauke sense of humor and laughed the comment (and my awkwardness) off, unfurling a mat so we could sit down and get the introductions underway. My discomfort at the beginning was augmented by what I saw of Valentina's physical condition, which I assumed would make her unable and/or unwilling to sit through interviews at all. She could no longer walk, moving around only as far as her arms would drag her across the sand; her hearing was poor; and she was emaciated and hoarse, subject to frequent fits of coughing and obviously uncomfortable when she had to speak at any length.

Yet while Valentina described herself as "about to die," when she heard Aida's explanation of my work—and learned that her two daughters, who lived close by, were going to be interviewed as well—she agreed quite readily that we could come back to talk with her again. When we returned a few days later, Valentina greeted us excitedly and told us that she had been "sitting happy" knowing that Aida and "her *mulungu*" would be coming to visit her soon. And at the end of what I described later in my interview log as "an unexpectedly wonderful interview," Valentina asked me, through Aida, if "everyone in my country lived this way, going around talking and visiting all the time, and she asked this somewhat wistfully, as though a life spent that way would be wonderful indeed." [1](#)

In other words, the very circumstances that I thought would disable Valentina for interviewing made her appreciate our meetings all the more. Aida and I could not visit her often enough, in part because Valentina could do little else with her time than sit sadly alongside the *machamba* (cultivated field) of her grandson's wife or wait for her unruly band of great-grandchildren to return from school so that she could try to cajole them into listening to her stories. Other motives for Valentina's eagerness to talk with us included, as she said, a desire to see more of Aida, whose mother Valentina considered her "daughter" and who, she complained, was neglecting her own visiting obligations. Valentina appeared motivated as well by the conviction, increasingly apparent the better I knew her, that because she had led what she considered an exemplary life, in strict accordance with laws of respect learned from both the non-Christian woman who raised her and the Swiss Mission church, she had vast stores of experiential wisdom to pass on to us. The eldest of the women we interviewed, Valentina recalled that she was beginning to develop breasts at the time of the *xiponyola* (Spanish flu) epidemic that spread throughout southern Mozambique (and elsewhere in Africa) in 1918, putting her birth sometime between 1905 and 1908. [2](#)

Born in Xisangwana (Nyongane) after her parents had arrived there as refugees from the war in Hlengwini, Valentina—then called Naveta ("for poverty")—was "left alone" as an infant when her mother died and her father returned home, putting her in the care of one of his maternal aunts. Valentina remembers this woman, N'waXavela Mazive, as both her "grandmother" and her "mother," and she speaks with gratitude above all for her strong support of Valentina's desire to participate in the mission school and church. The older woman's position here is ironic, given her own refusal to consider conversion. In fact, one of the most significant themes recurring throughout Valentina's life stories is the tension between her vigorous identification with Christianity and her equally emphatic deference to traditional laws as taught to her by her foster mother. Valentina's marriage to a young church man, for example, was negotiated by the male African teacher at the Makuvulane mission school; yet when her husband died a few years later, leaving her with only one daughter, Valentina, a young widow, entered a sexual relationship with a second man in order to fulfil the requirements of *kucinga tindzhaka* (to cleanse or purify oneself

of the pollution of death through ritualized sexual intercourse) <sup>3</sup>—a distinctly traditional practice that the Swiss sternly forbade and that Valentina ended rather harshly as soon as she had conceived a second child.

5

For a number of reasons, interviewing Valentina was a challenge, especially for Aida. The older woman chastised us for (or claimed not to hear) questions she considered inappropriate, and she devoted much of her limited voice to berating Aida and the generation of Aida's daughters for immersing themselves too deeply in *xilungu* ways. We spent roughly twenty (recorded) hours interviewing Valentina and still felt confused about many of the details of her life, above all the labyrinthine kinship connections by which she was linked to the other characters in her stories. This topic provided many opportunities for Valentina to point out the deficiencies in Aida's upbringing, since Aida was almost never able to follow Valentina's genealogical trails from beginning to end. However, Aida and I also developed a close relationship with Valentina's elder daughter, Talita (mother of the man in whose household Valentina was living), whose own life stories often shed light on her mother's murkier narratives.

Talita's willingness to talk with us seemed to stem from those elements of her experience that mirrored Valentina's: a turbulent sexual past not always consistent with her self-identification as Christian; a marriage that ended prematurely and left her in charge of her own, struggling household; and a proud, outspoken sense of personal independence. It was only by trying to understand their similarities as life-storytellers that I began to appreciate why Valentina's younger daughter, Marta, behaved so differently toward Aida and me and why after our first awkward interview it seemed best not to impose on her again. The offspring of a union Valentina preferred not to discuss, married to the man her older sister had been promised to and then spurned by for conceiving a child with someone else, one of a small group of church women whose dedication to Christianity was so strong they followed the European practice of adopting their husband's family name—Marta was the quiet, conventional member of an otherwise notoriously troublesome triad, studiously upholding Christian virtue by throwing herself into work and disdaining time lost in idle talk about the past.

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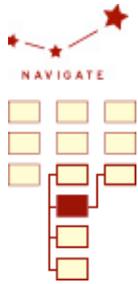
#### Notes:

**Note 1:** Interview log 1 (27 June 1995), entry 018. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Gerhard Liesegang, "Famines, Epidemics, Plagues, and Long Periods of Warfare: Their Effects in Mozambique 1700-1975," Paper presented at the Conference on Zimbabwean History: Progress and Development, Harare, 23-27 August 1982, 3. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** *Ndzhaka* is believed to bring illness and potentially death to inhabitants of the family and village of the deceased; if not properly taken care of, it also brings drought and other ecological misfortunes. Henri A. Junod describes a complex battery of rites for cleansing what he called "the frightful malediction accompanying death" (see Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* [London: Macmillan, 1927], 1:152 ff). Belief in the destructive power of *ndzhaka* was still widespread in Magude in 1995-96, though it was denounced by some Christian congregations. [Back.](#)

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## Lives of Grandmothers (Valentina Chauke) N'waXavela Mazive

4 October 1995, Facazisse

### Author

Rosalina

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Valentina

### Introduction

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- V: My grandparents, I didn't know them. The ones who gave birth to my mother, they don't know me. The ones who gave birth to my father, they don't know me. . . . I grew up with my *kokwana*. . . . It wasn't that grandmother Salume, it wasn't Salume. <sup>1</sup> . . . [Salume] is the one who does that, she goes and takes her, that *kokwana*. She takes her from her *vukatini* [marriage home]. They say, "Come, you will look after this child." She looks after him, she stays there—she says, "But I'm married!" [Salume says] "Come back [home], you will look after this child of ours, this boy Matoyi." N'waXavela is the *nhlantswa*. <sup>2</sup> He died, the father of her child. She gave birth to one male child. He was Phumuyani. When he grew up, he was Manuel. . . . This *kokwana*, she was born together with Salume. Salume, she goes and takes her from her *vukatini*. This *kokwana* who brought me up, she is N'waXavela, N'waXavela Mazive. She is a mother of my father. Salume, she goes and takes the daughter of [her father's] brother. She goes and takes her because [she wants her] to bring up that child, that boy.
- H: Wasn't N'waXavela upset, to be taken from her *vukatini* that way?
- V: What will she be upset about? No, she wasn't upset. Because [Salume] takes her with her child. She comes back to the house of Malate. <sup>3</sup> They got along well, those VaHlengwe! Our *kokwana*, she was taken—the fathers, they agree to take our *kokwana*. . . . Salume takes a *nhlantswa*, to bring up this child.
- A: She brings you up?
- V: No, it's [Matoyi]. We, we came later. N'waXavela, she marries at her *vukatini*. Salume, she goes to take her. She takes this *kokwana*, this one who was married by the Mawayi family. Well, she takes her, she returns home, she returns to bring up this child. When he was still small, he hadn't yet married.
- A: But how does Salume "take" N'waXavela, from her *vukatini*? She just goes and "takes" her?
- V: Don't we get along? *We get along*. You [V to A], you have a sister. You know that your sister, she gave birth to a child, over there. And at that place she doesn't have value. [Salume], she goes and takes her, it's because of love between sister and sister. N'waXavela and Salume, they were sisters. Salume goes and takes her, from her *vukatini*. And [N'waXavela] says, "But I'm married, *hahane*, and yet you're taking me?" <sup>4</sup> And [Salume] says, "I'm taking you to bring up this child." She refuses at first, [but] Salume says, "I want you because you will look after this child until he grows up, he takes a wife while you're there with him." Indeed, she brought him up. She brings up Matoyi. Because this Matoyi, his mother died, when Matoyi is still small. Now who will raise him? [N'waXavela], she brings him up, until he becomes a young man, until he takes a wife. And then me, I was brought up, I was brought up in the house of my brother, this Matoyi. . . .
- H: Why was it N'waXavela who raised you, then?
- V: Mother died, and I was still this small [V indicates size with her hands]. We, we two—because there was one, she was living with our *hahane*, this one who was born with Xihlehlwana [i.e., Xihlehlwana's sister]. This one, who let my sister burn in the fire. . . . When he goes home, when Xihlehlwana goes to Hlengwini, he says, "Take this child, bring her up." Me, they leave me behind, they leave me behind, when I'm very, very small! They leave me behind, at this *kokwana*'s place. I stay, and I'm still small! Father, he goes to Hlengwini. Father, Xihlehlwana, he gives me to N'waXavela. He says, "You, mother, look

after this child of mine for me." They got along, those elders. They got along so well, those of long ago! Long ago, those of long ago, they got along so well! They weren't like us—they got along together, those of long ago. When one said, "Go over there, you go and bring up that child," you did it.

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** Salume Mazive, birth mother of Xihlelwana Chauke, Valentina's father. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** *Nhlantswa* normally refers to the daughter of a woman's brother's daughter or to the woman's younger sister, whom her husband may marry as a junior wife. Valentina uses the term differently here. Salume and N'waXavela were considered *vamakwavo* (sisters) because their fathers were uterine brothers. Since Salume's father was the elder of the two, Salume was senior to N'waXavela and so could treat her as *nhlantswa*—in this case, calling on her to live in Salume's household in order to look after the boy Matoyi, who was the orphaned son of one of Salume's daughters. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Malate: the clan name of Salume's son-in-law, Matoyi's father. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Here, *hahane* (which normally means father's sister) is used by N'waXavela because Salume is the elder sister. [Back.](#)

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## Lives of Mothers (Valentina Chauke) N'waMbokhoda Chauke

19 December 1995, Facazisse

- V: [When my father went back to Hlengwini], we stayed, we two, the other one is this [sister] who is born after me. She lets her go burn in the fire. She says, "She is preventing us from going home to Hlengwini."
- A: Mm?!?
- V: Heh! Don't you understand? This sister of Xihlehlwana. She comes to Xihlehlwana's place, she takes this [sister] who is born after me, he gives her to her. Well me, I was older. Well, she lets her go burn in the fire! She says, "She doesn't want to go home to Hlengwini."
- A: Who is it, the one who let her burn in the fire?
- V: This one who lets her burn in the fire, it's the sister of Xihlehlwana, N'waMbokhoda Chauke. Mmm. She lets her go burn in the fire. [A has trouble translating] You don't understand, you. My father, Xihlehlwana. When he goes home to Hlengwini, . . . we two stayed behind. He says, "You, you stay." We stay. Well this one, he says [to N'waMbokhoda], "Bring up this child." She lets her go burn in the fire. Well, she died, my sister, the one who is born after me.
- H: But *vovo*, how did she get into the fire?
- V: [N'waMbokhoda] says, "She's preventing us from going home," because she wants to go home to Hlengwini. She wants to go home. And they can't go home, she prevents them from going home. She is unable to walk, well they wanted to go to Hlengwini. Well, [Xihlehlwana] takes the child, he gives her to his sister, he says, "Stay here with this child." Well, she lets her go, in the night, when she goes to sleep. She crawls by their heads, she goes and burns in the fire, my sister. This one who is born after me. She is born after me. . . .
- H: Why did your father return to Hlengwini?
- V: They were calling him. Mmm. They say, "Let's return and govern our land."
- H: So he was the chief?
- V: Mmm, he was the chief. Well, they call him, they say, "Let's go home." . . . [Xihlehlwana] says [to his sister], "Because she is small, she can't walk. She will stay with you. Later we will see, if we will come and take her." Well, she lets her go [be burned] because she is preventing [N'waMbokhoda] from going, when they go to Hlengwini. She prevents her from going home! Mmm. [N'waMbokhoda], she hears the words of Xihlehlwana, he says, "They will stay, those two. This one [Valentina] I am giving to N'waXavela. This one stays with N'waMbokhoda." . . .
- H: Mmm. So I still don't understand, did your father's sister leave your sister alone, and she crawled into the fire?
- V: It happened on purpose! 1 She goes and neglects her on purpose! She leaves her alone, she burns. On purpose! Because she wants to go home to Hlengwini. [The baby] goes 'eee' [i.e., crawls out the door]. She goes on her knees. She didn't know, she was sleeping. A child, when she is asleep, you go 'eee.' [V peers as though checking on child] You check on her. But when something hurts her, you won't be able to sleep, the fire makes her cry, when she's burning in the fire. But you can't look after her? Hah!
- H: So your aunt did nothing to save her?

V: Hah! Save her, when she is such a devil?! She is a devil, that's all! She let her go burn in the fire, on purpose! She's a devil! I remember. She even goes and deceives them, she says, "Maybe she burned herself on the burning coals." But she's crying—you don't say, "Where is she?" You don't look for her? "Where is she, where is she?" Hah. When you're a devil, do you know a child?

Well, *kokwana* N'waXavela, she says, "Why did this happen? Why didn't you give the child to me, so I could raise her for you?" Well, she was buried. She was buried, my sister. Well, Xihlehlwana says [to N'waMbokhoda], "Go back to where you were married, never enter my home again!" He suffered, father, he really suffered. He suffered so much! So he banishes her, "My sister, my sister, go! To a place known only by you! [i.e., he doesn't care where]" . . .

H: So it couldn't have been an accident, your sister's death?

V: Didn't you hear me? I said, she's a devil, through and through.

A: What was her problem?

V: Because it's in her *moya* [soul], <sup>2</sup> the soul of the one who gave birth to her.

A: She got it from her mother?

V: So you don't know that it's the mother who gives it to her daughter?

H: Gives what, *vovo*?

V: Could I know those things of the night? Those things, when it's not my *mahanyelo* [way of life]?

