

**Retrieving Elements of an Economic Ethic from Ezra 3: Ezra's  
Building Project in Dialogue with Poverty and Economic  
Inequality in Homoine District in Mozambique**

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**DECLARATION**

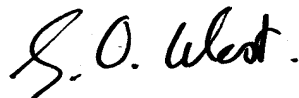
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Signed.....

Date.....

Supervisor



.....

Professor Gerald O. West

Date.....27 November 2012.....

## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to the memory of my late father, Mr Carlos Filimone, who did not live long enough to see my small but significant contribution to the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. *Nzi bongile papai!*

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Above all, I would like to thank God, the omnipotent, for giving me the strength, health, wisdom, courage and grace that enabled me to carry out this research.

## ABSTRACT

This research seeks to retrieve elements of an economic ethic from Ezra's building project that can dialogue with poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. The research argues that the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra's building project is a valuable biblical resource which can be used to orient economic analysis and reflection in Homoine district in the context of poverty and economic inequality.

This research consists of three related parts. One part consists of a detailed socio-historical analysis of the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. The focus here is on three related issues. Firstly, it analyses the general economic-historical background of Mozambique, focusing on the three micro-economic policies that have been influencing the development process of the country since independence. Secondly, it locates Homoine district within this economic-historical background of the country, focusing on the causes of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district. Thirdly, it analyses the response of the church (United Methodist Church in Mozambique) to the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district. The second part consists of a socio-historical and literary analysis of Ezra's building project. The focus here is on three related aspects. Firstly, it analyses the economic-historical background of Ezra's building project, focusing on the economic situation of the Israelites who were left in Palestine after the destruction of Judah, the economic situation of the Israelites who were deported to Babylon and the economic policies of Persia. Secondly, it locates Ezra 3 within this economic-historical context in order to retrieve elements of an economic ethic from this narrative. Thirdly, it analyses the response of religion towards the economic struggle in Ezra's building project. The third part consists of an analogical dialogue between Ezra's building project and the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district. The focus here is on the affinity of struggle for economic liberation between the two contexts and the relevance of the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra's building project in the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district.

The research concludes by suggesting that the United Methodist Church and/or theologians should educate communities in Homoine district (and elsewhere in Mozambique) about the Mosaic memory and its liberation capacity as an alternative economic motivation which can reduce the problems of poverty and economic inequality.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AK-47	Avtomat Kalashnikova (a Russian rifle introduced in 1947)
ANE	Ancient Near East
AR	<i>Assembleia da República</i> (Assembly of the Republic)
BC	Before Christ
BWIs	Bretton Woods Institutions
Care	Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere
CIP	<i>Centro de Integridade Pública</i> (Centre for Public Integrity)
CM	<i>Conselho de Ministro</i> (Council of Ministry)
CTD	<i>Conselho Técnico Distrital</i> (Technical council of the district)
EDM	<i>Electricidade de Moçambique</i> (Mozambican Electrical System)
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
Frelimo	<i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i> (the revolutionary movement)
GNP	Gross National Product
GPA	General Peace Agreement
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMUM	<i>Igreja Metodista Unida de Moçambique</i> (United Methodist Church)
INGOs	International Non-Government Organizations
IRN	<i>Imposto de reconstrução Nacional</i> (tax for national reconstruction)
MAE	<i>Ministério da Administração Estatal</i> (Ministry for State Administration)
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
PEDD	<i>Plano Estratégico de Desenvolvimento</i> do district (Strategic Plan)
PES	<i>Plano Económico e Social</i> (Economic and Social Plan)
Renamo	<i>Resistencia Nacional de Moçambique</i> (Mozambican Resistance Movement)
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
STV	<i>Soico-Televisão</i> (Soico-Television)

UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WB	World Bank
ZANU	Zimbabwe National Union
WHO	World Health Organization

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Research Background and Motivation.....	1
1.3 Research Questions.....	3
1.4 Theoretical Framework.....	3
1.5 Research Methodologies.....	4
1.6 Structure of the Research.....	5
1.7 Conclusion.....	6
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THE CONTEXT OF POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN HOMOINE DISTRICT IN MOZAMBIQUE.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 The General Economic-Historical Context of Mozambique.....	7
2.2.1 The Path through the State-Based Model of Development.....	8
2.2.2 Limping through the Aid-Based Model of Development.....	12
2.2.3 The Decentralized Model of Development.....	15
2.3 Poverty and Economic Inequality in Homoine District.....	17
2.3.1 Locating Homoine District in Mozambique.....	17
2.3.2 Assessing the Economic Potentialities of Homoine District.....	19
2.3.3 Indicators of Poverty and Economic Inequality in Homoine District.....	21



2.3.4 The Causes of Poverty and Economic Inequality in Homoine District.....	25
2.4 How does the Church Respond to the Problems of Poverty and Economic Inequality in Homoine District?.....	29
2.5 Conclusion.....	32

**CHAPTER THREE: THE ELEMENTS OF AN ECONOMIC ETHIC IN EZRA’S BUILDING PROJECT.....33**

3.1 Introduction.....	33
3.2 The Economic-Historical Context of Ezra’s Building Project.....	33
3.2.1 The Economic Situation of the Israelites in Palestine.....	34
3.2.2 The Economic Background of the Exiles in Babylon.....	36
3.2.3 The Economic Policies of Persia.....	38
3.3 Retrieving Elements of an Economic Ethic from Ezra 3.....	41
3.3.1 The Chiastic Structure in Ezra 3.....	42
3.3.2 Analysing the Content of the Chiastic Structure in Ezra 3.....	44
3.3.2.1 The People Assembled as One Person and the Shouting with Mixed Emotions (A and A’).....	44
3.3.2.2 The Altar and the Foundation of the Temple (B and B’).....	48
3.3.2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion in the Building Project (C and C’).....	50
3.3.2.4 International Trade (D).....	52
3.3.3 The Mosaic Memory in Ezra’s Building Project: An Element of an Economic Ethic...54	
3.4 How did Religion Respond to the Economic Struggle in Ezra’s Building Project?.....	56
3.5 Conclusion.....	57

**CHAPTER FOUR: EZRA’S BUILDING PROJECT IN DIALOGUE WITH POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN HOMOINE DISTRICT IN MOZAMBIQUE.....59**

4.1 Introduction.....	59
4.2 Bridging the Hermeneutic Gap through an Analogy of Struggle.....	59
4.3 The Mosaic Economic Ethics in the Context of Poverty and Economic Inequality in Homoine District.....	61
4.4 What should the Church do with the Mosaic Memory in Homoine District?.....	63

4.5 Conclusion.....65

**CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....67**

5.1 Introduction.....67

5.2 Summary of the Research.....67

5.3 Recommendations for further Research.....69

5.4 Conclusion.....69

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.....70**

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This research retrieves elements of an economic ethic from the narrative of the building of the altar and the temple as described in Ezra 3 in order to dialogue with poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. This chapter introduces the research topic and locates it within current research by biblical scholars. It includes the background of the research, the relevance of the research, the research questions, the theoretical framework, the methodology and the structure of the research.

#### **1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION**

Mozambique became independent in 1975 and enjoyed a short period of relative peace, but slid into a 16-year war that lasted until 1992 (Addison 2003:17). This civil war impacted negatively on the national economy, and Homoine is one of the districts in Mozambique most affected by this tragedy (see Bergh 2009:19). Once the civil war ended, “millions of displaced people attempted to resume normality in their lives, and the government turned to the processes of economic stabilization, recovery, and development” (Puig 2008:28). Nevertheless, poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district still affects the majority of the population. While luxury characterizes the life of a few; issues like clean water, balanced diet, shelter, sanitation, transport and education remain a problem for the majority of (ordinary) people. The government in Homoine district has made efforts to minimize this problem, but the reality has shown that the situation has not been reversed in recent years (*Conselho Tecnico Distrital* 2011:5).

At the centre of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district is an unjust economic system. The Mozambican economy extracts and it makes economic groups and big companies extremely rich (Carmona & Beúla 2010:4). Research has shown that all the natural resources that Mozambique has are exported in their natural form and everything that is consumed is imported (Carmona & Beúla 2010:4). The Mozambican elite “sell off natural resources and chop down forests to plant cash crops to earn foreign currency” (Edgar 2000:20). Moreover, the Mozambican government has been very passive towards

international economic demands, accepting the policies of donors which are not relevant for local development (Hanlon & Smart 2008:46). Besides the party-oriented model of development, which excludes some people in terms of decision-making and access of resources and means of production, foreign debt and the unjust distribution of resources of the country are also other causes of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district.<sup>1</sup> This situation of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district has not yet been sufficiently addressed by the church (United Methodist Church) and theologians in general.

Research has shown that the church (United Methodist Church in Mozambique) has been helping poor people as part of its mission in the public sphere but it has also failed to focus on the systems that enable poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district (*Igreja Metodista Unida em Moçambique* 2011). The church helps individuals by assisting them when they are in a situation of vulnerability but it does not say anything about the systems that cause this economic vulnerability. This is what has motivated me to make a small but valuable contribution to the situation by studying the narrative of the building project as described in Ezra 3 in order to retrieve elements of an economic ethic that can be used to dialogue with poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique.

Much research has already been done on the narrative about the building project as described in Ezra and Nehemiah (Bright 1962; Williamson 1987; Trotter 2001; Farisani 2002; Gunda 2009; amongst others). These researches have analyzed different aspects of the narrative, using socio-historical, literary and contextual approaches. However, no in-depth research has been done into the elements of an economic ethic of this narrative in order to dialogue with economic struggles in contemporary contexts. Scholars have worked in general terms with the Ezra-Nehemiah text addressing general economic struggles. Nevertheless, this research deals with a specific area (the building of the altar and the foundations of the temple as described in Ezra 3) in dialogue with a specific selected African context (the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique after civil war).

Thus, this research analyzes Ezra's building project in order to retrieve elements of an economic ethic that can orient economic analysis and reflection in Homoine district in the context of poverty and economic inequality.

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<sup>1</sup> The causes of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district is fully discussed in section 2.3.4 of this research.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The question for this research is:

What elements of an economic ethic can be retrieved from Ezra's building project to dialogue with poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique?

In order to answer this key question, the following three sub-questions were formulated:

1. What are the main causes of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district?
2. What elements of an economic ethic can be retrieved from Ezra's building project?
3. How can the economic ethic retrieved from Ezra 3 orient economic analysis and reflection in Homoine district in the context of poverty and economic inequality?

### **1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research is conducted under the African contextual hermeneutical framework, using the tri-polar approach recently suggested in African biblical scholarship. It has been argued that prior to tri-polar approach, African biblical scholarship operated within a bi-polar approach in which African context and biblical text interpret each other (West 2010:21). Although the bi-polar approach emphasized the context of reception as the subject of interpretation (Ukpong 2000:12), it has failed to acknowledge the role of the reader "who enables the text and context to come into conversation" (West 2010:22). As a result, African biblical scholars have recently suggested a tri-polar approach, which takes "account of a third pole" (Draper 2002:16). The interrelated components of this tri-polar approach are: the pole of the African context, the pole of the biblical text, and the pole of appropriation.

The pole of the African context refers to a specific selected context in Africa according to the needs of the reader or of the community. The main task of this pole is to analyze and evaluate the context of the reader (Draper 2001:157), giving details of a specific African context which will be brought into dialogue with the biblical text. The pole of biblical text focuses on a particular selected biblical text in order to analyze its various dimensions of meaning. It has been said that "before the text can be brought into dialogue with the context, it must be given its own voice" (West 2010:30). This process is also called 'distantiation', in which "we have to allow the text to be different to us, alien, intended for others" (Draper 2001:152). In other

words, the task in this pole is to do an exegetical study of the selected biblical text. The pole of appropriation refers to a moment when the reader establishes a dialogue between the biblical text and the African context, using particular forms of ideo-theological orientation (inculturation, liberation, feminist and postcolonial) (West 2010:21).

Within the tri-polar approach, this research uses Marxian analytic concepts as developed by Norman Gottwald (1993). The Marxian analytic concepts are used within a liberation ideo-theological framework to point precisely to “relationships among people in actual social formations and specify where and what to look for in the social interaction” (Gottwald 1993:146). This is an adequate model because it is broad enough to view the whole course of human history and pre-history as a social continuum shaped by class; and it is precise enough to discriminate changes and differences that have occurred over the course of human social history (Gottwald 1993:145). Furthermore, it offers analytic concepts that disclose the basic workings of social life both in its dynamic integrity and in its changefulness (Gottwald 1993:145). In summary, Marxian analytic concepts provide a perspective on biblical economics that can orient contemporary analysis and reflection on economic systems (Gottwald 1993:346). The use of Marxist analysis in this research forms part of the ‘appropriation’ pole in the tri-pole model. The Marxist analysis is a constituent element of the ideo-theological framework adopted in this research (liberation). Hence, the Marxist categories are used in this research to analyse both the biblical text and the African context.

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES**

The setting of this research is Old Testament biblical studies. The research methodologies used within this field of study include a combination of approaches: socio-historical analysis and literary analysis. Firstly, a socio-historical analysis has been carried out to understand the causes of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district. This has helped the researcher to discover the economic systems that enable poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district. Secondly, a socio-historical and literary analysis has been employed to retrieve elements of an economic ethic from Ezra’s building project. On the one hand, the literary analysis focuses on issues of textual structure and its significance, including analysis of metaphors, repetitions, semantic fields and chiasmic forms. This literary approach has the advantage of offering to ordinary readers of the bible some sense of what the researcher is doing. These readers, though not the primary audience of this research, are part of the context

within which the research has been done and to which the research outcomes will be communicated. On the other hand, a socio-historical approach enables the researcher to locate the literary dimensions of the narrative within the communities that produced them (or the socio-historical context of the text).

## **1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH**

After introducing key issues of the research in this chapter, chapter two explores the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. It argues that an extractive economy, foreign debt, the passivity of the government towards international economic demands, unjust distribution of resources and the party-oriented model of development are the main causes of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district.

Chapter three is an attempt to retrieve elements of an economic ethic from Ezra 3 that can dialogue with poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district. It argues that the economic ethic which can be retrieved from Ezra's building project is not Ezra's practice but the communitarian biblical ethic represented by the Mosaic covenant, a metaphor for early Israel's egalitarian project. This Mosaic ethic is not allowed to guide the economic reality in Ezra's building project, for it is suppressed by the Davidic-Solomon covenant, a metaphor for tributary mode of production. However, its very presence in the chiasmic structure of Ezra 3 demonstrates that it remains a 'dangerous memory' for future generations, including our modern generation. The challenge for modern readers or interpreters is to place this 'dangerous memory' at the centre rather than at the periphery of the chiasmic structure.

Chapter four establishes a dialogue between Ezra's building project and the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district, focusing on an analogy of struggle (the struggle for economic liberation) between the two contexts. It points out that the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra's building project can be used to orient economic analysis and reflection in Homoine district because it represents an alternative economic system which can reduce the problems of poverty and economic inequality. By remembering this memory, the church and/or theologians in Homoine district can help their communities to understand their economic struggle and to find their way forward in relation to the situation. The church is a promising entity which can promote this Mosaic economic ethic in Homoine district through education.

Chapter five draws findings from the previous chapters to point out the need for the church and/or theologians in Homoine district to engage fully on issues of poverty and economic inequality, and support an economic organization that benefit all members of the society, like the one advocated by the Mosaic covenant retrieved from Ezra's building project. Finally it offers some recommendations that could possibly encourage and stimulate further research.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter introduced the research by locating it within current biblical scholarship. It has briefly shown the background of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique, and the need to retrieve elements of an economic ethic from Ezra 3 as a motivation to the research. The chapter has also introduced the conceptual framework and methodology of the research. The following chapter of this research represents the pole of the African context in the tri-polar approach and it analyses the economic context of Homoine district in Mozambique, focusing mainly on the causes of poverty and economic inequality after the civil war.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE CONTEXT OF POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN HOMOINE DISTRICT IN MOZAMBIQUE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter introduced the research topic, presenting the research background, relevance of the research, the research questions, the conceptual framework, methodology and the structure of the research. This chapter (the pole of the African context) sets out to analyse the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. It outlines the economic-historical context of Mozambique since independence, focusing on the state-based model of development, the aid-based model of development and the policies of decentralization. It then locates Homoine district within the whole economic-historical context of the country, focusing on the economic potentialities of the district, the indicators of poverty and economic inequality as well as the causes of this problem. It concludes by analysing the place of the United Methodist Church within the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique.

It is important to note that many resources used in this chapter were provided by the government of Homoine district despite several barriers including suspicion on the part of the government about the destination of the requested information. Although the researcher produced documents which proved that the information was for academic purposes, some members of the government were not willing to assist until some witness (to prove that the information was not for political purposes) were required as a condition to have access of this information. Therefore, those intending to make use of this information must be conscious of the difficulties faced during the process of data collection. Links to the ruling political party play a significant role in Homoine district, even for academic research; anyone who intends to conduct research must first identify himself/herself with the ruling political party.

