


Wiriyamu and the Colonial Archive: Reading It Against the Grain? Along the Grain? Read It at All!

Andreas Zeman 

University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland

E-mail: andreas.zeman@unige.ch

Abstract: “The archives are silent.” The starting point of this article is the alleged non-existence of archival sources on the Portuguese massacre of Wiriyamu (1972). The article proves this claim to be false and shows how the available sources can be used to improve our knowledge of the massacre. The article suggests that scholars’ ignorance of these sources is connected to general misconceptions about colonial archives and their alleged silence on wartime atrocities, which are based on the belief that such atrocities do only appear in the sources, if they are read against the grain. Revealing the explicit presence of war atrocities in the sources, the article argues that the legitimate concern about reading such sources against the grain should not prevent us from reading them at all.

Résumé: « Les archives sont silencieuses ». Le point de départ de cet article est la prétendue inexistence de sources archivistiques sur le massacre portugais de Wiriyamu de 1972. Cet article soutient que cette affirmation est fautive et montre comment les sources disponibles peuvent être utilisées pour améliorer notre connaissance du massacre. L'article suggère que l'ignorance de ces sources de la part des chercheurs.e.s est liée à des idées fausses généralement répandues sur les archives coloniales et leur prétendu silence quant aux atrocités commises en temps de guerre. Cette ignorance est fondée sur la conviction que de telles atrocités n'apparaissent dans les sources que si elles ne sont lues qu'à contre-courant. En révélant la présence explicite d'atrocités de guerre dans les sources, l'article soutient que les préoccupations

History in Africa, Volume 50 (2023), pp. 206–236

© The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the African Studies Association. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that no alterations are made and the original article is properly cited. The written permission of Cambridge University Press must be obtained prior to any commercial use and/or adaptation of the article.

doi:10.1017/hia.2023.2

légitimes concernant la lecture de ces sources à contre-courant ne devraient pas nous empêcher de les lire dans leur intégralité.

Keywords: Colonial archives, Mozambique, PIDE/DGS, Massacres, Decolonization

Introduction

The claim to read colonial archives against the grain has become a scholarly convention. Ann Laura Stoler's advocacy to read the archive along the grain has changed little about that.¹ Stoler's focus was less on the extractive than on the ethnographic value of archives. She was more interested in the authors of the archives than in the events they wrote about. The concern to read colonial archives against the grain is perfectly legitimate. It is absolutely crucial to never forget the layers of racial and imperial hierarchy that have shaped the archival narratives. But the question is to what extent this concern actually goes beyond the craft of source criticism that every student of history ought to learn? Is it not always our task to reflect on the authors, recipients, circumstances, intentions, and omissions of a source?

The aim of this article is to show that the legitimate concern to read archives against the grain can raise misguided expectations of what can—and cannot—be found in colonial archives. It will be argued that this is particularly true in the case of colonial violence and war atrocities. Many authors claim that archives remain silent on such questions, suggesting that archival evidence referring to them was either never produced or deliberately destroyed by the perpetrators.² Oral information is therefore often regarded as a more trustworthy and authentic evidence for such questions.³

While the non-existence of archival evidence might be a reality in many cases of colonial violence,⁴ this article points to the danger that expectations

¹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

² Simon Fowler, "Enforced Silences," in Thomas, David, Fowler, Simon, and Johnson, Valerie (eds.), *The Silence of the Archive* (London: Facet, 2017), 1–40; Caroline Elkins, "Looking beyond Mau Mau: Archiving Violence in the Era of Decolonization," *The American Historical Review* 120–3 (2015), 852–868; Peter Karibe Mendy, *Amílcar Cabral: A Nationalist and Pan-Africanist Revolutionary* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019), 181.

³ On this point in general, see Alexander Keese and Brice I. Owabira, "Rescuing, Interpreting, and, Eventually, Digitizing Regional Postcolonial Archives: Endangered Archives and Research in Pointe-Noire, Republic of Congo," *History in Africa* 47 (2020), 143–165, 145.

⁴ However, the case of Kenya's "migrated archive" points to the fact that documents were at times not destroyed, but only hidden away. See David M. Anderson,

of the (non-)content of colonial archives guide scholars too strongly. Taking the example of the Portuguese massacre of Wiriyamu (1972), the article argues that the legitimate concern about reading sources of the Portuguese military and intelligence apparatus against the grain should not prevent us from reading them at all. Thus, the article will refute current claims of the alleged non-existence of archival material relating to this act of mass violence and show how the available material can be used to improve our knowledge of the massacre.

The Massacre of Wiriyamu and the Alleged Dearth of Archival Evidence

The massacre of Wiriyamu (1972) is the most infamous act of mass violence perpetrated by the Portuguese armed forces during the Mozambican War of Independence (1964–1974). Up to 500 civilians are said to have been killed during the Operation Marosca in and around the two communities of Wiriyamu and Chaworha in the chiefdoms of Rego and Gandar south of the city of Tete. The international coverage of the massacre in July 1973 led to widespread protests against Marcello Caetano's planned visit to London and considerably weakened Portugal's international position.

Over the last decade, the massacre has been brought back to the attention of the scholarly community through different publications. The first was an article by Bruno Cardoso Reis and Pedro Aires Oliveira in the journal *Civil Wars* in 2012.⁵ Their claim that there were some uncertainties about Wiriyamu led to heated reactions by Eric Morier-Genoud and, above all, Mustafah Dhada.⁶ Dhada subsequently processed the results of his research in several talks and publications, which included the monograph *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013* (2016) and a collection of oral history interviews (2020).⁷ Dhada's research

“Guilty Secrets: Deceit, Denial, and the Discovery of Kenya’s ‘Migrated Archive,’” *History Workshop Journal* 80–1 (2015), 142–160; David M. Anderson, “Mau Mau in the High Court and the ‘Lost’ British Empire Archives: Colonial Conspiracy or Bureaucratic Bungle?,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39–5 (2011), 699–716.

⁵ Bruno Cardoso Reis and Pedro Aires Oliveira, “Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts: Late Colonial Portuguese Counterinsurgency and the Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972,” *Civil Wars* 14–1 (2012), 80–103.

⁶ Eric Morier-Genoud, “Wiriyamu: atrocidade por esclarecer?,” *Savana* (1 June 2012), 11; Mustafah Dhada, “The Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972: Response to Reis and Oliveira,” *Civil Wars* 15–4 (2013), 551–558. See as well the response of Reis and Oliveira to Dhada: Bruno Cardoso Reis and Pedro Aires Oliveira, “Reply to Mustafah Dhada,” *Civil Wars* 15–4 (2013), 559–562.

⁷ Mustafah Dhada, “The Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972: Its Context, Genesis, and Revelation,” *History in Africa* 40–1 (2013), 45–75; Mustafah Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Mustafah Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

on Wiriyamu has been widely praised, and in 2017 his monograph received the annual Martin A. Klein Prize of the American Historical Association for the most distinguished work of scholarship on African history published in English.

At first glance, Reis and Oliveira on the one hand and Dhada on the other seem to have little in common in terms of methodology, argumentation, and interpretation. However, their heated exchange hides the fact that they share a common premise: all of them claim that little or nothing on Wiriyamu can be found in archives. In the case of Reis and Oliveira, this contention is rather implicit as they maintain that some facts about the course of the events are “now impossible to know.”⁸ In the case of Dhada, however, this assertion is repeated over and over again most explicitly.⁹ In his 2016 monograph, which reflects at length on the alleged (non-) contents and biases of Portuguese sources about the war, he wrote that “the Portuguese papers tell us next to nothing” about Wiriyamu.¹⁰ And in the introduction to his 2020 collection, he affirmed that the “Portuguese archives are silent” about Operation Marosca.¹¹ In a footnote, he stated that the “only reference to Marosca is to be found [in a document] in the Lisbon-based O Arquivo da Defesa Nacional.”¹² Given the alleged lack of documentary evidence, Reis and Oliveira concluded that some uncertainty about the course of events would remain forever. Dhada, for his part, used this alleged lack of evidence to promote his own research method, namely the reconstruction of the massacre through numerous oral history interviews.

In what follows, I have no intention of disputing the use of oral sources as an invaluable instrument of our historiographical work. On the contrary, I am a declared fan of oral history and have conducted many interviews for my

⁸ Reis and Oliveira, “Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts,” 94. See as well Reis and Oliveira, “Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts,” 85.

⁹ In his response to Reis and Oliveira, he just guessed that “Portuguese archives, if they exist, will have very little to say on this narrative from the ground below.” See Dhada, “The Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972: Response to Reis and Oliveira,” 556–557. See as well “Seminário e apresentação do Livro ‘The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013’ de Mustafah Dhada,” min. 01:35:20–01:36:25, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3Aj-Hd2ldU> (accessed 1 October 2020).

¹⁰ Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, 18.

¹¹ Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, 9. In his newest publication, he writes that “the Portuguese archives are inaccessibly silent on this issue.” See Mustafah Dhada, “The Wiriyamu Massacre,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2021).

¹² Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, 18, footnote 65. Note that the Arquivo da Defesa Nacional is not based in Lisbon as claimed, but in Paço de Arcos.

own research.¹³ But I would like to show that the Portuguese archives are not as silent as Reis, Oliveira, and Dhada want us to believe. I want to demonstrate that the archival evidence not only allows us to see that the massacre was discussed as such by the Portuguese authorities before it became public knowledge, but also to question some of the interpretations of previous scholarship.

First, it must be noted that the Portuguese archives contain several fully accessible folders that are specifically on Wiriyamu. The *Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo* (ANTT) houses a file titled “Massacres em Moçambique (Massacre Wiriyamu)” with a total of 222 pages.¹⁴ The *Arquivo da Defesa Nacional* (ADN) in Paço de Arcos houses two similar dossiers, and the *Arquivo Histórico Diplomático* (AHD) in Lisbon even three.¹⁵ However, these folders are of little direct use for the reconstruction of the massacre, as they first and foremost comprise published charges against the massacre: they contain almost exclusively copies and extracts of newspaper articles and church-based reports. They are what Dhada calls secondary or “synthetic” sources,¹⁶ which can also be found in various folders of the archives of the secret police PIDE/DGS (*Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado*, transformed into the *Direção-Geral de Segurança* in 1969) in the ANTT.¹⁷

The primary material about Wiriyamu is not as abundant as this secondary material, but it is still available. It consists of different folders at the *Arquivo Histórico Militar* (AHMil) in Lisbon, different pieces of evidence in PIDE/DGS reports deposited at the ANTT, and at least two references to Operation Marosca in documents stored at the ADN.¹⁸ These documents allow us to

¹³ Andreas Zeman, *The Winds of History: Life in a Rural Corner of Africa Since the 19th Century* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, forthcoming 2023).