A: Do you mean *vuloyi* [witchcraft]?

V: Eee!! Could you let a child burn, if you're not a witch? . . . Those great ones, our grandparents, they talked. They say, she bewitches. She kills people, by witchcraft. People she despises. N'waMbokhoda and her mother, they bewitched together.

H: So did her mother teach her, or what?

V: Of course she teaches her. Isn't it a school? Can't you teach your child at home? Mmm, it's a school, truly, a school of witchcraft. . . . <sup>3</sup> They killed people so that—they really got rich from people. Say you're married with *lovolo*. Your father, he eats it. Then another one [of his daughters] is married with *lovolo*, your father eats it. They say, "Well, he's getting rich. And he's not giving anything to us! He has many daughters, he's getting rich. Well we, can't he send us anything?" Because he doesn't send them anything, that's like [saying] they can kill him. Mmm. They were jealous of girls, of women—those who gave birth to many girls. Those were the ones they bewitched.

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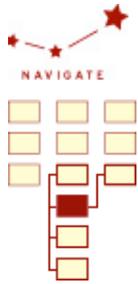
#### Notes:

**Note 1:** *Hi ma xi vomu*: with malice aforethought, intent to do harm. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** *Moya* can mean air, wind, spirit, soul; it is also the Shangaan word used for the Christian concept of soul. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** According to Henri A. Junod, witchcraft (or "black magic") among the Tsonga is a hereditary power passed down from mother to child ("sucked in at their mother's breast"). Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (London: Macmillan, 1927), 2:506. [Back.](#)

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**Fighting Story:** [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Girls (Valentina Chauke) Fighting Story

**27 June 1995, Facazisse**

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

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Lives of girls

fighting story ★

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- V: My girlhood, yee! Hah! We lived by *mugayeyiso* [fighting]! <sup>1</sup> We lived by fighting, by fighting! When we were girls. [laughs]
- H: Who did you fight with?
- V: It was the girls of the *tiko* [country]. There are girls here in Facazisse, there are girls there in Magude, you invite each other. "Ah, there's a battle, let's go play together, at this place!" The girls of this *tiko*, they were warriors! When you go to play with each other—we go to the woods, far! We didn't fight at home, we fought in the woods. With our fellow girls. This one who wins over the others, "Ba-ba-ba-ba!" [V raps A on the head] When you see her, you must really respect her. You respect her! Ho! When they see her, they say, "She's '*tate*' [elder sister]." You say, "*Tate*." . . . "Heh-heh, here comes *tate*! Greetings, *tate*!" Me, I was a wild animal! They really respected me. I was really a wild animal, among my fellow girls. "Ooh, ooh!," they jump in fear! She jumps, this fellow girl, she beats me! [V pauses] I wouldn't accept it. Heh! It was the time. Aida. Aida! When you invite each other, [the girl] who is eldest, she says, "You, you fight with this one," "You fight with this one." They say, "Fight together, with this one." . . .
- H: How did you fight, with your hands, or sticks, or what?
- V: We fought with our hands. Heh! Heh, heh! [V mock-punches A] You scratch with your fingernails, until blood comes out.
- H: What did your elders think of these fights?
- V: Ha! Ha, ha, ha. You don't tell them, we didn't tell them.
- H: [laughing] But what about when you went home bleeding, didn't they ask you about it?
- V: Oh! What will you tell them? Do they talk about the affairs of girls, the business of girls out there in the woods? The affairs of girls, they didn't care about them, truly. . . . It's our secret, this thing. Our secret then, it's fighting. . . .

**4 October 1995, Facazisse**

- V: We fought, indeed! These things—pulling those, those *mitsingi*! [laughs] Well, you go "eee." [V leans forward, pulls cloth over her head] You work here inside your *nguvu* [cloth], here. Well, you come out, you show your friends. Well. When—[V breaks off twigs from bush beside her], you break off a little piece. When you come out, you finish [with] your body, you finish. Well, when it's finished, well, you look for a girl in your *ntangha* [age group], you'll show her. We weren't equal. Well, when we finished, you go— [V taps A on the head with her stick] "When you see me, respect me! I'm your *tate*! I'm the big one!" *Tate*, [because] you defeated her. You did it with girls in your age group, your *ntangha*. You weren't *tate* by your mouth alone!
- H: Where did you do this fighting?
- V: In the bush, in the bush. Where we weren't seen by anyone. Although a boy—he must not see you when you're in this place where you go, to do this work! It was a secret! These things weren't seen by anyone. Boys, boys, when—eh! They say, "We're going to the *xitikini* [playground] of the girls! When [the girls] see . . . , they go "eee" [V scans the horizon, as if for boys], we turn around, we send them away. They go. Hee! We didn't allow it! They

always surprise us from behind, they sneak up on us from behind, we go "eee" [V peers into trees]. "The boys, they're coming!" Hee! But we hid ourselves. It's a secret place! Where no one goes. [V pulls leaves from bush, tears them into pieces.] We, we had this thing, the thing that makes the medicine for pulling, it's this. The medicine.

- A: You went with a medicine?!
- V: We dug that tree, that little tree, for the medicine for pulling. We go and heat it. We shred it into a pot, we heat it. Well, we take it. We had this *xirhengele* [pot sherd] and a *nkambana* [small clay dish] [V goes through motions of mixing medicine, using stick and a can]
- A: [laughing] Is that your *xirhengele*, there?
- V: Do you want to go and show them, there at the home of the *valungu*?!?
- A: [laughing] We just want to learn, *vovo*! We won't show anyone!
- V: You don't show them, you don't tell them [how to make the medicine]! It's just for us. Since you say that you want to know everything about us.
- H: Mmm, I understand, *vovo*. I won't show anyone.
- V: It's this that we worked with, long ago—here [V points, laughs] to pull [*mitsingi*]. . . . [V explains how medicine was made and used].
- H: Who taught you these things, how to make this medicine, how to pull [*mitsingi*]?
- V: Yeee! So [you think] I'm of today?! Even our mothers, the ones who gave birth to us, they played this way. There was no *n'anga* who [alone] knew the tree for this medicine. These things, this medicine—when you know the tree, you should go and take it. . . . We understand each other through these things. This one who is the biggest, we sing a song to celebrate her victory, we sing a song, there. She's really respected! Me, I wasn't beaten by anyone! I beat them. Yah! It's what we wanted, in our *ntangha*. We say, "This one," we say, "She's *tate*!" You speak [this way] of her, when you're playing. If they weren't long—"You're a child!" . . . The men, they aren't happy with us [if we don't do it], the men. They say, "She doesn't yet know these things." They say, "She didn't pull." They say, "She's a *mhakwa* [hole]!" . . .
- A: But *vovo*, how did you learn about these things?
- V: These things, they couldn't be told by anyone, because—you know, long ago, you see this one who is older, she knows these matters. It's she who is the elder, you're sitting with a lot of people, she says, "There's this, there's this." And these lies that exist now, they didn't exist then. These things, it was the custom of long ago, of the girls. It was the time. Girls, long ago, they lived by these things, long ago. Mmm. All the girls, they all belonged to our age groups! Not one revealed your secrets. . . .
- H: Did the church know that this was being done?
- V: Hah! The superiors?!? Hee! In the church, is there this kind of talk? This kind of talk, it didn't exist in the church. It wasn't there. These things were known by the old ones, that, they have these things, the girls. [But] the church, they didn't accept it, because they're heathen, these things. They said, "These things, they don't mean anything." But they had value, among the girls. The law of long ago, of the church, all this nonsense, we didn't speak about it in the church. [V pauses] You didn't speak about it in the church, [like] this craziness that is spoken now. These things that we're talking about, you didn't tell anyone!

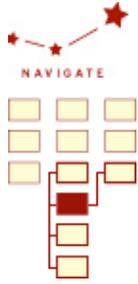
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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** *Mugayeyiso*, a Zulu word meaning a challenge to battle, specifically with reference to fighting among groups of herdboys. [Back](#).

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(lives of women)

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Work Story****27 June 1995, Facazisse**

H: What else did you do when you were a girl, besides fighting?

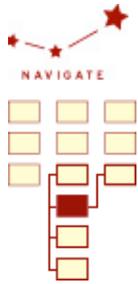
V: Well, you pound corn, you grind corn, you cook, you go to your fields. Mmm.

H: Did you enjoy this work?

V: Cooking? Ah, what do we know? We might suffer at our *vukatini* if we don't know how to cook. If we don't know how to cultivate. They teach us to cook, they teach us to cultivate. Me, I had my own field! There with my mother. . . . [V explains size of this field, in relation to landmarks around us] We found peanuts, we found corn, we found *maxalana* [sorghum]! Even, *xikombe* [millet], we found it.**Work Story:** [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

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Schooling Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Girls (Valentina Chauke) Schooling Story

27 June 1995, Facazisse

- H: Did you go to school when you were a girl?
- V: Yah! We go to play. We didn't go with our whole hearts. When you want, you leave it—when you didn't want to, you didn't go to school. You sit in the path, you play. [V demonstrates game played in sand with pits of *nkanyi* fruit, like jacks]. . . . We go and we sit, there in the path, like we're sitting now. You're here, I'm here. We're all sitting [V tosses imaginary stone in the air with one hand, while other hand scoops stones from ground]. You go, "eee." It's called *ngqako*. <sup>1</sup> . . . [V explains how game is played] And yet, although I never studied [in school], my heart studied. My heart, it studies! . . . We were taught respect, there with our mothers.

4 October 1995, Facazisse

- V: Eeh! We were taught that, this man, when he wants you, you go by the *nawu* [law]. Maybe he comes to you, maybe he speaks with your parents. When your father wants that, "We'll take this one," we'll talk [and I'll say], "When you say so, I'm coming." Me, I was brought up well. We didn't know that, when you speak with a young man, you speak with him, you grab each other, you go "eee" [V pulls on A's arm, mockingly], you say "We're in love, we're in love." "You're in love"—what is that? *Kokwana* N'waXavela, she didn't allow that, hee! She didn't allow that. Even this man, the one I married, they didn't want it, they say, "We don't want you to go marry in the desert! Because, there's no water! Well, since you live by bathing <sup>2</sup>—where will you find water?"

H: But you married him anyway?

V: Mmm. . . . When you look after yourself, when you're looked after, you didn't know—you didn't say that, "Me, I look after myself."

A: *Vovo?*

V: You didn't say that, "I look after myself." When they could come to thank your mother, for bringing you up by the law, what do they say? They say, "You brought her up by the law, she didn't run around foolishly with men!" They thank her, they give her an *mpondo* [100 *escudos*]. He thanks her because she brought you up well. Mmm. . . . Me, I was instructed in proper behavior. [My grandmother] told me, "You must not go around with men, they won't give *lovolo* for you." For us, *hahane*, we said it for the sister of your husband! *Hahane*, it's the sister of your husband, that's how we spoke of her. We spoke this way. <sup>3</sup> We helped her. Maybe a headscarf, or whatever, you give it to her. You're happy because she's the sister of your husband. . . .

When you begin to see your *tin'hweti* [period—*literally*, moons], we sit inside the hut. The day I see it [for the first time], it's me who goes and tells *kokwana*. Mmm. I say, "There's something, I'm seeing something that's coming out." She'll take you, she takes me inside. You sit there. We sit, we wait for it to be finished. They cook food, they'll give it to you here inside, until it's finished. When it's finished, when your month is done, you have to wake up at the crack of dawn! The time they get up to go to their fields, when the chickens are squawking. You wake up early! You go to bathe. And you take a piece of burning wood from the fire. You go with it, to the river. Well, you get there, you go "duu!," you put it in the water. . . . [V makes "rra-rra-rra" sound, demonstrates washing herself with water mixed with soot] You get out. You run, you go home. You leave, running! You don't look behind

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you. You don't talk to anyone, you go straight home! Well, you've come out, indeed, you've come out from your work. . . . *Kokwana* tells me, it's this way because me, I'm growing. It's this way. Mmm. She tells me, "You must not! Not one day you do these things!"

A: You must not do what?

V: You [must not] go and do those things, a boy, when he wants to court 4 you, you say, "He-he-he! He-he-he!" [i.e., laugh in a disrespectful way]

### 30 December 1995, Facazisse

V: I stay at the home of my sister. 5 She was married by Jakovo Chauke. There, the church there. There was this tree, there at the church of Makufulane. A *nhlaru* tree. It's the church of Makufulane, "Nhlarweni." It's there that we grew up. We say,

<i>Khale ahinga ni nayo,</i>	Long ago we didn't have it [i.e. church],
<i>Ahikhongela [tindlwini te ro].</i>	We prayed inside the huts [?].
<i>Ahiwela Nkomati!</i>	We crossed the Nkomati!
<i>Hiya petcheya,</i>	We're going across the river,
<i>A Khocene!</i>	To Khocene!
<i>Antioka!</i>	Antioka!
<i>Mati, matele ngopfu,</i>	The water is really overflowing, we won't
<i>hingarivali!</i>	forget!
<i>Loko mati matele ngopfu,</i>	When the water is really overflowing, we
<i>hingarivali!</i>	won't forget!

Isn't it this way? When the water is really overflowing, we won't forget. We crossed the [Nkomati] river, we come here [to Facazisse]. We go to church. Even if the water floods, we can't forget! We cross the Nkomati. Jakovo was a *muvangeli* [evangelist].

H: What about Matoyi, and N'waXavela?

V: Yah! They were heathens, through and through.

H: So did you go to church because of Jakovo?

V: Weren't we staying with him? I stayed there, at his place. Won't you go to church, when you have the same *xivongo* [clan name], of the church?

H: How did N'waXavela feel about this?

V: She's happy! She's really happy, when I'm seen there at church. She's happy. It made her happy because, "Our children, they're going to work in the school. They pray." Mmm. But she didn't mislead us, saying "Why are you praying?" Mm-mm. She didn't mislead us. When you didn't go, you don't go to school, she'll ask you, she says, "Ah! Today, you're not at the church, why?" She didn't go, because their work, they went around using the divining bones, outside. 6 She goes [to church] when she sees that today at the church, there are festivities. . . . This one, is Jakovo. This one, is Daniel [Khosa]. This one, is N'watoya, Ngomane. This Daniel, he's the teacher, at Makufulane. This one, Jakovo, he's the *muvangeli*. The missionary, it's *muni* Payi, 7 and the *Misse*, 8 heh! We call her *Misse* Xipikiri [nail]! She's named for her work, when she does this work, she's always going around stabbing you with needles. She was killed in Catembe. They say, "Long ago, for a long time, we've been studying! You slander us, what will you teach us? Well, we studied [since] long ago. Well, you, what will you tell us?" They go after her with axes, they cut her. . . .

