Dear Grail women around the world,

Greetings from the team who prepared the materials for the second phase of the Txintxa process: Anita Saisi and Marina Sangalli (Italy), Deirdre Cornell (USA), Maria Carlos (Portugal) and Ruth Crowe (Australia/representing the new ILT). We met in the Golega Grail Centre, Portugal for 3 days in February to reflect together on the responses to Phase 1 of the Txintxa process and to plan the next steps. Unfortunately, Cay Charles was unable to be with us at the time, we missed her presence and her contribution. The Golega team, as usual, gave us wonderful hospitality which we appreciated very much.

We would like to thank you all for the responses you sent to the first phase with the focus on ‘Christian Origins’ and Rachel Donder’s paper, ‘Sources of Grail Dynamism’. There was great depth in your insights and sharing. Anita and Pia Zuccolin (Italy) read through all the responses carefully and have made a summary of important points, especially those around the subject of diversity. This summary is already on the international Grail website – http://www.thegrail.org/index.php as is Ruth Crowe's reflection, “Overview” from responses to the first Txintxa papers.

Once we complete the second phase, we will be submitting a recommendation to the ILT during the preparation period leading up to the 2011 IGA about how to take the Txintxa process forward.

At this time, we would like to point out that DIVERSITY was the word repeated most often in the responses to the questions around ‘Christian Origins’ and Rachel’s paper. Grail women have many observations about this, leading members of the resource team to ask: “Are we daring diversity/plurality with all the challenges involved?”

Some examples of what Grail countries wrote included:

“We are trying to understand what diversity means to all of us.” (Uganda)

“The challenge today and in the future is to deepen and cultivate diversity in the Grail... [We need] receptivity and openness to diversity.” (Portugal).

“How much diversity can we live with? Diversity means to live with uncertainty, it can be uncomfortable, it necessitates change within people.” (Australia)

“Plurality is intrinsic to the Grail today. The legitimacy of diversity needs to be a constitutive element of the Grail’s unity today.” (USA)
Since CULTURE is a factor which so strongly shapes our diverse spiritualities, we invite you to join in Phase 2 of the Txintxa process with the theme – ‘Cultural Changes and Spiritual Challenges’. We hope every Grail grouping around the world will spend time on this reflection and send in their insights.

‘CULTURAL CHANGES AND SPIRITUAL CHALLENGES’

Main goals:
* to build together a picture of the cultural influences being experienced today by Grail groupings in our different realities
* to help each other appreciate what spiritual challenges we are experiencing in our different realities as a result of these cultural influences

Questions for reflection within Grail groupings

1. What are the strongest cultural influences present in your country today?
2. In what ways is the spirituality of your Grail grouping being affected/challenged by these cultural influences?
3. In what ways has the spirituality of your Grail group shifted over recent times and what do you see as the major challenges for the future?
4. Do you have any further comments or observations?

We ask IC members and National Leadership Teams to facilitate this Phase 2 of the Txintxa process in their countries.

Please note: National Teams need to contact Mariana Malta, mariana@maltas.org to arrange for a password for Grail members from your country to access ‘the members only’ part of the Networks/Spirituality &Theology section on the website.

Responses should be sent to Ruth Crowe by 1 November
Email: ruthcrowe@ozemail.com.au

With love and thanks.
Ruth, Anita, Marina, Maria Carlos and Deirdre
WINDS OF CHANGE ARE BLOWING:
we miss attitudes that will break down the walls that obstruct human relationships

“The world is closing in
did you ever think
that we could be so close, like brothers
[and sisters]
the future’s in the air
I can feel it everywhere
blowing with the winds of change”

Klaus Meine – ‘Scorpions’

I’m writing this text during the week of the 9th November, 2009, the day of the commemoration of the fall of the Berlin Wall; a wall that for twenty years separated the lives of the east/west Berliners. I kept thinking about all the walls that have blocked human dignity and separated people, in several places of the world. I also wondered about the winds of change now blowing on human relationships.

Luckily it came to my mind that there are some movements in the cultural arena that call our attention to the fact that humans, whatever their culture, religion, race or language, was conceived from the same atom and that the same substance, blood, runs through our veins. There is therefore, no plausible reason for the superiority of a determined race, culture or people over the others.