#### **2.2 THE GENERAL ECONOMIC-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MOZAMBIQUE**

Mozambique is a country located in the south eastern part of Africa, covering an area of 800,000 km<sup>2</sup>, and is bordered by Tanzania in the north, South Africa and Swaziland in the south, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia in the west and the Indian Ocean in the east

(Nzabilinda 2005:30). The country is divided into ten provinces, namely: Maputo,<sup>2</sup> Gaza, Inhambane,<sup>3</sup> Sofala, Manica, Zambezia, Tete, Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa. Mozambique became independent in 1975 and enjoyed a short period of relative peace, but slid into a 16-year war that lasted until 1992 (Addison 2003:17). The revolutionary movement, *Frente de libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo), governed the country from independence until the first democratic elections in 1994, through a mono-party state system (Hanlon & Smart 2008:30). From the time when Mozambique introduced democracy as well as the multi-party system, Frelimo has repeatedly won elections, making it the only government ever since independence.

Since 1975, the Mozambican economy has been influenced by a never-ending number of factors. In order to limit the discussion, this research will concentrate on three micro-economic policies which have played a significant role in the development process of the country: the state-based model of development, the aid-based model of development and the decentralized model of development.

### **2.2.1 THE PATH THROUGH THE STATE-BASED MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT**

When Mozambique gained independence from Portugal, its economy was very weak. Scholars have pointed out three reasons for this chaotic economic situation. The first reason is the colonial legacy, since the colonies were viewed as the providers of raw material for the metropolis (Puig, 2008:20). Instead of benefiting the local citizens, Mozambican resources were extracted to feed the ambitious European consumers. As a result, Mozambique became poor, with no transformative industry to build up its economy. The second reason is that, the majority of the Portuguese settlers were illiterate and from the most impoverished areas of Portugal (Hanlon & Smart 2008:29), lacking in the skills needed to strengthen the Mozambican economy. In other words, they were consumers more than producers. The third reason is the Portuguese exodus,<sup>4</sup> where the colonizers devastated the major economic centres of the country before they left, killing cows and destroying machinery (Hanlon &

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<sup>2</sup> Maputo is the capital city of Mozambique.

<sup>3</sup> Homoine district is located in this province.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Hanlon and Teresa Smart (2008:30) state that this exodus was a result of propaganda by the colonial government and the Catholic Church which painted Frelimo as a communist monster which would kill white people.

Smart 2008:30). This destruction worsened the Mozambican economy which had already been destroyed by the imperial system.

In an attempt to reverse this economic scenario, the independent Mozambican government, under the leadership of the revolutionary party (Frelimo), adopted the African approach of the socialist model of development, with the influence of the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist ideologies of Marx and Lenin (Kofi 1981:856). The socialist model of development is generally characterized by “public ownership of the means of production and central planning” (Fenichel & Khan 1981:813). Although not embracing all the features of this model, the Frelimo government adopted state planning and nationalized large industries and utilities (Addison 2003:18). It also nationalized or intervened in colonial plantations already abandoned by the colonizers (Addison 2003:18).

In 1977, Frelimo held the third congress and proclaimed itself a Marxist-Leninist party and advanced a socialist program for development, which included a transformation of agriculture, a provision of resources for industry, the organization of the peasant’s farmers in cooperatives and state farms, and the eventual collectivization of family and smallholder agriculture and peasant farmers, to be employed on mechanized state farms or on semi-mechanized producer cooperatives (Cumbe 2010:23). This was portrayed by the Frelimo government as a valuable strategy to emancipate the local citizens from their deplorable conditions after a long period of Portuguese tyranny.

In this economic model, the new government in this new Mozambican state played a central role in the development process, planning and executing the economic trajectories of the country. Much of the investment was controlled by the state since monetary investments were seen as irrelevant to peasants. The peasants were viewed as “poor, vulnerable to weather conditions, but not to market mechanisms” (Wuyts 2003:145). In other words, they were viewed as able to live without money; their food and other valuable goods would come from their work on the land, not from the market. Marc Wuyts (2003:144-1445) gives a clear picture of how investment was distributed in the period of central planning, when he points out that “some 90 per cent of total agricultural investment went to the state sector, 2 per cent to the cooperatives, and the small-scale household farming sector received virtually none”. This means that the development model was state-based par excellence and the only ways that the government could emancipate peasants from poverty and backwardness were through

the expansion of the state sector as well as the formation of cooperatives and communal villages (Wuyts 2003:145). Hence, poor peasants were forced to organize themselves into cooperatives and communal villages so that the government would, through these initiatives, assist them to achieve a socialized development.<sup>5</sup> Even so, this expectation was not fulfilled. In fact, in the 1980s poverty intensified within the country, especially in rural areas (Cumbe 2010:6). This means that the Frelimo government had failed to improve the lives of the local population through this state-based model of development.

Various factors can be mentioned to justify the failure of the state-based model of development in Mozambique, but the lack of administrative capacity of the local citizens and the commencement of civil war stand out above others. Indeed, after independence, the Mozambican government did not have sufficient resources<sup>6</sup> to put into practice the centralized system influenced by socialism. Alongside the economic infrastructure destroyed by the departing colonizers, the educational level of black Mozambican was very low because the majority of them had not had access to education during the colonial period. In other words, independent Mozambique adopted central planning with little expertise at its disposal. As Katie Willis (2011:96) wisely argues, “the state bureaucracy was too weak to implement planning systems following the Soviet model, and there were few companies which could be taken into state ownership”. In view of the fact that the majority of the population were rural and poorly educated, Mozambique could not successfully implement the centralized mode of production required in the Soviet model. In fact, resources were spread very thinly instead of being focused on core priorities such as poverty reduction (Addison 2003:21).

Moreover, the commencement and intensification of the civil war also negatively affected the socialist initiatives already planned by the Frelimo government. The civil war started when the United Nations (UN) decided to impose sanctions on the white, minority government in Rhodesia,<sup>7</sup> which “cut traffic through the Mozambican port of Beira” (Bergh 2009:17). In order to show solidarity with its neighbours in struggle, the independent Mozambican government agreed to apply these sanctions, but the white Rhodesian government responded by creating an anti-Frelimo guerrilla force called the Mozambican Resistance Movement or *Resistencia Nacional de Moçambique* (Hanlon & Smart 2008:31). In the first instance, the

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<sup>5</sup> People in rural areas still have the idea of cooperatives and communal villages.

<sup>6</sup> This includes human resources and economic policies.

<sup>7</sup> Before independence, the actual territory of Zimbabwe was known as Southern Rhodesia.

Mozambican Resistance Movement (Renamo) was used by the Rhodesian government to acquire intelligence about the ZANU (the Zimbabwe National Union); but when Rhodesia became Zimbabwe in 1980, Renamo was used by the white, minority government in South Africa “for terrorism, disruption and destruction” in Mozambique, as part of its struggle against the neighbouring socialist states (Bergh 2009:17). In fact, “the Cold War propagated different alliances between many countries in Southern Africa, between different political parties and movements dependent on either the communist or capitalist bloc” (Puig 2008:2). In other words, the Mozambican civil war was partly a punishment for being allied to the wrong side of the cold war (Hanlon & Smart 2008:28). When the war intensified, the government was forced to think about how to fight against the enemy under precarious economic conditions and how to improve the lives of the peasants also affected by the war.

In an attempt to control the situation, the government had to abruptly adjust its war as well as its economic policies. These policies “implied that its war efforts concentrated on the protection of its major assets in rural areas (the farms, plantations, and other large projects), leaving other areas economically in the cold and open to Renamo infiltration” (Wuyts 2003:146). Areas where the state bureaucracy did not have relevant economic projects were left unprotected, and Renamo could easily move in and cause damage.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, these areas became “increasingly marginalized as they were left open to Renamo infiltration and occupation, and large population movements took place as peasants fled from war and famine zones” (Wuyts 2003:147). Again, the government had to “borrow heavily from the international market” with the assumption that this would help in stabilizing the economy during war time (Puig 2008:28). However, the brutality of this war did not create a conducive atmosphere for Mozambique to repay its debts; it therefore became a highly indebted country.

Since the war was brutal and destructive, Frelimo government progressively lost control over rural production, failed to mobilize the peasantry behind the war effort, and was unable to stop the spread of Renamo’s infiltration into, and destruction of, the rural society and economy (Wuyts 2003:147-148). Then, the peasants, previously viewed as able to live without cash, could not produce enough food for their normal diets during war time; the only way for them to survive was to sell their labour to obtain cash to buy food and other rural goods because these commodities could be bought for cash from private traders, who

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<sup>8</sup> This will be discussed further in sub-section 2.3.4 when analysing the causes of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district.

operated within parallel market circuits (Wuyts 2003:147). Consequently, the state bureaucracy as well as the rural peasants became vulnerable to market mechanisms, whereas civil war, poverty and foreign debt intensified in the country.

Having failed with the implementation of the state-based model of development because of the lack of administrative capacity of the local citizens as well as the commencement and intensification of the civil war, Mozambique was forced to ask for assistance from the international community, which came in the form of an aid-based model of development under the eyes of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

### **2.2.2 LIMPING THROUGH THE AID-BASED MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT**

It has been argued in the previous section that the lack of administrative capacity of the local people and the commencement and intensification of the civil war could not allow the Frelimo government to improve the lives of the Mozambican population through a state-based model of development. In response to that, Mozambique had to unquestionably adopt the aid-based model of development, which is characterized by a transfer of money, technology and expertise to fill the gaps and help the economic development process in countries regarded as “lagging behind on the path of economic development, being largely agricultural and lacking the autonomous capacity for investment and economic growth” (Willis 2011:49-50). The aid systems also include grants, loans, technical advice, equipment or food and debt cancellation (Willis 2011:50). In Mozambique, this aid-based model of development was adopted under conditions imposed by the United States of America (USA) and other donors.

Firstly, the Mozambican government had to authorize two of the international non-government organizations (INGOs) from the USA (Care and World Vision) to work in the country (Hanlon & Smart 2008:35). Josep Puig (2008:17) describes non-government organizations (NGOs) as hybrid entities in the sense that they combine many characteristics. For Puig (2008:16), many NGOs were born with a particular identity which was to become the voice of millions of oppressed, playing the role of wealth provider. However, the global situation shows that thousands of these NGOs are becoming welfare providers in joining the neo-liberal agenda, serving as the front line of the global welfare (Puig 2008:13).

Secondly, Mozambique had to separate herself from socialism and embrace capitalism (Hanlon & Smart 2008:36). This implied that Mozambique had to embrace a form of economic organization in which “all forms of wealth tend to be converted into capital” (Meyer 1994:322); those who did not own the means of production had to earn a living by selling their labour (Willis 2005:71).

Thirdly, Mozambique had to adopt the policies of Structural Adjustment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (Hanlon & Smart 2008:36). The IMF and World Bank (WB) are two regulatory institutions formed in 1944 at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire by 44 nations, their purpose being to “secure world peace and prosperity through international economic cooperation” (Peet 2005:44). This idea was based on “neo-classical economic principles of a world market, in which capital and goods would move freely” (Peet 2005:44). The structural adjustment programme (SAP) is a debt management policy introduced by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) “to allow indebted states to reschedule their loans and pay off their debt” (McMichael 2005:662). The SAP is characterized by a reduction in public spending, currency devaluation, privatization of state owned enterprises, and reduction of wages to attract foreign investors and reduce export prices (McMichael 2005:663). In the Mozambican case, privatization allowed the members of the Frelimo elite to own small firms, whereas larger firms belonged to foreign companies (Hanlon & Mosse 2009:2). This privatization process has benefited the majority of the Frelimo elite who are increasingly becoming the richest group in the country.

In 1983, Mozambique commenced, on its own initiative, the shift from “a statist towards a market economy”, but liberalization and privatization began in 1984 when the country joined the BWIs; it received its first structural adjustment loan in 1987 (Batley 2005:416), becoming increasingly dependent on concessional bilateral and multilateral aid as successive IMF and WB adjustment programmes took effect (Addison 2003:21). The first SAP was planned by the Mozambican government without a formal consultation of the BWIs, and this did not meet the conditions required by them (Hanlon & Smart 2008:40). In reaction to that, there was a financial boycott by the IMF, which resulted in an economic decline in Mozambique, even some years after the general peace agreement (GPA) of 1992 (Hanlon & Smart 2008:40). Indeed, in 1997 the Mozambican gross national product (GNP) per capita was the world’s lowest (Puig 2008:2). But when a group of donors issued a declaration criticizing the

IMF, the situation was reversed (Hanlon & Smart 2008:41) and Mozambique became aid-dependent par excellence, receiving investment from different parts of the world.

This ongoing shift from a state-based model of development to an aid-based model of development has brought relative prosperity to Mozambique. Indeed, industrial production has been increasing, there is food in shops, businessmen can be seen in every corner of the cities, towns and villages, and independent newspapers are being published (Hanlon & Smart 2008:39-40). However, this relative prosperity is also accompanied by a huge gulf between the rich and the poor (Puig 2008:29) because only a small group is able to cope with the constantly increasing prices of products, while the majority of Mozambicans are starving.

Although Mozambique has been limping through an aid-based model of development since 1984, socialist ideologies are still a priority for the Frelimo government, which expresses them in terms of symbols, principles and practices. Some of these ideologies are well expressed in the Mozambican ‘coat of arms’, which is similar to the Soviet ‘coat of arms’. The Soviet ‘coat of arms’ has a globe, hammer, sickle, ears of wheat, a red star and rising sun (The Great Soviet Encyclopedia 2010), whereas the Mozambican ‘coat of arms’ has a book, a rifle (AK-47), a hoe, an ocean, a rising sun, a cog-wheel, a stalk of maize, a stalk of sugar cane and a red star (Berry 2007). These similarities give an impression that while Mozambique retains the Soviet red star as well as the rising sun, it replaces the globe with a book, a hammer with a rifle, a sickle with a hoe and the ears of wheat with the stalks of maize and sugar cane, which is a clear symbolic expression of the socialist ideologies.

Moreover, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) has pointed out that the Mozambican government continues with its “nationalist rhetoric and statist attitudes and membership of-or links to-Frelimo”, which is also crucial for doing business (EIU 2010:4). For that reason, “the independent institutions are being repoliticised, the patronage networks of the Frelimo elite extended, and the rhetoric and autocratic style of the former one-party state revived” (EIU 2007:7). These attitudes result from the fact that Frelimo has been winning elections since 1994. In support of this argument, there is a report issued by the government of Homoine district in 2007, on an occasion of transference of competences, which states that the minimal impact of the opposition parties constitutes an important factor in materializing the plans of the government (*Governo do Distrito de Homoine* 2007:2). In other words, the small impact of the opposition is a good starting point for the Frelimo government in consolidating its



revitalization of the statist and one-party oriented model of development. This revitalization also manifests in language through the use of expressions like *camarada* or ‘comrade’ which refer strictly to those who belong to Frelimo. Beside this, Frelimo has introduced small political nuclei within communities, known as *celulas do partido* or cells of the party. Although the *celulas do partido* aim at strengthening Frelimo from the base, they also facilitate renewal of the one-party state system, because they exist even within state institutions such as schools.

Thus, although Mozambique has adopted an aid-based model of development, it is still applying socialist ideologies within its program of development. Using Josep Puig’s (2008:17) language, it could be argued that Mozambique is a hybrid country, in the sense that it is dependent on concessional bilateral and multilateral aid while stressing socialist principles and practices based on the Marxist-Leninist ideologies.

### **2.2.3 THE DECENTRALIZED MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT**

Within the aid-based model of development, Mozambique has been passionate about the politics of decentralization. Decentralization refers to a process of government in which the responsibility of development is brought “closer to the people with the primary goal of making the people who benefit from development the focus through their involvement in designing and implementing programs to ensure ownership and sustainability” (Agyemang 2011:300). In other words, decentralization turns upside down the development system in which the central government dictates to communities what, when and how to do development.

Generally speaking, decentralization seems to be a good vehicle for resolving the needs of the poor, especially in rural areas, because they become key agents, actively participating and benefiting from all the mechanisms involved in the development process. However, when “traditions of collective action for common goods” are not observed by communities, development through decentralization cannot be effectively achieved (Abe 2009:78). Another aspect which can contribute to the failure of decentralization is what Zdravko Petak (2011:75) describes as a “centrally controlled decentralization” whereby the central government puts “the sub-national levels of governments into a position of pure agents of the central governments’ basic will”.

Although decentralization seems to be a new phenomenon in Mozambique, it was discussed even before the end of civil war in 1992. Conceição Osório and Teresa Cruz e Silva (2009:33) point out that the commitments to decentralization and de-concentration were renewed in the constitutional revision of 1990. After that, a range of legal instruments were issued by the Mozambican government in order to put into practice the initiatives of development on the basis of this decentralization. To mention some of them, the Rule number 9/96 was established by the constitutional revision of 1996 to orient the terms of functioning of the local authorities (Osório & Cruz e Silva 2009:33). Moreover, they were elaborated on the decree number 5/2006 of 12 of April in which the provincial governors and the Administrators of districts are given powers to manage human resources, and then the decree number 6/2006 of 12 of April which approves an organic structure of government in each district as well as its organic statute (*Conselho de Ministros* 2006:119).