¹⁴ Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, Lisbon (ANTT), SCCIM, N.º 430, “Massacres em Moçambique (Massacre Wiriyamu).”

¹⁵ Arquivo Histórico Diplomático, Lisbon (AHD), MNE-MD/LEM-UK-ELON/122/000106, “Proc. 2,34: Acusações massacre de Moçambique (wiriyamu);” AHD, MNE-MD/LEM-UK-ELON/122/000060, “Proc. 2,34: Acusações massacre de Moçambique (wiriyamu), vol. 2”; AHD, MU-GM/GNP01-RNP/S0236/UI00007, “Campanha contra Portugal a propósito do massacre de Wiriyamo em Moçambique”; Arquivo da Defesa Nacional, Paço de Arcos (ADN), SGDN/2REP/222/0765/004, “Situação em Moçambique”; ADN, SGDN/2REP/222/0765/005, “Notícias sobre os massacres em Moçambique. Wiriyamu e Tete.”

¹⁶ “Seminário e apresentação do livro ‘The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013’ de Mustafah Dhada,” min. 01:35:20–01:36:25.

¹⁷ See for example ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 25, f. 586–608: Os massacres de mucumbura, chawola, wiriyamu e juwau: missionarios apoiam a luta do povo moçambicano.

¹⁸ Arquivo Histórico Militar, Lisbon (AHMil), DIV/2/7, cx. 155, n.º 6, “1973, Setembro, 13–29”; AHMil, DIV/2/7, cx. 155, n.º 7, “1973, Agosto, 19–28”; AHMil, DIV/2/7, cx. 155, n.º 8, “Processo Chawola”; AHMil, CECA, 00.500/006/0001, “Operação ‘Marosca’ – Wiriyamu; AHMil, CECA, 20.900/073/0003, “Massacre de

question or complicate at least five elements of the narrative that has been circulating about Wiriyamu and has been fostered by Mustafah Dhada. They are as follows:

1. The assumption that documents from Portuguese archives do not contain information on war atrocities in general and Wiriyamu in particular
2. The allegation that documents referring to Wiriyamu were actively removed or erased from Portuguese archives
3. The claim that massacres like that of Wiriyamu were common during the war and typical of Portuguese warfare
4. The central responsibility attributed to PIDE/DGS and its local agent Chico Cachave for the massacre
5. The “cog-in-the-wheel-attitude” of the commander of the assault operation

Assumption I: Archival Documents Do Not Contain Information on War Atrocities in General and Wiriyamu in Particular

There seems to be a general assumption that the documents from Portuguese archives do not contain much information on war atrocities in general and Wiriyamu in particular.¹⁹ This seems to be related to a more general misconception or misrepresentation of the content of Portuguese archives, at least for the war period. At one point in their article, Reis and Oliveira for example seem to suggest that Wiriyamu was too small and unstable to feature on maps and to “officially” exist.²⁰ In his book, Dhada has argued that it is easy to reach such a conclusion when examining the massacre from the perspective of archives in Lisbon, implying that Wiriyamu was too insignificant a

Wiriyamu”; AHMil, CECA, 80.250/076/0001, “Autos de averiguações de ocorrências”; AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 89, N.º 6: BCaç 17: Relatório de Acção N.º 05/72, Tete 21 Dec. 1972; ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 13, f. 128–151; DGS/SUBT: Relatório de Situação N.º 24/72: Período de 16 a 31DEZ72, Tete 2 Jan. 1973; ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 13, f. 404–428; DGS/SUBT: Relatório de Situação N.º 23/72: Período de 1 a 15DEZ72, Tete 18 Dec. 1972, 2; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 23, f. 633–634; DGS Moçambique: Informação N.º 4046/73/DI/2/SC: Acções inconvenientes, 21 Aug. 1973; ADN, SGDN/2REP/190/0671/087: Comando-Chefe de Moçambique: Anexo “D” (Actividade Operacional das FT) ao SC 52/72, Nampula 27 Dec. 1972; ADN, GABMIN/007/0035/047: Carta N.º 3394/GB de Comando-Chefe em Moçambique ao Chefe do Gabinete de Sua Exa. o Ministro da Defesa Nacional, Nampula 4 Jun. 1973.

¹⁹ Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, 18.

²⁰ The paragraph in question is certainly problematic but worded more ambiguously than their critics have suggested, and includes qualifying formulations such as “Wiriyamu, with that name” or “most maps.” See Reis and Oliveira, “Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts,” 98.

settlement to appear in the archival records.²¹ Such a view ignores that Portuguese military and intelligence documents are full of names of small geographical locations. Wiriyamu (“Williamo” or “Wiliamo” in the sources) is mentioned in several (primary) reports.²² The geographical and social knowledge of the Portuguese forces may have been ignorant and superficial in many respects—but not to the extent that has been suggested. The armed forces had known of Wiriyamu before they went there.²³

A similar observation can be made with regard to the knowledge of the Portuguese forces about Mozambican individuals: in her preface to Dhada’s second book on Wiriyamu, Jean Penvenne recounted her own experience of historical research in archives in Mozambique and Portugal, referring to the absence and namelessness of the historical actors she was interested in.²⁴ Although I can understand what she means, it must be underlined that precisely the PIDE/DGS archives are full of names of Africans. Some documents even contain biographical notes about them.²⁵ While it would be naive to think that these PIDE/DGS files by themselves mirror the lived reality of these people, the archival records show that African people as historical actors were not unanimously erased from Portuguese archives. My experience from my own microhistorical research in Mozambique shows that it is precisely with the beginning of the war that names and individuals become more visible in the archives. From the Portuguese perspective, the “enemy” had undoubtedly become too strong and the preoccupation to win people over to one’s own side too important to simply continue to ignore the people and their perceptions.

²¹ Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, xix, 17.

²² For examples, see ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 13, f. 400–401: DGS SUBT: Relatório Imediato N.º 4381/72/DI/2/SC: FRELIMO: Indivíduos e suas actividades, 18 Dec. 1972; ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 13, f. 128–151: DGS/SUBT: Relatório de Situação N.º. 24/72: Período de 16 a 31DEZ72; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 16, f. 802: DGS Moçambique: Relatório Imediato N.º 1094/73/DI/2/SC, 13 March 1973.

²³ The BCaç 17 mentioned the place already in reports as early as August 1972, saying it was 15 kilometers from the city of Tete. See AHMIL, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 8, f. 39–41; BCaç 17: Anexo “C” ao Informação N.º 189/P/73: SIT.CIRC: 50/72 do BCAC 17.

²⁴ Penvenne, “Foreword,” xv–xvi.

²⁵ For an example of list of names of people from the Wiriyamu triangle, see ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 13, f. 481–483: DGS Moçambique: Relatório Imediato N.º 4329/72/DI/2/SC: FRELIMO: Redutos IN, 13 Dec. 1972. Such biographical notes appear above all in the cases of FRELIMO deserters. For examples, see ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 13, f. 395–396: DGS Moçambique: Relatório N.º 4367/72/DI/2/SC: FRELIMO/Apresentação de Paulo Julio Adolfo, 18 Dec. 1972; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 14, f. 220–222: DGS Moçambique: Relatório N.º 447/73/DI/2/SC: FRELIMO/Baixas, 31 Jan. 1973.

War atrocities and (mass) violence against civilians are present in the archival record too. It is even surprising how explicit many of the documents are in mentioning violence against non-combatants. As I have argued elsewhere, the systematic destruction of all the means of living (including fields, foods, and shelter) by Portuguese forces outside the *aldeamentos* (“strategic hamlets”), which aimed at starving people and making them go to the *aldeamentos*, is very well documented in Portuguese sources and explicitly formulated in operational instructions.²⁶ Many military and secret service reports specifically record the destruction of infrastructure belonging to civilians in contrast to infrastructure belonging to “proper” combatants.²⁷ And others explicitly mention the killing of civilians.²⁸ Correspondingly, the report of Operation Marosca—which does exist and is accessible (and was even published by the Portuguese army in 2013)—does not deny civilian casualties.²⁹ It lists as results of the operation the destruction of “102 huts” and the killing of “20 collaborators of the enemy.”³⁰ Similarly, the weekly situation report of the Portuguese Commander-in-Chief in Mozambique speaks of the killing of “20 elements belonging to a support base of the enemy” (“Abt 20 El base apoio In”).³¹

While this is a rather twisted way of reporting the killing of non-combatants, the bi-monthly PIDE/DGS report for Tete for the second half of December 1972 is far more unambiguous of what happened in Wiryamu. It says, and I quote it in full:

Successes and failures of Operation ‘MAROSCA’

By virtue of our R.I. No. 566/72/DI/2/GAB, of 12DEZ72, on 15/12, our troops carried out an operation called ‘MAROSCA’ in the area of sub-chief WILIAMO, of the REGO regency. This sub-delegation suggested that the Air

²⁶ Andreas Zeman, “Caught Between the Guerrilla and the Colonial State: Refugee Life in Northern Mozambique During the Independence War (1964–1974),” in Gerlach, Christian (ed.), *On the Social History of Persecution* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023), 115–138, 124–126; Zeman, *The Winds of History*, chap. 7.

²⁷ For examples, see Arquivo Histórico da Marinha, Lisbon (AHMar), Coloredo, Pasta 054/MO: Vasconcelos, Henrique: Resumo Histórico da Comissão do DFE 6, Nampula 19 Aug. 1970; AHMil, DIV/2/7/150/3: Batalhão de Cavalaria 1879. História de Unidade (Vila Junqueiro, February 1968), II/3–II/5.

²⁸ See for example AHMar, Coloredo, Pasta 058/MO: Bastos, João: Relatório de Comissão DFE N. 8, 11.

²⁹ For the publication, see Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África (CECA), *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique*, Livro II (Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 2012), 345–347.

