

‘Money has More Weight than the Man’: Masculinities in the Marriages of Angolan War Veterans

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Abstract This article discusses how male Angolan war veterans navigated the sudden shift from the rigours of military discipline to life in a civilian society they no longer recognised, where money had become a dominant social value. Based on a year of participant observation and interviews with war veterans in the city of Huambo, it traces their life histories and their post-war struggles to develop the necessary creativity and initiative to make a profit in a disordered, war-torn economy, where masculine status and authority had come to depend crucially on monetary income. I analyse their reaction to the crumbling of the relative certainties of the patriarchal orders of both pre-war society and military life, and the associated anxieties around living up to a senior masculine archetype of the wise, authoritative provider whilst attempting to ensure that their wives’ behaviour conformed to the family model that accompanies this archetype.

1 Introduction

Development programmes focusing on masculinities have often been criticised for focusing too much on seeking to change the attitudes and behaviour of men at the individual level, rather than seeking to change the broader structural basis of gender inequalities and power relations. As Chris Dolan argues, such programmes are intended to support gender equality by transforming oppressive attitudes, but can involve development organisations demanding enormous courage from male ‘beneficiaries’ to perform non-normative masculinities, whilst not themselves having the courage to push for the broader societal changes that are needed to support them (Dolan 2011).

To understand how development programmes could support such change, it is necessary to understand how men adopt and adapt particular ways of being a man at the individual and community level, and how this process is shaped by broader social forces (Greig 2009). Such an analysis needs to take account of how these forces criss-cross men’s lives in the form of intersecting axes of inequality, such as class, race, sexual orientation and so on, since gender identities are always inflected with other forms

of difference. As such, attempts to change them need to take account of this complexity. Studied in this way, masculinities can be a tool to uncover the workings of power and ‘the sediments of gender within’ (Cornwall *et al.* 2011: 10).

This article explores how and why a group of Angolan government war veterans take up certain masculine subject positions, particularly *vis-à-vis* their wives, in present day Huambo city, based on a year of participant observation and life history interviewing. I contextualise the study within their individual life histories, examining how these histories have been shaped by broader changing social contexts, which have informed their expectations, hopes and desires about the sort of men they aspire to be, whilst also constraining their options in this regard.

I particularly focus on the confluence of economics, identity and power, arguing that the take-up of senior masculine subject positions required securing the cooperation of their spouses in playing the supporting role of obedient and faithful wife. Complex socioeconomic change brought on by the war made men’s ability to secure this cooperation crucially dependent on the generation of monetary income. The

unpredictability of this income provoked intense anxieties amongst these men about their ability to generate income reliably, an anxiety which, I argue, was simultaneously about their continued exercise of power over significant others, and about their identity as senior men. They feared that their wives might use their husbands' income irresponsibly, publicly shame them or start earning more than them, or even leave them for a richer man, because this could lead to several identity-related losses: they would publicly be seen to fail as an authoritative husband, capable father and respected member of their church community.

2 Subject positions and gender discourses

It has often been noted that work on masculinities can inadvertently naturalise gender binaries by associating 'masculinities' exclusively with 'men', thus reinforcing patriarchal norms. There is also a danger, pointed out by Barker *et al.* (2011), of creating false dichotomies between, say, violent and non-violent men, and thus failing to recognise the complexity of positions that people may take up.

To attempt to avoid these two pitfalls, I follow Henrietta Moore (1994) in using the concept of individual subjects taking up different gendered 'subject positions' in different discourses, positions that are always multiple and may often be contradictory. This means that selves are not singular, but multiply constituted through 'investments' individuals make, consciously and unconsciously, in subject positions throughout their lives. Subjects invest in certain gendered subject positions according to the pleasures, satisfactions and rewards promised by that subject position. Such rewards are not a matter of free choice, however, as they can only be understood in the context of institutionalised discourses and sanctioned modes of subjectivity, and also depend on emotional and subconscious motivations. Dominant institutionalised discourses offer tangible rewards or sanctions for constructing oneself as different types of person, and so investments are both a matter of emotional commitment and the promise of social and economic advantages or disadvantages. Such investments are also not just about self-identity, but also about taking up a relational identity, and thus involve maintaining certain relationships with significant others. Ways of being a gendered subject are thus bound up with power relations and economic structures from the most intimate level to national and global levels of society.