One aspect which requires attention here is that the Mozambican decentralization does not give absolute autonomy to local authority and people. In fact, the rule 6/2007 gives powers to central government for intervening, revising, protecting and controlling the initiatives of development undertaken by the local governments (Osório and Cruz e Silva 2009:34). In other words, the central government has the right to validate or invalidate what is being developed by the local governments. This means that, the Mozambican decentralization cannot be described as fully decentralization in the real sense of the word, but as a “centrally controlled decentralization” (Petak 2011:75).

Within this centrally controlled decentralization in Mozambique, the districts are given some sort of autonomy in which they can plan and execute their local programs of development according to the needs of the local people. According to Article 1, in the first chapter of the decree number 6/2006, the districts are conceded the freedom to have their own local organic structure (CM 2006:121). This organic structure is composed by one office of the district, the service of planning and infra-structure, the service of education, youth and technology, the service of health, woman and social action, the service of economic activities and the administrator’s office (CM 2006:121). This organic structure enables the districts to design their own legal instruments for local development. One of these instruments is the *Plano Estratégico de Desenvolvimento do Distrito* or the Strategic Plan for Development of the District (PEDD) which is a long plan aiming to orient and manage local development (CTD 2011:iii). Another type of local instrument used to foster development is the *Plano*

*Economico e Social* or the Economic and Social Plan (PES), which is a yearly plan focusing mainly on the economic and social management of the district, based on the objectives established by the central government as well as in PEDDs (CTD 2009:1).

Accordingly, the state-based model of development, the aid-based model of development and the decentralized mode of development constitute the huge and complex economic-historical background of Mozambique since independence. Therefore, the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine District must be scrutinized taking into consideration these economic phases that have been shaping the economy of the country at large.

## **2.3 POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN HOMOINE DISTRICT**

The name Homoine is a Portuguese articulation of the *Tswa*<sup>9</sup> word *Honwine*, and it can be literally translated as ‘in the place/land of Cows’. Official accounts state that Homoine district has been known as *Honwine* until today, because long before colonization people from that area had many cows (CTD 2011:7). This hypothesis is based on the premise that cow in the *Tswa* language is *Homo*, and the *Tswa* suffixes *ine* and *ene* refer to something which is inside/in something else (CTD 2011:7). If the word *Honwine* is a combination of the noun *Homo* plus *ine*, then the probable translation of *Honwine* could be, *de facto*, ‘in the place or land of Cows’. The same source has suggested other combinations which can help in understanding these terminologies, such as: *dluine* (in the house), *moveni* (in the car), *massinwini* (in the field), *chitangueni* (in the kitchen), *macotine* (in the toilet) and so forth (CTD 2011:7).

In July 1907, the Portuguese colonizers established their first military command in the territory of *Honwine* (CTD 2011:6) and the name *Honwine* was pronounced ‘Homoine’, which is typical a Portuguese accent. In 1964, the Portuguese settlers, officially elevated *Honwine* into the category of town but after independence it was declared one of the Mozambican districts (CTD 2011:7).

### **2.3.1 LOCATING HOMOINE DISTRICT IN MOZAMBIQUE**

As one of the districts of the independent Mozambique, Homoine is located in the southern part of the country and in the western part of Inhambane province, about 78 km away from

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<sup>9</sup> *Tswa* is a language spoken by the majority of people in Homoine district.

the capital city of the province and it covers an area of 1 918 Km<sup>2</sup> (CTD 2011:3). Homoine district shares borders with Funhalouro and Morrumbene districts in the north, Jangamo and Inharrime districts in the south, Maxixe city in the east and Panda district in the west (see Figure 1 below). The district has two Administrative posts: Homoine-Sede, which has six localities (Manhica, Inhamussua, Golo, Mubecua, Chinjinguir and Chizapela) and Pembe, which has only two localities, Pembe and Nhaulane (CTD 2011:3). According to the Census of 2007, the total population of Homoine district is about 107.735 inhabitants, in which 47.493 are men and 60.242 are women (CTD 2011:5).

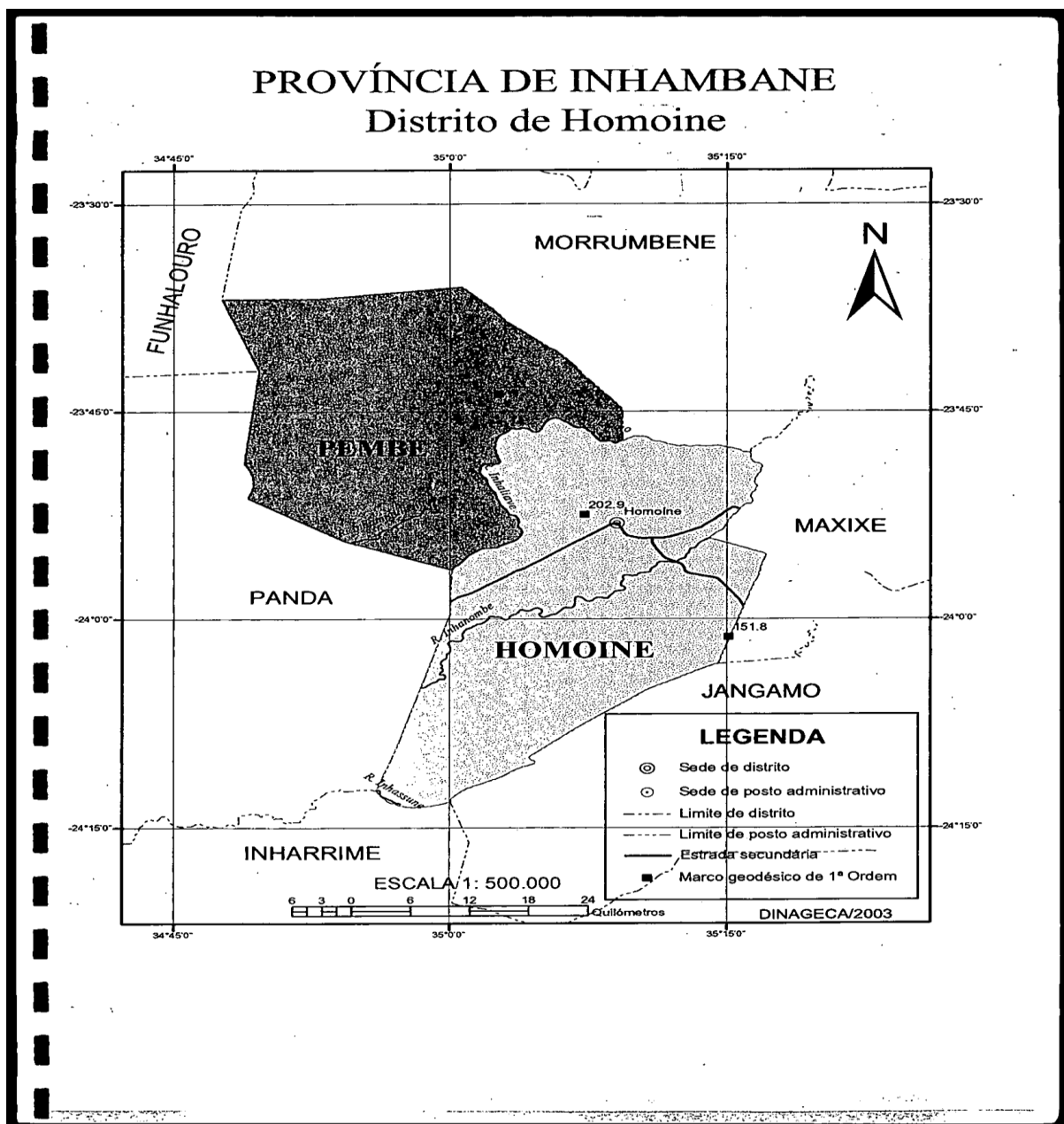


Figure 1. Map showing the location of Homoine district (Mahumane 2003: v).

### **2.3.2 ASSESSING THE ECONOMIC POTENTIALITIES OF HOMOINE DISTRICT**

Although small-scale urban activities can be observed in Homoine district, the majority of the population is rural, with agriculture being practised by almost all families. Indeed, of about 113.359 inhabitants that Homoine had in 2005, only 7% had an urban livelihood and this scenario has been the same in recent years (*Ministério da Administração Estatal* 2005:2).

At the centre of this rural community there is fertile land, water resources, minerals, flora and fauna, which enable them to survive through agriculture, animal farming, commerce, small-scale industry, small-scale mining and so forth. The soils of Homoine district have optimum natural conditions for cultivation without chemical products (CTD 2011:15). In fact, the majority of people still are using rudimentary techniques for agriculture, digging the soil with the traditional hoe. However, in some cases, animals and mechanical techniques are also used (CTD 2011:16). Modern techniques include small systems of irrigation by gravity feeds and drip irrigation, which have benefited some communities in their work with the land (CTD 2011:16). These facilities have enabled communities to produce maize, rice, peanuts, different kinds of beans, potatoes, cassava, vegetables, cotton, pineapples and cashew nuts (CTD 2009:5). The land is also suitable for production of coconut, banana, citrus and other types of fruits (CTD 2011:15). Alongside crop farming, Homoine is notable for animal farming, more specifically cows, pigs, chickens, goats, ducks and other birds (CTD 2011:15).

According to official information provided by the government, Homoine district is rich in terms of water resources which are used differently by the local communities. There are two big rivers (Domo and Nhanombe), two big lakes (Pembe and Nhavare) and many other small rivers within the district (CTD 2011:4). With these resources, communities fish for their own consumption and/or for small business; they also collect water for domestic use (drinking and cooking), irrigation and sanitation. Beside this, the district has some reserves of calcium, mineral coal, white sand and stones for construction, but these have not been fully explored in some localities (CTD 2011:20). In addition, honey, firewood, wild meat and wood for construction are some of the products which can be acquired from the fauna and flora that Homoine district has (CTD 2011:15). It is also crucial to state that the district has good conditions for Agro-tourism, Eco-tourism and tourism of adventure, which have not been fully explored (CTD 2011:15).

In terms of industry, the district does not have much economic potentiality; only two soap factories can be found in the localities of Golo and Manhica (CTD 2011:21). In addition to this, there are some small handcraft enterprises, which are considered by the local government as small industrial establishments, such as bakeries, mills for grain, carpenters, workshops and so forth (CTD 2011:21). Although Homoine does not have much industry, it diversifies its economy through commerce. There are about 356 commercial establishments in Homoine district, which facilitate provision of services and other goods for communities, but most of them are concentrated at the centre of the town (CTD 2011:22). Alongside this, people from villages sell their surplus to the businessmen at the centre of town, who then sell it again to the transformative industry in the neighbouring city of Maxixe as well as at the capital city of the country, Maputo (CTD 2011:22).

It has been argued earlier in this chapter that the Mozambican decentralization is *de facto*, a ‘centrally controlled decentralization’.<sup>10</sup> Within this type of decentralization, part of the investment needed to put into practice the plans for development of the district, comes from the central government (*Centro de Integridade Publica* 2011:2). Another financial source for Homoine district is the system of taxation, which involves tax for national reconstruction (IRN), taxes collected from the marketplaces, licences for small business, licences from construction and habitation, income from the cemetery, patrimonial income, income from workshops, certification of documents, different kinds of fines, income from the butchery, parking taxes, taxes for velocipedes and others taxes not specified (CTD 2009:25). The system of taxation in a peasant society like Homoine is, *de facto*, a burden to local communities.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the district has also a significant number of human resources who operate in different economic and social sectors. For instance, in 2010 there were about 1.368 public workers, where 66 were at the office of the district, 14 at the service of planning and infra-structures, 1.128 at the service of education, youth and technology, 112 at the service of health, woman and social action and 45 at the service of economic activities (CTD 2011:27).

In summary, this section has provided the general overview of what constitute the economic as well as human resources of Homoine district, which could be wisely explored in order to overcome the problems of poverty and economic inequality among local communities.

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<sup>10</sup> See sub-section 2.2.3 above.

<sup>11</sup> This aspect of taxation and economic burden in a peasant community will be discussed in detail in chapter three when analysing the economic systems behind the narrative of the building project in Ezra 3.

### **2.3.3 INDICATORS OF POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN HOMOINE DISTRICT**

Poverty is a relative concept, which varies from one context to another depending on how it is understood or determined by people in a certain historical and geographical location. Poverty is therefore defined by P. J. Paris (2009: x) as “the lack of daily necessities such as water, food, and medicine and as a reflection of the hideous social crises of our time such as disease, crime, violence, war, and prostitution”. Clara De Sousa has even gone further, defining poverty based on the expenditure required to secure a food basket containing the minimum caloric requirements to meet daily needs. In her definition, the poor “are those with a standard of living insufficient to meet even basic food requirements” (De Sousa 2003:58). Broadly argued, poverty is the deprivation of the daily basic needs of people. It is also generally accepted that behind poverty there is an economic inequality. Hence, the question of poverty in Homoine district goes hand in hand with economic inequalities, which are reflected in different spheres of life, such as habitation, education, the health system, transportation and food provision.

It has been argued that, “once the civil war ended, millions of displaced people attempted to resume normality in their lives, and the government turned to the processes of economic stabilization, recovery, and development” (Puig 2008:28). In Homoine district, the government has officially recognized that poverty and economic inequality are realities not to be ignored; therefore, the principal challenge for government is to develop human resources, increase the quality and the quantity of education and health services, also fortify the systems of assistance of the poor and most vulnerable people (CTD 2009:3). Despite this, the problems of poverty and economic inequality persist in Homoine district.

Firstly, the PEDD (2011-2015) states that about 25292 buildings can be found in Homoine district. Some are public or private buildings and others are commercial and residential buildings (CTD 2011:5). From a superficial analysis one could argue that one house serves more or less four people.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, this does not reflect the reality, because a significant number of these buildings are public offices, private buildings, business construction, religious institutions and so forth. For instance, it is stated that of this number of buildings, 356 are businesses and 35 are small-scale industrial establishments (CTD 2011:21). Beside

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<sup>12</sup> If one divides the number of houses by the total number of residents.

this, 12 of these buildings are health centres and 105 are schools (CTD 2011:6 and 10). This means that more than five people live in the same house. Even though the number of people dwelling in the same house seems to be reasonable, the majority of these houses are precarious. In fact, of the 25 292 houses that Homoine has, only 4 364 are made from stable materials such as cement, zinc and wood, whereas the rest are made from sticks, bamboo, grass, mud, tin, paper and others (CTD 2011:5). This reality shows that only about 16.7 % of the total population dwell in decent houses whereas about 83.3 % live in precarious houses where they are vulnerable to weather conditions, serpents and diseases (see Figure 2 below).



Figure 2. Pictures showing precarious houses in Homoine district.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, until 2010 the district had 105 educational establishments, in which 74 were lower primary schools,<sup>14</sup> 26 upper primary schools,<sup>15</sup> 2 secondary schools,<sup>16</sup> 2 technical and professional schools and 1 institute for teacher training (CTD 2011:6). One aspect which needs to be clarified here is that, Homoine is habited largely by youth. In fact, the district has more than 4 965 children between the ages of 0 and 14 years, about 51 027 young people and adults between 15 and 64 years, and about 7 085 over 65 years of age (CTD 2011:4). It therefore becomes evident that education is needed for more than 80 % of the total population. Nevertheless, looking at the number and quality of schools available in Homoine it also becomes evident that the majority of these people have no access to decent education. The majority of people only have free access to primary education up to Grade 7 and they have to walk 6 to 12 kilometres to reach their schools, which is difficult for many. Those intending to further their education must compete for admission into the few but distant secondary and professional schools of the district or rely on other districts and provinces of

<sup>13</sup> Personal archive.

<sup>14</sup> Lower primary schools teach from grade 1 to 5.

<sup>15</sup> Upper primary schools teach grades 6 and 7.

<sup>16</sup> One of these secondary schools teaches from grade 8 to 10 whereas the other teaches grade 11 and 12.



the country (in the case of university), which is not easy for poor parents. Accordingly, this scenario shows that the majority of people (especially the youth) have no access to decent education, which prevents them finding employment, thus increasing the number of unemployed and marginalized people in society.

Thirdly, the health system is another indicator that poverty in Homoine district is a reality. The district has 12 health centres which respond to the health needs of all 8 localities (CTD 2011:10). Beside the number of centres being insufficient, the conditions in those health centres are also precarious. Indeed, the district has only one Level I health centre with 87 beds, 8 Level II health centres with 38 beds together and 3 Level III health centres without beds (CTD 2011:10).<sup>17</sup> Taking the number of localities as well as the number of people living in Homoine as the starting point, one could argue that each locality has one health centre and that about 862 people share the same bed in the different health centres available. Although this argument is statistically possible, it may differ in reality, because in some places there is more than one health centre whereas in others there are none. The same can also be applied to beds; where some health centres have beds, in other places terribly sick people cannot be admitted because there are no beds.

Fourthly, transportation is also a problem in Homoine, both in terms of roads and vehicles. The district has about 13 roads which establish connections between administrative posts, localities, villages and/or with other neighbouring districts (CTD 2011:22). Official accounts state that, of this number of roads, only two are in good condition, seven are reasonable and four are in bad condition (CTD 2011:22). It is interesting to note that even those considered good or reasonable by the government, in reality are in bad condition, because none of them are tarred roads. All of them are either gravel roads or simply cut of the natural soil (CTD 2011:22). In most places, when it is raining, the natural sand on these roads becomes mud and vehicles cannot easily move. This breaks the connections between the different parts of the district. Even on days when there is no rain people are transported in overloaded and dangerous pick-up trucks, because the conditions of roads do not motivate private transporters to risk using their own cars (see Figure 3 below).