³⁰ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 89, N.º 6: BCaç 17: Relatório de Acção N.º. 05/72. Copies of the same report can also be found in the following folders: AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, N.º 8; AHMil, CECA, 00.500/006/0001.

³¹ ADN, SGDN/2REP/190/0671/087: Comando-Chefe de Moçambique: Anexo “D” (Actividade Operacional das FT) ao SC 52/72.

Force should first bomb the hamlet of sub-chief WILIAMO, in which many terrorists, headed by RAIMUNDO, were present, and only afterwards launch the assault on the village of WILIAMO with heli-transported troops. However, the military decided to carry out the bombardments around the village, apparently with the aim of catching RAIMUNDO and his men by hand. As the operation was carried out under such a strategy, the result was completely null and void, since not a single terrorist was killed or captured, nor any war material apprehended. On the contrary, as a result of the bombings and the action of the ground forces, about a hundred members of the population were killed.

We therefore consider the lack of capture or killing of terrorists and the massacre of the population to be failures. If only we had killed terrorists together with elements of the population, we would have had the moral consolation of saying that the enemy was in the midst of the population and that the death of the population was a result of the enemy's presence in its midst.

As a positive part of the operation we must say, in truth, that it gave a certain confidence to the European population and distanced ['desarticulou'] the enemy from the populations of the REGO and GANDAR regencies, stripping them of the myth that FRELIMO dominated in the areas and forcing them to take refuge near the city of Tete.³²

We will return to the content of this report and its possible meanings below. For now, I just like to highlight the facts that 1) the Portuguese head of the PIDE/DGS office in Tete spoke of a massacre of non-combatants already shortly after the execution of Operation Marosca, that 2) he even condemned the moral misconduct of the armed forces, and that 3) he estimated the number of civilians killed at about one hundred, much higher than the report of the military.

Assumption II: Documents Relating to Wiriyamu Were Actively Removed or Erased from the Archives

Mustafah Dhada and Jean Penvenne have suggested that documents relating to Wiriyamu were actively removed from the archives.³³ It is well-known that most PIDE/DGS files from the Mozambican delegation of PIDE/DGS are lost and have most probably been destroyed.³⁴ The suggestion of Dhada and

³² ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 13, f. 128–151: DGS/SUBT: Relatório de Situação N°. 24/72: Período de 16 a 31DEZ72, 1–2. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

³³ Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, 18, footnote 65; Jeanne Penvenne, "Foreword," in Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, xi–xvii, xiii–xiv.

³⁴ Of the documentation of the Mozambican delegation of PIDE/DGS, only 21 "installation units" from the subdelegations of Beira, Nampula, and Vila Cabral

Pevenne, however, refers to documents stored in Portugal. Although their assumption seems plausible, it must be emphasized that possible attempts to erase the massacre of Wiriyamu from the archives were obviously unsuccessful in view of the evidence still available and especially the report just quoted.

Furthermore, the example that Dhada and Penvenne used to suggest archival collusion is not convincing at closer observation. Dhada has not provided any information on the document in question, which according to him is the only reference to Operation “Marosca” that can be found in Portuguese archives. He has merely noted that “the actual copy of the military commission of inquiry is missing from the folder.”³⁵ This remark refers to the fact that the document in question, letter N.º 3394, is the cover letter of the photocopy of a report on a process of investigation into the conduct of the Portuguese troops during Operation “Marosca,” sent by the office of the Portuguese Commander-in-Chief in Mozambique to the office of the Portuguese Minister of Defense.³⁶

The photocopy is indeed missing from the folder. However, four points must be made to put this absence in the right perspective. First, this was not an inquiry commissioned by the Portuguese authorities following the public disclosure of Wiriyamu in the middle of 1973, but the investigation ordered by the Portuguese Commander-in-Chief Kaulza de Arriaga in March 1973. This investigation was completed on 29 May 1973, and the results were sent to the Ministry of Defense on 4 June 1973 by letter N.º 3394.³⁷

Secondly, there is reason to believe that the photocopy in question was not removed from the folder but was in fact never archived in it. According to a handwritten note on the letter, the copy and letter were handed over directly to the minister when they arrived in Paço de Arcos on 23 June 1973. The stamps on the letter show that the letter was returned to the office on 25 June 1973 where it was archived, but possibly without the copy of the report, which the minister may have kept.

Thirdly, although missing at the ADN, a copy of the report of the inquiry is available and fully accessible at the *Arquivo Histórico Militar*.³⁸

found their way to the ANTT. The reasons for their disappearance are controversial. Cahen has, for example, suggested that the files might have been destroyed on request by Samora Machel: Michel Cahen, “Do ultramar ao pós-colonial. Reflexões de um historiador sobre Moçambique contemporâneo nos arquivos de Portugal e Moçambique.” *Práticas de História. Journal of Theory, Historiography, and Uses of the Past* 10 (2020), 249–267, 251, 255.

³⁵ Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre*, 18, footnote 65.

³⁶ ADN, GABMIN/007/0035/047: Carta N.º 3394/GB de Comando-Chefe em Moçambique ao Chefe do Gabinete de Sua Exa. o Ministro da Defesa Nacional.

³⁷ On this point, see also CECA, *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro II*, 330.

³⁸ Note that the “photocopy” consists of two separate documents. The cover letter says “photocopy of information and report.” They are AHMil, DIV/2/7,

Furthermore, the Portuguese military commission for the study of campaigns in Africa (1961–1974) has quoted from it extensively in one of its published volumes on the operational activities of the Portuguese troops in Africa.³⁹

Finally, this report, having been allegedly deliberately removed from the archives, has been anything but secret since it was published in 1976 by the Portuguese journalists José Amaro and José Fortunato in their collection of “secret documents” on the Wiriyamu massacre.⁴⁰ The document has thus long been easily accessible to all those interested in the case.

The content of the report suggests that the collusion did take place at the investigatory level, not at the archival. For, in contrast to the judgment by PIDE/DGS quoted above, the military investigation concluded that nothing problematic had happened during Operation Marosca. The military report claimed that people ran away from the troops despite the repeated orders to stop. People were thus, according to the investigation, “rightly” expected to belong to the “enemy.” However, the report determined that the report of the operation had understated the number of casualties. It found that 63 people had been killed, not 20. This was then also the only point of criticism of the investigation: that the military units were urged to record the “results” of their operations with greater accuracy.

Obviously, unlike PIDE/DGS, the military was not willing to admit misconduct even in its internal documents and investigations. This was similar in the second major military investigation into the massacre, conducted by Brigadier Nunes da Silva in September 1973. This renewed investigation was the result of what Dhada calls the “dissident probe into the affair,”⁴¹ which was conducted under the direction of Jorge Jardim, an influential Portuguese businessman. Accompanied by three journalists and Orlando Cristina (later the first general secretary of RENAMO), Jardim had visited Tete in August 1973 and found clear proof of a massacre. Jardim subsequently used his influential position with the Portuguese government to initiate a further investigation. As part of this last investigation, Brigadier Nunes da Silva interviewed not only survivors but also members of the Portuguese military. The records of his investigation are

Cx. 155, n.º 6: RMM Chefia do Serviço de Justiça: Informação N.º 22/73, P.º 18/92/73: Processo de Averiguações sobre o Compartimento das NT na Operação “Marosca,” 29 May 1973; AHMIL, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 6: António Pereira da Silva: Relatório.

³⁹ CECA, *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro II*, 330.

⁴⁰ José Amaro and José Fortunato (eds.), *Massacres na guerra colonial: Tete, um exemplo* (Lisboa: Ulmeiro, 1976), 71–93.

⁴¹ Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, 134.

today available at the AHMil but have also not been used by previous scholarship on Wiriyamu.

The documents show that the interest of the military in really clarifying the circumstances of the massacre was indeed limited. Furthermore, the investigation was confined to determining what had happened in Chaworha (the village visited by Jorge Jardim) and did not include clarification of the killings in the other locations. The investigation was also inconclusive and in fact contradictory as to what had really happened. During the investigation, Nunes da Silva temporarily considered to charge certain members of the Portuguese military and even opened a judicial inquiry, but in the end basically followed the testimonies of the white soldiers that people were shot while trying to run away despite being repeatedly ordered and warned not to do so. While Nunes da Silva stated that “there [had] indeed been, on the part of our troops, acts of violence against the natives during Operation Marosca, which might have been partly avoided,”⁴² he recommended against continuing the investigation and process, as this would only bring the case back into the public eye and possibly cause feelings of frustration among the soldiers.⁴³ The Portuguese Defense Minister followed this recommendation, calling part of the actions of the soldiers “reprehensible,” but simultaneously justifying them as a result of the tense situation on the ground.⁴⁴

The Portuguese unwillingness to conduct a real and independent investigation does however not mean that the evidence of the massacre was removed from the archives as suggested. As part of the Commission for the Study of the Campaigns of Africa (*Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África*, CECA), the Portuguese military has recently even made efforts to actively gather all archival records still available.⁴⁵ Penvenne gives a false impression when she writes that at Wiriyamu “the evidence of their murder was hidden, ‘cleaned up’ by burying what remained of rotting corpses in mass graves.”⁴⁶ As much as the massacre of Wiriyamu was not (totally) erased from the archives, it was also not made (totally) invisible on the ground. A PIDE/DGS report from 21 August 1973, a good nine months after the massacre, reads as follows:

⁴² AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 7: Brigadeiro Henrique Nunes da Silva: Informação. Assunto: Averiguações mandadas levantar por S Exa o Ministro da Defesa Nacional, por seu despacho de 28AGO73, Nampula 19 Sep. 1973, 10–11.

⁴³ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 7: Brigadeiro Henrique Nunes da Silva: Informação. Assunto: Averiguações mandadas levantar por S Exa o Ministro da Defesa Nacional, por seu despacho de 28AGO73, Nampula 19 Sep. 1973, 9–10.

⁴⁴ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 7: Despacho, Tete 19 Sep. 1973. See as well CECA, *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África*, Vol. 6: *Aspectos da Actividade Operacional*, Tomo III: *Moçambique*, Livro II, 333.

⁴⁵ AHMil, CECA/00.500/006/0001, “Operação ‘Marosca’—Wiriyamu; AHMil, CECA, 20.900/073/0003, “Massacre de Wiriyamu”; AHMil, CECA, 80.250/076/0001, “Autos de averiguações de ocorrências”.