This framework, then, provides scope for analysing the complexity of gender identifications that individual men may make, and the power relations with significant others that this involves – the level at which many development interventions are targeted. However, it also allows us to analyse how these identifications are bound up with broader socioeconomic processes and the gendered subject positions that institutionalised discourses make available to the men and women involved, and the rewards and sanctions that men may face for failing to conform to patriarchal norms, or for choosing not to.

In the next section I will briefly explain the context of my research. In sections 4 and 5 I will describe the main aspects of these veterans' pre-military and military lives, concentrating on the aspects that were most important in forming their expectations and desires about the kind of men they would like to be after demobilisation and in the present. The sixth section will describe the new structural context in which they found themselves after demobilisation and their struggles to adapt to a life of commerce. The seventh section will link this context to the everyday struggles and anxieties of these men's relationships with their wives and how this impacts on their ability to take up senior male subject positions in a variety of contexts. The final section concludes.

3 Angola's civil war

Three main independence movements in Angola, a large country on the coast of west-central Africa, fought an insurgent war against Portuguese rule that lasted more than a decade. These were the Frente Nacional para a Libertação de Angola (FNLA), the Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola (MPLA) and the União para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA). By the time independence finally arrived in 1975, these movements were already fighting amongst themselves for control of the country. The FNLA was soon defeated and disappeared as a military force, but the MPLA with Cuban and Soviet assistance seized control of Luanda and fought UNITA, who had South African and US assistance, until 1991. After abortive elections in 1992 the MPLA and UNITA returned to war, now without their Cold War allies, until UNITA was defeated in 2002.

In 2012 I spent a year in Huambo, the largest city on Angola's central plateau (*planalto*), doing fieldwork for my PhD thesis in Anthropology. I conducted participant observation with around 50 men, about 20 of whom were civil war veterans, mainly socialising with them in the markets where they worked, but also in their neighbourhoods, churches and leisure activities. I also conducted life history interviews with 25 of them.

4 Pre-army life (c.1968–83)

4.1 Economic life

Generations of men from Angola's *planalto* region fought in the armed forces of different movements during the country's civil war. However, I will focus in this article on a generation of men who fought for the MPLA government army and who had left the army by 1992. Most of my informants of this generation were born in the late 1960s and grew up in the countryside, in the turbulent final years of Portuguese rule and early years of the civil war. They generally recall this time as one of hardship and privation when they would often 'go to bed hungry', although the viability of subsistence agriculture meant that there was a reliable supply of food to at least meet basic needs. Several of my informants' fathers had salaried employment with either the colonial government, or with state-run enterprises, and this income was usually supplemented with subsistence agriculture. According to my informants, it was expected at this time that women would work in subsistence agriculture,¹ and any monetary income was generally earned by their husband.

My informants all grew up in government- (rather than UNITA-) controlled areas, where the economy was strictly controlled according to socialist principles, and the only legal shops were operated by the state. This meant that it was difficult to engage in informal trading, since it was both illegal and there were legal limits to the amount of goods each person could buy from government shops.

4.2 'Umbundu' institutions

Two 'traditional'² institutions of long standing played important roles in the early lives of my informants, enforcing an age hierarchy with strict discipline and making initiated and especially older men the repositories of privileged knowledge. One of these institutions was the

ondjango, a round hut, usually in the centre of a village, where the male elders would meet to recount traditional stories and myths, while young boys listened. As one informant said, 'there you would find the elders, talking to the younger people, giving them judgement, how they should live their lives, how you should respect the elders'. So the *ondjango* was intended to give boys wisdom in conducting themselves in society and to instil respect for elder men. It was also a place of mutual help, where 'food always arrived', so that orphaned or poor children would not go hungry.

Another important institution was the traditional circumcision ritual (*evamba*), which almost all of my informants underwent. This ritual involved a group of boys of around ten years old going out into an area of the bush far removed from the village, to be circumcised 'in cold blood' – without anaesthetic. The group would stay out in the bush until every boy's wounds had healed – a time of enforced hardship and strict discipline that could last three months, during which time they were not allowed to see anyone outside their circumcision cohort. This separation from close kin and the severe discipline in the bush were seen as signifying the symbolic death of the boy, and at the end of the period of seclusion, their rebirth as men. 'It was an educative process, it would change your thinking, you would be mature', one informant said. It was essential to being *um homem considerado* – a man worthy of respect – another said, rather than 'apathetic', and to being permitted to have sexual relationships with women. These and other institutions, then, gave my informants the expectation of gradually accruing respect as increasingly authoritative and wise older men, as they passed through various life stages such as being circumcised, getting married and having children.