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<sup>17</sup> Level I is a Rural Hospital which serves as reference for primary clinical services such as delivery complications, injury, and medico-surgery emergencies, among others. Level II provides primary clinical conditions that do not require professionals like Surgery Technicians. Level III is a health post, the most peripheral health unit (see WHO 2005:5).



Figure 3. System of transportation in Homoine district.<sup>18</sup>

Fifthly, shortage of food is another indicator of poverty in Homoine. In fact, it has been argued that a large number of people, more precisely peasants with low income, elders and families headed by women, are in potentially vulnerable situation (MAE 2005:39). This scenario has been forcing them to develop strategies for survival, such as participating in programs of *comida pelo trabalho* or literally ‘food for work’, whereby hungry people are required to do some public works and receive food in return (MAE 2005:39). In addition, if they do not collect fruits from the bush, they participate in illegal hunting or risk their lives as cheap labour in the neighbouring country of South Africa (MAE 2005:40).

It is interesting that, even with this scenario of poverty, differences between regions and /or people are also observed. For instance, only a few places in three localities of the district have electricity powered by the *Electricidade de Moçambique* or the Mozambican Electrical System (EDM) whereas the rest have to use alternative types of energy (CTD 2011:50). These include firewood, paraffin and/or solar panels for those who can afford them from the neighbouring country of South Africa. Moreover, the administrative post of Homoine-Sede presents better conditions in terms of housing than the administrative post of Pembe. In fact, in some localities of Homoine-Sede, people have radios, water, toilets, electricity and houses made of cement or zinc (MAE 2005:6), whereas these facilities are uncommon in the administrative post of Pembe. Alongside these and other differences between regions, there are also a few people enjoying some sort of luxury such as driving expensive cars, dwelling in luxurious houses and eating high quality food while the majority die of starvation.

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<sup>18</sup> Personal archive.

Accordingly, these factors highlight the scenarios of poverty and economic inequality which are troubling the majority of the population in Homoine district. The following sub-section will discuss the causes that lie behind this economic scenario.

#### **2.3.4 THE CAUSES OF POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN HOMOINE DISTRICT**

The Mozambican president, Armando Emilio Guebuza, has been arguing in his presidential visitation that, *a pobreza no país está nas mentes das pessoas* (poverty is a problem of the poor themselves) (*O País Online da STV* 2011). Mr Guebuza argues, in other words, that people are poor because they do not use their minds to develop themselves. Using this unfair popular statement of the Mozambican president, one can quickly assume that poverty and economic inequality within the country is a result of laziness of the local populations. For the Mozambican president and others, people are poor and marginalized because they are not working hard. It is true that the popular statement of president Guebuza is an attempt to justify his unjust wealth, but his assumption is unsustainable. In fact, poverty and economic inequality in places like Homoine district are the result of systems which prevent people from improving their standards of life.

Firstly, the Department of the State Administration has stated that one of the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district is the high number of people living in that area (MAE 2005:3). Compared to other districts, Homoine is highly populated and this has created pressure on the available resources. It is true that the land is traditionally understood as a family property, transmitted to new generations as inheritance (MAE 2005:25) but this does not satisfy the number of people of Homoine, where in most cases, conflicts over land develop (MAE 2005:3). Associated with this are natural calamities, irregular precipitation and traditional methods of fertilization, all of which delay agricultural development in Homoine (MAE 2005:4). When it does not rain people lose their crops but when it rains too much, they also see their crops being destroyed by floods. In other words, the district does not have enough capacity to control natural calamities which have been destroying the disputed available resources. Even if people manage to produce enough surpluses, the chaotic system of transportation does not allow them to satisfactorily trade what they produce in order to reduce the asymmetrical economic relations between regions and people. As Clara de Sousa (2003:57) wisely argues, “economies that are reconstructed

from war must give priority to road investment and rehabilitation as a poverty reduction measure” because they determine market opportunities as well as travel costs to schools and clinics. This means that even if enough surpluses are produced, failure to improve the transportation system will result in people dying of starvation in some regions while food gets rotten in barns in other places.

Secondly, Homoine is one of the areas which were left in the cold economically and which was open to Renamo infiltration when the war intensified, because it did not have significant economic assets to be protected by the government.<sup>19</sup> As a result, Homoine was constantly subjected to brutal attacks which have caused uncalculated damage to the lives of people. A visible picture of this brutality is the massacre which occurred on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1987, where about 424 people were killed in one day and others were kidnapped (Bergh 2009:92).<sup>20</sup> Many people who could have used their skills to develop the district were killed and those who escaped had to move to other places, seeking safety. This massacre traumatised people and it is painful for them when they look at the cemeteries and mass graves where their families were buried (see Figure 4 below). Accordingly, the damage created by the civil war was so enormous that it is difficult for the local people to repair it.



Figure 4. Pictures showing mass graves of 350 people killed in the Homoine massacre, others were buried in family graveyards.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See sub-section 2.2.1.

<sup>20</sup> In some countries emerging from war, truth commissions are taken seriously, but Mozambique did not follow this example, and the real perpetrators of the massacre in Homoine district remain unknown. Accusations of supporters on both sides involved in the struggle dominate the popular discourse. This aspect requires further research but it is not a concern in this work.

<sup>21</sup> Personal archive.

Thirdly, Mozambique has a history of colonialism where national raw materials were extracted to feed the ambitious Western industry. With independence this legacy was replaced by corporations. All natural resources that Mozambique has are exported in their natural form and everything that is consumed is imported (Carmona & Beúla 2010:4). Behind the deceitful charity of investors, there is an interest in the natural resources that the country possesses. In order to attract this fraudulent charity, the Mozambican elite “sell off natural resources and chop down forests to plant cash crops to earn foreign currency” (Edgar 2000:20). In other words, the Mozambican economy extracts, it does not process, it does not articulate itself, it does not diversify itself, it does not accumulate, but it makes economic groups and big companies extremely rich (Carmona & Beúla 2010:4). This extraction operates like a chain, whereby the corporations extract from the central government, the central government from the provinces, the provinces from the districts, the districts from the villages and so on. In the case of Homoine district, the good cash nuts and coconuts produced in some localities are extracted through an unjust trade system by the businessmen living at the centre of the town, who then sell them again to the transformative industry in cities like Maxixe, Inhambane or Maputo (CTD 2011:22). It is obvious that the cities also depend on the central government who then export it to their international capitalist allies. Besides this, the prices of these commodities are determined by the buyer and not by the producers. Therefore, many peasants in Homoine district are left poor because what they produce is unjustly taken away from them by the extractive economic system of the country.

Fourthly, foreign debt is also a cause of the aforementioned problem in Homoine district. Mozambique is one of the many African countries that are highly indebted. This debt is a result of the consecutive loans and grants that the country has been receiving since its adoption of the aid-based model of development. The international financial institutions “lent the money and set the terms of repayment, except that when schemes went bankrupt, the debts were never wiped out but passed on and accumulated indefinitely” (Draper 2003:82). For these institutions, repayment of debts is a priority and they insist on the reduction of “spending on schools, hospitals, social support and infrastructures” as a condition for giving further loans (Draper 2003:82). Then if the Mozambican government is “forced to cut subsidies for public education and charge fees that make schooling too expensive for the poor, it cheats a whole generation of children” (Edgar 2000:20). This has been negatively

affecting the majority of Mozambicans, more precisely those living in rural areas, because a large portion of their resources is being allocated to schemes of debt.

Fifthly, the Mozambican government has been very passive towards international economic demands, accepting the policies of donors which are not relevant for local development (Hanlon & Smart 2008:46). Since the government has adopted a strategy of development which consists of extending its hand and waiting for donors to come and end poverty, these donors can dictate what, when and how to implement this development strategy. This system has left the Mozambican government with fewer roles in the development process; it simply follows the rules of its international lords. In fact, donors have been granting multi-billion dollar investments in mining and transport systems that facilitate the extraction of these resources (Barr 2006:9). Even knowing that this kind of investment has few direct benefits for the poor, most of whom living in rural areas, the government has unquestionably been collaborating with them. This passivity of the Mozambican government has created a situation in which the places where minerals have not yet been discovered are left economically in the cold and are marginalized. This is the case of Homoine district, where people are left behind simply because minerals have not yet been discovered.

Sixthly, a large amount of the state budget comes from outside, but these borrowed resources are not equally distributed within the country. The ruling elites are interested in investing in places where they can enhance their pleasure and increase their financial success through corruption. Recently, the government has announced that is going to invest 725 million dollars in the construction of a bridge between the capital city Maputo and the neighbouring bay of Ka Tembe,<sup>22</sup> where 95% of this amount will be borrowed from outside (Mabunda 2012:1). The objective behind this building project is more for tourism rather than for local society, because it will enhance the pleasure of the ruling elite and that of their foreign allies (Mabunda 2012:2). Ordinary Mozambicans are not really interested in tourism but in good diet, decent education, good habitation and a good health system. Moreover, the connection between Maputo and Ka Tembe is currently established by two ferryboats, which even carry loaded cars. Therefore, this is not the time for building this kind of infrastructure with borrowed money in a country where the districts and administrative posts are not yet connected by roads and bridges, where millions of children study under trees because there

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<sup>22</sup> Ka Tembe is a touristic bay located about one kilometre away from the capital city of Maputo.

are no classrooms and where millions of women and their babies die because there is no decent health system (Mabunda 2012:1). In addition, it has been said that this borrowed money is sufficient to build about 6300 health centres throughout the whole country, meaning that in each administrative post about 14 health centres could have been built (Mabunda 2012:2). This unjust distribution of resources is also extended to provinces and districts. In fact, in 2010 Homoine district had a budget of 9 046 030 *Meticais*<sup>23</sup> to invest in programs of development, but a large amount of this money went to the administrative post of Homoine-Sede, leaving Pembe with a smaller amount (CIP 2011:5). In other words, Homoine is threatened by both local and national unjust systems of distribution of the national resources.

Finally, the party oriented model of development is also a cause of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district and elsewhere in Mozambique. In fact, political loyalty is the key requirement for progression and job security in the government and civil service (EIU 2010:4). Those who are not affiliated to the ruling party are given less priority in the development process and the autonomy of the local government is limited, because they have to function according to what is decided by the ruling political party. This means that for anyone to succeed he/she must be affiliated to the ruling party, otherwise he/she will be excluded in terms of decision-making and in terms of accessing the resources of the country at large. Even the money allocated every year in every district for local initiatives (traditionally seven million), goes to individual projects of locally influential people (Carmona & Beúla 2010:7). Consequently, a small group of those who are loyal to the ruling party become increasingly prosperous at the expense of the poor.

Basically, these are the mains causes of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district, which also apply in other parts of Mozambique and especially in rural areas. With this in mind, the next section will assess the role of the church in this situation.

#### **2.4 HOW DOES THE CHURCH RESPOND TO THE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN HOMOINE DISTRICT?**

Mozambique has been officially declared a lay state in the sense that there is a separation between the state and religious organizations (*Assembleia da República* 2004:4). Although

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<sup>23</sup> This 9 046 039 Meticais is the Mozambican currency, which is equivalent to US\$323 072.50 dollars according to the exchange rate provided by Mozambican Television on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2012.

Mozambique is a lay state by definition, religious organizations are free to operate in the public sphere in order to promote an environment of tolerance, understanding and peace and to reinforce national unity, the spiritual and material well-being of the citizens and economic and social development (AR 2004:4). Using Paul Gifford's (1998:17, 20) language, it could be argued that religious organizations in Mozambique are the strongest form of associational life, functioning as key elements of civil society, the role of which is to counterbalance the state. Ordinary people, as well as the state bureaucracy, put religion in the front line of their lives and a massive number of religious organizations can be noted all over the country.

The centrality of religion in the lives of people is also observed in Homoine district, whereby the majority of people living in that area are affiliated to different religious organizations. Official account points out that the predominant religions in Homoine district are: Christianity, Islam and Hinduism (CTD 2011:9). On the side of Christianity, one can find different denominations such as: the Roman Catholic church, the United Methodist church, the Free Methodist church, the Anglican church, the Zionist church, the Universal church of the Kingdom of God, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Adventist church of the seventh day, the church of the Twelve Apostles and the church of the Old Apostles (CTD 2011:9). It is interesting that the majority of Christians in Homoine district are also part of African traditional religions. In other words, many Christians in Homoine district are hybrid entities in the sense that they attend Sunday services while living according to the principles established by their traditional religions.<sup>24</sup> For the purpose of this research, the response of the church to the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district will be limited to the United Methodist Church in Mozambique (IMUM). The reason for concentrating on the IMUM is the need to narrow the analysis and the familiarity of the researcher with this denomination,<sup>25</sup> but this narrowed analysis can also be applied to other Christian denominations operating within the district (and elsewhere in Mozambique).

In 2011, the IMUM issued a report after the conference of the district held at Malonguela, in Homoine district, and a significant number of activities undertaken by this Christian denomination can be noted throughout the report. Firstly, the report states that the IMUM has been doing a charity work, giving assistance to people in a situation of poverty and

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<sup>24</sup> This issue requires further investigation in order to find out the reason for this mixture of religious practice.

<sup>25</sup> The researcher is a member of the United Methodist church in Mozambique and it is easier for him to analyse something familiar than navigate an unknown environment.



vulnerability (IMUM 2011). Secondly, the IMUM has been developing strategies in order to improve Christian as well as secular education, which will then empower the communities in terms of writing and reading skills as a valuable strategy to strengthen their faith (IMUM 2011). Thirdly, evangelization is another activity being stressed by IMUM in Homoine district (IMUM 2011). The ultimate goal of this evangelization is to bring more members into the church. Fourthly, the IMUM has been working hard in order to improve the infrastructure of the church, such as toilets, offices and others (IMUM 2011).

Looking at the activities outlined in this report it becomes evident that the IMUM does not focus on the structures that enable poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district. In fact, it helps the individuals by assisting them when they are in a situation of vulnerability but it does not say anything about the systems that cause this vulnerability. Moreover, a large number of activities developed by the IMUM are church oriented in the sense that they aim at improving the church as an institution, paying little attention to the socio-economic lives of its members. This means that the IMUM in Homoine district is much more interested in improving the spiritual well-being of people than their material well-being.

The aforementioned report highlights two problem areas: the burden of taxation and exclusion. On the one hand, believers have to offer a considerable number of contributions such as tithes (tenth), a thanksgiving offering, offering during Sunday services, birthday offerings, offerings when greeting in a conference, offerings when reading a report and so forth (IMUM 2011). Although, the IMUM insist on offerings it does not show the destination of this money contributed by believers. The assumption is that this money is directed to programmes of the church as an institution instead of being focused on core priorities such as reduction of poverty and economic inequality within the district. On the other hand, the report states that the church should not serve those who fail to pay their monthly tithes until they have paid all that they owe (IMUM 2011). This means that the IMUM is even prepared to see someone dying simply because he/she did not pay his/her monthly duties. In other words, the IMUM excludes from its services those who fail to pay their monthly tithes but it does not consider the reason why they fail to pay these contributions.

In summary, the IMUM in Homoine district has been developing some activities as part of its mission in the public sphere but it has also failed to focus on the systems that enable poverty and economic inequality in the district. The church is more interested in the improvement of

the spiritual well-being of people and not in the improvement of their material well-being. Finally, the IMUM is also promoting poverty and economic inequality through a system of taxation and exclusion of social services for those who fail to pay their monthly taxes.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has analysed the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. It has shown that after independence, the Frelimo government adopted the state-based model of development as a valuable strategy to emancipate people from the deplorable conditions after the colonial tyranny. Nevertheless, this expectation did not materialize because of the lack of administrative capacity of the local people and the commencement of civil war. As result, the government was forced to adopt the aid-based model of development, which drove the country to experience relative prosperity as well as economic inequalities between regions and people. Then, the chapter has argued that currently Mozambique is being run along the lines of a ‘centrally controlled decentralization’ in the sense that local authorities and people are given some sort of autonomy to plan and execute their own development initiatives but the central government has the right to validate or invalidate what is being developed locally. Moreover, the chapter has shown that Homoine district has a significant number of resources which could be used wisely to reduce the problems of poverty and economic inequality but this problem persists because of: the lack of capacity to control natural calamities by the local people, the chaotic system of transportation, the effects of the civil war, the extractive economy, foreign debt, the passivity of the government towards international economic demands, unjust distribution of resources and the party-oriented model of development which excludes people in terms of decision-making and access to resources. Finally, the chapter has pointed out that the church in Homoine district (IMUM) has failed to challenge the systems that contribute to poverty and economic inequality and it has reinforced this problem through the system of taxation and exclusion of those who fail to pay their monthly taxes. With this in mind, the following chapter (the pole of the biblical text of the tri-polar model) will analyse the narrative of the building of the altar and the foundation of the temple as described in Ezra 3:1-13 in order to retrieve elements of an economic ethic which can dialogue with poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE ELEMENTS OF AN ECONOMIC ETHIC IN EZRA'S BUILDING PROJECT**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter of this research analysed the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. This chapter (the pole of the biblical text) sets out to retrieve elements of an economic ethic from Ezra's building project. It outlines the economic-historical context of Ezra's building project, focusing on the economic situation of the Israelites in Palestine, the economic background of the exiles in Babylon and the economic policies of Persia. It then analyses the building of the altar and foundation of the temple as described in Ezra 3, focusing on the elements of an economic ethic in this narrative. It concludes by analysing the role of religion within the economic situation around the building project of Ezra.