H: Wow. Were there ever problems like that here, at Antioka?]

V: [shakes her head] We had love, our church, we had love for everyone. The people here, they go with love only, all of them! Those of the church, they were brothers and sisters. [V sings song again]. . . . Mmm. We cross to the

other side of the river. We go to see our relatives. We cross the Nkomati. [Even] when the water is really overflowing, we won't forget! But when we sing this way, the water dries up! Maybe you [pray in a different place], it doesn't matter. Relatives, church. The church is [your] *xaka* [relative]! The church. You belonged to the church, the church is kin. Really, kin. Mmm. Even when the Nkomati overflows, we couldn't forget! They're our relatives. . . .

We study in church. We learned the stories of *hosi* [lord] <sup>9</sup> Jesus. Jesus, truly, when he comes, he'll come, to help on earth. To teach. "The father of Jesus, do you know him, who is he?" "He's Jehova." He'll come to look after us. To sweep away our sins. I heard! Because I was there. When he comes, when he puts you to the test, [it is] to help us. Even now, I like to hear these things. It's only because of illness, that I don't go to church. . . . We learned, "Don't cry, he'll deliver us, when he comes to the earth." Lord Jesus. When he was very small, he goes around, he leaves [his parents], at Joseph's home. His father, Joseph. He goes, he goes, he goes around teaching. They say, to that Joseph, "Wake up, take the infant and his mother. Flee to the land of Egypt. Wake up and take him, because a war is coming, the war of Herod. Herod, when Jesus was an infant. Well, the angel, the angel, he wakes up Joseph. "Joseph, Joseph, wake up! Take the infant and his mother, flee to the land of Egypt!" . . .

H: What other things did you learn?

V: Ah, the laws there, for the girls, were to forbid taking a boy as a lover. <sup>10</sup> Heh! The girl, she must not [do this]! These things weren't allowed. [We learn] that, this man who wants you, he must go to the teacher! Your teacher, the one who teaches you. He goes to court the teacher. He says, "I've come, I've come here to you, because I want that little girl of yours." [The teacher] says, "Show me." He says, "I want that one." Well, he'll come and talk with you. This one who is accepted by the teacher. [The teacher] courts you for the man. Isn't it this way?

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### Notes:

**Note 1:** Also *mathakisana*. See Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (London: Macmillan, 1927) 1:175. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** N'waXavela may have been teasing Valentina about new habits of personal hygiene learned from Swiss missionaries, since N'waXavela herself resisted Christian conversion and all *xilungu* ways. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Valentina is contrasting the much stricter meaning of *hahane* in the past with its more flexible, inclusive meaning today, when it is typically interchanged with *titia* (from *tia*), an adapted Portuguese word for aunt and used not only for paternal and maternal aunts (and husband's sisters) but for any woman to whom the speaker wishes to show respect. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** *Kugangisa*: a verb indicating a boy's effort to persuade a girl to accept him as her lover. See also note 10 below. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** Lídia Malati, daughter of Matoyi Malati, son of a sister of Valentina's father. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** I.e., N'waXavela and Matoyi were *tin'anga*. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** *Muneri*: a missionary. Payi is Frank Paillard, a missionary who spent several years at Antioka in the 1910s. [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** *Misse* (from Miss): the term of address for female mission personnel, who at Antioka were usually in charge of the infirmary, social-work activities, and education. [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** *Hosi*: more commonly, chief; but also king, monarch, master, lord. [Back.](#)

**Note 10:** *Kuganga*: A verb indicating a girl's choice or acceptance of a boy as her lover. See also note 4 above. [Back](#).

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Travel Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Girls (Valentina Chauke) Travel Story

27 June 1995, Facazisse

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmother

Mothers

Lives of girls

fighting story

work story

schooling story

travel story ★

trading story

courting story

Valentina

(lives of women)

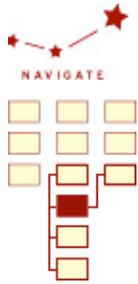
V: I remember that I had friends! Those I was happy with, really happy! Yah. Even though they were friends [who lived] across the river, you go, truly, you go to your friend's place—maybe every week, on Sundays, when you've finished your work. . . . I remember that *tintswalo* [kindness] <sup>1</sup> that we did for each other—because whatever was eaten by one of us, if she, your fellow, if she is eating something, you will eat it too. Hoh! When she arrives [V shakes her head suddenly, remembering], you cook, you sit down, you sit quietly together. You eat. You sit in a row, you talk, you laugh! You talk about—hah!—those things of the girls. The business of the men, we didn't care about those things! It was those things of the girls, only.

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### Notes:

**Note 1:** *Tintswalo*: benevolence, kindness, mercy. The word is also prominent in the Shangaan Christian lexicon, where it is used to express the notion of divine mercy and love. [Back](#).

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Trading Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Girls (Valentina Chauke) Trading Story

27 June 1995, Facazisse

- V: When we were girls, we used to play in Magude, at the shops [owned by] the Banyans. *Tinguvu* [cloths], where else will you find them? That's why we go there, to the shop. When they know that we drink tea, they'll take a kettle, and sugar, to give to you, with bread!—when you haven't yet bought anything!
- H: Why did they do that?
- V: Out of *tintswalo* [kindness]! Out of tintswalo. They had it, mmm—they had it, the Banyans. The *valungu* really liked us. We liked them through eating! Mmm. When we go there, on the day when we want to go to Magude, it had to be maybe two, maybe three of us, we go to Magude. I go with all my fellow girls, we go together to the shop. We reach Magude, they take a kettle, they give it to us. They take sugar, they give it to us; they take bread, they give it to us—in the basin. We begin to eat. . . . I remember that the *valungu* helped us. We didn't despise *valungu*, they really liked us. The Portuguese, the Banyans, it was the same. Week by week, when you go to the shop, they knew our names! [They gave us food] because, you enter the shop, you go—you're visiting them. They say we're their customers. <sup>1</sup> When you come, from over there, he says, "Come back here! There's this, and this!" Ah! Long ago, we were friends with *valungu*. They really fed us! <sup>2</sup> They were friends of the blacks.

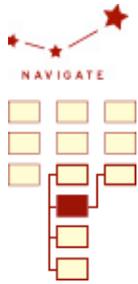
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### Notes:

**Note 1:** Customers: singular, *farangezi*, from the Portuguese *freguês*. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** *Kuphamela*: to dish out food from pots onto plates, a symbolically important display of hospitality to visitors and a demonstration of kinship. [Back.](#)

[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Magude, Mozambique](#)



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## Lives of Girls (Valentina Chauke) Courting Story

30 December 1995, Facazisse

- H: So you met your husband through the church?
- V: Mmm. He was tall. When we walk, I go—[V looks upward], he goes—[V looks downward]. "Well, what are you looking at?" I'm always creeping around, hiding, I go "ngu-ve, ngu-ve, ngu-ve." [V indicates crawling around, to catch a glimpse of him] I want to see the face of that tall one.
- H: But why were you hiding?
- V: [V shakes her head] Hoh! He's a man. The elders in the church, they say, "Respect your husband!" He comes to visit, in the afternoon, he goes to the teacher.
- H: So he was also in the Makuvulane church?
- V: Ee-ee. He's a Rikhotso, a Ubisse. <sup>1</sup> He was in Mavavaze. António, Ubisse. [He finds me] here, when he comes to church—mmm—when the month ends, when they come to worship with us.
- H: And did you like this boy, when you saw him?
- V: Yee! Heh-heh! [laughs] I was happy. My heart, in me, there was great happiness! Really, really [V looks upward]. When I got married, they were sitting outside, the heathens, drinking *byala*. They say, "Heh!" They call me. Me, I go, "Papa?!" [laughs] when I see a man, and they say, "Heh!"—[V folds her hands, looks upward] Hah!—because those heathen women, they say, "You!" They can't say, "*Bava* [father]?" They say, "You!" I say, "Father?"—I'm accepting [his summons], truly. Everyone in the church, we know that the man, your husband, he's "*bava*." When you give birth to a child, he's *papai*. <sup>2</sup> He's the *papai* of the child. . . .
- H: So before your husband asked you to marry him, you had never spoken to each other, he didn't try to court you?
- V: Yee!! [laughs] Long ago, the church, they prayed well; you didn't have secrets, talk secrets with young men.
- H: So you didn't know that this boy wanted to marry you?
- V: How would I know? Hee! He tells the teacher; they talk about it. You don't know about it. You were small, when you see each other, he comes to talk to you. Do you reject him? Reject him, when you're told by the teacher?
- H: So how did you feel when the teacher told you that this boy wanted you?
- V: Oh, you understand. You understand.
- A: Weren't you happy about it?
- V: Hoh! What will you know? He'll say to you, "Well, you. . ."; will you say, "Heh, I don't want him!?" You accept. You please the heart of the teacher—the one who courted you for the young man.
- A: But were you happy?!
- V: Hee! That young man [V shakes her head]—I was really happy. Even if he wasn't beautiful, his heart was pure.
- A: So you loved him?
- V: Truly, truly. . . . Then he goes and takes money, he gives it to Daniel. The money [says], "I want that girl." It's the money for *kuqoma*. <sup>3</sup> . . . Daniel, he gives it to father, that Matoyi. <sup>4</sup> [My husband], he's happy. He says, "I didn't believe you would accept me!" I was beautiful. [laughs] When I walk, here [V

pats her hips], they sang! I go, "Nduti-nduti-nduti,"—legs, I had them! Eee! Heh! [V pauses] When long ago, they believed that a person wakes up, when he dies—he would wake up, when he sees that I've stayed here. He would come to see me.

H: Would you like that, *vovo*?

V: [V snorts] When a person dies, does he wake up?!

A: He doesn't wake up.

V: That's how it is. . . .

H: What was your wedding like? Did you marry in the church here?

V: Isn't it my home, the church? Mmm. I married in the church. [But] it was the church of long ago, long ago, long ago! [This church now], they hadn't yet built it. <sup>5</sup> It was really long ago.

A: Was your wedding beautiful?

V: Maybe it was beautiful, maybe it wasn't beautiful, we had nothing to do with those things. I'm going to my *vukatini* with my husband. The man, he's beautiful, the church, it's beautiful. Even if it's a *mucato* [wedding], <sup>6</sup> your wedding is your husband. It's only not beautiful if you go in sin [i.e., pregnant]. Me, I didn't sin. I married.

H: Did a lot of people attend?

V: Eee! Kin?! People of the country?!

A: Were there cakes?

V: Hah! Aida, Aida! [to H:] Do you see her?! [laughs] You really make a lot of noise! Ah! Mm-mm. Aida. Hah! [V shakes her head] I'm going to tell N'waAsa [i.e., A's mother]—I'll say, "Eh, that Aida, your daughter, she's testing, testing me!" [laughs]

H: But *vovo*, it's not Aida's fault—it's me. I'm asking so I can learn about your wedding.

V: [to A:] Do you hear me? She's come to take our news! She'll take our news, she'll go home with it, we'll never see her again!

A: Our weddings here, and weddings in her country—they're not the same. Well, she wants to learn about things here.

V: And theirs, what happens?

A: At her place? She'll tell you!

H: Mmm, *vovo*, if you want to know, I'll tell you!

V: Heh! You'll tell me?

H: Mmm.

V: I want to know about those things that are beautiful, those things. I don't want to know about those things that go off the path, into the bush! Because it's big news of ours, that you're taking. [Your weddings], I don't know, maybe they're beautiful, maybe you drink that bitter stuff, or maybe *xarope* <sup>7</sup>—we don't know these things!

H: Well, this is what we did at our wedding. [H describes her wedding ceremony]

**Courting Story: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)**

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**Notes:**

**Note 1:** Two names for the same clan. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** *Papai* (from the Portuguese *pãe*): father. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** *Kuqoma*: Zulu term for choosing a lover. The *kuqoma* offering represents the young man's commitment to marry and give *lovolo* for the young woman. At this point I asked Valentina

how much her husband gave for her, for *kuqoma* and *lovolo*, because most other interviewees seemed to enjoy talking about the quantities of goods transferred to their family when they married. Valentina insisted that this was "men's business" and that people shouldn't always be asking "How much? How much?" about a woman's marriage. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Matoyi Malati, son of Valentina's father's sister's; like Valentina, he was raised by N'waXavela Mazive. Valentina calls him *bava* (father) because he was the senior male in the household when she was growing up. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** The present church building at Antioka was built in 1926. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** *Mucato*: a Zulu term for a formal church wedding. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** *Xarope*: concentrated juice syrup. By "bitter stuff" Valentina means Coca-Cola. [Back.](#)

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Lives of Women: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

## Lives of Women (Valentina Chauke)

2 February 1996, Facazisse

### Author

Rosalina

Albertina

Valentina

### Introduction

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Valentina ★

(lives of women)

- V: My heart hurts when I remember my husband! But if you want me to remember, tell me. Even if my heart hurts, say, say [what you want]! It's no problem. My husband, he teaches in the church. People come from Somanyani, he brings them in to worship. He brings them in, truly, the people of Somanyani. My husband, he's a *muvangeli* [evangelist]. He worked for the church, he taught them here at home. He works with them, he works to teach people.
- H: Were there many people in that church, in Mavavaze?
- V: Mmm. Women. The men, they didn't come out. The men, they were many only at the end of the month. They drank a lot of *byala*! Mmm. Women, they were many because—especially some of them, it's because they're poor. Since the church can help them. It helps them because, we teach them God's words, so they open their eyes. They help them, they teach the women, the ones who know, that lord Jesus, what kind of person is he? How was he born? Mmm. They're helped by these things, they liked to hear them. Because, there is also, when they take this *nguvu*, they take it and give it to them, they say, "You take this, you're a *xisiwana* [destitute person]." Mmm. It's to help them. Maybe cloths, maybe something else, even food, well it's because of poverty. They help the poor with food. They say, "Let's prepare food, we'll visit the home of so-and-so." Mmm. You visit the *xisiwana*, you give her something. . . . She thanks you. They're helping the poor, they're helping the poor, with clothing. . . .