⁴⁶ Penvenne, “Foreword,” xv–xvi.

Although his Excellency Colonel Videira has twice sent troops to the place to destroy all evidence of a massacre, the truth is that 8 months after the attack on the Chawola village bodies were still lying there on the surface of the ground.⁴⁷

Assumption III: Massacres Like That of Wiriyamu Were Common During the War and Typical of Portuguese Warfare

Based on his conversations with the commander of the assault operation, Dhada has repeatedly suggested that Wiriyamu was “small potatoes,”⁴⁸ implying that there were even worse massacres by Portuguese troops, which however have not been made public to date. In an oral presentation of his book, he referred to it as a “coisa pequenina” (“very small thing”).⁴⁹ He has portrayed the cruel killing of non-combatants (including women and children) as a structural element of the Portuguese way of war.⁵⁰ By doing so, Dhada has, in my view, missed the opportunity to properly explain the ambiguities of Portuguese war strategies and the temporal and regional dynamics of the war.⁵¹ Research on late colonial reforms and counterinsurgency campaigns in other places has clearly highlighted the importance of recognizing such ambiguities and dynamics.⁵² As will be shown in this section,

⁴⁷ ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 23, f. 633–634: DGS Moçambique: Informação N.º 4046/73/DI/2/SC: Acções inconvenientes, 2. Regarding the bodies still being visible in August, see as well AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 7: Brigadeiro Henrique Nunes da Silva: Informação. Assunto: Averiguações mandadas levantar por S Exa o Ministro da Defesa Nacional, por seu despacho de 28AGO73, 2, 7.

⁴⁸ Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, 18; Dhada, “The Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972: Response to Reis and Oliveira,” 557. See as well Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, 9.

⁴⁹ “Seminário e apresentação do livro ‘The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013’ de Mustafah Dhada,” min. 01:35:34–01:35:37.

⁵⁰ Similar arguments have also been advanced recently by João-Manuel Neves, who even speaks of a “genocidal strategy” as far as the war south of the Zambezi River is concerned. See Joao-Manuel Neves, “Portuguese Fascism’s Genocidal Strategy in Mozambique: The Zambezi River South Bank in the Early-Mid 1970s,” *Interventions* 25–2 (2023), 192–215.

⁵¹ Dhada’s failure to do so is noteworthy since he himself pioneered the analysis of such dynamics with regard to the war in Guinea-Bissau, arguing against the narrative that the war was “a teleologic sweep with the PAIGC calling the shots.” See Mustafah Dhada, “The Liberation War in Guinea-Bissau Reconsidered,” *The Journal of Military History* 62–3 (1998), 571–593, 593.

⁵² For examples, see Moritz Feichtinger and Stephan Malinowski, “‘Eine Million Algerier lernen im 20. Jahrhundert zu leben’. Umsiedlungslager und Zwangsmodernisierung im Algerienkrieg 1954–1962,” *Journal of Modern European History* 8–1 (2010), 107–135; Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, “A Robust Operation: Resettling, Security, and Development in Late Colonial Angola (1960s–1970s),” *Itinerario* 44–1 (2020): 55–79; Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). And as Alexander

the available archival material helps us to situate the massacre of Wiryamu within the ambiguities and dynamics of the war in Mozambique.

I have pointed to other cases of killings of civilians by Portuguese troops and the importance of the Portuguese destruction policy outside the *aldeamentos* above. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the Portuguese war strategy to “win people’s hearts and minds” was not a mere propaganda strategy only for the “Englishmen to see,” but had tangible effects on the ground. My research in Niassa revealed that, for the goal of maintaining power, the colonial state proved more capable of reform than is commonly assumed. I have shown how the Portuguese efforts to draw people away from FRELIMO’s side were remarkably effective in many parts of Niassa—and to such an extent that the number of people living in FRELIMO’s so-called liberated areas was in fact tiny at the end of the war.⁵³

This success was also because the Portuguese forces began to change tactics in the war’s course. While they maintained the systematic destruction of all the means of living outside the *aldeamentos*, they were more zealous in offering people a reasonable alternative in the *aldeamentos* than previous opinion has held. And there is sufficient evidence to substantiate that Portuguese forces began to avoid the killing of both combatants and non-combatants. This change in tactics is also confirmed by the research of Sayaka Funada-Classen for the *Circunscrição* of Maúá.⁵⁴ As part of this strategy, the Portuguese military began to pay fixed bonuses to its troops for every armed guerrilla brought into the *aldeamentos* alive.⁵⁵

Karl Hack has recently highlighted the importance “to take into account the lifecycles of multiple types of violence, and of violence-limitation” in the

Keese has repeatedly pointed out, even the “earlier” Portuguese colonial state was anything but monolithic and unchanging. For examples, see Alexander Keese, “‘Proteger os pretos’: Havia uma mentalidade reformista na administração Portuguesa na África Tropical (1926–1961)?” *Africana Studia* 6 (2003): 97–125; Alexander Keese, “Forced Labour in the ‘Gorgulho Years’: Understanding Reform and Repression in Rural São Tomé e Príncipe, 1945–1953,” *Itinerario* 38–1 (2014): 103–124.

⁵³ See Zeman, *The Winds of History*; Zeman, “Caught Between the Guerrilla and the Colonial State.”

⁵⁴ Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Origins of War in Mozambique: A History of Unity and Division* (Somerset West: African Minds, 2013), 322–323.

⁵⁵ CECA, *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro I* (Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 2012), 120, 197. The question how big bonuses should be paid for armed or unarmed captives was discussed actively and also somewhat controversially by different army units. See for example AHMil, FO/63/21/961/2: COM SEC “A” ao CEM/QG/AV (3a.REP): Prémios por material capturado (N.º 2856/c-70, P.º 505.01.05), 21 Dec. 1970. See as well Zeman, “Caught Between the Guerrilla and the Colonial State,” 128–131.

analysis of counter-insurgency violence. He has called for a “more nuanced and contextualized account, clearly differentiated by technique, place, and period.”⁵⁶ This is barely what Dhada and others have done in relation to Wiriyamu. By portraying the massacre as “small potatoes” in the war, such accounts underestimate how much Portuguese warfare had become structured by psychological reasoning and had begun to use violence and repression much more specifically albeit, as in the case of the destruction policy outside the *aldeamentos*, still on a very broad scale.

However, a nuanced perspective has undoubtedly to consider regional and temporal differences. In the case of Mozambique, these differences were considerable in the 1970s. For while in December 1972 the situation in Niassa was in favor of the Portuguese forces,⁵⁷ the state of affairs in Tete was “simply chaotic”⁵⁸ and about to turn “hopeless,”⁵⁹ as various PIDE/DGS reports from that time put it.⁶⁰ It seems likely that under this pressure, voices in favor of a hard line were (re)gaining the upper hand, especially as in the case of Wiriyamu the insurgency had reached the orbit of a district capital and seemed to be advancing toward the white settler areas further south. This interpretation is substantiated by the words with which the Portuguese commander of Sector F⁶¹ commented on the report of Operation Marosca

⁵⁶ Karl Hack, “‘Devils that suck the blood of the Malayan People’: The Case for Post-Revisionist Analysis of Counter-insurgency Violence,” *War in History* 25–2 (2018), 202–226, 202. See as well Moritz Feichtinger, who has equally emphasised the importance of considering these dynamics of counterinsurgency conflicts, explaining differing interpretations and experiences of counter-insurgency measures “by the simple fact that they often refer to distinct phases in the history of strategic resettlement.” See Moritz Feichtinger, “‘Villagization’: A People’s History of Strategic Resettlement and Violent Transformation, Kenya & Algeria, 1952–1962,” PhD dissertation, Universität Bern (Bern, 2016), 137.

⁵⁷ For examples, see ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 13, f. 313–366: DGS SUBVC: Relatório de Situação do Dist do Niassa: Período de 30NOV a 15DEZ, Vila Cabral 19 Dec. 1972; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 14, f. 583–595: DGS SUBVC: Relatório de Situação do Dist do Niassa: Período de 31 DEZ a 15 JAN, Vila Cabral 19 Jan. 1973; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 18, f. 331–342: DGS SUBVC: Relatório de Situação do Dist do Niassa: Período de 30ABR a 15MAI73, Vila Cabral 19 May 1973.

⁵⁸ ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 17, f. 32–49: DGS/SUBT: Relatório de Situação N.º. 8/73: Período de 16 a 30ABR73, Tete 3 May 1973, 1. See as well ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 12, f. 520–545: DGS/SUBT: Relatório de Situação N.º. 20/72, 2 Nov. 1972, 1.

⁵⁹ ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 24, f. 586–602: DGS/SUBT: Relatório de Situação N.º. 17/73: Período de 1 a 30SET73, Tete 19 Sep. 1973, 1.

⁶⁰ For other examples that describe Portuguese difficulties in Tete, see as well ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 13, f. 404–428: DGS/SUBT: Relatório de Situação N.º. 23/72: Período de 1 a 15DEZ72, 1; AHMIL, FO/63/15/954/3: Relatório de Acção Psicológica N.º 1/72, referente ao 4.º Trimestre de 1972, Nampula 30 Apr. 1973, 27.

⁶¹ At the time of the massacre, the Portuguese operation zone in Tete (*Zona de Operações de Tete*, ZOT) was divided into the three sectors: F, G, and H. See CECA,

on 11 January 1973. For, according to him, the operation was determined by concerns about the “suffocation” of Tete.⁶²

Among the temporal differences, one must certainly also consider the more offensive strategy of the Portuguese military after the appointment of General Kaúlza de Arriaga in 1970. In their article on Wiriyamu, Bruno Reis and Pedro Oliveira have argued that Arriaga’s “escalation of the war” and greater focus on airborne operations was seen by many critics within the military as “an abandonment of sound Portuguese counterinsurgency doctrine.”⁶³ In my view, however, the practical effects of this change in strategy have not yet been sufficiently examined and do not seem to have challenged the psychological priorities of the Portuguese war strategy as a whole and certainly not on all war fronts.

