

Peace and Contemporary war in Mozambican Rap Performance

Based on my engagement with Mozambican Hip Hop communities over the past decade, this paper examines rap music, addressing two separate contemporary wars in Mozambique with very different dynamics but sharing social and political exclusion of local people as one of their root causes. For two decades, post-civil war (1976-1992)/post-Cold War Mozambique was celebrated as a success story of international co-operation and peace building. This came to end in 2013 when former civil war parties ended up in a new armed conflict in two central region provinces—a conflict that is still not adequately resolved. In 2017, the situation became even more sinister when a brutal jihadist insurgency started in impoverished but natural-resource-rich northern region. Over the last decade, a number of songs have been published addressing different dynamics of these two conflicts, performing their histories or trying to contribute to stopping them. Acknowledging that many Mozambican rappers who comment on these conflicts in their performances belong to the same generation as those jihadist insurgents whose local vernacular designation is 'alshababi' (from 'youth' in Arabic), this paper aims to focus on different perspectives on contemporary war and the promotion of peace through rap tracks from three Mozambican regions. Expanding the temporal scope, the paper also reflects on how many of these tracks perform histories which precede the contemporary conflicts, invoking political ancestors and dead personas who lived in earlier periods, but which remain significant in the present-day.

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