4.3 The churches

There were two well-established churches in the *planalto* in this period – the Catholic church and the Congregationalist church. These churches were key routes to social mobility for black Angolans for much of the colonial period, as the education provided in mission schools could be a route to *assimilado* ('assimilated') status, which meant not being subject to onerous colonial labour laws and being considered part of the colonial elite (Newitt 2007). On the *planalto*, Congregationalist missions in particular also

provided a space for a measure of political autonomy from the colonial state (Heywood 2000).

The parents of all but one of my informants counted themselves as belonging to one or other of these two churches. Most of my informants attended church when they were children, but for most of them faith does not seem to have been a strong orienting factor in their young life. Nevertheless, these churches were greatly influential in *planalto* society at that time, and were opposed to the initiation rituals, considering them as pagan and ‘uncivilised’. This point of view was influential, and three of my informants who were committed Catholics from a young age were circumcised in hospital rather than in the bush. Churches to some extent seem to have represented, and still represent, a route to senior masculinity that emphasises monogamous, companionate marriage, regular church attendance, publicly demonstrated piety and knowledge of the Bible or the Catholic catechism.

5 Army life (c.1983–92)

The youth of these men was brought to an abrupt end when they were recruited by the army, and they were transferred to a radically different social world. As the MPLA government’s war against UNITA and their South African allies began to intensify, recruitment was stepped up by the government army (the *Forças Armadas Populares para a Libertação de Angola* or FAPLA). Most of my informants were forcibly recruited before the age of 18, with army recruiters making decisions based on boys’ physical size rather than their age. Their education was suddenly interrupted, and, according to official policy, they were sent away to other regions of Angola to fight in order to make it difficult for them to desert and return home. After three months of training in basic combat drills, how to use a rifle and the importance of respecting superiors, new recruits were selected for training in a specialism, or sent right away to fight in the infantry.

A common theme in these veterans’ accounts of their time in the army is the difficulty of adjusting to life under the harsh regime of military discipline. As one veteran recalled, ‘in the army, a small thing, a really small thing, and they would give you a punishment... three days of forced work [in the guard post], sometimes without the right to lunch’. Superior officers’

authority had to be rigidly respected, and duties carried out successfully, or punishment would range from forced labour, to leg-breaking and summary execution for serious failures or infractions. On the other hand, during the 1980s, if soldiers were following orders a decent supply of food was usually provided to them, which gave them an advantage over most civilians. One informant described how some civilian women were compelled to exchange food for sex with soldiers in order to feed themselves and their families. In addition, several veterans recounted how soldiers were able to steal from civilians to supplement their army rations, being considered by many to be above the law, despite the threat of discipline from senior officers.

In this period, soldiers generally lived separately from civilian society and their families for many years. This meant that key life projects of getting married and having children were delayed for long periods, and their chances of completing their education seriously prejudiced. Soldiers were forbidden from practising religion, with a well-known FAPLA slogan being ‘God is your rifle’ (*Deus é arma*), and so religious recruits were limited to furtive private prayer. Casualty rates were often very high in FAPLA tactical groups, and many recruits were killed, disabled or disfigured during their service. All of my informants spoke of the suffering that they underwent as being part of their service to their fatherland, considering it as part of a contract with the state, which they expected in return to look after them upon demobilisation.

6 Demobilisation and civilian life (c.1992–the present)

6.1 War-induced socioeconomic change

In May 1991 the Bicesse Accords brought a temporary halt to hostilities, paving the way for Angola’s first democratic elections in 1992. By this point most of my informants had left the army. Some were officially demobilised in 1991, and others had either deserted or been seriously injured and demobilised on grounds of physical disability in the previous decade. They returned to a drastically changed social and economic setting, with corresponding changes in institutionalised gender discourses. A war principally waged in the countryside had meant mass, rapid urbanisation, fragmenting broader kinship groups and village communities, and severely curtailing agricultural activities. In

addition, the MPLA government provided very little assistance to civilians (Messiant 2008), leaving them to survive on their own wits in an unforgiving and unpredictable war economy undergoing liberalisation (Birmingham 2002).