#### **3.2 THE ECONOMIC-HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF EZRA'S BUILDING PROJECT**

According to George V. Pixley (1991:233) "Israel first appeared on the historical scene around the end of the thirteenth century BC". It emerged as an ethnically and socioeconomically mixed coalition, composed of a majority of tribally organized peasants, along with lesser numbers of pastoral nomads, mercenaries and freebooters, assorted craftsmen, and renegade priests (Gottwald 1988:273). With the introduction of iron tools in Palestine, various peasants groups marginalized by the tributary systems fled to the hill country, where they were joined by a group of Hebrew slaves from Egypt, who brought with them a god (Yahweh) who heard the cry of slaves (Pixley 1991: 233-236). In this coalition, Yahweh became the socioreligious ideology and organizational framework that helped to forge into an effective revolutionary movement that expelled the tributary system and established a communitarian economic system (Gottwald 1985:273). Within this economic system, Israel "was made up of a small villages organized by ties of blood relationship into families, clans and tribes", and they had neither cities nor king (Pixley 1991:234). However, internal and external pressures led Israel to shift from a pre-monarchic to a tributary system.

Gerald O. West (1999:15) argues that the rise of the Philistines, alongside with corruption among the judges constituted the broader socio-economic conditions that led Israel to abandon the egalitarian vision. In fact, the Philistines were posing a serious threat to the mountainous heartland of Israel due to their oligarchic form of leadership as well as their iron

weaponry and mobile military, which made them effective fighters in the hill country (West 1999:15). Moreover, dishonesty among Eli's sons and Samuel's sons contributed to this erosion of the egalitarian vision (West 1999:15-16). As a result, the Israelites persuaded Samuel to change their economic system and adopt a city-state system like other nations around them (see West 1999:16, 1Sam 8:1-22). This was, indeed, the shift from a household to a tributary economic system, inaugurated by Saul and David and consolidated by Solomon through his intense building project (see Dreher 1997:25).

After the death of Solomon, the Israelite monarchy was divided into two kingdoms (Israel in the north and Judah in the south) (see 1 Kings 12:1-19). Following this division, after short periods of independent rule, the people of Israel were deported to Assyria (2 Kings 17:1-6) and the people of Judah were destroyed and deported by the people of Babylon (2 Kings 24:8-11). After a long period of exile in Babylon the southern kingdom was restored (Bright 1962:341; Coogan 2011:415; Gottwald 1985:430 amongst others). Although this restoration is attested to in various biblical references, the Ezra-Nehemiah text narrates it methodically as a continuous project. In the Ezra-Nehemiah narrative, there are three different voices involved throughout the restoration process of Judah: the Israelites who returned from captivity, the Israelites who were left in Palestine and the Persian authorities. These voices can be analysed from different perspectives, but this research will concentrate on the economic situation of the Israelites in Palestine, the economic background of the exiles and the Persian economic policies.

### **3.2.1 THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE ISRAELITES IN PALESTINE**

It has been said earlier in this chapter that the people of Judah were exiled in Babylon.<sup>26</sup> But this exile did not involve the whole population. In fact, "only the cream of Jewish leadership was taken, and the poor elements of the population were left behind to harvest the crops" (Anderson 1978:418). In other words, the Israelites who went to Babylon represented the country's political, religious and intellectual leadership, which constituted not more than 5% of the total population (Gottwald 1988:397). The ruling elite who previously controlled the economic life of the nation were the main targets of the Babylonian policy of deportation so that an attempt at quick reconstruction would be impossible (Wittenberg 1993:97).

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<sup>26</sup> See sub-section 3.2

In Judah, the Babylonians did not bring in people from outside to replace the deported leadership class, but they appointed local nobilities to rule on their behalf over those who were left behind (Bright 1962:324). For that reason, a certain man from the local nobility, called Gedaliah, was appointed to be the ruler of Judah on behalf of the Empire (2 Kings 25:22). This means that both the deported leadership and the Israelites who were left in Palestine remained under Babylonian sovereignty after the destruction of Judah.

The Babylonian imperial policies included a re-distribution of land of those whom they had deported (Farisani 2002:196). Based on this Babylonian policy, the Israelites who were left in Palestine took over large estates abandoned by deported officials (Gottwald 1985:424). The land which was previously a commodity for a few became available for the majority of those who were left in Palestine. From that perspective, it could be argued that the deportation of the Jewish leadership enabled those who were left behind to till the soil and improve their economic situations which were previously ruined by the (now destroyed) Davidic monarchy. In fact, under the leadership of Gedaliah agriculture flourished to some degree (Van Zyl et al. 1979:196). However, this economic recovery under Gedaliah did not last long (Farisani 2002:194). Though the Israelites in Palestine had access to land, they could not improve their economic situation in a short period of time.

Based on archaeological excavations, Gunther H. Wittenberg (1993:97) argues that after the Babylonian destruction and deportation “all of the fortified towns in the heartland of Judah were razed to the ground and in most cases they were not to [be] rebuilt for many years to come”. This destruction impacted negatively on the economy of Judah. People were deeply affected by a severe famine and there was no food for them to eat (2 Kings 25:3). Besides this, the Israelites who were left in Palestine were the “poorest of the land” (2 Kings 25:12, New International Version). They were less educated and less influential than those who went into exile (Farisani 2002:205). Further, Neo-Babylonian authorities kept a close eye on taxable surpluses (Gottwald 1985:425). A large quantity of what Israelites produced from the land was squeezed by the Neo-Babylonian system of taxation. Therefore, the Israelites who were left in Palestine could not effectively recover their economic stability.

As a response to their economic crisis, the Israelites who were left in Palestine developed an alternative form of social organization. The ancient village tribalism emerged as the dominant force in organizing and preserving Palestinian Jewish identity throughout ‘the exile’, no

matter how much they were hampered by the imposition of the Neo-Babylonian dominion (Gottwald 1985:425). While payment of tribute and tax continued in Judah, the decentralized system of governance previously suppressed by the destroyed Davidic monarchy was revitalized. Elelwani Farisani (2002:198) admits that “in the absence of a centralized and institutional cult, the peasants were not heavily exploited in terms of tribute and royal tax”. The temple which legitimized the extraction of tribute was no longer there, and this might have indeed reduced the burden of taxation. In other words, the renewal of this decentralized system of governance was an attempt to at least partially re-establish an egalitarian economic vision which would have reduced the burden of debt and slavery.

Accordingly, the huge damage created by the Babylonian army, the lack of skills in the population and the reduced but still intact tributary system did not allow the Israelites in Palestine to improve their economic situation after the destruction of Judah. Nevertheless, they made an attempt to recreate the egalitarian form of social organization, which remained as their economic vision probably until the restoration period of Judah. With this in mind, the research will move on to analyse the economic background of the Israelites in Babylon.

### **3.2.2 THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE EXILES IN BABYLON**

It should be noted, as Norman Gottwald (1985:420) argues, that “many of those who were driven away or fled the land went to foreign lands nearer at hand than Babylon, such as Transjordan, Phoenicia, Syria, and Egypt”. In other words, Babylon was not the only place where the exiled could be found, but this section deals specifically with those who were in Babylon. When the Jews arrived in Babylon they “were kept together in compact groups settled on deserted agricultural sites” (Gottwald 1985:425). Elelwani Farisani (2002:206) suggested that the Jews were kept together probably because the Babylonian policy of deportation “was not to disperse those whom they deported in attempt [sic] to destroy them ethnically and politically”. While this assumption could be true, it could also be argued that probably this was a Babylonian strategy to control those whom they deported.

The concept of exile is commonly understood as total privation. But the exiles in Babylon seemed to have experienced some sort of tolerance. The fact that the exiles in Babylon were desperate cannot be denied, because they had “lost not only their homes but also their land and a social status which was usually influential” (Farisani 2002:206). However, this

situation did not stop the continuity of their lives. Their exile was not in a private space; they could even maintain some contacts with people in Palestine, among them the prophet Jeremiah who sent a letter from Jerusalem to Babylon encouraging them to build houses, plant gardens and eat what they produce, marry and have children, find wives for their sons and give their daughters in marriage, increase in number, and seek peace and prosperity in the land they live (Jeremiah 29:5-7, New International Version). The words of Jeremiah seem to have been taken seriously by the Jews in Babylon. Indeed, after a certain period of initial difficulty, they became participants in the commercial life of the city and eventually flourished there (Coogan 2011:381). In the same way, they engaged in agriculture and earned their living in any way they could (Bright 1962:326). In other words, the incorporation of the exiled into the Babylonian community created possibilities for them to improve their economic situation.

The wealth of the exiles in Babylon can also be attested by the quality and quantity of donations presented in order to support the building project in Jerusalem once they were allowed to return. Just after the decree of Cyrus, those who returned from the exile were assisted with “articles of silver, and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all freewill offerings” (Ezra 1:6-11, New International Version). These types of contributions cannot be associated with people who are economically deprived. Again, these donations came not only from those who wished to return but also from those who wanted to remain (Coogan 2011:401). Scholars have admitted that many of the Jews who remained in Babylon were economically stable and they were willing to assist the venture<sup>27</sup> financially but not to participate personally (Bright 1962:344). This means that they chose not to leave their economic possessions in Babylon in order to begin a new life in Judah. In fact, evidence from the next century (after the restoration of Judah) shows that “many Jewish names appear in business documents in Nipur” (Van Zyl et al. 1979:205), probably those who did not return to Judah. The other evidence of this economic stability of the Jews in Babylon is expressed in terms of employment opportunities held by some of them within the Babylonian administration. Although most of them were not highly educated they were in the leadership class (Farisani 2002:207). This is true for people like Nehemiah who was a cupbearer to the Persian king (Nehemiah 1:11) and Ezra who was probably a secretary at the Persian Court (see Gottwald 1985:435). Many of those who could not hold high position had to work on

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<sup>27</sup> The building project in Judah.

“state projects, such as irrigation, works in agriculture, or on building sites” (Wittenberg 1993:13). These and other employment opportunities within the Babylonian administration would have, certainly, helped the Jewish community in exile to improve their economy.

From this analysis it becomes evident that while the Jews in Babylon were dislocated and homesick having been forcibly driven away from their homeland, the exile had opened up the possibility for the majority of them to ameliorate their economic situations. With this in mind, the research will analyse in the next sub-section the economic policies of Persia.

### **3.2.3 THE ECONOMIC POLICIES OF PERSIA**

The restoration process of Judah started when the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, conquered Babylon probably in 539 BC, bringing the whole of the Babylonian Empire under his control (Bright 1962:342). Hence, the Jews previously controlled by Babylon became new subjects to Persia. In his imperial policies, Cyrus allowed the Jews exiled in Babylon to go home and restore their community as well as their cultic life centred in the temple (see Coogan 2011:415; Ezra 1:2-4 and Ezra 6:3-5). Moreover, Cyrus not only returned to their original places the idols which Nabonidus<sup>28</sup> had brought to Babylon (Van Zyl et al. 1979:204), but also demanded that people in his reign assist the venture with valuable things such as gold, silver, goods, animals and other freewill offerings (Ezra 1:4). Likewise, the Persian kings who succeeded Cyrus supported the restoration project in Judah with economic as well as human resources (see Ezra 6:5; 7:15-17; Nehemiah 2:7-9).

The attitude of the Persian authorities towards Judah, particularly in allowing them to rebuild the temple, is viewed by some scholars as an expression of religious sympathy towards the subject people (Bright 1962:342; Farisani 2002:218; Van Zyl et al. 1979:203). However, locating it within the entire Ancient Near Eastern context, this assumption is inadequate. In the Ancient Near East the “political, philosophical, juridical, and above all economic relations were expressed in terms of [the] sacred” (Boer 2007:44). The Ancient Near Eastern temples not only functioned as religious places but they were also “centres of the economic life of the community” (Wright 1944:67). Paul S. Evans (2010:40) also argues that in the Ancient Near East (ANE), the temples functioned somewhat as national banks, as a supplement to palace treasuries, where the ruling monarch had an understandable interest in

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<sup>28</sup> The last Babylonian ruler who was captured by Cyrus (see Coogan 2011:399).



the maintenance and protection of the temple and in the possible distribution of the monies held there. In Egypt and Mesopotamia temples were heavily endowed with landed properties and received a tremendous income and at certain periods they probably owned nearly all the land of the country and acquired almost an economic strangle-hold over the people (Wright 1944:67). So, it could be argued that in the ANE there was no separation between the sacred and the secular. As Gerald West (2011:532) also admits, the basic attitude between the state and the temple in the ANE was that of collaboration and mutual ideological assistance.

In addition, the temples in the Ancient Near East were erected as the houses or palaces of a deity, comparable to the palaces of a king or noble and “it was the duty of both king and commoner to provide for the upkeep of the temples” (Wright 1944:70). This maintenance of the temple, which was at the same time the centre of religious and political administration, was established through an exchange of services. The rulers were expected to offer a set of religious or public works while the people would guarantee the labour and the upkeep of the court and/or the temple (Dreher 1997:27). This exchange of services is typically one of the main features in a peasant society, where the surpluses of the rural cultivators are extracted by the ruling elite in order to underwrite its own standard of living and to distribute the remainder to groups in society that do not farm but must be fed for their specific goods and services (Wolf 1966:3-4). Non-payment of tribute means disloyalty to God, because the kings are viewed as God’s servant (Gottwald 1993:163).

Based on the reality of other temples in the ANE, it is difficult to accept that the attitude of the Persian authorities towards Judah, in allowing and sponsoring the building of their temple, was merely an expression of religious sympathy towards the subject people. Indeed, James A. Trotter (2001:287) argues that most religious construction projects in the ANE “functioned as the acceptable public face behind which the personal and/or political motives of the rulers who sponsored them were hidden”. Hence, it could be argued that the construction project in Jerusalem was part of the imperial policies of Persia. Scholars like John Bright (1962:344) point out that Persia allowed and sponsored the building project in Jerusalem in order to have a nucleus of royal subjects there, since Palestine lay near the Egyptian frontier. In other words, the decision of Cyrus and his successors was influenced by their ambition of the incorporation of Egypt into their empire. This assumption could be true because Egypt was conquered probably in 525 BC by Cyrus’s successor, Cambyses (Bright

1962:346). However, it could also be argued that Persia allowed and sponsored the building project of the Jews in order to gain economic dividend from it.

According to Farisani (2002:239), Persia demanded from its subject people three kinds of tax: a tribute tax which was paid annually to the Persian monarch; a toll tax which was probably paid to use roads or bridges; and a land tax which was in connection with the fields and vineyards. This system of taxation is also attested in the Ezra-Nehemiah text. Indeed, when the authorities of Samaria issued a letter to Artaxerxes, opposing the building project, they argued that if the temple was built, there would be no payment of taxes, tribute or duty and the royal revenue would suffer (Ezra 4:13). Here, both Artaxerxes and the authorities of Samaria recognise this system of taxation within the Empire. Similarly, in his letter to Ezra, Artaxerxes argues that none of the Jews has “authority to impose taxes, tribute or duty on any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants or other workers at this house of God” (Ezra 7:24, New International Version). In other words, Artaxerxes argues that the burden of taxation should not be imposed on the authorities of the temple, but that only ordinary people should carry this yoke. Based on this system of taxation within the empire it could be concluded that Persia sponsored the construction project in Jerusalem not simply as an expression of religious sympathy, but also as an economic project.

In order to ensure a regular yield from tribute, the Persian authorities divided the Empire into satrapies,<sup>29</sup> provinces and districts (Van Zyl et al. 1979:206). Each of the provinces was headed by a governor appointed by the Persian authorities (Flanders, et al. 1988: 397). This organized administrative system, enabled an effective extraction of surplus from the peasants to feed the ambitious needs of the Persian Empire. Besides this, the Persian authorities appointed local leaders with some ancestral roots so that the extractive economic system would probably gain credibility among the subject people.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the real exploiters were hidden behind the local client-rulers of the Empire. Further, the extraction of tribute was effectively maintained by an efficient system of communication as well as the army, directly controlled by the Persian emperor (Bright 1962:344).

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<sup>29</sup> Judah was one of the provinces of the Satrapy called, ‘Beyond the River’ (see Gottwald 1985:429).

<sup>30</sup> In Jerusalem, Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah were appointed by the Persian kings as the heads throughout the restoration process.

In summary, the deprived economic situation of the Israelites in Palestine, the improved economic situation of the Israelites in Babylon and the Persian system of taxation constitute the huge and complex economic-historical background of Ezra's building project. Therefore, the elements of an economic ethic in Ezra 3 must be retrieved taking into consideration this economic-historical background which run throughout the entire restoration process of Judah.