Me, I worked at home, I didn't work outside. I cooked. And I cultivated. Mmm, it's like this. We had fields, they weren't far from home. We just cultivated. When you're cultivating, you know what time is *dina* [dinner]. You go and cook dinner at home. He returns here, to wash, in water that is warmed up for him. . . . They call him, they send people to call him. They say, "The work of today, it has arrived." . . . Hee! I was loved by my *n'wingi* [mother-in-law], this one who gives birth to my husband. [But] there at my *vukatini*, there was always fire! They were troublesome, those two! The husband [i.e., V's husband's brother] and the wife. Me, I found this elder brother [of my husband], this Makupe. He married a woman. But he's always furious! When he beats her, he seizes her hair, he goes 'eee!' When he beats his wife, he pulls out her hair with his hands. My husband, he was very quiet. He was so quiet! . . . If he had gone on living, we would have separated from [his brother]. . . .

- H: But you had a good relationship with your mother-in-law?
- V: Yeee! She likes me so much, she has her own work, then she turns around, she'll work on my field with me. When she sees that there is a lot of grass in my field, she leaves [her field], she'll cultivate mine, she'll help me here, so that we'll finish and we'll go home. She really loved me! . . . I didn't know how to gather *nkaka*, me. She goes and gathers it, she returns with firewood. She'll arrive and pour it out, she gives it to me. That *nkaka*, she cooks it. When she cooks it for me, she says, "Here it is." She serves it to us. Even firewood for cooking, she goes and gathers it. We cook with it. . . . When she didn't see me, her heart really hurt. . . . I had my own hut. And they, there is a hut for them, my husband's brother and his wife, a little over there. I had my own hut, and my own *ndyangu* [yard], me and *mamana*, the mother of my husband. Those children of mine, I didn't carry them on my back. I didn't know how to carry them on my back, she carried them for me. Other people, when I go to the river, they say, "Valentino!" [laughs] "Greetings,

Valentino!" I say, "Eeh!" They say, "But that child, where did you leave her? Your pregnancy, did it disappear?" I say, "She's here, she's at home." They say, "Yee! Doesn't she cry?" I say, "When she cries, that's her problem, at home!" . . .

One of those children, of the elder [brother], I found him when he was a boy, he was a child. Well, they take those children. They give them to me, those two children. A girl, and this boy, he's in Misaveni, in Maputo. Their mother, she loves them very much. She gives them to me, she says, "Bring them up for me." Because that place, she was sitting and her heart, how could it be happy? Her heart—to sit there and be beaten? I raise them, those children. Well that one, the boy, they gave him to me when I was still at home. They send him and he comes, I'll sit with him. I sit with him, that boy, and I raise him. I was still a girl, I hadn't yet married. Because of their love, and they see my love, for the children. Those children, they loved me, they really loved me. . . . This one [the girl], her mother gives her to my mother-in-law. This one, the girl. Well, when I go to my *vukatini*, I take the two children, they give them to me. Mmm. I hadn't yet given birth to my daughter, Talita. I look after the two children of Makupe. Me, when they know [that the children love me], they say, Makupe says, "Heh-heh! They want her! They don't want us, they don't love us. You'll be her children! They love her too much, that junior wife!" Do you understand? Are you listening? Well. They really loved me. . . . They go, they go, they go. When they don't see me, they stop [playing], they come back home. They arrive, they call me, they say, "We want *mamana*." Mmm. This tree, in the woods, the *n'wambu*. When they go and pick the *n'wambu* fruit, they pick *n'wambu*, they pick *n'wambu*. They come home, they give it to me. And their mother, she sits alone. . . .

H: Was it easy for you to make new friends when you moved to your *vukatini*?

V: We didn't play together, because the knowledge of school, these things are very late [to reach that area]. Well, they don't know anything. And yet they laugh at you, truly. They laugh at you, they say, "Those people, they're full of school, they're full of school!" My friend, at my *vukatini*, it's the wife of the *muvangeli*. We were always together, with [her] friends, the wife of the *muvangeli*. And they're there, when we go to church. And me, I arrive and I'm happy, because there are other girls at church. There's the wife of the *muvangeli*. This one at home [i.e., V's sister-in-law], she doesn't know the church, she's dirty. We joke, we play, we talk. We play. Mmm. [The evangelist's wife], she's Sara, of the Khosa clan. We were very, very good friends! Where she goes, we find each other. When we come here to church [at Antioka], we come together. Mmm. We worked together, for the church. . . .

#### 24 February 1996, Facazisse

V: But this man, the brother of my husband, he's a devil! . . . He was a heathen through and through. When visitors arrive, we were used to cooking food for them, we give it to them. When he sees me cooking, I cover the pot, I have to cover the food [to give it to the visitors]. He says, "We're sitting here with two headmen [singular, *munumzane*]! <sup>1</sup> When she cooks, she covers the food—the visitors have their food covered for them. She covers the pot for them, she goes and gives them the food. There are too many headmen here!" He does this, he goes "mmm." [V draws line in sand] Over here is my place. Over there is his place. Me, I look after this *visiwana* [poverty, solitude] of my mother-in-law. It's me who cooks food for her. . . . He says, "They go to church, they greet the people of the church. We have visitors from church here at home. They're known by him [i.e., V's husband]! Well me, I'm here alone, with my wife!" Heh! That heathen. When he eats food, that we cook for him, I serve it to him, he goes and sits here, in the doorway. He eats sitting in the doorway. Well, when he sees them coming over there, he covers his food, he hides it [inside]. He comes out, he sits down again. He says we are fools. He says, "Those fools. That wife, she's just like her husband. When she sees someone, she takes food and gives it to them. I

thought my brother would marry a woman who is like us. But that wife is just like her husband." This man, he didn't want us. He didn't want us! . . . Devil, he was a devil through and through!

Truly, he kills my husband. He kills him this way. He wakes up in the morning, he comes and wakes up my husband, in the morning, while we're still sleeping. He wakes him up, they go. He doesn't tell him what he'll be told. Well, he goes, he hears . . . finally, [his brother] says, "It's today, we're going to end this problem with the books." My husband, he has a book full of people, he writes them in one book, one book. They don't have one, his brother, well [my husband] writes his [brother's] wife, and his children, in the same book. Well, [his brother] says, "Let's divide it, so that you, you take them [i.e., his own family], you'll have your book, and me, I'll have my book." . . .

- A: I don't understand, *vovo*, what book is this?  
 V: It's for the taxes.  
 A: Of the church?  
 V: It's for, for the people of the *tiko* [country].  
 A: The taxes for the *xikanikiso* [government]?  
 V: Eeh, for the *xikanikiso*. He takes him, he takes my husband. He says that he wants [the book], he doesn't want to stay with us anymore, they won't stay together anymore! At this place. . . He says, "Go back to Khoseni, get out of here! Go to the church there in the land of the Khosa [i.e., Antioka]! In this land, it's I who choose the site of my village. Leave here, you can go anywhere, anywhere, anywhere! But we'll see each other!" He died, my husband. He was killed because he hesitated, with that book. He refused. [His brother] says, "It's me who pays taxes for my children." <sup>2</sup> . . . He says, "We'll see each other!" He kills him with those things of his, of the night.  
 A: He bewitches him?  
 V: Eeh. He's a real *noyi* [witch]. When he tells him *Hitavonana!* [We'll see each other!], he's not saying anything else except that my husband will die. <sup>3</sup> He's terrifying, that man!

## 2 February 1996, Facazisse

- V: He dies, my husband. The father of Talita, and my child, this first-born. He dies. He gets thinner and thinner, the father of Talita. After a month, it wasn't [even] a month, the child follows him. But it didn't hurt me. Because, when he's sick, he had his question, he says, "When a *mulungu* goes back to his own home, doesn't he take his *banga* [money] <sup>4</sup> with him? Doesn't he go home with his money, doesn't he take it with him? And me, if God helps me . . ., I'll go home with my money, that child." Well, it really made me suffer! Because, what is he asking [God] to do with that child? Well, he dies, a little later he takes the child. I didn't suffer anymore, because I know that the child is with him. . . . He says, "If Talita were a man, my wife, she would stay here, he would look after her. But since she's a woman, Talita, you [i.e., V] will stay and you will suffer." He's talking about this brother, this one who beats his wife. . . .

## 24 February 1996, Facazisse

- V: Truly, he was so happy, Makupe! He says, "Since he died, I'll marry her!" He's always saying, "Cattle of my brother, where are you going? We married at N'waHeyeni, the fat cattle of N'waHeyeni!" <sup>5</sup> . . . And me, he used to stalk me. Me! He stalked me, [he says], "Let's go gather *timhandze* [poles, for building huts]. I want you to go carry *timhandze* for me." He says, "My brother, we're going together. When we cut the *timhandze*, she'll walk carrying them on her head for me." [My husband] says, "In our home, that's taboo [*swa yila*]! For a woman to bring back *timhandze*." He says to me,

"He'll cut them, and I'll go with him." This elder brother, he says, "You're my brother. I want her to carry the *timhandze*. I refuse [to go with you]. When you don't have any strength." I say, "He's your brother, he has strength!" When he goes into the woods—he was a hunter. I reject [the words of my husband], I say, "I want to go, I want to see his strength!" Me, I want to see his strength. . . . And me, I'm strong, God gave it to me, strength. I do this—[V demonstrates tucking her *nguvu* between her legs]. He didn't wear pants, that man. He didn't wear pants, he just wore *tinguvu*. . . . When he's out hunting, he's hunting me! He carries a duiker here, on his back. He tells those boys who are herding cattle. He says, "When she arrives, don't show her the place with the *timhandze*!" [When I get there], I ask the boys, "Do you know that place with the *timhandze*?" They say, "We know it, but we're afraid of him!" Aida! Are you listening? Aida, when he comes, we fight!

A: Who?

V: Me, with him!

A: In the woods?

V: Eeh!! My belly! It was fat. Eeh, I was really fat [i.e., strong]! I say, "Show me those *timhandze*! I'll carry them home on my head." He says, "I'm not showing you." Well, he goes, "hoo!" [V mimics him trying to grab her] Eh! He wants to seize me, to make me his wife. Because he was surpassed by his younger brother, he goes and marries this woman, this thoroughbred, <sup>6</sup> one of those cattle of N'waHeyeni! . . . He wants me, he wants the thoroughbred for himself. [laughs]

H: What did you do, *vovo*?

V: Heee! I was really troublesome! I grab him. I say, "Me, when I follow you, I follow your spoor—that you're a man, I don't even see it!" There are women, they're gathering *nkaka* in their fields. They're gathering *nkaka*. I say, "This one, he wants to make me his wife!" They're afraid, truly. They fear him. They fear him. "Ah, help me! He says, 'Let's go carry *timhandze* together,' and yet finally he grabs me!" Since he sees that I'm seizing him with such force, he says, "Eeh! My brother marries a thoroughbred with strength!" We go from there, running. He carries the duiker on his head. He runs so far! He didn't go by the path, he went through the bush. He says, "He didn't marry a woman! He married a bandit!" [laughs] I was really terrible, daughter! I was really terrible. I tell him, "You, that you're a man, I don't see it! I see that you're a man only because you kill duikers. That's all! You, who killed my husband, you think you'll marry me? You won't marry me by fighting!" . . . I run, I arrive at home, I say, "He wants a thoroughbred, a thoroughbred," to his wife, I tell her. I say, "Your husband, he's there in the bush, I summoned him to fight, I beat him!" [laughs] She says, "You left him there, you didn't kill him there in the woods?" His wife, she says, "Why did you leave him, without killing him? You could have killed him!" . . .

## 2 February 1996, Facazisse

H: So did you stay at your *vukatini* after your husband died?

5

V: When he died? I didn't leave. I stayed there. Well. The time arrives, he quarrels with me, this elder [brother]. Well, we leave. Me. I stayed at my *vukatini*. At the *muti* that we build, my husband and I. [Then] we don't stay with him anymore. Mmm. I stayed four years. I leave, me, because of my heart. He says, "You can't stay here," he says it's his house. This man, my husband's brother. It's my heart! At last I say, "Me, stay at home with him, this devil?" He finished off my husband. Devil! . . . We leave together, my mother-in-law and I. Well, we didn't want to stay there anymore. . . .

H: Who is Marta's father, *vovo*?

V: Me, it didn't happen that my husband dies yesterday, I want a man [right away]. Mm-mm. There were years when I was just sitting. I didn't yet want a man. Well, later I had one, we end up with Marta, Talita and I. Well, he leaves, he goes away—heh, he goes, that's for sure!

H: What was his name, Marta's father?

- V: He's António, Talita's father.
- A: No, Marta's father.
- V: It's him, António.
- A: What is his clan name?
- V: So you want to tear apart my children? The child of the other, he gives [me] a child—that child, she's the same. Talita's father, he's the father of this one, Marta. [7](#)
- H: So that man was just cleansing *tindzhaka* [pollution from death] for you, *vovo*—he wasn't a second husband.
- V: Mmm! He's not my husband! Even his name, I don't know it. This man, he was sought out for me by Aida.
- A: Me?
- V: Ah—you, you know the name Aida, don't you? [laughs] Well, do you know it? The name Aida?
- A: I don't know, *vovo*! [A laughs]
- V: Heh! Aida . . . of the Maluleke clan. She's my *ntukulu* [granddaughter], this one who looked for a man for me. [8](#)
- H: Why did she do this for you?
- V: Because I'm her *kokwana*, me. Eeh, they scorn me, they want me to be cleansed. I accept him—[then] I see that he really lives by drinking. I just take his belongings, I go and throw them in the tree, there! I say, "Today, you'll eat at your own house!" Eee! I could really trouble people with these arms! I had arms! Hoh! I didn't want him. I say, "Go home to Aida's place!" Mmm. I say, "You'll be at work"—he'll go to work with something to remind him of me! "They'll ask you, 'How did you get that scratch on your face?' You say, 'I was scratched by that cat named Chauke!'" [laughs] He goes, he goes—Aida, he asks her, "So what kind of people are you?" She says, "We're the Chaukes, *va ka Xinyori-xa-humba, kangandzela ribyeni!*" [9](#) Mmm. Chauke! They say, *Xinyori-xa-humba, kangandzela ribyeni*. [laughs] He says, "You courted a very troublesome woman for me!" [He says], "I'm going, I'm leaving! Take this person of yours, and go away! I don't ever want to see her again!" His clothes, I burn them! I go back, I throw his belongings in the *nkaya* trees! [10](#) I take leave of him there in the *nkaya* trees. When I say goodbye to him—"The road! There it is!" He went. He died at his own house. . . .
- H: Did you ever have another husband after that?
- V: I don't want another one. These two daughters of mine, I see they're enough.