This had a number of important consequences. Firstly, it left families relying on informal trading to survive, dependent for produce on armed convoys making the perilous journey from the coast, putting both products and traders' lives in great danger, or on even more perilous journeys on foot over long distances. Secondly, the absence of many men and the unviability of agriculture meant that women were now involved in earning money to support their families. Thirdly, the impoverishment brought on by the war meant that solidarity networks beyond close family members were significantly weakened, since there was 'nothing left over for lending a hand' (Robson and Roque 2001).

Finally, the fragmentation of rural communities and limited urban space meant that the *ondjango* gradually ceased to exist. The danger of spending time in the countryside meant that the circumcision ritual also went into steep decline in the 1980s. Correspondingly, the practice of mutual help also waned, as did the old age and gender hierarchies based on the authority and privileged knowledge of older men. All this made for a particularly unforgiving social environment. As one informant told me, screwing up his face, 'when civilian life came, tcha! That was suffering!'

6.2 Money, consumerism and the corruption of social values

My informants had to some extent embraced this new socioeconomic setting by the time I met them in 2012. After the war ended, they began cultivating subsistence crops in their home villages to fulfil basic nutritional requirements and ease some of the pressure to earn money, and importing goods became much easier. However, they still lived in the city and poked fun at the lack of education and perceived disconnectedness from national and international society of rural residents, who they now termed *matumbos* (country bumpkins), and *burros* (dumb people, literally 'donkeys') who needed people from the city to go and educate them in the ways of the modern world. Some also clearly aspired to possess consumer status symbols such as smartphones, cars and designer clothes and

sunglasses, that have become increasingly important since liberalisation, and particularly since the end of the war. Money is thus seen as a way to demonstrate status and a possible path of social advancement.

Yet these men also regularly lamented the social changes that the monetisation of the economy, war and urbanisation had provoked. Attaining sufficient wealth to be able to live a life of ostentatious wealth seemed impossible to them, and the rise of money's social value offered them many more threats than opportunities, corrupting social values of solidarity and mutual help, and undermining old gender and age hierarchies. Urbanisation had, they said, made wealth disparities in Angolan society more visible than they had been before, provoking *inveja* (envy) in poorer people, who turned to unscrupulous, anti-social means to enrich themselves: 'Angolans don't see people', one informant told me, 'they just see money'. The love of money was held to have corrupted every part of the state, from politicians to judges, policemen and low-level bureaucrats, making money essential to protect oneself from predation and coercion by state agents.

The nefarious influence of money, seen as literally Satanic by my more religious informants, was seen to sully even the most seemingly sacred of relations. Priests and pastors were often accused of hypocrisy for driving expensive cars while their congregations languished, and hospitals were bitterly criticised for allegedly paying blood donors only \$60 per litre of blood, and then selling it to desperate patients for \$200.

6.3 Starting a business

Rafael was a logistics officer, and had been transferred back to Huambo, his home city, to work at the airport, shortly before the Bicesse Accords were signed:

So, I demobilised. I was at home. In 1993 war erupted [again] here in the province of Huambo... In the end our brothers in UNITA retook the province of Huambo... [T]he situation started to get complicated. Especially concerning food. Only our wives could do business, us men couldn't, they [UNITA] wouldn't accept us walking around. But after a while I saw that the situation was really terrible. Always relying on your woman won't do... Later I asked God, because really, a person always relying on a woman, that just wouldn't work.

Rafael's account illustrates how many veterans reacted to the transformed society that they returned to. They were often desperate to work, partly because their families were struggling to survive, but also because relying on their wives for support was an affront to their status and authority as men. These twin pressures were such that some men were willing to risk imprisonment and execution by UNITA forces, rather than hide at home.

Rafael eventually managed to start a successful business selling plastic bags, but for many veterans the transition was more difficult. One of them is Rafael's market colleague, João:

[The transition to civilian life] was difficult, because my ideal life was the military life... Ever since I was a child I'd been a soldier... In the army, housing and food was provided by the state. Every month you would be given something, and even though it wasn't much... But now life gives me problems, because everything depends on me.

The transition from the harsh but stable military hierarchy to the more fluid and unstable life of commerce was cited by many of my informants as particularly difficult. I heard many tales of veterans who were so used to receiving from the state and stealing from civilians, that they 'didn't have the head' for business, and ended up begging or scavenging for food.