### **3.3 RETRIEVING ELEMENTS OF AN ECONOMIC ETHIC FROM EZRA 3**

It has been argued earlier in this chapter that the restoration of Judah is presented in the Ezra-Nehemiah text as a continuous project (see sub-section 3.2). The events in this narrative can be outlined in this sequence: the first return during the reign of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-2:70); the building of the altar and the temple (Ezra 3:1-6:22); the return of Ezra with other exiles during the reign of Artaxerxes and the case of intermarriage (Ezra 7:1-10:44); the first journey of Nehemiah to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1-2:20); the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:1-7:73); the reading of the Law and the renewal of covenant (Nehemiah 8:1-10:39); and the second journey of Nehemiah to Jerusalem and his final activities (Nehemiah 11:1-13:31).<sup>31</sup> This sequence of events within the entire process of restoration of Judah constitutes a huge field which cannot be covered only in this research. In order to limit the discussion and meet the objectives of this research, this section will concentrate on the narrative of the building of the altar and the foundation of the temple.

In order to analyse the narrative of the building of the altar and the foundation of the temple (Ezra 3) this section will make a shift in terms of methodological approaches. On the one hand, the section will use a chiasmic structure as a tool to retrieve some relevant economic elements of the narrative. On the other hand, the section will use a socio-historical approach to locate the literary elements of the narrative within the economic-historical background of the entire restoration process of Judah, since the narrative shows some evidences of its side of production (the community behind the text). This kind of shifting in terms of methodological approaches is not unique to this research; Néstor Míguez (1995:252-254) in his *Apocalyptic and the Economy: A Reading of Revelation 18 from the Experience of Economic Exclusion*,

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<sup>31</sup> This sequence is based on the New International Version.

has made a similar shift in his analysis of the text. Hence, this section will analyse Ezra 3 using an eclectic set of methodologies, similar to the approach used by Néstor Míguez.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.3.1 THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE IN EZRA 3

The text in Ezra 3:1-13 reads as follows:

When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled as one man<sup>33</sup> in Jerusalem. Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices. Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day. After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred feasts of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD. On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD's temple had not yet been laid. Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia. In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work, appointing Levites twenty years of age and older to supervise the building of the house of the LORD. Jeshua and his sons and brothers and Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Hodaviah) and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers-- all Levites-- joined together in supervising those working on the house of God. When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their

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<sup>32</sup> For how models matter, see Chaney, cited in West (2011:511).

<sup>33</sup> The word 'man' in this text seems to exclude women and children. Therefore, the following discussion will use the word 'person' as an alternative translation of the Hebrew word *iysh*, which seems to be more inclusive.

vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away (New International Version).

It has been stated that the conspicuous property of the language of the Old Testament poetry is its use of parallelisms, where certain events repeat themselves (Burden 1986:50). Though Ezra 3 is not poetry (but a narrative), parallelisms run throughout the whole chapter. The parallelisms in Ezra 3 can be reflected in a chiasmic structure, as follows.

A: People began with harmonized emotions: assembled as one person in Jerusalem (v. 1)

B: They built an altar of God to sacrifice burnt offerings as it is written in the Law of Moses, the man of God (v. 2)

C: Before the foundation of the temple, they [who returned from the captivity] were terrified because of the peoples of the land (*am ha aretz*) (v. 3-6)

D: International commerce begins with the permission of Cyrus king of Persia (v. 7)

C': When the work began, those returning from the captivity appointed leaders to supervise the building of the house of the Lord (vv. 8-9)

B': The builders laid the foundation of the temple to praise the Lord as prescribed by David king of Israel (vv. 10-11)

A': People had mixed emotions: some shouted with joy and others wept in a great voice [in Jerusalem] (vv. 12-13).

At the surface level, Ezra 3 constitutes a concentric structure, whereby the antithetical parallelism between the people who assembled as one person and their shouting with mixed emotions begin and close the chapter respectively (Míguez 1995:254). This concentric structure serves as an inclusion around the parallel between the building of the altar (B) and the foundation of the temple (B') as well as around the fear of those returned from the captivity (C) and the designation of supervisors (C') (Míguez 1995:254). International trade provides the climax of the economic reality behind the building project as described in Ezra 3 since it is situated at the very centre of the chiasm, functioning as the fulcrum of the structure.<sup>34</sup>

The concentric structure of Ezra 3 constitutes a relevant tool in this research because it sheds some light on some metaphorical or symbolic elements (Moses, David, Cyrus, amongst others), which can be used to retrieve some elements of an economic ethic from this narrative. Therefore, the following section will analyse the content of Ezra 3, based on the suggested parallel divisions as well as the fulcrum of the structure.

### **3.3.2 ANALYSING THE CONTENT OF THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE IN EZRA 3**

The previous sub-section argued that Ezra 3 constitutes a chiasmic structure. This sub-section analyses the content of this structure, following the overall sequence outlined above (the parallel divisions and the suggested fulcrum of the structure).

#### **3.3.2.1 THE PEOPLE ASSEMBLED AS ONE PERSON AND THE SHOUTING WITH MIXED EMOTIONS (A AND A')**

Ezra 3:1 says: When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, the people assembled as one man in Jerusalem (A). However, Ezra 3:12-13 says: But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away (A').

Ezra 3 begins with people 'assembled as one person in verse 1, probably the returned from the captivity (see the preceding chapters in Ezra). The Babylonian exile did not only scatter

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<sup>34</sup> The research will come back to this point later (see sub-section 3.3.2.4).

people but also it destroyed Judah, both in terms of economy and religion centred in the temple. The centralized unity based on the temple and the Davidic dynasty was destroyed. As Ellen Posman (2005:5) argues, with the Babylonian destruction and deportation of Judah “the one became many”. In other words, while some people remained in Judah others were driven away or fled the land and went to foreign lands. Therefore, it could be argued that the restoration process under Cyrus and his successors opened up a new opportunity at least for those who returned from the captivity (the old elite) to rebuild the economy and religion of Judah centred on the temple.

According to Ezra 3, before the beginning of the building activities, those who returned from the captivity had to assemble as one person (Ezra 3:1). Scholars like F. Charles Fensham (1982:59) argue that the assembling as one person is referring to a gathering with common purpose. In other words, the building project could not start unless the community was united with common purpose. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word *acaph*, which is commonly translated as ‘assembling’ or ‘gathering’, is the same as the one used in Exodus before the liberation project of Moses and Aaron (Exodus 4:29). The difference between the two events is that in Exodus those who were assembled were the elders of the Israelites whereas in Ezra 3 the gathering is for people. In other words, in the Exodus text, the elders represent all the people, but in Ezra those who gather do not represent all the people, only a particular sector, the returned from captivity. The language appears inclusive, and yet what is really happening is exclusive.<sup>35</sup>

Walter Brueggemann (1983:308) argues that the Old Testament presents “two circles of traditions in Israel’s literature concerning covenant, one derived from Moses and the other Davidic in its formation”. While the Mosaic covenant tends to be a movement of protest which is situated among the disinherited and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who decisively intrudes, even against seemingly impenetrable institutions and ordering, the Davidic tradition tends to be a movement of consolidation which is situated among the established and secure, and articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who faithfully abides and sustains on behalf of the present ordering (Brueggemann 1983:308-309). According to Walter Brueggemann (1983:310), the difference between the two trajectories is that the Mosaic tradition is characterized by political decentralization and social

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<sup>35</sup> This tension will be discussed later in section 3.3.2.3.

egalitarianism while the Davidic tradition is characterized by urban centralization and social stratification with power in the hands of an elite. The Mosaic covenant has its foundation within the conquest and pre-monarchic period of Israel while the Davidic covenant can be well understood within the period of the united monarchy in Israel.

It is also interesting to note that the two traditions or trajectories run throughout the entire Old Testament as competing memories in different periods of the Israelite history (Brueggemann 1993:316). Within these competing traditions, the visionaries (who stand for the Mosaic covenant) continue the hope and passion of the liberation tradition which believes that the present order is sharply called into question by God's promise whereas the pragmatists (who stand for the Davidic-Solomonic covenant) continue the confident affirmation of the present as the proper ordering willed by God, perhaps to be gradually changed but on the whole to be preserved (Brueggemann 1993:322). In view of Brueggemann's analysis, it could be suggested that the gathering of people in Ezra 3, which is similar to the one in Exodus, reflects the presence of the voices (or at least the potential for the presence of the voices) of the visionaries at the beginning of the building project. The Mosaic metaphors or symbols deriving from texts like Exodus 4:29 are being invoked in Ezra's building project. However, this Mosaic memory seems to have been suppressed at the end when the foundation of the temple was laid. In other words, the potential of the Mosaic memory is not actualized.

After the foundation of the temple, the returned from the captivity are presented shouting with mixed emotions. While some shouted for joy, others wept aloud (Ezra 3:12-13). Those who shouted for joy are not clearly described in the text, but it is probably that they represent a generation of people who were born after the destruction of the temple of Solomon, probably in exile. This description seems to be plausible in this context since they (those who shouted for joy) are clearly contrasted with "older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple" (Ezra 3:12, New International Version). Those who had seen the former temple are presented in the narrative weeping aloud when the foundation of the new temple was laid. According to the traditional view, the older priests and the Levites and family heads wept in disappointment because the new house (temple) was not as good as the former house (see Fensham 1982:64). In other words, they wept because they remembered the grandeur of the previous temple in contrast to the ordinariness of the new temple. Even though this hypothesis cannot be discarded, it could be also argued that they wept because



they remembered the economic role played by the previous temple. Their lament could be seen as recognition of both the grandeur and the ambiguity of the temple.

Following the general pattern of the temples in the ANE, Solomon “introduced the temptation to think of a God domesticated on behalf of the royal interests” (Birch et al. 2005:252). Solomon used the temple as well as the name of God to legitimize his ideologies and practices. The basic attitude between the state and the temple in the reign of Solomon was that of collaboration so that the surplus would be legitimately extracted from peasants to feed the excesses of Solomon and his allies.

The exploitative system during Solomon’s reign began with his massive constructions. Besides the immense amount of human labour required to build such splendour, Solomon’s building activities created a series of needs unable to be met solely through the work and production of the people of the land (Dreher 1997:29). Large amounts of materials and skilled labour required for the temple and other buildings of Solomon were only found elsewhere (Dreher 1997:29). Indeed, biblical references point out that the building project of Solomon required cedar woods, pine logs and special skilled labour which could be found only in Hiram of Tyre (1 Kings 5:1-18).

Since Israel was a peasant society, it relied on agricultural production to cover these expenses. This means that large amounts of what peasants produced was extracted in order to pay for these importations needed for the building activities of Solomon. Besides this, rural cultivators were required to pay tributes for the excessive royal consumption as well as for maintenance of Solomon’s army which secured his throne (Dreher 1997:35). As a result, most of the rural peasants could not afford to live on and pay taxes from their agricultural surplus and so they relied on loans from the rich merchants living in cities, who then charged them high rates of interests (West 1999:14). Failing to pay their debts meant that their land was taken and they were forced to sell themselves as slaves. In view of this socio-economic cost generated by the temple of Solomon, it could be suggested that the old priests and Levites and family heads in Ezra 3, who had seen the temple of Solomon, wept because they saw in this new temple the continuation of the socio-economic burden centred in the temple.

Based on this antithetical parallelism, it could be suggested that at the beginning of the building project in Ezra 3 the Mosaic covenant existed as memory among the visionaries, yet

this memory was suppressed (or not actualized) by the Davidic-Solomonic memory when the foundation of the temple was laid.

### 3.3.2.2 THE ALTAR AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE TEMPLE (B AND B')

Ezra 3:2 says: Then Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God (B). But Ezra 3:10-11 says: When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel. With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid (B').

The building of the altar began under the leadership of "Jeshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates" (Ezra 3:2). Jeshua was the high priest while Zerubbabel was the recognized civil authority appointed by the Persian authorities as the successor of Sheshbazzar<sup>36</sup> (Anderson 1978:479). The presence of both the religious authority and the civil authority in Ezra's building project can be interpreted as a clear indication of collaboration between the state and the temple, one of the main features of the economic trajectory based on the Davidic-Solomonic memory.

Though other types of celebrations occurred after the building of the altar (for example, the feast of booths); the main purpose of its construction was to sacrifice burnt offerings on it (Ezra 3:2). The Hebrew root translated as 'burnt offerings' is *olah* and it is repeated 6 times only in this chapter (see Ezra 3:2, 3, 4, 5 and 6). This repetition strengthens the relevance of *olah* in the building of the altar. Based on the burnt offering sacrificed by Noah (Genesis 8:20), Norbert Link (2008:2) argues that this type of offerings was already being done long before the establishment of the sacrificial system in the time of Moses. Nevertheless, the burnt offering referred to in this narrative is clearly connected to the tradition of Moses (see Ezra 3:2). According to the Mosaic tradition, burnt offerings were offered in order to make atonement (Leviticus 1:1-17) or to bring about reconciliation with God, by loving God; it

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<sup>36</sup> Sheshbazzar was the head of the first mission after the decree of Cyrus (see Gottwald 1985:430; Ezra 1:8).

foreshadowed the first step toward renewed contact with God (Link 2008:8). The pre-exilic prophecies interpreted the destruction and deportation of Judah as a result of the [economic] sin of the nation (Coogan 2011:363; Amos 2:4-5; Isaiah 3:8-9; Jeremiah 8:4-12). In other words, the nation was destroyed because people did not walk according to God's principles. Hence, their project of restoration should begin with reconciliation with God. Moreover, this reconciliation should be done according to the Law of God given through Moses.

Moses is the archetype of the Israelite pre-monarchic form of social organization. According to biblical tradition (see Exodus 19:1-25 and 20:1-21), Moses was given the Law or *torah* by God at Mount Sinai. The Law of Moses was given to the Israelites by God as instruction about worship and the daily conduct of life (Gottwald 1985:106). This means that the Law of Moses should not be viewed as a Law merely concerned about God and theological identity but also as concerned about "social values and social organization" (Brueggemann 1993:313). The law of Moses stresses the socio-religious and ideological framework based on Yahweh. In other words, the Law of God given to the Israelites through Moses, stands for an egalitarian project in which the entire populace is assured of approximately equal access to resources by means of their organization into extended families, protective associations of families and tribes (see West 1999:15). Therefore, it could be argued that the metaphor of the Law of Moses represents the pre-monarchic Israel and the egalitarian form of social organization. This egalitarian project is present as a memory at the beginning of the building of the altar but this memory was suppressed by the memory of David when the foundation of the temple was laid.

The builders laid the foundation of the temple and the priests and Levites took their place to praise the Lord (Ezra 3:10). The Hebrew root translated as 'praise' in this narrative is *halal* and is repeated three times in this chapter (see Ezra 3:10-11). According to Paul Vickers (1998:5) praising the Lord involves boasting in the Lord. This boasting turns to pride and self worship, from which all [economic] sin ultimately stems (Vickers 1998:5). Even though Vickers's argument cannot be generalized to all forms of praising, it carries some sort of credibility in this narrative. In fact, the praising referred to in this narrative is accompanied by special vestments and musical instruments, which indicate a human pleasure and festival rather than a humble reconciliation with God. Moreover, this celebration is not done according to the Law of a simple man of God like Moses; but according to David, a [boastful] king of Israel (Ezra 3:10).

David is the archetype of the Israelite monarchy; the king who began the tributary system consolidated by Solomon and his successor. Besides the extraction of tribute, David established the beginning of a city-state through the distribution of “the fertile alluvial plains of Canaan, secured when he defeated the Philistines, to his retainers, leading to the establishment of a new class of Israelite aristocrats and bureaucrats” (West 2011:516). According to Carlos Dreher (1997:26), the extraction of tribute in the reign of David was not as “severe and heavy as what would subsequently be imposed, especially on the northern tribes, during the reign of Solomon”. The burden of taxation during the reign of David seems to have been moderate compared to the subsequent periods because the king (David) was able to rely extensively on the booty of war, and tribute was extracted from conquered people (West 2011:516). In Solomon’s reign and that of his successors, the tributary system reached its critical stage where the peasants were left with no means for survival and were forced to take out survival-loans from the wealthy moneylenders, which led them to dependence or debt-slaves because of the high interest rates (Chaney 1993:258-259). Though the tributary system in Israel was consolidated by Solomon, David is the Israelite king who laid the foundations of this system. This means that the metaphor/or symbol of David represents the Israelite monarchy and its tributary mode of production.

Therefore, it could be argued that this parallelism is a clear evidence of the existence of the two circles of traditions within the restoration project of the Jews as described in Ezra 3. The egalitarian project is present as memory in the invocation of the Law of Moses but this memory is not allowed to guide the economic reality in Ezra’s building project, because it is suppressed by the oppressive memory of David.

### **3.3.2.3 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN THE BUILDING PROJECT (C AND C’)**

Ezra 3: 3-6 says: Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices. Then in accordance with what is written, they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles with the required number of burnt offerings prescribed for each day. After that, they presented the regular burnt offerings, the New Moon sacrifices and the sacrifices for all the appointed sacred feasts of the LORD, as well as those brought as freewill offerings to the LORD. On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD’s temple had not yet been laid (C). Yet, Ezra 3:8-

9 says: In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Jeshua son of Jozadak and the rest of their brothers (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work, appointing Levites twenty years of age and older to supervise the building of the house of the LORD. Jeshua and his sons and brothers and Kadmiel and his sons (descendants of Hodaviah) and the sons of Henadad and their sons and brothers-- all Levites-- joined together in supervising those working on the house of God (C').