#### 24 February 1996, Facazisse

- H: So both of your daughters were born in Mavavaze.
- V: Mmm. And João, that husband of mine, [11](#) he was also born in Mavavaze. Talita, she was going around with a man, a worker. She gets pregnant. With João. Well, I beat her. I say, "Why do you do this? You're pregnant! I wanted you to find a young man in the church, to marry you. And you're so quiet, you're such a quiet person. [12](#) I thought that maybe, since you're quiet, you want to be married by a good boy." I beat her! This person, this boy, the one who makes her pregnant, I say, "Get out of here! Yah! I don't want to see you again!" Yee! He comes to visit, it's beginning to spit rain. It's raining, I say, "Here, you won't sit here! Go, to your own kin, sit at their place! Here, this is my husband's *ndzhuti* [shade] [13](#) here!" He wasn't in the church, he was only here to work, a worker. She wants to be married by a stranger! I chase him away. I chase him away, "Go to the place of your own kin! Here, here, this is the shade of my husband! It's not a place for a prostitute to sit!" Talita, I chased her away through beating. I was beating her. I beat her. I beat her, and she leaves. She goes, she gives birth there at her brother's

place, at the home of the son of my sister. . . . <sup>14</sup> She goes and gives birth. This son, Nyongane, he sends a man. He says, "Go and tell mother that Talita gave birth." I say, "We don't know anything about it!" Me, in their faces, she hides it from me! I call the church, I go to tell them. "This daughter, they say she's pregnant." She denies it, she says, "I'm not pregnant." When I call the people from church, I call them, I say, "You'll show me, you'll tell me. This daughter, I hear that, they say she's pregnant. When I ask her, she doesn't accept it." They come from the church, the fellow women, and the wife of the *muvangeli*. They arrive at our house, they say, "Here in her belly, there's nothing. Her breasts, we don't see anything." Maybe they're hiding it from me, I don't know. They say, "We don't see it, her pregnancy."

H: Why did you call the church women, instead of your relatives?

V: Me, I belong to the church. I belong to the church. It's a duty to call them! . . . When a person sins, we call the people of the church, so that they'll make you see this problem. Long ago, the church, it's this way. I'll call them, they'll see for me if she has this pregnancy. . . .

Well, I take her, me. We come to the hospital here [at Antioka], I give her to the doctor. We see *Misse* Cochard. <sup>15</sup> And well, many days have passed [since the church women examined her]. But they didn't see it. This child, he doesn't sit here [V points to her abdomen], he wasn't in her belly. He sits here [V points to her side]. Cochard, Cochard, she arrives and she says, "This child, well, he's big here in her belly. If I weren't going away for a vacation, she wouldn't go home, she'd stay here, because the child, well he's already big. There are only a few days [i.e., a short time] before she gives birth. Well, I'm going, I'm going home to rest. If I weren't going to rest, she'd stay here with me, give birth while I'm here with her." Well, [Talita] goes outside. . . . Me, I tell Cochard, "That she's pregnant—it hurts me, because I didn't know she was pregnant." [Talita] leaves with great speed! Indeed, she runs. She passes by the home of her *hahane*. She cooks, she cooks in a hurry. She says, "When they arrive, they'll eat." And me, when I come, I'm angry. I arrive. I say, "Ah, the master [i.e., head of household], well where is he?" "The master, he's accompanying [Talita]. She went home." It's her *hahane* [who says this], "She went home." "Mmm, thank you. And me, I'm going home." I go home. I arrive at home. Talita, she's already there, she ran home to see her grandmother, this one who gave birth to her father. My mother-in-law. She says, "If you don't run, if you don't flee, when [your mother] arrives home, she'll beat you. Run! You can go to your brother's house, to Nyongane's. She won't come after you." Well, I arrive. I really beat her! I beat her. I beat her, I say, "You turn around and run, you return here—you trouble me, we wake up and go all the way to the missionary's place. And yet you know that you're pregnant!" Well, I beat her. She goes, when I beat her, to her brother's house, to Nyongane's place. There where she gives birth, that's where [the child] finds the name Nyongane. He's Johane—Nyongane, he says, "I see that he's Nyongane. But me, his namesake, I'm Johane." Mmm. For us, he's João, that name Johane, it's João.

H: So what happened after the baby was born? You said that Nyongane sent a man to tell you?

V: Mmm. Two of them come. He sends them, Nyongane, he says, "Go! Go and call her. Tell her, if you arrive and she gives you trouble, with her words about not wanting to see the child, ask her if it was I, her brother, who gave [Talita] that pregnancy! It's not my pregnancy, this child. It's her child. . . . " When they said that, I send her grandmother. She goes to see her, to see the child. Finally I go, I arrive there. I went. He really loved me, this son [Nyongane]. Mmm. He really loved me. I went. When he sees me, "You're sulking, you're not talking to me. You're sulking [against] the son of your sister." I say, "I'm not sulking against you. It's because of trouble with this one." I say, "Daughter, we want you to come home. A person can sin, when she sins, won't kinship forgive her?" Doesn't a person take her child back? She takes her child. We go home. Well, I see that this child, he's the master

of the *muti*. I didn't give birth to one child. I remember my husband, his words about her, the mother of João. He says, "If she were a man, she would look after you. But she's a woman. I don't know how you'll stay here in this *muti*, when I die." Indeed, I forgave her. I raise this child. Because a child when he has two teeth, we suffer to raise him! [laughs] I raised him, this husband of mine. . . .

- H: Was Talita not living with you at that time?
- V: Yoh! Where was Talita? He stole her, that man, the father of João. She follows him to Xahakelana, she leaves the child at home. At my home. I stay with João, he sits with me. Well, and me, I say, "I'm following her to Xahakelana." I leave João at home, with the *kokwana* who gave birth to Talita's father. I leave him. Mmm. I went. There, hee! I went by train, this *ida-volta*. <sup>16</sup> *Ida-volta!* . . . You take a ticket, for *ida-volta*. You go and you go, with that ticket. Well, I arrive in Bilene-Macia. [Then] in Guijá. I'm going to Xahakelana, with that paper. Tomorrow you'll return with it, you won't have to take out any money. I got out, I go to Guijá, me, by that *ida-volta* train. Heh! It's far. We arrive in Guijá, I get down [from the train] at Guijá. Well, from Guijá I go on foot to Xahakelana. . . . I get there, I say, "You, come home. Your grandmother wants you." We found each other. [V pauses] She's—there's nothing to her! It's terrifying. That place, Xahakelana, it's the bush, it's the desert. They live by *makwakwa*. <sup>17</sup> They would have died if I hadn't gone there. They're dying, in that place of watermelons—they pound the leaves, they cook them, they say it's sauce!
- A: Yeesh!
- V: She was so, so thin!! Here [V points to her face], and here [V points to her arms]. She has no *nguvu*, she has no blouse. Well, I arranged clothing. I take my *nguvu* and I give it to her. I take a blouse, I give it to her. I say, "Me, I won't board the train with you, you like that!" She returned with me. She arrives, her sister, she cries when we get down [from the train]. Marta. She cries to see her sister so thin. . . . Well, we stay together. Until she's married by that Mukavele man. Talita—this man comes, the father of João! They come, they say, "He'll grab them, he'll steal João, and Talita." Well, I chase him away, this man. I chase him away. I say, "Here, no prostitutes sit here!" . . .
- H: Why did you finally decide to move from Mavavaze to Facazisse?
- V: It's because of poverty. Hee! Poverty, mother. When they say they're poor, they're lying. The poverty that I saw, it was big! Mmm, I saw great poverty. Facazisse, isn't it the land of the church? I didn't come here to be with the people of the *tiko*. I'm here in the place of the church. They're my relatives, all of them. In Makuvulane, my relatives. *Ka mureri* [the missionary's place], <sup>18</sup> Facazisse, my relatives. They wouldn't sit and watch me suffer. You can ask João. I return because of the church, because of poverty. Papa Sambo, he's the *mulangutela*, <sup>19</sup> he finds me a place. I say, "I won't stay out there anymore, in Mavavaze. Because now, the leaders of the church there, they've died. Well, people are going to the church of the MaZion. Our church, it wasn't going anymore. Well now, it's dead. They say it's just the Zionist church there now. Mmm. You can ask Sambo—you, Aida, ask Sambo, he went there, he knows.

Lives of Women: [Author](#) | [Albertina](#) | [Rosalina](#) | [Valentina](#)

#### Notes:

**Note 1:** *Munumzane*: male head of the *muti* (homestead). Makupe was senior to Valentina's husband both in age and in rank, because he was the son of a wife who was senior to António's mother. [Back](#).

**Note 2:** It is hard to tell from Valentina's narrative exactly what this final conflict between the

brothers was about, except that Makupe wanted them to separate their residences permanently. In an earlier interview Valentina stated that her husband "was killed [by his brother] because of cattle. [Makupe] says, 'The one with the books, since he's dying, you'll give the cattle to me.' Those cattle, they sit in here [pats her stomach], the cattle they sit inside his belly, they fill the belly of my husband. Indeed, they cried, these cattle." Interview with Valentina Chauke, 30 December 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** *Hitavonana* (we will see each other), like the statement "I will see you," is a warning that the speaker intends to bewitch the person to whom s/he makes the threat. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** *Banga* (perhaps from *bank*): Aida translated this as *money*. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** N'waHeyeni is the local name for the Chobela Veterinary Research Station just east of Facazisse, possibly derived from the name of the first African manager of the state-owned livestock bred there. Makupe is complimenting Valentina's "fatness" by comparing her to one of these well-fed animals. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** Here Valentina uses a Portuguese word, *raça*, which in certain contexts can mean thoroughbred (e.g. *cavallo de raça*, thoroughbred horse). [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** According to the rules of *lovolu* marriage, any children a woman bears after she has been widowed will take the *xivongo* of her husband. Since widows in theory are "cleansed" and then married by a man in their late husband's family, the birth father of subsequent children would have the same clan name as the first husband in any case. However, in the absence of an appropriate same-clan substitute for her husband, a widow may have a relationship with a man from outside her affinal family and still construct the relationship in terms of cleansing *tindzhaka*. Children born from this union will have the clan name of their mother's first husband as well. [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** Aida Maluleke's paternal grandmother was N'waMbisa Chauke, so Valentina considered her a granddaughter. [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** According to Jaques, Xinyori is the originary Chauke ancestor. *Xinyori-xa-humba*, *kangandzela ribyeni* is the first phrase of the formal Chauke *xivongo* (praise name). According to clan traditions, the son of Chauke (the first chief of the VaHlengwe) married the daughter of a Sono chief. The Sonos knew how to cook their food with fire, while the Chaukes did not. One day the son of Chauke stole a burning ember from the Sonos and brought it home in a *humba* (snail shell). The Sonos were angry and declared war on the VaHlengwe, but the latter—strengthened by their new diet—were victorious in battle. The son of Chauke was then named *Xinyori-xa-humba*: he who brings fire in a shell. The literal translation of *kukangandzela ribyeni* is to cut something into small pieces on a rock; Valentina uses the phrase here as metaphor and proof of the physical strength and capacity for violence she has inherited from her clan ancestors. See Henri A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (London: Macmillan, 1927), 1:24; A. A. Jaques, *Swivongo swa Machangana*, 5th ed. (Braamfontein: Sasavona, 1995), 17-20. [Back.](#)

**Note 10:** *Nkaya*: a type of acacia thorn tree with particularly long, sharp thorns. [Back.](#)

**Note 11:** Valentina is referring jokingly to her grandson, with whom she was living in 1995-96, as her "husband." [Back.](#)

**Note 12:** *Kurhula*: to be quiet, calm, at peace. [Back.](#)

**Note 13:** *Ndzhuti*: literally, shadow or shade, but the shade of the central, largest tree on the grounds of a *muti* has special symbolic and social importance, representing the man who is that family's head. [Back.](#)

**Note 14:** Talita fled to the home of Nyongane Khosa, whose mother was Khataza Chauke, a daughter of Valentina's father with one of his other wives (and so Valentina's *makwavo* [sister]). [Back.](#)

**Note 15:** Louise Cochard was stationed at Antioka in the 1950s. [Back.](#)

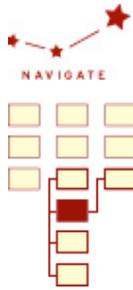
**Note 16:** *Ida-volta*: Portuguese term for return fare. [Back.](#)

**Note 17:** *Makwakwa*: indigenous species of fruit, also known as monkey oranges. [Back.](#)

**Note 18:** *Ka muneri*: still commonly used to refer to Facazisse/Antioka. [Back.](#)

**Note 19:** *Mulangutela* (from *kulangutela*, to look for, wait for): a church elder responsible for receiving and settling people who come to the area from other places. [Back](#).

[Binding Memories: Women as Makers and Tellers of History in Maqude, Mozambique](#)



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## Based on a True Story: Conclusion: "Ah, Long Ago, It Had a Story!"

1

In response to my request for their life stories, the "old women" of Magude offered me stories about "life"—their own, and anyone else's they could recall at the time—and endless skeins of talk contrasting the glorious ways of "long ago" with the deplorable shortcomings of "now." One might be tempted to dismiss many of these stories, with their layers of homely detail and bewildering (for an outsider) casts of characters and jumbles of everyday events, as having no real historical value, because in form and content they seem like gossip, old wives' tales, or the narrowly personal memories of aging peasant women unhappy about the disappearance of an outdated way of life. Yet this response would, first, ignore the lode of information that women's stories deliberately carry forward from the past: Valentina's mission memories from the 1910s, Albertina's corn prices from the 1920s, Rosalina's tales of interracial romantic intrigue from the 1930s—details that often challenge core assumptions of previous historical scholarship or that furnish rare glimpses of the interior worlds of agrarian southern Mozambique.