However, a tense situation such as that of Tete in late 1972 certainly contributed to more repressive ideas regaining acceptance among the military. The report quoted above shows that at least PIDE/DGS was prepared to accept civilian casualties as part of Operation Marosca. For, the bombing of the hamlet of sub-chief Wiriyamu by the air force would have undoubtedly resulted in the death of non-combatants as well.⁶⁴ But the Portuguese forces were not unaware of the collateral damage that such bombings could have for their objectives. This can be illustrated by looking at “Operation Refractário,” an operation carried out east of Lake Malawi in October 1967. As part of this operation, bombardments by the air force were only launched after the ground troops had verified who lived in the encampments. The report of the operation explained this procedure as follows:

It was necessary to verify this [who lived there] first in the terrain in order to avoid the unnecessary death of women and children who were controlled by the enemy and who could have been there in large numbers. It is of exceptional interest to us that they fall to our side.⁶⁵

Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 4: Dispositivo das Nossas Forças Moçambique (Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 1989), 167.

⁶² AHMil, DIV/2/7, cx. 155, n.º 8: Comentário do Comandante do Sector ao Relatório de Acção N. 05 /72 de 2118000DEZ72, 11 Jan. 1973. A copy of this commentary was published in CECA *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro II*, 354.

⁶³ Reis and Oliveira, “Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts,” 89.

⁶⁴ According to oral information collected by the Portuguese journalist Felícia Cabrita, it may have been the commander of the air force who opposed to bombing of the sub-hamlet of the chief against the wishes of the commander of the operation. See Felícia Cabrita, *Massacres em África* (Lisboa: Esfera dos livros, 2008), 252.

⁶⁵ AHMar, Colorado, Pasta 303-A/MO: Comando do DFE 5: Relatório de Missão de Intervenção do DFE5 N.º 47: “Operação Refractário” (Confidencial), Augusto Cardoso 21 Oct. 1967, 4.

Various operational reports reveal that Portuguese troops sometimes shot at unarmed people as they tried to run away. Thus, a combat group of the 6.^a *Companhia de Comandos de Moçambique* (CCmds), the unit that provided the bulk of the soldiers for Operation Marosca, had killed eight apparently unarmed runaways in an operation about two weeks before the massacre of Wiriyamu.⁶⁶ However, this was far from the continuous standard strategy of the Portuguese forces during the war. Countless other operational reports demonstrate the absolute importance of capturing people alive. Along the shores of Lake Malawi, it became official policy to shoot only when really necessary, and certainly not just randomly at non-combatants. Thus, for psychological reasons, it was considered preferable to let runaways escape rather than to shoot them, and Portuguese military commanders repeatedly praised their troops for their discipline in this respect.⁶⁷

In any case, official policy differed sharply from what António Melo, the commander of the 6.^a CCmds, claimed it was. In his conversations with Dhada, Melo alleged that “killing the enemy and their collaborators was our mission” throughout the war, with “no ifs, buts, or maybes.”⁶⁸ I will return to Melo’s general credibility below. At this point, I would only like to reemphasize that the rationale of the Portuguese strategy was definitely another, namely that a captured “enemy” was “more valuable” than a dead one. In line with this, the operational instructions of Operation Marosca formulated as the main objectives 1) the capture of Raimundo, 2) the capture or annihilation of his guerrillas, and 3) the subtraction of the population from the control of the enemy.⁶⁹ However, the operational instructions suggest that Marosca was indeed planned to be more on the repressive end of the continuum between violent repression and political persuasion. Thus, the instructions also included the order that “installations or other means of living of the population should not be destroyed, save as a punitive means [against] incrimination with the enemy.”⁷⁰ As mentioned earlier, the destruction of houses and means of living was an explicit part of many, if not most, Portuguese operations. In Marosca, orders of scorched earth were excluded because the operation was not directly related to a resettlement mission but was primarily intended to serve the aim of capturing

⁶⁶ The combat group in question did not participate in Operation Marosca. See AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 89, N.º 6: Relatório de Acção: “Operação Rotulo 1,” Estima 5 Dec. 1972; AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 89, N.º 6: Comentários à OP “Rotulo 1,” Estima 7 Dec. 1972. For another example, see AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 123, n.º 1: Relatório da Operação N.º 2/8, Metangula 22 Oct. 1968.

⁶⁷ See Zeman, “Caught Between the Guerrilla and the Colonial State,” 129.

⁶⁸ Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, 58.

⁶⁹ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 8: Maj. RCunha: DIROP N.º 09/72 CMD SEC “F” – Confirmação ordens verbais para execução OP “Marosca,” 20 Dec. 1972; AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 89, N.º 6: BCaç 17: Relatório de Acção N.º. 05/72.

⁷⁰ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 8: Maj. RCunha: DIROP N.º 09/72 CMD SEC “F” – Confirmação ordens verbais para execução OP “Marosca,” 2.

Raimundo. That the destruction of houses was nevertheless considered as a punitive means seems to me rather anomalous compared to the usual logic of creating tensions between the population and the guerrilla in a more discrete way. The official report of the operation is largely silent on how the troops attempted to follow these orders on the ground.⁷¹ However, the fact that the official report of the operation mentions not only the killing of collaborators of the enemy but also the destruction of “102 huts” suggests that the troops justified their actions in terms of such a punitive action. In the operational instructions, punishment was considered an option, but not the primary objective. And according to the instructions, such punitive measures included only the destruction of infrastructure, not the killing of collaborators.

Certainly, we can imagine that further objectives were formulated or sanctioned orally.⁷² However, it seems doubtful that internal documents of the Portuguese military apparatus on the war systematically misrepresented the situation on the ground. That this was hardly the case is also shown by the concluding remarks of the military report of Operation Marosca:

It can be generally verified that the enemy is in the region, living among the population, and the latter does not denounce him, *the majority out of conviction*, and the rest out of fear from repression.⁷³

This clearly indicates that the Portuguese forces were indeed aware of the fact that the “subtraction of the population from the control of the enemy” involved more than just a game of power and repression.

However, we can assume that the Portuguese war strategy around Tete in December 1972 had become (again) more ambiguous. No document demonstrates this ambiguity better than the PIDE/DGS report quoted above. While calling the killing of 100 civilians a moral and military failure, it still highlights the positive effects that the setting of an example had, especially among the European settlers. That many of those had little patience with the psychological priorities of Portuguese warfare is also evident in other

⁷¹ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 89, N.º 6: BCaç 17: Relatório de Acção N.º. 05/72. See as well AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 89, N.º 6: Anexo A (Fita de Tempo) ao Rel OP N.º. 05/72, Tete 21 Dec. 1972.

⁷² Melo, for example, claimed that he was orally ordered to shoot on fleeing populations. However, the commander said to have ordered him so denied this. In a later interview with the Portuguese journalist Felícia Cabrita, Melo claimed to have received orders to kill everything that moved. See AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 7: Brigadeiro Henrique Nunes da Silva: Informação. Assunto: Averiguações mandadas levantar por S Exa o Ministro da Defesa Nacional, por seu despacho de 28AGO73, 7, 11; Cabrita, *Massacres em África*, 270.

⁷³ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 89, N.º 6: BCaç 17: Relatório de Acção N.º. 05/72, 2. (Emphasis by the author).

documents.⁷⁴ European settlers, rather than the metropolitan soldiers, felt their lifestyle threatened by the more inclusive and less racist policies pursued by the government since the early 1960s. A military report of the *Acção Psicológica* (“Psychological Action”) from early 1973 mirrored these growing tensions between the official and settler mentalities by noting that “attitudes of racism continue to manifest [among the settlers], who show no efforts to alter their conceptions regarding Africans.”⁷⁵

It is telling that precisely a week before the massacre, a Portuguese electrician wrote a letter to Marcelo Caetano “on behalf of the entire population of the city of Tete” in which he complained about the lenient actions of the Portuguese forces against the “terrorists.” He demanded that they be “eliminated once and for all.” Otherwise, the population of Tete would leave the city *en masse*. He further stated,

The soldiers and police officers, and the junior officers, say that they do not have the permission to shoot a *turra* [“terrorist”]. They are forced to hunt them by hand. It is impossible to make such an error. What is the government’s interest in treating murderous terrorists with such cordiality?⁷⁶

Brigadier Nunes da Silva’s investigation found that FRELIMO had firmly established itself around the city of Tete prior to the massacre and was “constituting a serious threat to Tete.”⁷⁷ According to Nunes da Silva, “the civilian European population of Tete was feeling this threat and wanted immediate action to be taken.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ The visit of the Portuguese Minister of Overseas Affairs to Mozambique in December 1973 for example produced much dissatisfaction among the European population of Mozambique, as according to a PIDE/DGS report “it was almost entirely oriented towards contacts with the non-white population.” See ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 29, f. 28–29: DGS Moçambique: Informação N.º 179/74/DI/3/SC: Rumores e Boatos Moçambique, 9 Jan. 1974, 1. For another example see as well ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 31, f. 594–601: Manuel de Sousa Teles (Governador): Relatório sobre os acontecimentos ocorridos na Beira, de 16 a 19 de Janeiro de 1974, Beira 22 Jan. 1974.

⁷⁵ AHMil, FO/63/15/954/3: Relatório de Acção Psicológica N.º 1/72, referente ao 4.º Trimestre de 1972, 16.

⁷⁶ ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 13, f. 220–221: Letter from M. d. S. to Marcelo Caetano, Tete 9 Dec. 1972.

⁷⁷ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 7: Brigadeiro Henrique Nunes da Silva: Informação. Assunto: Averiguações mandadas levantar por S Exa o Ministro da Defesa Nacional, por seu despacho de 28AGO73, 1. On this point, see as well AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 8, f. 14–16: Major António Vasco Santos de Faria Leal: Informação N.º 301/B, P.º 815.1: Situação que deu origem à Operação Marosca e ocorrências verificadas, Nampula 1 Sep. 1973, 3.

⁷⁸ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 7: Brigadeiro Henrique Nunes da Silva: Informação. Assunto: Averiguações mandadas levantar por S Exa o Ministro da Defesa Nacional, por seu despacho de 28AGO73, 1.

The massacre of Wiriyamu should be understood against the background of such demands for a hard line. Such appeals may also have contributed to the fact that the massacre of Wiriyamu was subsequently “sanctioned from above” in the internal (legal) investigations even though it ran counter to the official (internal) policy of conquering the people.