Ezra 3 argues that the building project occurred while those who returned from the captivity<sup>37</sup> were afraid of the peoples of the land or the *am ha aretz*<sup>38</sup> (Ezra 3:3-6). Moreover, those appointed to supervise the building of the temple were exclusively selected from those who returned from the captivity and not from the people of the land (Ezra 3:8-9). Those who returned from captivity are the Jews who were taken into exile by the Babylonians and returned under Cyrus's decree while the *am ha aretz* are those Israelites who were left in Palestine (Farisani 2002:123). Ezra 3 not only silences<sup>39</sup> the *am ha aretz* but also does not show the reason for this conflict between the two groups. Nonetheless, if the narrative is located within the entire restoration project then it becomes clear that the conflict was about the inclusion or exclusion in the building project (see Ezra 4:1-5). The *am ha aretz* wanted to participate in the building project but they were excluded by the returned from the captivity. This exclusion created "resentment and hostility on the part of those who were turned away" (Farisani 2002:129).

In Babylon, some exiles considered themselves to be the true Israel, with whom Yahweh himself had gone into exile, while those left in the land were among the guilty; the exiles seem to have created a notion of an empty land or a land devoid of inhabitants (Coogan 2011:379). The exiles viewed the real nation of Israel as constituted only by those who were in exile; the poor people of the land were viewed as non-existent or even alien in the land. This exclusivist ideology of the exiles certainly came into conflict with the *am ha aretz* who also claimed the land as theirs (Coogan 2011:379). Though the historical reality of this

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<sup>37</sup> Alternatively, the Ezra-Nehemiah text uses the designations Jews, Judah and Benjamin, Israel, the nobles and officers or holy race to describe the returned from the captivity. But, it is not the aim of this research to give the details of each of these terminologies.

<sup>38</sup> This term did not originate with the Ezra-Nehemiah text, it is found also in some pre-exilic text (see Thames 2011:109). Its originality requires further investigation.

<sup>39</sup> Farisani (2002:127) describes this as part of the exclusivist ideology of the Ezra-Nehemiah text.

exclusivist ideology in Ezra 3 is important, this section is interested in showing the economic implications of this exclusion or inclusion in the building project.

Elsewhere in this research it is been argued that in the ANE, the religious and economic lives of people were interwoven and centred in the temple (see sub-section 3.2.3). This dual function of the temples also existed in Israel (Evans 2010:1). Like the temple of Solomon, the second temple functioned as both a religious place and economic centre of the Jewish people. The inclusion or exclusion in the religious affairs of the temple symbolized the inclusion or exclusion in the economic life of the nation. For that reason, the exclusion of the *am ha aretz* in Ezra's building project is a symbol of their exclusion from the economic life of Judah. Farisani (2002:223) goes further arguing that the exclusion of the *am ha aretz* from the building project was motivated by the role and control of Jerusalem within the new dispensation. On the one hand, the exclusion of the *am ha aretz* from the building project also symbolized their exclusion in terms of control of and access to the economic outcome of the temple. On the other hand, the inclusion of the returned from the captivity meant their inclusion in terms of control of and access to the economic resources of the nation.

#### **3.3.2.4 INTERNATIONAL TRADE (D)**

Ezra 3:7 says: Then they gave money to the masons and carpenters, and gave food and drink and oil to the people of Sidon and Tyre, so that they would bring cedar logs by sea from Lebanon to Joppa, as authorized by Cyrus king of Persia (D).

At the centre of the narrative, Ezra 3 presents the beginning of the international trade (Ezra 3:7). Those returned from the captivity exported local products (money, food, drink and oil) in order to obtain cedar wood as well as retain the services of the masons and carpenters for the construction project. These materials and services were acquired mainly in places like Tyre, Sidon and Lebanon for they held the monopoly on cedar wood and skilled labour needed in the construction project (Dreher 1997:29-30). This trade was established by sea because maritime transportation was cheaper than the overland models utilized of necessity by transit trade in Israel and Judah (Chaney 1993:253). So, Tyre played an important role in this trade because of the port and the knowledge in navigation that it had (Dreher 1997:29).

One aspect which cannot be ignored here is that, the commercial relationships with Phoenician cities like Tyre existed even before the exile. Indeed, in his reign Solomon imported luxurious goods, military technology, raw material and skilled labour required for the building project and exported wheat, olive oil and wine, through the maritime city-states of Phoenicia (West 2011:518; 1 Kings 5:1-18). This trade did not end in the reign of Solomon; the divided monarchy also exported oil wine and wheat in order to receive luxury goods and military material (Chaney 1993:253). This means that the import/export trade in Ezra's building project is a continuation of the commercial relationships grounded by Solomon and his successors.

Marvin Chaney (1993:253) argues that "it was the import/export trade which heavily impacted the peasant majorities in Israel and Judah". In fact, the products exported by the elite were squeezed from the peasants through a system of taxation. This extraction of tribute was even worsened by the insatiable appetite for imported luxuries, which tempted the kings to "become involved in changing the priorities, methods, and distribution of agricultural production" (Chaney 1993:253). Some of these shifts in terms of agricultural policies included not only the increasing of production of wheat, oil and wine (the three preferred agricultural commodities), but also directives concerning what and where it must be produced on peasant land (West 2011:517-518). The peasants were forced to produce more cash crops rather than food for their normal diet. This economic system produced "growing numbers of debt-slaves" (Chaney 1993:259).

Based on the socio-economic yoke generated by import/export trade in the time of Solomon and his successors, it could be argued that the beginning of trade in Ezra 3 symbolised a continuation of a heavy and severe extraction of surplus from peasant producers in order to cover the materials and the skilled labour needed in Ezra's building project. It is interesting, however, that the export/import trade in Ezra 3 is re-established according to the permission of Cyrus. In this narrative Cyrus is described neither as a man of God nor as a king of Israel, but as a king of Persia. From this perspective, it could be argued that the metaphor/or symbol of Cyrus does not represent either the socio-religious and ideological framework based on Moses or the tributary system based on the Davidic monarchy. However, Cyrus shares similarities with the Davidic-Solomon economic system since both are described as 'kings'. Therefore, the metaphor of Cyrus symbolizes the Persian imperial domination towards the Jews and its mechanism of economic exploitation (tributary system). In other words, the

returned from the captivity were free in terms of religion but economically remained dependent on Persia. This metaphor is situated at the centre of the chiasmic structure, representing the present imperial ruling over the Jews. This means that the 'Imperial trade' is a major concern in the chiasmic structure because it is part of the tributary mode of production and so it is this element in the chiasm that has suppressed the Mosaic ethic.

Accordingly, there three metaphorical or symbolic figures which draw much attention in this section: the metaphor of Moses which stands for the early Israelite egalitarian project, the metaphor of David which stands for the tributary system and the metaphor of Cyrus which stands for imperial domination. With this in mind, the following sub-section will outline the economic ethics which can be appropriated from the narrative of the building project as described in Ezra 3.

### **3.3.3 THE MOSAIC MEMORY IN EZRA'S BUILDING PROJECT: AN ELEMENT OF AN ECONOMIC ETHIC**

It has been long argued by certain scholars that the dominant voices in biblical economic ethics are emphatically communitarian, "resolutely critiquing tributary power by seeking state reforms, urging resistance to oppressive power, upbraiding ruthless exploiters and speaking to the collective religious conscience of a nation with a communitarian premise at its base" (Gottwald 1993:345). From a socio-historical point of view, it could be easily assumed that the narrative of the building of the altar and the foundation of the temple as described in Ezra 3 represents an account of terror, which consolidates the status quo with its oppressive consciousness and practice. However, from a literary perspective this assumption is unsustainable. Though Ezra 3 presents some features of the imperial consciousness, expressed through the temple-state system and its mechanisms of exploitation, it presents signs (or traces) of these biblical communitarian voices, which insist on resistance to oppressive power. These voices can be well retrieved from Ezra 3 if the literary analysis of the above suggested chiasmic structure is read from within a community of struggle and for a community of struggle (see West 1995:74).

Gerald West (1995:75) in his book *Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation* identifies two forms of analogy, an analogy of method and an analogy of struggle. On the one hand, an analogy of method links a certain contemporary situation of struggle with the past situation of struggle, a



situation of struggle which is located behind the text (West 1995:74). In the analogy of method, scholars emphasise that a similar method must be applied not only to the contemporary situation of struggle but also to the analysis of the text and the situation of struggle behind the text (West 1995:74). On the other hand, an analogy of struggle links a certain contemporary situation of struggle with a past situation of struggle, a situation of struggle which is located in the text and in front of the text (West 1995:70). In other words, an analogy of struggle is more concerned about the literary, canonical, or thematic/metaphorical/symbolic aspects of the text (West 1995:79). It is interesting, however, that even though the two forms of analogy seems to follow different directions, they are both committed to “reading the Bible from within and for the community of struggle, the community of those who are oppressed to an oppressive system” (West 1995:64).

Based on West’s analysis it could be argued that an analogy of struggle is an appropriate mode of reading the text, which can be used to retrieve the economic ethic from Ezra 3. In fact, the literary analysis of the chiasmic structure of Ezra 3 captures the struggle in the text, metaphorically. Earlier in this chapter we identified two circles of traditions in Israelite literature concerning covenant, the Mosaic tradition which stands for the early Israelites’ egalitarian project and the Davidic tradition which stands for the tributary mode of production (see sub-section 3.3.2.1). It is interesting to note that the two trajectories are also present in Ezra’s building project as competing memories. The metaphor for the early Israelite’s egalitarian project is present in the text through the invocation of Moses, yet it is situated on the margin or periphery of the structure. In other words, the ‘liberation’ consciousness of the Mosaic tradition with its egalitarian project is present in the chiasmic structure but it is not allowed to guide the economic reality in Ezra’s building project, for it is suppressed by the ‘consolidatory’ memory of David.<sup>40</sup> The metaphor for the tributary system is present in the text through the invocation of David, who is closer to the centre of the chiasm, where the presented imperial consciousness (represented by the metaphor of Cyrus) is located. Even though the Mosaic tradition is not allowed to guide the economic reality in Ezra’s building project, it remains as a subversive or dangerous memory in a sense that not only keeps alive the suffering and hopes of the oppressed communities in the past, but it allows for a universal solidarity with all oppressed people of the past, present and future (see West 1995:127-128). In other words, the communitarian voices which stand for an egalitarian

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<sup>40</sup> The Mosaic and the Davidic memories are clearly outlined in sub-section 3.3.2.1 above.

project are muted in the text but they remain as a subversive movement which is “profoundly religious in its commitment to the God of exodus and dangerously political in its rejection of the status quo with its oppressive consciousness and practice” (Brueggemann 1993:312).

Accordingly, the economic ethic which can be retrieved via this analogy of struggle is not the ethic of Ezra’s practice but the communitarian biblical ethic represented by the Mosaic covenant in the text. The economic memory represented by the Mosaic covenant metaphor is present in the text and indeed in the realities behind the text. Its very presence in the chiasmic structure demonstrates that it remains a ‘dangerous’ memory for future generations, including modern generations (including in Homoine district today). Modern generations can use the Mosaic economic ethics to orient economic analysis and reflection within their contexts. Therefore, the ethical imperative or challenge now is for modern interpreters to place this dangerous memory of Moses in the centre rather than at the periphery. In other words, the challenge for modern readers is to allow the voices of the margin to guide the economic realities within their contexts. Having done this, the research will move on to briefly outline the role of religion within the economic struggle in Ezra 3.

### **3.4 HOW DID RELIGION RESPOND TO THE ECONOMIC STRUGGLE IN EZRA’S BUILDING PROJECT?**

Elsewhere in this research it has been pointed out that in the ANE, economy and religion were not separated (see sub-section 3.2.3). Roland Boer (2007:34) describes this as a ‘sacred economy’, referring to “a system in which the economy operates and is understood in terms of the sacred rather than political”. For Boer (2007:34), the gods like Yahweh, Asshur or Marduk chose a people, allocated them land (more to the tyrant and his associates and less to others), and established and sanctioned the collection of tribute (tithe) in the temple. In other words, the religious as well as the economic affairs of people in the ANE were interwoven and centred in the temples.

As in many other nations of the ANE, the temple of Solomon was the centre of both religious and economic dimensions of the Israelites. Using Brueggemann’s (1993:311) language it could be argued that the temple of Solomon established the connection between theological vision and sociological organization of the nation. In fact, the temple of Solomon stood side by side with the palace and the king controlled the priesthood of the temple (West 2011:524).

The collaboration between the state and the temple was a mechanism used by rulers to legitimize the extraction of tribute from the subject people in the name of the sacred. For instance, in the reign of Solomon, religion was used to convince those who contributed labour and resources to the massive building projects in Israel that their service was divinely ordained (see West 2011:524). Driven by faith or their loyalty to God, poor peasants were legitimately exploited because the temple was viewed as the house of God (see 1 Kings 8:10; 1 Kings 9:1). This means that religion in the reign of Solomon was used to legitimize and consolidate the Davidic covenant, which is characterized by “an imitation of urban imperial consciousness of Israel’s more impressive neighbours and a radical rejection of the liberation consciousness of the Mosaic tradition” (Brueggemann 1993:313). After the death of Solomon the role of religion, particularly in legitimizing the tributary system, remained unchanged both in the northern kingdom and in the southern kingdom. The elite continued to take from the non-elite their land and products as well as people to work for them (see 1 Sam 8:10-18). This extraction of tribute was indeed legitimized by religion which was centred in the temple.

The pre-exilic prophecies interpreted the destruction and deportation of Judah as a result of the [economic] sin of the nation (Amos 2:4-5; Isaiah 3:8-9; Jeremiah 8:4-12). In other words, the nation was destroyed because it had rejected the Mosaic covenant and embraced the Davidic trajectory with its mechanisms of exploitation. It is interesting, however, to note that after the restoration of Judah the old elite continued doing what they did before the exile. In fact, scholars have agreed that the second temple “performed a similar economic function to the earlier Jerusalem temple” (West 2011:524; Nehemiah 5:1-5). In view of that, it could be concluded that religion in Ezra’s building project was used to legitimize the tributary system. Nevertheless, the tributary system and its legitimating temple in Ezra’s building project benefited not only the local elite but also the Persian authorities who controlled and used this temple as its tax depot (Evans 2010:46). Even though religion in Ezra’s building project was used by the elite to legitimize the memory of David, the Mosaic tradition remained as ‘dangerous memory’ for future generations.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this chapter was to retrieve elements of an economic ethic from Ezra’s building project. It has shown that Judah was deported by the Babylonians; but this deportation involved only the leadership class. Those who were left in Palestine were poor

and less educated than those who were in exile, and they could not improve their economic situation. Those who were in Babylon were homesick but the exile opened opportunities for them to improve their economic situation. The restoration of Judah took place when Cyrus, king of Persia conquered Babylon and allowed his subjects to return home and restore their community. Then, the chapter has argued that the construction project in Jerusalem was part of the imperialistic policies of Persia. The Persian project (the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem) was an economic project. Moreover, the chapter has showed that the element of an economic ethic which can be retrieved from Ezra 3 is the Mosaic ethic, which stands for early Israel's egalitarian project. This economic ethic is present in the text through the invocation of the metaphor or symbol of Moses. However, this liberation memory of Moses, which is on the periphery of the structure, is not allowed to guide the economic reality in Ezra's building project, for it is suppressed by the consolidatory memory of David, which is closer to the centre of the chiasm. Even though the Mosaic memory is not allowed to guide the economic reality in Ezra's project, it remains as 'dangerous memory' for future generations, including modern societies. So, the challenge for modern readers or interpreters is to place this dangerous memory of Moses at the centre, rather than at the periphery. Finally, the chapter has pointed out that religion in Ezra's building project was used by the elite to legitimize the 'consolidatory' memory of David, with its oppressive consciousness and practice. Accordingly, the following chapter (the pole of appropriation in the tri-polar approach) will establish an analogical dialogue between the context of poverty and economic inequalities in Hemoine district and the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from the narrative of the building project as described in Ezra 3.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **EZRA'S BUILDING PROJECT IN DIALOGUE WITH POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN HOMOINE DISTRICT IN MOZAMBIQUE**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter of this research analysed the narrative of the building of the altar and the foundation of the temple as described in Ezra 3 in order to retrieve elements of an economic ethic from this narrative. This chapter (the pole of appropriation) sets out to establish a dialogue between the economic ethic (Mosaic economic ethic) retrieved from Ezra's building project and the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. It outlines the hermeneutical procedures (analogy of struggle) adopted in this research to bridge the gap between Ezra's building project and the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district, focusing on the category of struggle for economic liberation which is similar in both contexts in dialogue. It then appropriates the Mosaic economic ethic in Homoine district, focusing on its relevance within the context of poverty and economic inequality. It concludes by suggesting what the church in Homoine district should do with the Mosaic memory retrieved from Ezra's building project.