It’s because of this appeal that, nowadays, within the agreements among nations, it’s mandatory that we leave nobody outside. Words like: social inclusion, tolerance, respect, and expressions like: stereotype and prejudice elimination are entering the agenda. Although their value is relative, they are words and expressions that evoke positive attitudes and that is why they are discussed and widespread, because in a context of cultural ambivalence sane values should be preserved. What is desirable is that those words and expressions be operationalized and made reality, meaning attitudes that overthrow the walls that hurt human dignity.

Movements of social inclusion were long overdue, since there is no reason to go on supporting the idea that some people deserve more respect, more dignity than others. Unfortunately, from slavery, passing through the process of colonization and up to the present economic neo-colonialism, it is still possible to find “murder identities” – people, who in the name of some ambition, some religious or economic obsession still think it

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1 **Stereotype:** a fixed, commonly held notion or image of a person or group, based on an oversimplification of some observed or imagined trait of behaviour or appearance. Stereotypes can be either positive (“black men are good at basketball”) or negative (“women are bad drivers”). **But most stereotypes tend to make us feel superior** in some way to the person or group being stereotyped. Stereotypes ignore the uniqueness of individuals by painting all members of a group with the same brush.

2 **Cultural ambivalence:** emphasizes the positive nature of “cultural difference,” “ambivalent[ce]”. When talking about ‘culture/s’ in postcolonial times acknowledges the complexity, heterogeneity, unevenness of real conditions… In multicultural situations, a decision is made to mould a richer inter-cultural dialogue that sheds the stereotypical perception and demonisation of the ‘other’, and embraces new friendships and insights rather than only seeing and acting through the lenses of the dominant culture.
necessary to slaughter their fellow-beings, cultures, identities, languages and religions; hence the need for “winds of change”.

All these initial words have to do with approaches to cultural changes that are being discussed a bit everywhere. The above mentioned context is valid for all countries that inhabit the planet; however, the present text will only deal with Mozambique, in particular, and at some points, when deemed convenient, with Africa in general. I’m not forgetting the fact that everywhere walls exist that obstruct human relationships.

I must remind you that to talk about Mozambique, from a cultural point of view, is to talk of a plural context and numberless ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities. The context is not very different if we refer to other African countries, once they are also ambivalent from the cultural point of view.

To talk of cultural changes in Africa presupposes to discuss the social processes that integrate the revival and the recovery of lost values; this happens because, for many years, the continent was invaded by “peoples from other lands” that, under the pretext of “civilising” it, deprived it of its essential values, namely the use of its names – to “adopt” foreign names; the use of its culture or language, changed to a foreign culture and language. This was a process that shook the self-esteem of the Africans and meddled with the essential of their identity.

Just as an example, how many Mozambicans, instead of being registered with their African family names, like Khossa, Nheve, Djsonasse, Mphumu, were registered with Portuguese names such as Cossa (Costa in some cases), Neves, Jonas e Fumo? How many women, whose name was originally Ntsay, Tchanaze, Khudzi, Sumbi or Ndrawu, were called Madalena, Maria, Rita, Cristina or Mundau? The dignity of Mozambicans was despised because they were given names not blessed by the traditional Bantu religion; according to that culture and religion their names should be chosen among those of a living relative or an ancestor, so as to carry the Karma wished by the family.

Africans stopped worshipping their ancestors – their gods, to start worshipping other gods. Wasn't that possibly a way of placing a wall in the heart and the heads of human beings, so that they stopped feeling their bodies and put on a body that doesn’t belong to them? Actually Africans had no churches, neither conventional altars, in the western way, but they had their sacred places; family trees, forests, sacred rivers; where they worshipped their divinities and talked with their ancestors, whenever that seemed to be necessary. Once, communication between the living and the dead was quite natural.

In the Christian religion, for example, when somebody gets married, travels or is happy with something good, doesn’t that person have a mass said? The same happens in the Bantu Traditional religion, ancestors are informed on these same events and in that process, they are asked for their blessings or thanked for their gifts. The difference between these two religions, is the place where the ritual happens; in one case inside the church and in the other in a sacred place, just as it was mentioned before. In both cases, there is an appeal to a higher being. In one case we believe it to be God; in the other, we believe we are praying to someone who is going to act as an intermediary with God. This question is indisputable, it is a process where the so-called
“ethnocentric absolutization”\(^3\) happens, which explains that every society satisfies its cultural needs as it suits it.