It was only after the public disclosure of the massacre in the mid-1973 that Armindo Videira was removed as governor of Tete, and not because of the massacre itself, but because of omissions in its investigation.⁷⁹ And his dismissal was still not free from any ambiguities. For in a letter to the Minister of Overseas Affairs, the Minister of National Defense wrote: “The return of Colonel Videira is still a pity, as he is a good officer and valiant, even if there is justification for it.”⁸⁰ While the Portuguese military logics allowed for the impunity of its perpetrators, the massacre of Wiriyamu was not “small potatoes” in the war. We can also doubt that Operation Marosca was indeed “planned and executed as intended,”⁸¹ as Dhada has claimed. The killing of non-combatants was clearly considered problematic by the official mind of the Portuguese military and secret service apparatus in 1972.

However, opinions, objectives, and intentions within the Portuguese military and security apparatus were anything but uniform and universal. Moreover, Portuguese warfare was adapted to local and regional factors and developments. But the assertion that massacres like that of Wiriyamu were the timeless norm of Portuguese warfare means precisely to ignore these dynamics and ambiguities of the Portuguese war strategy. It is essential to take them into consideration. Otherwise, we will fail to understand the reasoning and behavior of many Mozambicans during the war and equally fail to understand the social history of the war, which was much more complicated than FRELIMO’s still dominant “liberation narrative” suggests. In the end, an understanding of this history is also crucial to fully understand many of the developments in postcolonial Mozambique.

Assumption IV: The Central Responsibility Attributed to PIDE/DGS and Its Local Agent Chico Cachave for the Massacre

Since the revelation of the massacre of Wiriyamu, one actor has repeatedly been identified as key figure in the perpetration of the massacre: Chico Cachave, a black Mozambican who worked for PIDE/DGS as “guarda

⁷⁹ CECA, *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro II*, 331.

⁸⁰ ADN, GABMIN/007/0036/055/0178: Carta do Ministro da Defesa Nacional (Horácio de Sá Viana Rebelo) ao Ministro do Ultramar (Joaquim Moreira da Silva Cunha), Lisboa 31 Aug. 1973.

⁸¹ Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, 141.

prisonal” (prison officer) in Tete, but who was also at times used as a guide by the Portuguese troops during their operations. His central role in the massacre has been stressed to such an extent that some popular accounts have referred to him as the leader of the PIDE/DGS agents or even the leader of the entire operation.⁸² The Portuguese journalist Felícia Cabrita called him the “most passionate strategist” of the massacre, who, according to her, also fired the first shot.⁸³

He was already mentioned by name in the report written by the Mozambican priest Domingo Ferrão. It was Ferrão’s report that brought the massacre to the attention of European missionaries, and eventually to the international public. In the report, it was claimed that Chico Cachave repeatedly ordered to kill them all and even drowned out a military officer’s plea for clemency. Based on interviews with members of the Portuguese troops and survivors, Dhada and others have reinforced the central role played by Cachave.⁸⁴ Certainly, Dhada’s comments on the role of Chico Cachave are ambiguous. On the analytical level, Dhada is cautious about placing too much responsibility on Cachave, aware that this might leave too much interpretative room to view the massacre as an act of unauthorized mass violence and to thus free “Portugal’s blood-soaked shoulders” from responsibility. But in Dhada’s description of the massacre, Cachave is almost omnipresent and seemingly omnipotent. In his latest publication, Dhada again highlights Cachave’s key role, asserting that the only difference of Wiriyamu from other Portuguese “cleanups” in the region was the presence of PIDE/DGS agents led by Chico Cachave and Johnny Kongorhogondo.⁸⁵ The central role PIDE/DGS and Cachave is also highlighted by Reis and Oliveira.⁸⁶

While PIDE/DGS and Chico Cachave are almost unanimously portrayed as the principal culprits of the massacre on the ground,⁸⁷ the responsibility of other perpetrators is sometimes presented as limited. This is especially true for António Melo, the aforementioned commander of the 6.^a CCmds. His claims that he was only following “superior orders” feature prominently in

⁸² Thus, the entry on the massacre in the English Wikipedia states, “The action, named ‘Operation Marosca,’ was planned at the instigation of PIDE/DGS agents and guided by agent Chico Kachavi.” See “Wiriyamu Massacre.” In Wikipedia, 25 September 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Wiriyamu_Massacre&oldid=917820653 (accessed 3 October 2021).

⁸³ Cabrita, *Massacres em África*, 269.

⁸⁴ Dalila Cabrita Mateus, *A PIDE/DGS na Guerra Colonial 1964–1974*, 2nd edn. (Lisboa: Terramar, 2011 [2004]), 82–83.

⁸⁵ Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, 9.

⁸⁶ Reis and Oliveira, “Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts,” 82, 91, 94.

⁸⁷ See as well Margaret Hall and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence* (London: Hurst, 1997), 29; Mateus, *A PIDE/DGS na Guerra Colonial 1964–1974*, 82–83, 175–176.

both Felícia Cabrita's and Dhada's accounts.⁸⁸ Several accounts have also highlighted that he showed at least some mercy. Thus, Dhada attested him "flashes of compassionate courage" because he apparently saved the life of a little girl and protected an adult female from sexual abuse by his troops.⁸⁹ And based on the testimony of another member of the 6.^a CCmds, historian Dalila Cabrita Mateus suggested that Melo was the said military officer who pleaded for clemency while Cachave ordered to kill them all.⁹⁰

In my opinion, the motives and responsibilities for the massacre could and should be examined more thoroughly and critically than has hitherto been the case, even if the available sources do not allow for conclusive answers. This concerns first the pressure of Portuguese settlers for "immediate action to be taken," already referred to in the discussion of assumption 3, and connected to this, the role of white officials and soldiers belonging to the settler community. The credibility of the retrospective testimonies of one such official will still be analyzed in the next section. And second, this also concerns the exact role of PIDE/DGS and Cachave and the significance of "internal" conflicts among the inhabitants of the Wiriyamu triangle.

In fact, the testimonies collected by Dhada can offer another layer of explanations that is only touched upon by him on the analytical level, and only really appears when one reads Dhada's book between the lines.⁹¹ This is about the role of what Stathis Kalyvas has called "intimate violence."⁹² In the preface to his 2016 monograph, Dhada pointed at the fact that some of these or similar information "was deliberately left under-explored for reasons of sensitivity."⁹³ I understand that, of course, and therefore do not want delve into it any further at this point. I would only like to note that the archival records also allow us to think more about possible divisions within the population of the Wiriyamu triangle and the possible implications of these divisions on the massacre. In particular, they indicate that not all inhabitants of the triangle were on FRELIMO's side and that some also had reasons to detest FRELIMO. For according to Portuguese sources, Chief Rego, one of

⁸⁸ Cabrita, *Massacres em África*, 251, 270; Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, 161.

⁸⁹ Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, xxi, 165.

⁹⁰ Dalila Cabrita Mateus, *Memórias do Colonialismo e da Guerra* (Porto: ASA, 2006), 653, footnote 165; Mateus, *A PIDE/DGS na Guerra Colonial 1964–1974*, 82–83.

⁹¹ Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, 64–65, 156–157, 163. See as well Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, 41–42, 73–74.

⁹² Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chap. 10.

⁹³ Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, xix.

two chiefs of the Wiriyamu triangle, had been abducted and killed by FRELIMO shortly before the massacre.⁹⁴

While the scattered information from Dhada about “intimate violence” could potentially reinforce the importance of the role of the PIDE/DGS agents Cachave and Kongorhogondo, the documents available in Portuguese archives can also offer evidence to question the alleged key role of PIDE/DGS and its “black villain” Cachave as central instigators and culprits of the massacre on the ground. After all, the report by PIDE/DGS quoted above clearly blamed the massacre on the troops, who acted against the express advice of PIDE/DGS. Certainly, one could—reading the report against the grain—interpret this as a deliberate strategy to blame the army and prophylactically distance oneself from the responsibility for the massacre. Indeed, PIDE/DGS had some reason to cast the army in a bad light, especially since General Káulza de Arriaga was not very popular with the secret police.⁹⁵

But there are also problems with such an interpretation. For, why then, did the military not defend itself against this alleged instrumentalization by PIDE/DGS? The internal investigations focus solely on the role of the army and mention the supposed key role of PIDE/DGS and Cachave with no word. Furthermore, Chico Cachave does not seem to have fallen out of favor with both PIDE/DGS and the military because of the role he played in the massacre. For when he was murdered by FRELIMO in August 1973 as an act of retaliation, PIDE/DGS was quick in mounting an operation to capture and kill his assassins and to take revenge on what they called a “nefarious crime.” According to a PIDE/DGS report, the unit that carried out the operation was constituted not only by 11 secret police agents but also by 14 soldiers, “promptly lent by [military] Sector ‘F’, which were yet voluntarily joined by Second Lieutenant L. as proof of esteem and friendship for Chico Cachave.”⁹⁶ Cachave was posthumously described as “as an element of great value, having given undoubted proof of dedication and fidelity to the Homeland, in very risky missions, from which he always came out satisfactorily” and as someone “who was often requested by [the Portuguese] troops to accompany them” because of being an “experienced connoisseur of the bush.”⁹⁷

⁹⁴ ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 12, f. 308–332: DGS/SUBT: Relatório de Situação N.º 21/72, 16 Nov. 1972, 22; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 13, f. 280–281: DGS SUBT: Relatório Imediato N.º 4446/72/DI/2/SC: FRELIMO: Actividades, 22 Dec. 1972; AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 8, f. 27–34: Tenente-Coronel Raúl Jorge Gonçalves Passos, “Informação N.º 189/P/73: Situação que deu origem à Operação Marosca e ocorrências verificadas,” 1 September 1973.

⁹⁵ Mateus, *A PIDE/DGS na Guerra Colonial 1964–1974*, 382.

⁹⁶ The name of the second lieutenant was abbreviated by the author. See ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 23, f. 320–322: DGS Moçambique: Informação N.º 4133/73/DI/2/SC: Tete Actividades das NF, 24 Aug. 1973, 2.

⁹⁷ ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 22, f. 29–30: DGS Moçambique: Informação N.º 4032/73/DI/2/SC: FRELIMO. Assassinato dum guarda prisional, 20 Aug. 1973.