#### **4.2 BRIDGING THE HERMENEUTIC GAP THROUGH AN ANALOGY OF STRUGGLE**

In his attempt to identify a perspective emerging from biblical economics that can orient contemporary analysis and reflection on capitalist/socialist economic systems, Norman Gottwald (1993:344) argues that "the ethical forces of the Bible on issues of economics will have to be perspectival and motivational rather than prescriptive and technical" because there are economic challenges in our days (such as technology) that the bible throws no light upon. Therefore, the economic ethic retrieved from Ezra 3 (Mosaic economic ethic) cannot be simply imported from the bible and uncritically applied in the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district today, because the two contexts in dialogue represent two different geographical and historical locations.

Homoine district today is not ancient Judah and the reasons for reconstruction in both contexts are clearly different. While Ezra's building project speaks about economic and

religious reconstruction after the Babylonian destruction and deportation, the economic reconstruction in Homoine district appears as a response to the damage created by both Portuguese colonialism and the civil war in Mozambique. Hence, an attempt to bridge the hermeneutic gap between the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra 3 and the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district today should not be a matter of replacement but a more responsible analogy. In other words, the text of Ezra should be located within its socio-historical context so that a more responsible analogy is constructed between the biblical context and the context Homoine district today (see West 2011:530).

Itumeleng J. Mosala (1989:6) in his *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* suggests that the category of struggle at all levels and through various phases of black history should be taken as the key hermeneutical factor when using the bible as a social class resource. For Mosala (1989:9), “the category of struggle becomes an important hermeneutical factor not only in one’s reading of his or her history and culture but also in one’s understanding of the history, nature, ideology, and agenda of the biblical texts”. Although Mosala argues from the perspective of black struggle for liberation in South Africa, his suggestion is also relevant in this study because it allows the reader to see and understand the economic struggle not only in Ezra’s building project but also in Homoine district. Though Mosala is focusing on race, his analysis is class based. Indeed, part of his argument is that apartheid is a form of racialized capitalism (Mosala 1989:6). This means that there is a closer link between his analysis and this research. Therefore, the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra’s building project becomes a relevant economic resource only if one recognizes the affinity of economic struggles between the two contexts.

Even though Homoine district today is geographically and historically different from the context of Ezra, the struggle for liberation is present in both contexts. This struggle is not for liberation of blacks, like in the South African context (see Mosala 1989:94), but for economic liberation of the exploited sectors of society. On the one hand, Ezra highlights a struggle between the elite who extracted tribute, through control of the means of production and the land acquired by the disposition of the others, and the non-elite who worked the land but were reduced to slavery through a heavy system of taxes, rents and expropriation of the land by the local elite in collaboration with the Persian imperial authorities. On the other hand, in Homoine district there is a struggle between the elite who marginalize the majority of the population, through control of resources, means of production and unjust economic policies,

and the majority of the working class who are driven to abject poverty through an unjust trade system, exclusion in terms of decision-making and extractive economic systems developed by the privileged elite in collaboration with the international economic systems.

It is important to note here that the economic systems which promote economic exploitation in Ezra's building project are slightly different from the economic systems which generate poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district, but in both contexts these economic systems create a pauperization<sup>41</sup> of the majority of people. The only notable difference between the two contexts is that in Ezra's building project people knew that their product was being taken from them and used by others, while in Homoine district today the exploitation of the poor is hidden behind the veils of free labour, consumer goods and democratic rights (see Gottwald 1993:149-150). From that perspective it could be argued that the call for economic liberation is a common struggle between Ezra's building project and the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district today.

Accordingly, the struggle for economic liberation is what bridges the hermeneutical gap between Ezra's building project and the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district (see West 1995:69). Through this commonality, the economic ethic retrieved from Ezra 3 (the Mosaic economic ethic) can be used to orient the economic analysis and reflection in Homoine district today. With this in mind, the research will briefly outline in the following section how the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra 3 can be used as a resource for struggle for economic liberation in Homoine district today.

#### **4.3 THE MOSAIC ECONOMIC ETHIC IN THE CONTEXT OF POVERTY AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN HOMOINE DISTRICT**

Norman Gottwald (1993:346) argues that communitarian biblical economics can provide a general principle that economic organization should be developed in such a way as to benefit all members of the society and that this goal is attainable only by involving large numbers of people, representing all sectors of society, in economic decision-making. However, not all communitarian voices of the bible advocate an economic organization which involves all members of the community. As we have noted, the Davidic-Solomonic voices advocate an unjust economic system, over against the Mosaic voices which stand for a more just

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<sup>41</sup> Make people beggars (See West 2011:520).

economic system. This means that to engage a biblical text in the light of contemporary struggle for economic liberation is to take sides in and connect with kindred struggles that were being waged in very ancient communities (Mosala 1989:8). In Ezra's building project, there are contending ideologies (and their economic struggle), but from a liberation ideological appropriation the best side to be taken is the one represented by those voices committed to the God of Exodus (the Mosaic voices). The Mosaic side is not the 'best' in an objective sense, but it is the one which brings life for all. These voices urge Israel throughout the biblical tradition to reject and resist every religion and every politics which would dismantle the Mosaic covenant (Brueggemann 1983:312). In other words, the biblical voices based on the God of Exodus are ruled by the Mosaic covenant and they advocate that everyone is adequately provided for materially and financially. These are indeed valuable voices which can be appropriated in the struggle for economic liberation in Homoine district.

Early communities in Homoine district (and elsewhere in Mozambique) had an understanding of economic organization close to that of early Israel's egalitarian project. In fact, the land was traditionally a property of families within communities and it was transmitted to new generations as inheritance (MAE 2005:25). With this more egalitarian form of economic organization, people in Homoine district were able to till the soil for their own benefit. In other words, early communities in Homoine district advocated that everyone has at least enough food for his/her survival. This means that possession of the land and the resources of the land belonged to communities rather than to private companies and/or entities. Borrowing the basic principle of the Israelite wisdom tradition it could be argued that early communities in Homoine district reaped what they sowed (Matthews & Benjamin 1997:224-225). This means that the basic form of economic organization in Homoine district was more egalitarian, which is similar to that advocated by the Mosaic covenant. However, this more egalitarian understanding is being suppressed by the new global economy. The new global economy depends on "private ownership and the accumulation of capital in the hands of a relatively few individuals" (Draper 2003:95). Within this 'capitalized' and centralized economy, the land (traditionally viewed as a property of families) belongs to the state (Carmona & Beúla 2010:1). If the land is state property, then it means that the resources of the land belong to those who own the state (a few members of the government). The policies regarding production and distribution of the resources of the land are exclusively designed by those who own the state. As a result, poor communities in Homoine district today no longer harvest



what they plant. They work hard but their efforts are reduced to misery by the economic system established by the local ruling elite and supported by their international 'masters'. This means that the more traditional economic system similar to early Israel's egalitarian project is being suppressed by an economic system which is similar to that advocated by Davidic-Solomon covenant and its mechanisms of exploitation.

The situation of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district today has reached its critical stage where the society is widely divided into classes, a class of the elite who are at the same time economically secure and a class of the non-elite who are economically deprived. While the poor constitute the majority, the rich represent the minority of the population. The two classes are linked relationally, and the relationship is one of oppression (see West 1999:14). The 'poor' are poor because the 'rich' are rich (see West 1999:15). In other words, the rich are rich because they steal from the poor. This is a similar economic system to that prohibited by the Mosaic covenant, when God told the Israelites that the land belongs to God (see Exodus 19:5). If the land belongs to God, then the resources of the land belong to God too. Similarly, the land and resources of the land in Homoine district do not belong to a narrowed predatory elite; they belong to God and to the communities who live there. This means that the Mosaic covenant should not be viewed as an economic ethic for ancient biblical communities, but as an economic ethic for communities in Homoine district today in their struggle for economic liberation.

In summary, the Mosaic ethic can help poor communities to unmask the systems which promote their pauperization and develop an alternative economic system which can reduce the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district (and elsewhere in Mozambique). The challenge is for the church in Homoine today to promote this Mosaic ethic so that it can guide the economic reality of the district and reduce the pauperization of the peasant producers. With this in mind, the following section will briefly discuss what the church in Homoine district can do with this Mosaic memory.

#### **4.4 WHAT SHOULD THE CHURCH DO WITH THE MOSAIC MEMORY IN HOMOINE DISTRICT?**

The fact that the church has a history of success in Mozambique is a reality which cannot be denied, because it has remained the main source of hope even in situations where the reality

seems to have no hope. Indeed, Lucia Van Bergh (2009:28) argues that the church in Mozambique played a significant role in the struggle for independence. The church educated many children that later became the leaders of the liberation movement, which brought the independence of the country (Bergh 2009:28). These children included Eduardo Mondlane, the founder of the liberation movement (Frelimo), who was educated by the church; his studies in South Africa and in the USA were paid for by the Swiss Mission (Presbyterians) and Methodist scholarships (Freston 2001:122). Paul Freston (2001:122) argues that the church in Mozambique also helped many Mozambicans to resist Portuguese assimilationism and contributed indirectly to Mozambican nationalism through education. The role of the church throughout the Mozambican history did not end with the struggle for independence. Alongside international community, the church in Mozambique succeeded in preparing and consolidating the General Peace Agreement (AGP) after 16 years of a destructive civil war (Bergh 2009:29). So, it could be argued that the church in Mozambique has a history of success in different types of struggle. The church is a promising entity which can bring the Mosaic ethic at the centre to the economic reality of Homoine district today.

It is interesting, however, to note that the success of the church is not through an armed struggle, but a theological struggle which is developed from the perspective of the victims (see Mathewes 2002:564). In other words, the main source of struggle used by the church in Mozambique throughout its history of success is education. Through this education, biblically rooted and socially relevant, the church succeeded in bringing independence as well as reconciliation in the country. Based on this experience of the past, it could be argued that the church can truly promote the Mosaic economic ethic in Homoine district today in order to reduce the problems of poverty and economic inequality. Therefore, education is one of the valuable strategies which the church can use to promote the Mosaic economic ethic in Homoine district. As it did in the past, the church today can educate people about the relevance of the Mosaic economic ethic within their struggle for economic liberation.

According to Charles T. Mathewes (2002:555), the church is, more than anything else, a space of and for encounter, both spiritually and civically. In fact, the church is the place where various members of the congregation and larger communities of which they are a part not only encounter God but also encounter each other. In these encounters people have the opportunity to discuss their lives, their jobs, their past and their futures (Mathewes 2002:556). In other words, the church is not just a place for spiritual encounter but also for social

encounter; where both the rich and the poor are part of these encounters. The church can use this opportunity to retell the Mosaic memory and its economic system, drawing them from the periphery to the centre, in order to liberate not only the poor from their deplorable economic conditions but also to liberate the rich from their greedy and insatiable economic ambition. By retelling this liberation memory rooted in the Mosaic covenant, the church and/or theologians can help the community in Homoine district to orient themselves in the light of the experiences of the struggle in Ezra's building project and to enable them to understand themselves their own struggle and to find their way forward in relation to the situation. In this way, the Mosaic ethic retrieved from Ezra's building project can develop its truly liberative potential in the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district today.

Accordingly, the Mosaic ethic retrieved from Ezra's building project can develop its liberation potential in Homoine district (and elsewhere in Mozambique) if the church retells this memory within its communities. The church has a strong capacity for education, as it did in the past; it can use the same weapon and educate communities in Homoine district about the liberation potentiality of the Mosaic memory. Through education, the church can, *de facto*, help communities to resist their economic pauperization in Homoine district. This is a process which can be truly achieved only if the church commits to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, to recovery the sight for the blind, to release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lords' favour (Luke 4:18-19).

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has established a dialogue between the economic ethic (Mosaic economic ethic) retrieved from Ezra's building project and the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. It has shown that the two contexts in dialogue represent two different geographical and historical locations but the affinity of struggle for economic liberation is what bridges the hermeneutical gap between them. Then, the chapter has argued that the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra's building project is a valuable biblical resource which can be used to orient economic analysis and reflection in Homoine district in the context of poverty and economic inequality. Early communities in Homoine district had a form of economic organization similar to that advocated by the Mosaic economic ethic (early Israel's egalitarian project), but this economic organization is being suppressed by the new

global economic order which is similar to the economic organization advocated by the Davidic-Solomon covenant. Therefore, the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra 3 is a valuable biblical resource which can be used to orient the economic reality in Homoine district; it represents an alternative economic system which can help the communities to reduce the problem of poverty and economic inequality. Finally, the chapter has pointed out that the church (IMUM) in Homoine district is a promising entity which can promote the Mosaic economic ethic. Through education, the church and/or theologians can help the communities in Homoine district to resist their economic marginalization, but this education should emphasize the liberation memory rooted in the Mosaic covenant. Having done this the research will now move on to offer a summary of the conclusions drawn from the research findings and to highlight recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter of this research established a dialogue between the economic ethic (Mosaic economic ethic) retrieved from Ezra's building project and the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. This chapter offers a summary and a synthesis of the findings of the whole research. It gives a summary of the conclusions drawn from the research findings and highlights recommendations for further research.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH**

This research attempted to answer the question: What elements of an economic ethic can be retrieved from Ezra's building project to dialogue with poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique? This question was premised on the hypothesis that: the narrative of the building of the altar and the temple as described in Ezra 3 provides elements of an economic ethic that can dialogue with poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. Therefore, the research has shown that the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra's building project is a valuable biblical resource that can dialogue with and orient economic analysis and reflection in Homoine district (and elsewhere in Mozambique) in the context of poverty and economic inequality.

Chapter one introduced the research topic and located it within the current research of biblical scholars. It gave an overall orientation to the research by highlighting that poverty and economic inequality is threatening the majority of people in Homoine district in Mozambique. The chapter also offered the relevance of the research, the research questions, the theoretical framework, the methodology and the structure of the research.

In chapter two the research employed a socio-historical analysis to understand the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. It argued that the state-based model of development, the aid-based model of development and the decentralized model of development are three micro-economic policies which have played a significant role in the development process of Mozambique since independence. The chapter has also argued

that Homoine district has a significant number of resources which could be used wisely to reduce the problems of poverty and economic inequality, but that this problem persists because of the lack of capacity to control natural calamities by the local people, the chaotic system of transportation, the effects of the civil war, the extractive economy, foreign debt, the passivity of the government towards international economic demands, unjust distribution of resources and the party-oriented model of development which excludes people in terms of decision-making and access to resources. Further, the chapter showed that the church (IMUM) deals in part with the problems of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district, but it does not fully challenge the systems that contribute to this problem.

In chapter three a socio-historical and literary analysis were employed to retrieve elements of an economic ethic from Ezra 3. The chapter argued that after the destruction and deportation of Judah, the Israelites who were left in Palestine were poor and they could not improve their economic conditions while those who were in exile, though they were homesick, the exile opened opportunities for them to improve their economic conditions. The chapter has also demonstrated that Persia allowed the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem in order to extract tax and tribute from it. Then, the chapter showed that an economic ethic could be retrieved from Ezra 3, namely the Mosaic covenant, the metaphor for early Israel's egalitarian project. This metaphor is present in the chiasmic structure through the invocation of Moses. But, it was argued, this ethic is not allowed to guide the economic reality in Ezra's building project for it is suppressed by the Davidic covenant, the metaphor for the tributary mode of production. Yet the Mosaic covenant remains as a 'dangerous memory' for future generations, and the challenge now is to place this memory at the centre rather than at the margin of the project. At the end of the chapter was pointed out that religion in Ezra's building project was used by the elite to legitimize the 'consolidatory' memory of David-Solomon dynasty, with its oppressive consciousness and practice.

In chapter four the research offered a critical dialogue between Ezra's building project and the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. The chapter highlighted that the two contexts in dialogue represent two different geographical and historical locations, but that an analogy of struggle for economic liberation is what bridges the hermeneutical gap between them. Then, the chapter demonstrated that the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra 3 represents an alternative economic motivation which can help the communities to reduce the problems of poverty and economic inequality in

Homoine district. Finally, the chapter suggests that like it did in the struggle for independence, the church should educate communities in Homoine district about the Mosaic memory and its liberation capacity. Through education the church (IMUM) and/or theologians can help the communities in Homoine district to understand their economic struggle and to find their way forward in relation to the situation.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research has demonstrated that the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra's building project is a valuable biblical resource which can orient economic analysis and reflection of Homoine district in the context of poverty and economic inequality. This research has opened up the following areas for further research:

1. It is important to explore more fully how socialist and capitalist principles are interlinked in Mozambique and the economic implications of these linkages in Homoine district (and elsewhere in Mozambique).
2. We also need to understand why the church (IMUM) finds it so difficult to challenge the systems which promote poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district.
3. Of course, research on how the Mosaic economic ethic retrieved from Ezra 3 might impact on the church's engagement with economic issues in the context of poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique will need to be done.
4. Finally, and related to the above point, we should explore how this economic ethic might impact on theological reformulation within the church (IMUM) in Homoine district (and elsewhere in Mozambique).

### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has offered a summary and a synthesis of the findings of the whole research. It has given a summary of the conclusions drawn from the research findings and highlights recommendations for further research. This research has achieved its objective demonstrating that there are elements of an economic ethic in Ezra's building project that can dialogue with poverty and economic inequality in Homoine district in Mozambique. The main challenge now is on how to allow this economic ethic (Mosaic ethic) to guide the economic reality in Homoine district in Mozambique.

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