### Author

Rosalina  
Albertina  
Valentina

### Introduction

Grandmothers  
Mothers  
Lives of girls  
Lives of women  
Conclusion ★

Dismissing women's life stories would also prevent us from hearing the metathemes that emerge when we listen to these stories at length, and from appreciating the gendered historical imagination that produces them. In particular, it would deafen us to the most insistent claim that arises from the combined life stories of Valentina, Albertina, Rosalina, and their peers: that *vutomi* (life), or *mahanyelo* (way of life), has changed significantly, as they see it, only fairly recently, not with the advent of such well-researched disruptions as labor migration and Portuguese colonial rule and never so utterly that the fabric of women's memories, though damaged, is beyond their repair. While in many ways the histories told by Valentina, Albertina, and Rosalina stand apart when placed in the context of the larger collection of stories we recorded in Magude, in other respects they perfectly echo those of the larger group. The differences, to return to the quote from Anne Michaels's novel, lie in the details, for the "assumption" these women live by, the notion of history that underpins their life-storytelling, is very much the same.

The stories Magude's elderly women told of their grandmothers—like the stories told here about N'waXavela Mazive, Fahlaza Dzumbeni, and Kondissa Khosa—establish a firm baseline for the narratives the storytellers construct of their own lives. Grandmother stories focus principally on marriage yet rarely on the relationship between a wife and her husband. N'waXavela, Fahlaza, and Kondissa are remembered through their marital status—as *nhlantswa* (sister/co-wife), captive wife among Chopi women, and "queenly" first wife, respectively—and the nature of their interactions with co-wives is assigned central importance, whether they figure as a proud "slave" refusing to assimilate to the culture of her captors (Fahlaza) or as a powerful *nkosikazi* (chief wife) commanding the labor of younger women (Kondissa). Other women similarly made a point of emphasizing a grandmother's position as one of "many wives" ("Long ago," we frequently heard, "they really marry a lot!") and tended like Rosalina to dwell on the prevalence of *nhlantswa* marriage in particular and on the advantages it held for women. Yet if polygyny provides a crucial nexus for grandmothers' remembered identities, so does the bond between a woman and her natal kin. To Valentina, N'waXavela is heroic because she leaves her *vukatini* to raise the orphaned grandchildren of her sister; Albertina credits Fahlaza's escapes from suffering—potential (if she had married Mavavaze) and real (as a Chopi slave-wife)—to the intervention of her kinfolk, acts that in the story are rewarded by Fahlaza's repudiation of her Chopi husband and her scornful mimicry of Chopi ways once she is safely back home.

Women from the district's border areas were especially keen to pass on stories of grandmothers who, born in the Transvaal, married into Magude but continued to maintain close ties with their families through visiting. Cufassane Munisse, for instance, described how her maternal grandmother traveled regularly on foot between Macaene and *tinthaveni* (in the hills—i.e., Lebombo Mountains), along with other women she met at her marital home. <sup>1</sup> Within minutes of the beginning of our first interview with Marta Mabunda, she astonished Ruti and me by recounting the harrowing story of how her paternal grandfather's sister, Maqiviso, left her husband's home in Muqakaze—with "shield and spear" in hand, and only a young woman (to carry her baby) for company—to track down her missing brother, walking past "flowing blood" and piles of corpses whose faces she "pushed through" one by one until she finally gave him up

for lost and returned home. <sup>2</sup>

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The narrative value attached to a woman's loyalty to blood kin was also expressed through memories of grandmothers' fierce devotion to their own children: Albertina's vivid story of how Fahlaza sacrificed herself to save her husband and child from Chopi soldiers; the descriptive tag Lili Xivuri habitually attached to the mention of her maternal grandmother, who (like so many others) fled Hlengwini as a refugee from Nguni violence—"She runs, she runs, she runs with her children."<sup>3</sup> In the same way, grandmothers of Nda, Hlengwe, or Chopi origin who married into the Magude area in the late nineteenth century were paid admiring tribute for hanging onto the lifeways of their own people long after being driven (or captured) from their homeland. Valentina repeated many stories (not included here) told to her by N'waXavela about the diet, farming practices, and hunting rituals of the VaHlengwe; Lucia Ntumbo often commemorated her Nda maternal grandmother's practice of preparing old-style *vuswa* (from pounded rather than ground corn) for ceremonial offerings to appease N'waGwidimira's restless spirit and of wearing a strip of Nda *palu* cloth around her waist, thereby demonstrating her refusal to adopt Shangaan eating habits and styles of dress. <sup>4</sup>

European and Asian characters are conspicuously absent from women's grandmother stories, although *valungu* missionaries, explorers, hunters, merchants, and would-be colonizers were certainly moving into the areas traversed by interviewees' grandmothers at that time. To an extent, this silence is consistent with the apparent irrelevance of the world of men's politics (African or European) to women's lives in general, a silence manifested, for instance, in storytellers' professions of ignorance when asked for information about the wars that made refugees, slaves, or heroes of their grandparents. Such women as N'waXavela, Fahlaza, and Kondissa, according to the stories, focused on holding their families and households together while men went off to do their business as chiefs or soldiers; the women were unconcerned with things they could not "see" until events in men's world happened to obtrude on the field of everyday domestic life.

Yet the way in which European actors, *xilungu* influences, and masculine politics begin to creep into stories women tell about their mothers suggests an alternative explanation. Valentina's bitter tale of how N'waMbokhoda let her younger sister burn to death says nothing explicit about political context; however, this incident, which took place around 1910, was sparked by the return of Valentina's father to Hlengwini in response to a call to assume the chieftaincy—an event that must have had something to do with the struggling colonial administration in what was then Gaza military district. N'waMbokhoda's crime was doubly reprehensible, then, because in wanting to go home with Xihlehlwana she was allowing colonial politics to interfere with her duty as surrogate mother to her brother's child. Although Rosalina's stories of her mother, Anina, and her uncle's wife, Tavasse, are set somewhat later (1926 and 1938, respectively), they convey a similar view of the gendered meanings of colonial institutions and powers. Anina reluctantly follows the advice of her minister/brother-in-law and chooses an admirer to cleanse the *tindzhaka* of her late husband; but according to the story, she is the one to set the terms of this relationship. She balks at first, then gives in, but later rejects Musoni when she learns that her name has been sullied by the "jealous" gossip of his wives. Ultimately, she stands behind the *mufundhisi*, relying on him for protection—because she knows that his Swiss Mission connections insulate her from harm—while at the same time holding him responsible for the unpleasant outcome of the relationship. At the story's end, Anina is firmly retrenched in Dane's household, surrounded by her children and her fellow-widow sisters-in-law.

The story of Patapata and his unfaithful wife, on the other hand, highlights the escalation of Tavasse's marital crimes from troublemaking among her co-wives through lying to children and sexually betraying her crippled husband. Yet what Rosalina's narrative condemns most harshly is that Tavasse had her extramarital relationship with the *régulo*, and it is clear that Rosalina still holds Patapata's profitable connections with *valungu* at least partly responsible for his tragic end. Taken together, these stories tell us that involvement with official forms of colonial/*xilungu* power exposed families, marriages, and domestic communities to mortal peril, such that women (responsible for these domains of social life) were better off keeping their distance from them wherever possible. Yet a clever woman could take advantage of these new sources of power (by accepting, for example, the dubious support of an authoritarian brother-in-law) if her objectives were consistent with normative feminine responsibilities—in Anina's case, protecting her own and her children's health.

Other women, especially those who grew up in areas more removed from European influence than were the Limpopo River towns where Rosalina's early memories are set, recalled their mothers in stories that, devoid of reference to the colonial presence altogether, were anchored firmly in agrarian culture and economy. In Misse Xivuri's favorite narrative of her mother's life, for instance, she describes how Mbetasse Ngumbane grew up as the youngest of five daughters in Messa (northern Magude) and how, when she became pregnant with Misse, her parents asked for *lovololo* from the father-to-be in cash rather than cattle "because they already had too many cows" and wanted to hire a boy to look after them. <sup>5</sup> Lise Nsumbane recounted how when her mother, N'waFunana Muhlanga, was young she left drought-stricken Macia with a group of other women to trade clay pots for "food for her family" and ended up settling down in Facazisse, in a homestead that was looking for casual field labor—the homestead where she "found" and was courted by Lise's father. <sup>6</sup> Jane Mundlovu and Teasse Xivuri, both from western Mapulanguene, spent hours detailing for us how their mothers taught them the necessary knowledge of farming: proper hoeing technique, methods of intercropping, the agronomic requirements of various grains, and the physical properties of Magude's wide range of soils. <sup>7</sup>

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In other stories (not included here) that Rosalina told about her mother, Anina similarly appears as a hard-working farmer and shrewd domestic manager whose agricultural success rests on mutual-aid arrangements (*kupfunana*, "to help each other") with other women. Different kinds of field-labor exchanges among women were, in fact, prominent in the memories most older interviewees had of their mothers and of their own childhood, with the competitive pressure to prove one's individual "strength" in bountiful harvests—so that each woman or girl with her own fields would fill her personal granary and thus be able to contribute to the family food supply—was balanced against equally powerful incentives for cooperation across homesteads to accommodate sensitive cropping schedules, environmental uncertainties, and the philosophy that "everyone has to eat."

All interviewees, however, when asked about their girlhood, gave as much weight to memories of *kutlanga* (play) as to work. Playing, an activity always centered in a spatially and age-defined network of "fellow girls," included "pulling *mitsingi*" out in the woods, dancing at the *xitikini*, and listening to older women tell stories around the fire at night. *Mitsingi*—and, in particular, the "*Mahuke!*" challenges through which girls competed (and sometimes fought) for seniority and respect among their fellows—were not only a treasured memory. They were also the subject most interviewees first associated with "long ago," focusing their stories on the secret nature of the practice, the mystical importance of knowing "medicines" to help lengthen *mitsingi*, and their constant struggle to elude the prying eyes of boys and Christian authority figures who called this activity "heathens' work." Yet church pressure, as Rosalina's story makes clear, was rarely sufficient to persuade girls to ignore the counsel of their female elders. Indeed, as many women explained, the more secret a girl's *mitsingi*-pulling, the more respectfully (in women's eyes) she was behaving.

The greater success of the Swiss Mission's equally firm prohibition against dancing is reflected in its virtual absence from Rosalina's and Valentina's girlhood stories. For Albertina, however, as for the vast majority of interviewees, dance held at least as central a place in the memory as did *mitsingi* narratives, for it was during afternoons and evenings spent at the *xitikini* that girls performed dances and paraded costumes passed on to them from their mothers, that competitions between groups of girls and boys from different *maganga* (subdistricts) or *matiko* (chiefdoms) not only established another set of rankings but provided opportunities for courtship and sexual conquest, and that young people commented through song on events and personalities in the adult world around them. Out in the countryside, farther from the "news" of town and mission station, these songs typically addressed such issues as marital conflict, witchcraft, and locusts, famine, or other agrarian crises. Albertina's song about women carrying *vukanyi* to "Pareji," and a song Valentina sang for us about the First World War—remembered as the "war of the *maJeriman*" and the "war of the *mundzuruka*" <sup>8</sup>—illustrate how the colonial world impinged on girls' perceptions of community life. But again, what women highlighted in their stories was not interest in colonial matters but how girls of different places came together to play, assess one another, jockey for boys' attention, and prove that at traditional feminine skills they were as skillful as their contemporaries and their foremothers alike.

In a similar manner, through their stories of work, schooling, trade, and travel in their youth, women asserted that even as some of the features of the political and economic landscape were

changing—as Banyans traders provided new markets for cultivated and gathered products, as mission and state schools sought to wrest education from mothers and grandmothers, as the church battled the "immorality" of *kugangisa* by taking courtship out of girls' (and to a lesser extent, boys') hands, and as new means of transport and new schedules (e.g., of school holidays) altered, for some, the conditions of visiting kin—the basic underpinning and orientation of women's lives remained much the same. Even Rosalina and Valentina, far more immersed than most of the other interviewees in the puritanical Christianity of Swiss Mission schooling, repeatedly cited *ntamu* (strength) and *xichavo* (respect) as the twin pillars of their girlhood education, like other women understanding these concepts principally in the terms taught to them by their mothers and grandmothers.

For them, as for the others, "strength" meant not simply the ability to work hard but also dedication to farming, the drive to achieve an independent means of survival through food production. "Respect," in turn, meant not merely obedience to elders and men but perhaps even more importantly deference to laws that *masungukati* taught girls about proper comportment during menstruation and courtship, what men expected and desired from sexual intercourse, and the ways to win a mother-in-law's approval and devotion. In these stories, women's feelings about European schooling, Portuguese Catholic mission schools above all, range from indifference through ambivalence to fear and adamant opposition: Albertina's story of her grandmother's refusal to let the priest "seize" her for school (because learning *xilungu* ways, she believed, would make her granddaughter lazy) is in fact a relatively mild response for this period, with a far greater number of women recalling their mothers or grandmothers telling them they would *kuxanga* (go crazy) <sup>9</sup> and become *magelegele* (prostitutes) if they so much as set foot in a *xilungu* school. As Elena Khosa recalled of her childhood in Xihlahla, directly across the Nkomati River from the Catholic São Jerónimo Mission school:

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- E: Long ago, we fled, truly! [laughs] We refused, because they want to kill us, the whites! It wasn't *wanted*! School, it wasn't wanted, when we were small. We stayed in the woods, we were afraid of school. Boys went around looking for children, they seize them, to go to school. . . . My mother, my grandmother, they helped us to hide, because they say, "If you study, you'll become prostitutes."
- H: Why did they say that?
- E: They'll steal your daughter, [girls] were stolen by whites at the school, they go away with them. Well, the parents, when they hear about this problem, so-and-so was stolen, because of school, well they don't want it, because they won't eat the cattle [i.e., receive bridewealth for her]. <sup>10</sup>

If *mitsingi* tales expressed women's most exuberant memories of girlhood, stories of women's early interactions with *valungu* (usually Banyan) merchants were the ones that took me most by surprise. Yet across Magude district, virtually every woman we interviewed told some version of Valentina's and Albertina's "tea and sugar" story, varying significantly only among women who grew up in the western and northern reaches of Mapulanguene, Phadjane, and northern Moamba district. There, girls' first exposure to the colonial economy involved not shopkeepers but European commercial ranchers or their managers and hired hands, whom women, unlike men, <sup>11</sup> generally remembered as "good people" who built roads and wells, let women draw water from their pumps, erected fences to keep cattle from bothering their crops, drank *byala* with their African neighbors, and often courted or "married" local girls with the help of older women acting as go-betweens. <sup>12</sup>