Cachave might have himself covered his key role in the massacre, even fooling his superiors by misrepresenting what had happened.⁹⁸ However, many questions remain. Thus, in the military inquiry of September 1973, three survivors of the massacre of Chaworha claimed that all the Portuguese soldiers had been white with one or two exceptions. This information is also backed up by a survivor interviewed by Dhada, who claimed that they were “mostly white, with two blacks, fifteen in all.”⁹⁹ This is surprising evidence, as the 6.^a CCmds consisted mostly of black soldiers. While this alone might not automatically lessen Cachave’s responsibility, it does highlight the need to reflect on the significance of this possible over-representation of white soldiers.

In general, it appears to have been all too easy for the members of the 6.^a CCmds to retrospectively put the blame on the notoriously ill-famed PIDE/DGS and above all its dead agent Chico Cachave. It should also be considered that those who put together the initial accusations against the troops (and handed them to the Bishop of Tete) may equally have found it easier to place the blame on the black PIDE/DGS villain Chico Cachave instead of the white military commanders. One could also ask whether Cachave’s role was not overemphasized by the survivors from the very beginning as he and Kongorhogondo were the only ones they knew (by name)? This would, however, leave open the question, why they were not implicated by the survivors in the military inquiry of September 1973. Those interviewees mentioned the alleged key role of Cachave with no word.¹⁰⁰

In any case, it should be at least critically inquired why, considering both racial and military hierarchies, a black “guarda prisional” of PIDE/DGS should have been able to order white soldiers around and to drown out the plea for mercy of a military officer who, according to Cabrita Mateus, was even the commander of the assault operation? If Cachave really had such powers, Dhada should certainly reconsider the way he criticized Reis and Oliveira for the fact that they had analyzed the massacre of Wirihamu within the framework of civil war (their article had been published in the journal “Civil Wars”).¹⁰¹

As for the alleged key role of PIDE/DGS, it is noteworthy that the archival evidence points to the fact that PIDE/DGS, contrary to intuition, was apparently not among the principal actors voting for a hard line. On the contrary, it was the director of the Mozambican branch of PIDE/DGS who called on the military for “a very careful action in prevention or repression so as not to cause adverse impacts among the populations”¹⁰² despite the growing

⁹⁸ This has, for example, been suggested by José Aparício, the Portuguese commander of the operation. See CECA, *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África*, Vol. 6: *Aspectos da Actividade Operacional*, Tomo III: *Moçambique*, Livro II, 328.

⁹⁹ Dhada, *The Wirihamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, 73.

¹⁰⁰ One clue to this might be that the interpreter was sent by PIDE/DGS.

¹⁰¹ For Dhada’s criticism against Reis and Oliveira, see especially Dhada, “The Wirihamu Massacre of 1972: Response to Reis and Oliveira,” 555.

¹⁰² ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 29, f. 18–24: DGS Moçambique: Informação N.º 1/73/DI/IS, Lourenço Marques 1 Jun. 1973, 7. Similarly, PIDE/DGS seems to

troubles in Tete around that time. And an agent from the same PIDE/DGS called for modesty in arresting “traditional authorities” who were supporting FRELIMO out of the *aldeamentos* in Cabo Delgado “in order to not enter into a repressive phase that could have counterproductive effects.”¹⁰³

Interestingly, it was also sub-inspector Sabino (head of the PIDE/DGS delegation in Tete) who stood up for not arresting Domingo Ferrão when the Portuguese civil governor and military commander of Tete, Brigadier-General Rocha Simões, pressed him to do so about one year before the massacre of Wiriyamu, deeming the evidence that would justify Ferrão’s detention still insufficient from a legal point of view and arguing that it was necessary to await superior orders.¹⁰⁴ Of course, we cannot know with complete certainty whether Sabino’s action was really primarily guided by legal considerations.¹⁰⁵ But regardless of this question, it was the head of the PIDE/DGS delegation of Tete who resisted the immediate imprisonment of the future author of the report that would become so decisive in making the massacre of Wiriyamu internationally known. And he did so against the more repressive wishes of the military general. The intention of these observations is not to whitewash PIDE/DGS, but to highlight the importance of empirically based research in the face of the lure of seductive intuitions. Regarding mainland Portugal, Duncan Simpson has recently shown that the relation between society and PIDE/DGS was more complex and interactive than the traditional narrative of top-down violence and repression has it.¹⁰⁶ In my view, research on the war in Mozambique would also benefit from a more

have still favoured the psychological approach even after the protests for a harder line by the population of Beira. See ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 30, f. 285–289; DGS Moçambique: Informação N.º 2/74/DI/IS: Acontecimentos da Beira, Lourenço Marques 26 Jan. 1974.

¹⁰³ ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 29, f. 32–38; DGS Moçambique: Análise da Situação Geral CDelgado, 16 Jan. 1974, 6–7.

¹⁰⁴ ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 3, f. 276–277; DGS Moçambique: Informação N.º 3059/71/DI/2/SC: Atitudes inconvenientes Dist. de Tete, 19 Oct. 1971; ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 4, f. 268–269; DGS Moçambique: Informação N.º 114/71/DI/2/SI-GG: Detenção de sacerdotes católicos indiciados por actividades contra a segurança do estado, Lourenço Marques 29 Oct. 1971.

¹⁰⁵ However, there is evidence that this was indeed the case. For, a PIDE/DGS report from February 1972 described Ferrão’s presence in Tete as being “highly inconvenient in a zone so sensitive as the one of Tete” considering his hostility against the Portuguese colonial politics. The report stated that “the solution of his case is being studied.” This clearly indicates that even PIDE/DGS felt bound to follow at least certain legal principles. See ANTT, SC-CI(2) GU, cx. 6, f. 48–58; Relatório Periódico de Informações – Grupo V: Político – Religiosas, Lourenço Marques 28 Feb. 1972, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Duncan Simpson, “The PIDE Between Memory and History: Revolutionary Tradition, Historiography, and the Missing Dimension in the Relation Between Society and Salazar’s Political Police,” *E-Journal of Portuguese History* 18–1 (2020), 17–38.

open-ended analysis of the complex relations between PIDE/DGS, the military, and society.

Assumption V: The Commander of the Assault Operation Was Just a Cog in the Wheel

The archival records allow us to not only cast doubt on the key role of PIDE/DGS and its agent Chico Cachave, but also to call into question parts of the oral recollections of the massacre by Portuguese soldiers. This applies in particular to the statements by António Melo, the commander of the 6.^a CCmds and son of Portuguese settlers, who has not only shown public remorse but also willingly shared his memories with journalists and scholars.¹⁰⁷

In my opinion, Dhada and others have accepted Melo's recollections too uncritically. Reis and Oliveira have rightly highlighted that his claim that "he had orders to 'kill everyone'" do "not fit entirely smoothly" with other evidence.¹⁰⁸ And as already pointed out earlier, his recollections of Portuguese soldiers being trained to be cold killers barely correspond to the reality of Portuguese warfare of that time. Nevertheless (or because of that), his testimonies have played an important role in Dhada's reconstruction of the sequence of the massacre. Dhada also follows him in stating that the briefing for the operation took place early in the morning of the first day of the operation.¹⁰⁹ However, the report of Operation Marosca and the timeline of the operation show that there was not only one briefing for the operation but three and all of them took place on the day before the operation. According to the documents, Melo must have been present at two of them, one at 13.30 and another at 18.30. The second meeting was also the occasion on which both material and the guides of PIDE/DGS were allocated to the different combat units.¹¹⁰

It is possible that Melo did not intentionally misrepresent the facts. In the end, it seems to be quite impossible to have unfiltered memories of the details of the course of an operation that happened more than 20 years earlier (Melo was interviewed by Dhada first in 1995 and then a second time in 2014).¹¹¹ But, it seems improbable that the internal documents of the operation mis-recorded his presence at the meeting.¹¹² In any case, the archival record allows

¹⁰⁷ See especially Felícia Cabrita, *Massacres em África*, 245–282.

¹⁰⁸ Reis and Oliveira, "Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts," 94.

¹⁰⁹ Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyaamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, 161; Dhada, *The Wiriyaamu Massacre*, 49.

¹¹⁰ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 89, N.º 6: Anexo A (Fita de Tempo) ao Rel OP N.º. 05/72, Tete 21 Dec. 1972; AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 89, N.º 6: BCaç 17: Relatório de Acção N.º. 05/72.

¹¹¹ Even though this was certainly no usual day as Melo at times seems to imply.

¹¹² His presence was also confirmed in retrospect by his superior José Aparício. See AHMil, CECA, 20.900/073/0003.

us to take a more critical look at whether Melo's testimony about the beginning of the operation does not fit too well with a self-portrayal as a cog in the wheel who received his orders unprepared and at short notice. It is also noteworthy in this respect that, according to a PIDE/DGS report, the witnesses who had informed PIDE/DGS about Wiriyamu's collaboration with FRELIMO had been handed over by PIDE/DGS to the 6.^a CCmds already on 5 December 1972 in order to explore their knowledge, ten days before the operation.¹¹³

The written record also casts doubt on how Melo recalled the way his role in the massacre was investigated by the Portuguese authorities. In his conversations with Dhada, he stated that he was once called to Nampula to be questioned by a Portuguese military officer but claimed to be no longer "clear about the details of this interrogation."¹¹⁴ Dhada used Melo's statement to suggest that Melo and other possible perpetrators of the massacre never underwent in-depth questioning by the Portuguese military.¹¹⁵ However, Brigadier Nunes da Silva interrogated several officials and soldiers as part of his investigation. Whether these interrogations can be called in-depth questioning remains debatable. But in any case, da Silva's report reveals that Melo was not called to Nampula simply to provide information about Operation Marosca, but that he was in fact interrogated as a suspect.¹¹⁶ After his initial investigations in Tete, da Silva had reached the conclusion that there were indications that some "elements" of the troops had committed acts that could be considered murder under Article 349 and those that follow of the Portuguese penal code. As noted above, he thus turned his investigation into a judicial inquiry ("auto de corpo de delito") with two "presumed delinquents."¹¹⁷ Melo was one of them. We can doubt that Melo really had no more detailed recollection of this judicial inquiry against him.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ ANTT, PIDE, SC, CI(2), GU, cx. 13, f. 481–483; DGS Moçambique: Relatório Imediato N.º 4329/72/DI/2/SC: FRELIMO: Redutos IN, 3.