Those veterans who have managed to create a sustainable business nevertheless live with constant uncertainty. They cannot guarantee a continuous stream of customers, and lack the capital to invest in more established businesses. Most of my informants expressed deep anxiety about their 'unstable' lives, and about the constant need to improvise in order to earn enough money to support their families. As we have seen, monetary income was not just essential for economic survival in the absence of a communal safety net, but also for social status, healthcare and protection from a predatory state. One of the greatest causes of these men's anxiety and frustration, however, was how monetary income and its management played out in their relationships with their spouses.

7 Love and money

These men were taught as children to show respect and deference to elder men, and they

expected their own wisdom and authority to gradually accrue over their lifetimes. Although the traditional institutions and the economic setting that supported these aspirations had all but disappeared, the taking-up of senior masculine subject positions still relied crucially on being seen to be a capable provider for one's family, and able to exercise authority over one's wife and children. Therefore, taking up such a position relied crucially on husbands being able to secure their wives' cooperation in this respect. However, these veterans found their ability to exercise this control was threatened in a number of different ways, creating a fear of what Moore refers to as 'thwarting': the inability to sustain a gendered subject position, leading to a crisis of self-identity or social evaluation (Moore 1994).

At times, most of my informants spoke of how economic cooperation with their wives worked fairly well. They would generally share household expenditure, with men having a greater focus on planning for larger expenditures over the long term, and they might lend money to one another when needed for investment in new products to sell. Yet most of them also saw a number of potential dangers that the question of money and its use might pose. A common concern was that women might use men's income irresponsibly and endanger family survival. Eduardo, for example, a 49-year-old veteran who made a living selling electrical fittings, angrily recounted the story of his ex-wife. He might give her money for safekeeping, or for some household purchase, 'but she would think, "Oh, my husband's given me some money", and go and spend it on something pretty!' So when the family ran out of money before the end of the month they would all undergo hardship. To make matters worse she would then tell people in his neighbourhood that her husband was no good and could not provide for his family, publicly shaming him.

There was a fear amongst many veterans of the power that this gave wives over their husbands. João exasperatedly claimed to me that 'the tendency is to enslave the man'. He claimed that women of his generation still had the expectation they had grown up with that it was men who ought to spend money on supporting the family, and therefore spent their income on other things. Indeed, a wife's priority for spending on relatives might not be to her

husband and children but rather to her brothers, as she continued to follow matrilineal kinship allegiances. These were seen as 'backward' and immoral by many since they had been legislated against by the state and preached against by the churches. It would also leave men working on their own to support their families, a duty they could only neglect at the risk of a public masculine failure, family breakdown and suffering for their children.

Fears of how women might use their income were also related to the threat that women might start earning more than their husbands. This was unequivocally seen as a 'problem' by all of my informants, who claimed that the man would start to lose authority, and wives would become 'disobedient' as 'money starts to have more weight than the man'. This could lead to public ridicule if, for example, the man is walking home on the pavement, and his wife drives past with her colleagues in an expensive car, as one informant put it. Such a loss of authority and status was seen to be unsustainable by Rafael, who claimed that some women in this position would simply take another, richer man, to make up for the poor husband at home.

The menace of a wife leaving her husband for a richer man seems to represent a particularly severe masculine failure. Not only does it demonstrate failure to provide an adequate lifestyle for one's wife, but also publicly demonstrates inferiority to another man. Eduardo met his first wife in the neighbourhood where he was living in 1985, two years after being discharged from the army. Several years later, when he was trading on the coast in Lobito, leaving his wife behind in Huambo, he heard that she was seeing another man. He partly explains her affair as being 'biological' – implying that because her husband was far away she needed to find sexual satisfaction with somebody else. 'But at the bottom, really at the bottom of everything was a lack of economic means', he said.

Eduardo maintained custody of his children, but some men expressed the fear that if their wife took their children with her upon divorce, their children would henceforth see their father as merely a *pai biológico* – a biological father. They would thus lose another key masculine position, that of father, and yet might also be legally required to provide economic support to their

children. Divorce seems to have been a particularly painful 'thwarting' experience for Eduardo, since it 'destroyed' his spiritual life – church disapproval being the reason, in his view, that he was not elected as a church elder. This impact on a man's religious life could be taken as a serious blow, since practising religion could be a rare route to official and respected positions of authority as senior men.