It was about Banyan merchants, though, that Magude's elderly women spoke in the most uniformly glowing terms. Interviewees not only stressed the "mercy" and "kindness" these men (and sometimes their wives, sisters, and daughters) showed by "helping" them, but also celebrated the ways in which a trip to the shop was like "visiting relatives," complete with warm greetings, offerings of food, and expressions of concern for the well-being of family members at home. Fully aware that merchants were trying to lure and cement loyalty with customers, women nonetheless recalled these commercial relationships in much the same manner as they narrated their visiting/traveling memories with true kin—except at occasional moments when, as in Albertina's description of traipsing from shop to shop for free sugar, women enjoyed a private laugh at the merchants' expense. The role of merchants (and sometimes colonial administrators)

as sources of assistance in women's struggle to keep their communities fed was memorialized as well in the naming of famines (sing. *ndlala*) after the *mulungu* whose help made it possible for rural families to survive—for example, *ndlala ya Luis* (for the only shopkeeper selling foodstuffs near Phadjane during a famine in the 1920s), <sup>13</sup> *ndlala ya mucholoza* (for the white man who butchered his starving cattle to distribute meat to hungry farmers), <sup>14</sup> and *ndlala ya rhale* (after the administrator who, women claimed, drove to Gaza province to buy *rhale* [manioc flour] to distribute in Magude during a famine in the mid-1940s). <sup>15</sup>

Every interviewee had a courtship story, and most of these narratives were quite different from the three presented in this chapter. Only Albertina's narrative resembles, in its bare outlines, what women across Magude described as the traditional method of procuring a husband. Although many of the women interviewed had had their marriages formalized at the colonial civil registry, while perhaps a dozen had been married in a Protestant or Catholic mission church, the vast majority remembered this episode in their lives through stories that contained very few references to authorities or formal institutions of any kind. Like Albertina, whether they grew up in or near town or deep in the countryside, most women remembered finding their husband at the dance ground. Sometimes the young man (often a visitor from another area, traveling "to look for girls") approached his wife-to-be directly; sometimes he asked one of her girlfriends to do the courting for him; sometimes both he and she had "assistants" (sing. *ndhuna* <sup>16</sup>) who negotiated his proposal and the young woman's strategically coy response. Once she had formally "accepted" the young man, it was usually understood that a sexual relationship would ensue. Although some interviewees skirted this issue, others joked about a practice known as *kuduva*, which involved young lovers secretly spending the night together—again, often with the covert assistance of one or both *tindhuna*. Next, the young man presented the *kuqoma* offering to the young woman's parents, and then negotiation of *lovolo* between the two families ensued, a topic most women (like Albertina) seemed to enjoy discussing in detail.

Two other activities loomed even larger in women's courting stories. The first, the giving of *kulaya* (laws) to the prospective bride by *masungukati*, occurred just before she left her parents' home and involved elaborate instructions about sexual conduct and hygiene and warnings about how she should expect to be treated (and tested) by *masungukati* in her affinal community. The second was a practice known as *kukorhoka*, in which a group of girlfriends and sisters of the bride accompanied her on the day she moved, with great fanfare and greater sadness, from her parents' home to her *vukatini*. These girls then stayed on for several days or weeks to work for the girl's new mother-in-law and help the young bride get used to life and labor at her marital home.

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The protracted process of traditional marriage, including the day of the *lovolo*-giving ceremony itself (which women described principally as a time of dancing, eating, and presenting gifts to the new couple), furnished such pleasurable memories to the women we interviewed that I was taken aback when Valentina—so proud of her "tall" evangelist husband—fought every step of the way when Aida and I asked her to describe her courtship and church wedding. Looking back, and against the narrative backdrop of other women's courting stories, Valentina's reticence makes perfect sense, for in its battle to eliminate the sin of *kugangisa*, the Swiss Mission church took most aspects of courtship out of a girl's hands and transformed it into a male affair to be decided between the prospective groom, the schoolteacher who served as go-between, church elders, and the girl's father or other male guardian. This story was the only time I heard Valentina portray herself so passively; and in this respect Rosalina's long narrative of covert courting among church youth, her own long list of suitors, and girls' struggle—often backed, as hers was, by non-Christian female kin—to accept only a man who "pleased" them reflects a typical pattern in narratives of church-orchestrated unions. European missionaries, Swiss or Portuguese, and their male African evangelists could redefine courtship and marriage to their hearts' content and usurp positions of authority once occupied by girls and women, but most interviewees remember this critical moment of their lives as one in which they still, collectively, called the most important shots.

This view of marriage was carried to the furthest extreme in the more self-consciously traditional courtship stories, such as the one in which Cufassane Munisse recounted how the much older senior wife of her husband was the one to "find" and give *lovolo* for her—with this woman's own cattle, bought with corn from her fields—because she wanted a younger woman for extra help with child care and fieldwork. <sup>17</sup> Lili Xivuri described the elaborate maneuvering through which her girlhood friend from Tlhongana, married to a man from Moamba district who was planning to

move his household to his new place of employment in Komatiport (South Africa), returned to Phadjane to court Lili for her husband's friend so that they could move as *vakati kulorhi* (fellow wives) across the border. <sup>18</sup> But the representation of feminine negotiating as central to women's marriage decisions was not restricted to traditional settings. Four Facazisse women in their sixties, all from the same Swiss Mission congregation near Manhiça (on the coast) and all somehow related to one another, separately explained how they managed to "marry together" after a long period of strategizing and clandestine romance—carried out during monthly visits between mission youth groups—with four "boys" from the Antioka church.

Women's life stories changed fairly dramatically once they left their youth behind. In narratives of girlhood experiences, storytellers were woven tightly into cohorts of "fellow girls" on the one hand and female-kinship hierarchies on the other, both kinds of association being rooted in a secure sense of belonging to a known physical and social landscape. Marriage wrenched girls from a familiar place and thrust them into a new and vulnerable status as young wife, under the watchful supervision of a mother-in-law and with much weightier expectations related to work, "respect," and motherhood. As a result, it also required them to build new affective networks from scratch among fellow wives (i.e., women they met in the area of their *vukatini*), female in-laws who lived in the area and to whom they were introduced by the other women in their husband's household, and consanguineal relatives they went to great effort to seek out themselves. In women's recollections, the early years of marriage were typically quite painful; indeed, we had considerable difficulty persuading many interviewees to say anything at all about their years as wives beyond "I farmed, I cooked, I hauled water, I gave birth. . . ." Perhaps the most poignant statement we heard on this subject was Lucia Ntumbo's comment, offered quite cheerfully, that "when I got to my *vukatini* there was no more dancing." <sup>19</sup> More than once an interviewee simply fell quiet when the topic of married life was introduced. In other cases, a woman would start out reminiscing enthusiastically about what a hard-working, obedient, well-appreciated wife she had been, only to wilt finally—or, as happened with Lucia, burst into tears—and admit that, in fact, her husband or in-laws had treated her badly and crushed her expectations that marriage would bring her happiness. Many admitted that, had it not been for sympathetic female affines, friends, or blood kin in the area—or, in Lucia's case, a kind *xikoxana* neighbor she went to regularly for advice—they would have had to leave their *vukatini* altogether.

Not all marriage stories were unhappy ones, however. As in women's memories of mothers and grandmothers, the decisive factor was usually the quality of a wife's relationship with other women in her husband's homestead—with her co-wives, wives of her husband's brothers and their sons, her husband's unmarried sisters, wives of her husband's father and his brothers, and above all her husband's birth mother, her principal *n'wingi*. Valentina's narrative is unusual in this respect and may reflect her status as the wife of a *muvangeli*, for most women in their stories emphasize how diligently they worked for their mother-in-law and not, as in Valentina's case, the other way around. Albertina explained that her furious flight from her first husband—a man she admits harboring affection for even now—was provoked by her abusive co-wife, and she portrays him as quite helpless to resolve or even understand their conflict. Lucia confessed that part of her strategy for surviving her rocky marriage to the Nhiuana *chefe de terras*, <sup>20</sup> who finally left her to live in South Africa, was a pact she made with the wives of her husband's brothers, father, and uncle: that each of them would prevent her own husband from marrying other women (to minimize the jealousy sure to arise if too many wives joined the powerful family) and that, if one of them had trouble becoming pregnant, the others would help her "arrange a man outside" to secretly father a child so as to avoid angering the husband and provoking accusations of witchcraft. <sup>21</sup>

Given the normative gender division of labor, it is not surprising that, in the stories women told about married life, predominant topics were domestic work, farming, trading, motherhood, and relations with in-laws—or that "suffering" (emotional, physical, spiritual) was a recurring theme. Yet what such narratives also and perhaps more importantly highlight is the gendered relational context of these experiences, the identities of women whose presence and support enabled the storyteller to survive periods of hardship: to pass through suffering (*kuvaviseka* or *kuhlupheka*) and return to "living" (*kuhanya*) on the other side. Possibly for this reason, stories about child-fostering on the one hand and, on the other, illness or death were among the two most popular types of stories about adult life told across the group of interviewees. The former activity, by cementing ties of fictive motherhood (an especially important objective for childless women), enlarged the pool of "children" from whom a woman could later seek support; it also bound a woman permanently to domestic units other than her own. The latter—a source of endless,

graphic narratives of disease, disability, and medical treatment—enabled a woman either to locate herself within a community of individuals who proved their devotion by helping the invalid or to express criticism for those who failed to come to her aid at a critical time. Albertina recounted an entire series of farm-accident stories like the one included in this chapter; Rosalina told (over and over) a story (astonishingly detailed, given that she is supposed to have been unconscious the whole time) of her bout with cholera in 1990; Valentina's daughter Talita Ubisse shared a similarly elaborate tale of her struggles and hospitalization for "nervous" problems in the 1970s. Laurinda Mawelele's run-in with an angry bull and the mobility impairment it has caused her were, like Juliana's story of the fall that broke her hip in 1993, staples of popular lore in Facazisse. Women told and retold these stories regularly.

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Moreover, easily one-third of the interviewees described suffering from the symptoms of spirit possession at some point in their life, with only the fortunate ones able, through the help of a relative with sufficient resources, to undergo treatment and training (to become a spirit medium) with a *nyamusoro*. In every case, the point of these narratives seemed less to pass on evidence that a woman had fallen victim to a particular health problem than to recall her connections to the people who helped her through it: for Albertina, a series of *swikoxana*-healers, her sisters, and her sisters' daughters-in-law; for Rosalina, a ring of distant maternal kin and, especially, the one daughter of her brother who still "remembers" what Rosalina did for her; for Talita, her mother and husband, warring for her loyalty then as now. Narratives in which the storyteller assists other women who are similarly afflicted, or witnesses and deals with a loved one's death, were nearly as numerous. In addition to the ones included in this chapter, Rosalina told a long story, for example, about accompanying her mother from one *n'anga* to another in Lourenço Marques and Guijá when she began to suffer from spirit possession in the 1940s. She told another about her brother's illness and death from asthma in 1993. Caregiving, in other words, like child-fostering, both demonstrated a woman's fidelity to a history of kinship obligations and staked a claim to bonds in the future, when she might need such assistance herself.

Female suffering in adulthood takes other forms, as the narratives in this chapter reveal. Interpersonal conflicts surrounding marriage choices and marital and affinal relationships loom large in women's life stories, causing an affliction of the "heart" that could be just as painful and debilitating as any illness—and that women treated with similar reliance on female affective networks. Valentina, raised in the cradle of Swiss Mission influence from her early childhood, marries into a predominantly non-Christian family in a rural area where evangelization has barely begun, and then she is left vulnerable to her violent brother-in-law after her husband's death, resisting his advances with physical aggression when necessary and with the quiet moral backing of his wife, her husband's mother, and her few Christian friends in Mavavaze. Pressured, Valentina implies, to enter a second relationship to cleanse herself of *tindzhaka*, she tolerates intimacy with this man (whose name she refuses even to recall) until she conceives her second child, and shortly after chasing him from her home decides—breaking the custom that had until then kept her faithfully at her *vukatini*—to move out on her own with her young daughters and her *n'wingi*.

Albertina, who paints herself as a magnet for misfortune because of her de facto fatherlessness, takes surprisingly bold steps when, her "heart angry" and her patience gone, she leaves Vuma and heads for South Africa and then a few years later in Moamba strikes a bargain with a new suitor, enabling her to return home. There, once again, her heart instructs her to leave her second marriage and move in with her mother and then with her sisters, and then back out on her own. Rosalina, who throughout most of her life stories denies ever knowing this kind of suffering, expresses a similar sense of outrage in narratives of her uncle Dane's interference in her romantic life and of alleged efforts by Amorim's wife to hunt her down with a pistol. In both episodes, Rosalina takes decisive action to protect herself—not, however, without seeking the advice of (and temporary refuge with) friends and kinfolk along the way. Lucia, too, finally leaves her marital homestead in Nhiuana to live in Facazisse with a "daughter"—the birth daughter of Lucia's *hahane* (paternal aunt)—who looked after Lucia's two elder children during the most difficult years of her marriage. <sup>22</sup> Valentina's daughter Talita, tired of her husband's infidelity, one day "runs away" and, advised by a woman friend, boards a train to South Africa, where she spent three years supporting herself through wage work on various white-owned farms, while "cooling her heart" in a relationship with another man. <sup>23</sup>

One of the most important features of such stories is the absence of even a trace of defensiveness or acknowledgment that the narrator's actions were extraordinary or remarkable in

any way. In each case, the woman weighs what she knows various other people expected of her and then follows a path she represents as determined by the wishes of her heart. Many women used this formulation as a way to simultaneously assert, deny, and justify their agency in shaping the content of their life even under what outside observers might portray as the most oppressive personal circumstances. For Valentina, Albertina, and Rosalina, as for other interviewees, what the heart instructed them to do was generally consistent with priorities and "laws" taught to them by mothers and grandmothers. Valentina's contempt, as she narrates it, for her "heathen" brother-in-law is not a product of his religious beliefs but of his rude flouting of conventions of hospitality (he resents offering food to visitors and eats furtively in his doorway so that he can hide his food from passersby), his mistreatment of his wife, and his alleged perpetration of the most unforgivable crime of all—using witchcraft to kill his brother. Albertina moves from one "quarrelling" relationship to another because she has been raised with the "strength" to be able to support herself through farming ("Your hands," she often reminded us, "are led by your heart") and with the knowledge, acquired from her mother and grandmother, that a woman need not bind herself to a man who makes her "suffer." Rosalina, who evoked her mother's memory and example on a daily basis, explained her controversial romantic history as a deliberate strategy she learned from her mother, never for a moment hinting that there was anything improper, unusual, or even nontraditional in these relationship decisions.