¹¹⁴ Dhada, *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974*, 57.

¹¹⁵ Dhada, *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013*, 161.

¹¹⁶ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 8: Henrique Nunes da Silva, "Auto de corpo de delito dos presumidos delinquentes no processo Chawola o que deu origem à Operação 'Marosca,'" f. 103–106.

¹¹⁷ AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 8: Henrique Nunes da Silva, "Auto de corpo de delito dos presumidos delinquentes no processo Chawola o que deu origem à Operação 'Marosca,'" f. 98–99. See as well CECA, *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro II*, 333.

¹¹⁸ The interview protocol bears Melo's signature (or what claims to be his signature). See AHMil, DIV/2/7, Cx. 155, n.º 8: Henrique Nunes da Silva, "Auto de corpo de delito dos presumidos delinquentes no processo Chawola o que deu origem à Operação 'Marosca,'" f. 106.

Da Silva's investigation was doubtlessly superficial and biased in different respects. Neither the fact that Melo was considered a "presumed delinquent" nor the fact that the investigation was ultimately discontinued therefore allow any safe conclusions about Melo's possible personal responsibility for the massacre. It might be that Melo, who was just 21 years old at the time of the massacre, was indeed only a cog in the wheel with limited agency, following "superior orders." But that should not prevent us from reading his statements critically and from locating his place in the wheel correctly. The archival records undoubtedly help us in doing so.

Conclusion

This article has shown that the massacre of Wiri Yamu is not as absent from Portuguese archives as has been claimed. It has tried to demonstrate how the archival records allow us to challenge or complicate five assumptions about the massacre. The archives hold yet more material that can be valuable in further examining the complexities of the massacre.

Still, there is no doubt that archival documents have their definite limits when it comes to reconstructing many other aspects of the massacre. The archives are indeed silent about the victims. As far as I can tell from these sources, the Portuguese forces were not interested in the names and lives of the massacre's victims. Survivors and relatives were obviously left alone with their fates and traumas. Moreover, Portuguese sources tell us little about the details of the killings or what Dhada has called "the anatomy of the massacre." And even the highest Portuguese tally of those killed still deviates considerably from that found in Ferrão's or Dhada's reconstruction.

The goal of this article is, then, also not to play off different types of sources against each other, but to argue how a combination of these can expand our knowledge and improve our analyses of different types of sources. In a rare point of criticism of Dhada's book, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo has argued that Dhada's book has embraced an overly "unrestrained confidence in the heuristic potential of oral history and the revelatory powers of ethnographic fieldwork."¹¹⁹ This article hopes to have shown how the potential of oral history could be better and more critically exploited by the inclusion of archival sources. This also applies for the often disregarded archives of PIDE/DGS. Critically read, they offer a rich fund for the analysis of the history of the independence wars in lusophone Africa.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, "Mustafah Dhada. The Portuguese Massacre of Wiri Yamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013," *The American Historical Review* 122–3 (2017), 967–968, 968.

¹²⁰ On this point, see as well the recent comments by Helder Adegar Fonseca, *Agostinho Neto and Biographical Historiography* (Beau Bassin: Lambert, 2020), 38–40.

The ignorance of relevant sources can hardly be in our interest if we are truly concerned with microhistorical complexity. Certainly, it is part of our job as historians that we risk missing important sources that might call into question our well-assembled interpretations. Still, given the fact that there are numerous (primary) references to Wiriyamu, we can guess that previous scholarship did not find them because they did not really expect to find them. The main message of this article is thus to read the archives first before thinking about reading them against or along the grain.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Pedro Cerdeira, Moritz Feichtinger, Christian Gerlach, Christian Hadorn, Lena Joos, Alexander Keese, and two anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions and comments on earlier versions of this paper. My thanks also go to the Field Work Expenses Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Bern, which contributed to the funding of the research trips necessary for this article.

Andreas Zeman is a postdoc at the University of Geneva (Switzerland). He holds a PhD in history from the University of Bern (2019). In his thesis, he examined the history of a small village on the Mozambican shore of Lake Malawi from the time of its formation in the 19th century up to the present day.

References

- Amaro, José, and José Fortunato (eds.), *Massacres na guerra colonial: Tete, um exemplo* (Lisboa: Ulmeiro, 1976).
- Anderson, David M., “Mau Mau in the High Court and the ‘Lost’ British Empire Archives: Colonial Conspiracy or Bureaucratic Bungle?,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39–5 (2011), 699–716.
- , “Guilty Secrets: Deceit, Denial, and the Discovery of Kenya’s ‘Migrated Archive,’” *History Workshop Journal* 80–1 (2015), 142–160.
- Branch, Daniel. *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- Cabrita, Felícia. *Massacres em África*. Lisboa: Esfera dos livros, 2008.
- Cahen, Michel, “Do ultramar ao pós-colonial. Reflexões de um historiador sobre Moçambique contemporâneo nos arquivos de Portugal e Moçambique.” *Práticas de História. Journal of Theory, Historiography, and Uses of the Past* 10 (2020), 249–267.
- Dhada, Mustafah, “The Liberation War in Guinea-Bissau Reconsidered,” *The Journal of Military History* 62–3 (1998), 571–593.
- , “The Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972: Its Context, Genesis, and Revelation,” *History in Africa* 40–1 (2013), 45–75.
- , “The Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972: Response to Reis and Oliveira,” *Civil Wars* 15–4 (2013), 551–558.
- , *The Portuguese Massacre of Wiriyamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).
- , *The Wiriyamu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

- , “The Wiri Yamu Massacre,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2021).
- Elkins, Caroline, “Looking beyond Mau Mau: Archiving Violence in the Era of Decolonization,” *The American Historical Review* 120–3 (2015), 852–868.
- Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África (CECA), *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 4: Dispositivo das Nossas Forças Moçambique* (Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 1989).
- , *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro I* (Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 2012).
- , *Resenha Histórico-Militar das Campanhas de África, Vol. 6: Aspectos da Actividade Operacional, Tomo III: Moçambique, Livro II* (Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 2012).
- Feichtinger, Moritz, “‘Villagization’: A People’s History of Strategic Resettlement and Violent Transformation, Kenya & Algeria, 1952–1962,” PhD dissertation, Universität Bern (Bern, 2016).
- Feichtinger, Moritz, and Stephan Malinowski, “‘Eine Million Algerier lernen im 20. Jahrhundert zu leben’. Umsiedlungslager und Zwangsmodernisierung im Algerienkrieg 1954–1962,” *Journal of Modern European History* 8–1 (2010), 107–135.
- Fonseca, Helder Adegar, *Agostinho Neto and Biographical Historiography* (Beau Bassin: Lambert, 2020).
- Fowler, Simon, “Enforced Silences,” in Thomas, David, Fowler, Simon, and Johnson, Valerie (eds.), *The Silence of the Archive* (London: Facet, 2017), 1–40.
- Funada-Classen, Sayaka, *The Origins of War in Mozambique: A History of Unity and Division* (Somerset West: African Minds, 2013).
- Hack, Karl, “‘Devils that suck the blood of the Malayan People’: The Case for Post-Revisionist Analysis of Counter-insurgency Violence,” *War in History* 25–2 (2018), 202–226.
- Hall, Margaret, and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence* (London: Hurst, 1997).
- Jerónimo, Miguel Bandeira, “Mustafah Dhada. The Portuguese Massacre of Wiri Yamu in Colonial Mozambique, 1964–2013,” *The American Historical Review* 122–3 (2017), 967–968.
- , “A Robust Operation: Resettling, Security, and Development in Late Colonial Angola (1960s–1970s),” *Itinerario* 44–1 (2020): 55–79.
- Kalyvas, Stathis, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Keese, Alexander, and Brice I. Owabira, “Rescuing, Interpreting, and, Eventually, Digitizing Regional Postcolonial Archives: Endangered Archives and Research in Pointe-Noire, Republic of Congo,” *History in Africa* 47 (2020), 143–165.
- Keese, Alexander, “Forced Labour in the ‘Gorgulho Years’: Understanding Reform and Repression in Rural São Tomé e Príncipe, 1945–1953,” *Itinerario* 38–1 (2014): 103–124.
- , “‘Proteger os pretos’: Havia uma mentalidade reformista na administração Portuguesa na África Tropical (1926–1961)?” *Africana Studia* 6 (2003): 97–125.
- Mateus, Dalila Cabrita, *A PIDE/DGS na Guerra Colonial 1964–1974*, 2nd edn. (Lisboa: Terramar, 2011[2004]).
- , *Memórias do Colonialismo e da Guerra* (Porto: ASA, 2006).

- Mendy, Peter Karibe, *Amílcar Cabral: A Nationalist and Pan-Africanist Revolutionary* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019)
- Morier-Genoud, Eric, “Wiriyaumu: atrocidade por esclarecer?,” *Savana* (1 June 2012), 11.
- Neves, Joao-Manuel, “Portuguese Fascism’s Genocidal Strategy in Mozambique: The Zambezi River South Bank in the Early-Mid 1970s,” *Interventions* 25–2 (2023), 192–215.
- Penvenne, Jeanne, “Foreword,” in Mustafah Dhada, *The Wiriyaumu Massacre: An Oral History, 1960–1974* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), xi–xvii.
- Reis, Bruno Cardoso, and Pedro Aires Oliveira, “Cutting Heads or Winning Hearts: Late Colonial Portuguese Counterinsurgency and the Wiriyaumu Massacre of 1972,” *Civil Wars* 14–1 (2012), 80–103.
- , “Reply to Mustafah Dhada,” *Civil Wars* 15–4 (2013), 559–562.
- Simpson, Duncan, “The PIDE Between Memory and History: Revolutionary Tradition, Historiography, and the Missing Dimension in the Relation Between Society and Salazar’s Political Police,” *E-Journal of Portuguese History* 18–1 (2020), 17–38.
- Stoler, Ann Laura, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
- Zeman, Andreas, “Caught Between the Guerrilla and the Colonial State: Refugee Life in Northern Mozambique During the Independence War (1964–1974).” In Gerlach, Christian (ed.), *On the Social History of Persecution* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023), 115–138.
- , *The Winds of History: Life in a Rural Corner of Africa Since the 19th Century* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, forthcoming 2023).