Faced with the fear of such experiences of 'thwarting', it seems likely that many veterans resort to violence to attempt to control their wives' behaviour. All of my informants admitted that domestic violence was very common in Angola, and it seemed to be considered normal, if lamentable. For instance, on one occasion a female seller came to show me and one of her male colleagues a pair of shoes she had just bought for 200 kwanza (around US\$2). 'Your husband is going to beat you', was his immediate response. Two of my informants who worked as church marriage counsellors spoke despairingly of the difficulty of dealing with the problem, and the Angolan government run campaigns against domestic violence. Some writers particularly associate high rates of domestic violence with war veterans (e.g. Moura *et al.* 2009).

7.1 'Expensive' wives

I often heard veterans complaining that wives were 'expensive', and the threats posed by this fact were, as we have seen, the subject of frequent social criticism by these men who are often struggling to make ends meet. However, some men who were able to prosper seem to have been more than ready to take advantage of their wealth to attract and marry a younger woman. In fact this seems to be a more common occurrence than the reverse, with two of my more religious informants, who had been involved in marriage counselling in their churches, citing the problem of men becoming richer than their wives as the leading cause of divorce.

This desire of some richer men to take new wives was not simply tied to age but also to race. When I asked my informants why I often saw black Angolan women with white male partners, but never black Angolan men with white female partners, I was told it was because most Angolan men could not 'afford' a white partner. The automatic assumption was that white women were rich and so would not have a relationship with a

poorer man. The *dirigentes* (the country's leaders), it was said, might take white or *mestiço* girlfriends, however, as a way of demonstrating how much money they had. Thus the establishment of successful senior manhood for some men is tied up with the possession of money, which can be demonstrated through sexual relationships with women of certain races and ages.

This also suggests that despite the many anxieties that men express around money and marriage, the position of women is generally even more insecure. Another common point of conversation was the alleged tendency of women – often scorned by men as particularly backward, uneducated and irreligious – to resort to sorcery in attempts to stop their husbands beating them or leaving them for other women, which could throw them and their children into abject poverty. Such behaviour is also denounced regularly in church sermons and yet I saw the sticks required for such sorcery on sale in a municipal market in Huambo, which perhaps gives some measure of the anxiety that women also face in the unpredictable post-war socioeconomic situation.

8 Conclusion

In this article I have analysed how large-scale social change has affected how war veterans in Huambo construct and perform masculinities at the individual level, especially in relation to their wives. On leaving the army, the challenge facing these men cannot really be described as reintegration, since the society they were returning to had undergone such precipitous change. A combination of rapid urbanisation, the destruction of the agricultural economy, government neglect, unemployment and the monetisation of the economy meant that families' livelihoods were often very precarious. The collapse of 'traditional' rural institutions

and the economy that underpinned them has undermined gendered age hierarchies, and left these men toiling uncertainly to earn enough money to be able to continue to take up the subject position of authoritative husband – which is essential to being able to take up other subject positions, for example in the family as a father and outside the family as a church elder, or indeed as a well-respected elder man in most contexts. They are now left to face an old age of striving to support themselves and their families and maintain their standing, rather than, as Eduardo put it, 'thinking about how I can die in peace, without suffering', as he had been brought up to expect he would be at his age.

In other conflict and post-conflict contexts it has often been found that men struggle to get married and have children (e.g. Dolan 2011; Schafer 2007), and that this is one of the biggest obstacles to veterans' 'reintegration' into civilian society – since marriage can both represent a community's acceptance of a veteran as one of its members and the veteran's transition to an 'adult' male status. However, we can also see that passing this personal milestone is not a once-and-for-all achievement, but something that can be lost and that requires a constant struggle to maintain, a struggle that becomes particularly complicated in an insecure economic environment. Judging by these veterans' narratives it seems that this context has made both men's and women's lives more precarious, even though it seems to have loosened veterans' control over their wives and offered some more successful women the opportunity for greater autonomy. The consequences for gender equality of changes in the structural context on the *planalto* therefore seem to be ambivalent at best, but more research is required into women's perspectives on the economics of marriage and the prospects it currently offers.

Notes

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1 Whether this normative expectation was borne out in practice is less clear. For example, the father of one of my informants

died when he was young, with his mother left to provide for his family, later including his feckless stepfather, through the sale of *fuba* (maize meal) and *kissangua* (a drink made from fermented maize and sugar).

2 I use this word in the sense that my informants tended to use it: to denote practices and institutions they consider to be characteristically 'Umbundu' and of long standing.

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