The three women in this chapter, like their peers, stressed continuity with the *mahanyelo* of their foremothers in other ways as well. Perhaps the most striking example of the efforts of storytellers to foreground continuity was their insistence, despite what I understood as evidence to the contrary, that until only recently they had avoided involvement in the money economy. Both Valentina and Albertina did casual wage work on European commercial farms for several years in the 1940s and 1950s—Valentina (with her daughters) on the white-owned Delagoa Plantation in present-day Timanguene, and Albertina on land that she had once farmed along the Nkomati and that was appropriated by a Portuguese farmer in the 1940s. Yet both women seemed reluctant to talk about this part of their past, portraying it as a fleeting, meaningless experience necessitated by momentary poverty and "wanting to buy clothes." Indeed, in Valentina's case we only learned about it from Talita, who in one of our early interviews mentioned "working for money at Timanguene" as a girl. Rosalina, plainly dependent on cash earnings ever since her employment as a hospital midwife in the 1940s, and the object of much muttered criticism in Facazisse in 1995-96 because she occasionally walked to town to sell *nkaka* or manioc from her fields, would not let me for an instant suppose that her primary identity was anything but that of a farmer who fed herself with her own "arms" and "sweat."

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More dramatic claims not only of indifference to *male* (money) but of its life-threatening dangers came from women who had spent most of their years meeting their food needs entirely through farming in rural Mapulanguene or Phadjane. For these women, war-induced residence in town horrified them at every turn because "everything, *everything* wants money!" and because selling the crops from your fields "closes the skies, and kills the land." <sup>24</sup> As in Albertina's narrative, these women freely acknowledged a measure of dependence on *xilungu* shops for consumer goods (cloth, matches, soap) as well as on local craftspeople for basketry, wood utensils, and clay pottery; but such transactions were rarely called "buying" and "selling," for most women preferred to say (like Albertina) that they "gave" something (e.g., surplus corn) and then were "given" what they needed in return. Cufassane Munisse, a woman who had spent all but eight of her more than eighty years in the western borderlands of Magude, was fond of recounting how she learned to make *xirhundzu* baskets and *xikhubu* wigs <sup>25</sup> from her maternal grandmother and how "even *valungu*" used to come to her *vukatini* in Mapulanguene to "give her money" for them. And yet of all the interviewees she was perhaps the most outspoken critic of the money-immersed lifestyle she encountered while living as a *deslocada* in Magude town.

As a thread of continuity with women of generations past, however, what life stories of adulthood conveyed even more forcefully was a notion of spirituality that, whatever institutional or ideological shape it took, undergirded a system of gendered moral authority in the countryside. This spirituality provided women across lines of age, education, class, ethnicity, and civil status with a common ground and guiding compass, expressed in terms of the relationship between respect for laws of feminine behavior and the physical and psychological *vutomi* (health/life) of rural society. Rosalina's and Albertina's complex amalgam of belief in witchcraft and spirit possession, *tinhlolo* divination, ecstatic healing, "Napoleon Bonaparte," and the stern Swiss Mission God (*Xikwembu*) or more flexible versions of Christianity offered by independent churches was in fact more typical of the women we interviewed than was Valentina's conflicted narrow devotion to the Protestant church that had served as her extended-kinship network since her

childhood. Women's commitment to and enormous personal investment in a range of spiritual communities was integrally connected to their belief that healthy living and strict adherence to a set of laws went together. Indeed, of the women whose participation in Christian congregations we asked about, most explained the *risima* (value) of their involvement principally in terms of the set of *milawu* (laws) that they learned there—laws that, as in Lili Xivuri's explanation of what she gained from attending MaZion meetings in Phadjane, focused on dietary regulations, sexual behavior, respectful conduct toward relatives and neighbors, treatment of medical problems, and strategies to ensure the regularity of rain. <sup>26</sup> Interviewees seemed to see little difference in purpose or character between these religious activities and the forms of spiritualism practiced by their mothers and grandmothers—except, as many of them remarked, that women's spiritual activities, whether in churches or among *tin'anga*, had increased exponentially in recent years.

If life-storytellers insisted on the continuity of their own and their foremothers' experiences, the narratives themselves attest to what might appear to outside observers as profound social change. Change over time in Magude and increasing differentiation among women there are clearly demonstrated in the stories presented in this chapter. Valentina's blend of moral values that are traditional and those that are sternly Christian, Albertina's "angry" overland journey and stint as a domestic worker for a mixed-race couple, Rosalina's commercial talents and medical training and hard-to-classify sexual partnerships with white men—none of these stories is imaginable in the pre-1920s rural southern Mozambique described in existing historical scholarship, and certainly these narrated lives stand in dramatic contrast to the stories these women told of their mothers and grandmothers. Yet when asked for their own views on "change," <sup>27</sup> or more specifically for their definition of the historical watershed, the break between *khale* (long ago) and *swoswi* (now), that recurs so plaintively in their interviews and conversations, women shrugged off such variations as insignificant and echoed a refrain that unites them quite clearly on gendered ground. All agree on the things of long ago whose loss troubled them most deeply: "respect," of children for elders, women for men, and (perhaps most important) young wives for their *n'wingi*; "helping each other," by offering food to strangers and exchanging unpaid labor and time on each other's fields; communal beer-drinks where *byala* was never made to sell but to "make people happy"; *masungukati* performing their proper role in matters of sexuality, marriage, rain, and death; "secrets" kept where secrets belong, within generational cohorts of women, each cohort with its own set of binding rituals, "laws," restrictions, and powerful knowledge. All agree, moreover, on the forces that are responsible for undermining these elements of the past and on how catastrophically the Renamo war accelerated this destructive process.

No one, though, articulated this historical vision more compellingly than Valentina, the oldest *xikoxana* of the group.

V: And now. When we see these *valungu* [white people], . . . we say, "It's they who are bothering the blacks." *Valungu*, hah! We're telling lies about them, we say, "*Valungu*, they kill." It's not *valungu*.

H: So you're saying that it's Mozambicans who started the war?

V: Blacks? Haven't they become bad? <sup>28</sup> When they say, "Aida, go and kill someone, one of your own"? You go and kill someone, you go and kill because of money? Everything they're killing us for, they know it, they're killing us for—they say, they want *money*. They want *money*, all of these things, that they're killing us for.

H: So those things you were telling us about, when you were a girl, how people helped each other, gave each other food—people aren't like that anymore?

V: Hee! Hee! You can be my daughter, you rarely take something, you say, "Here *vovo*, here it is." Oh! These things change because of money. It's *money*, they want money—those blacks, they take it for themselves by killing people.

H: In the past people didn't want money?

V: Don't you know that one *mpondo* wrapped up a mountain of clothes for you? When you go to the shop with your *mpondo*, and they wrap up [your purchases] in a headscarf, and you didn't buy it, it's a gift for you—they give us a gift, those *valungu*. I say, "The *valungu*, they're not to blame"; when the blacks hear that, "There's a war, there's a war"—it's not a war of the

*valungu*. It's a war of the blacks, because of wanting money. . . . We put the fault on them, we say, "Hee, *valungu*, *valungu*!" We put the blame on them. Ah! It's our sin. Mmm. [29](#)

. . . Today! You don't see these things of long ago, there's nothing. [V shakes her head] No one fights [over *mitsingi*]. They've abandoned everything.

H: Why is that?

V: It's because of *xilungu*, they were bothered by *xilungu*. These things, they stopped in that time when *xilungu* entered [our lives] in full force. [30](#) Our children, they don't have respect. The respect back then, it was that we had *secrets*. Things that weren't known by anyone.

H: People don't keep secrets today?

V: Hah! They guard *lies*! Their mothers, the mothers of these children, they lie. She doesn't show them . . . that to speak of these things, she doesn't want it. All these children, they're speaking nonsense! They have no respect. It's because of the *mothers*, they don't teach proper behavior. . . . Long ago, we knew that, when you want to be married by a man—do you do this? [V tugs at A's arm, whispers in her ear, mimicking girls who flirt openly with boys]. Respect, it was ruined by prostitutes.

H: How is that, *vovo*?

V: It's because of their hearts, they show them that, when they see young men, they do things that have no path [i.e., are not the right way]. . . . We showed respect to our husbands. [Not like] now, they go "Aaa-aaa-aaa!" Girls? The ones who marry [today]? Ah, their husband, they don't even think of him. Maybe he's hungry, this husband, hah! They don't think about him. Ah, it was done by *xilungu*, truly. Because of studying. . . . [31](#)

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*Xilungu* and money, the customs and language of the "whites": Women's life stories unanimously posed these two phenomena as the greatest enemies not only of the "ways," "laws," and "life" of "long ago," but of women's collective power to shape what those ways, laws, and life should be. It is significant, I think, that Valentina distinguishes between "white ways" and "white people" in this historical diatribe, locating the wheels of change not in the imposition of European rulers and institutions but in intergenerational female relationships that have been corrupted by women's progressive abandonment of the respect and secrecy that structured these vertical affective bonds among women in the past. Remembered and passed on through women's life-storytelling, the great benchmarks in women's histories of Magude are the events that caused *xilungu* and money to take hold "with force" (*hi ntamu*) across the countryside. *Xilungu*, as elderly women understand it, initially spread along with mission and colonial state schools and hospitals; money started to percolate into their lives, according to some, through the arrival of the railroad. For others it became problematic during the "war of Samora" and at the inception of Frelimo rule. But it was with the escalation of the civil war, and with the forced uprooting of networks of female kinship and community from the agrarian landscape, that the women we interviewed saw their ability to keep these dangers at bay suddenly vanish. As the following chapters show, women's histories identify the last twenty to thirty years as the cataclysmic period during which the way of life their binding memories had sustained and defended was most critically endangered. If, for these women, talk is kinship, then kinship is "life" (*vutomi*), and, with few other people listening to them in postwar Magude, it is little wonder that these "old women" had so much to say to me.

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#### Notes:

**Note 1:** Interview with Cufassane Munisse, 7 February 1996, Matendeni (Magude). See chapter 4. [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Interview with Marta Mabunda, 10 January 1996, Ngungwe/Muqakaze (Moamba district). According to Marta, Maqiviso eventually learned that her brother had been murdered by his in-laws, who were envious of his prowess in battle. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Interview with Lili Xivuri, 24 September 1995, Tlhongana (Phadjane). [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** Interview with Lucia Ntumbo, 5 January 1996, Nhiuana (Phadjane). *Palu* is blue cotton cloth, usually criss-crossed with fine white (and some red) lines and associated with the Ndau. Cloth matching this description is included in European travelers' lists of trade goods from the mid-nineteenth century in southern Mozambique. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** Interview with Misse Xivuri, 4 October 1995, Matendeni (Magude town). [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** Interview with Lise Nsumbane, 29 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** Interview with Jane Mundlovu, 14 December 1995, Matendeni (Magude town); interview with Teasse Xivuri, 5 March 1996, Matendeni (Magude town). [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** *Mundzuruka* is a type of coin from the early twentieth century. This song portrays the war as a campaign by *valungu* to rob Africans of their money and take it home to their "banks." Interview with Valentina Chauke, 2 February 1996, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** The specific meaning of *kuxanga* is to abandon conventional behavior, be led astray, become immoral. [Back.](#)

**Note 10:** Interview with Elena Khosa, 29 December 1995, Matendeni (Magude town). [Back.](#)

**Note 11:** Men, who had more direct experience through employment for or with such men, were more likely to paint *valungu* neighbors in unsympathetic terms. The most extreme case I heard was from Muchangana (Phadjane), where local men uniformly insisted that a former Portuguese land-owner, Manuel Miranda, used to kill his workers (the local men who tended his cattle) and "pound them into holes in the ground." Interview with Frenge Mundlovu, 3 November 1996, Muchangana (Phadjane). [Back.](#)

**Note 12:** Lucia Ntumbo tells a story of her own intervention to win the acceptance of a young woman who had caught a *mulungu's* eye in Phadjane. According to Lucia, this Portuguese man, who worked on a large commercial cattle farm in the area, appealed to Lucia for assistance because he knew she was a *kokwana* of the young woman and so an appropriate messenger for his request. The young woman accepted him, he gave *lovolo* to her family, according to Lucia they were still living together, along with several children and grandchildren. Interview with Lucia Ntumbo, 25 February 1996, Nhiuana (Phadjane). [Back.](#)

**Note 13:** Interview with Lili Xivuri, 4 November 1995, Tlhongana (Phadjane). [Back.](#)

**Note 14:** Interview with Lucia Ntumbo, 2 November 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 15:** Interview with Albertina Tiwana, 24 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 16:** *Ndhuna*: The term for a chief's counselor, here used quite seriously to refer to young go-betweens in courtship. [Back.](#)

**Note 17:** Interview with Cufassane Munisse, 7 February 1996, Matendeni (Magude town). [Back.](#)

**Note 18:** Interview with Lili Xivuri, 2 December 1995, Tlhongana (Phadjane). [Back.](#)

**Note 19:** Interview with Lucia Ntumbo, 5 January 1996, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 20:** Subchief to the Xikwembu *régulo* (cf. chapter 2 for mention of the rulership of the subchieftancy Tlhongana by Lili's father). [Back.](#)

**Note 21:** Interview with Lucia Ntumbo, 2 December 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 22:** Interview with Lucia Ntumbo, 5 January 1996, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 23:** Interview with Lucia Ntumbo, 6 January 1996, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 24:** Interview with Jane Mundlovu, 31 August 1995, Matendeni (Magude town); interview with Lídia Chavango, 9 October 1995, Matendeni (Magude town). [Back.](#)

**Note 25:** These wigs are made from *milala* palm fiber and are an important part of the costume a *nyamusoro* wears when practising in the name of her Ndau spirits. [Back.](#)

**Note 26:** Interview with Lili Xivuri, 13 October 1996, Tlhongana (Phadjane). [Back.](#)

**Note 27:** *Kuhundzuka*: to turn around, change, become different (from *kuhundza*, to pass). [Back.](#)

**Note 28:** *Kuhunguka*: to go bad, become perverted, vicious, immoral; Aida translated this term as "crazy." [Back.](#)

**Note 29:** Interview with Valentina Chauke, 27 June 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

**Note 30:** *Hi ntamu*: literally, "with strength, power"—i.e., intensified, became a force they could no longer ignore or overcome. [Back.](#)

**Note 31:** Interview with Valentina Chauke, 4 October 1995, Facazisse. [Back.](#)

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