In colonial times in Mozambique, the Portuguese language was imposed as communication language. (Un)fortunately, after the independence, this same language was thought as unifying of all Mozambicans, and therefore adopted as the official language. Once again the Mozambican languages: kimwani (spoken in the province of Cabo Delgado); emakua and shimakonde (spoken in Nampula); cinyanja, ciyao and emakuwa (spoken in Niassa); eltômwé and echuwabo (spoken in Zambezia); cynyungwe, cinyanja and cisena (spoken in Tete); cindau e citeve (spoken in Manica); xirhonga (spoken in Maputo), among other variables of these languages, were withdrawn from the official social intercourse.

Mozambique is a country with about 20 million inhabitants, most of them having a bantu language as their first language. Portuguese is predominantly spoken in urban areas, often because it is the language of the public administration. How does a person feel when she/he is being tried in court, has to go to a hospital or to the school and cannot speak the language of his/her heart – his/her mother tongue, the language in which he communicates better? According to the universal declaration of linguistic rights one has the right to be attended to in public services, in a language that s/he can understand. In this case, wasn’t/isn’t a wall placed to his/her rights and identity?

Luckily, the Mozambican government has decided, since 2003, to introduce the teaching of mother tongues in the first years of school for the children that need it. The process is democratic and, in this way, at least, in the first years of their lives, children are not forced, at school, to speak a language they don’t know. This is a process that defined school success in countries like Swaziland, Papua New Guinea and in some countries in Latin America.

This process and others, in which the country has been involved, as, for example, the fact that the present President of the Republic proclaims the need to win back the self-esteem of the Mozambicans and the publishing of literary works in Mozambican languages are a proof of the wish for “winds of change” and there is some incentive for this process to be a reality and not only a wish.

Although many years have passed since the abolition of slavery and decolonization, it is worth reminding ourselves that social processes are slow in coming; this is the reason why we are still in search for the human values we were deprived of and denied at the time of slavery and colonization.

Mozambique is then at a moment of identity reconstruction, interrupted at the moment when the blacks were instilled with a complex of inferiority for being considered “barbarian”, “primitive” and “savage”. The question is that those labels were based on distorted theories of the characterized reality and on reductionist attitudes, on prejudice and stereotypes, without taking into consideration that each people has its own way to face, see, feel and deal with the world.

The cultural relativism existing in societies was not considered. It was not discussed, nor was a common denominator or criteria found that was valid and accepted all over the world to compare cultures. Crass mistakes are even nowadays, regrettably, made by people under the name of an unnecessary uniformity.

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\(^3\) Ethnocentric absolutization: conviction of own cultural superiority. A belief in or assumption of the superiority of the social or cultural group that a person belongs to.
Why is it necessary to be alike in order to respect and tolerate one another? We can be a balanced society without having the same creeds, the same way of dressing, without eating the same type of food, without singing alike, as long as, in the concert of nations, to which we are pushed by globalization, each society contributes with the positive aspects of its culture and the dignity of the human beings is preserved.

I wrote these lines letting my feelings flow out of my soul, following my discussions about Mozambican culture and African culture in the present time. The space I was assigned is getting scarce, but I don't want to finish the text without leaving a reflection note for the Grail – that mosaic of races and cultures that considers itself an ecumenical movement, that strives for peace and justice in the planet and that invited me to write this paper.

This reflection has to do with the fact that nowadays, in Africa, we see and accept religious syncretism; in the Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church, elements of African identity are being used or praised, like “batuque” and “xikitso” (African musical instrument – made of reeds and “missanga”), the priests’ cassocks with trimmings like a “capulana” and songs sung in African languages; unlike the time when in the church only the sound of the piano could be heard, the priests’ cassocks had the western-classical model and the hymns were sung in a foreign language (Portuguese, in the case of Mozambique).

Within the Grail, how does each country and each person live, accept, tolerate, respect or recognize the need for cultural and religious changes? How do we, members of the Grail, live or face inter-religious dialogue, within our movement? Are we walking together? How do we measure, how do we evaluate our capacity of being aware of the fact that we are an ecumenical movement?

For me, one of the great necessary steps ahead should be to learn to accept, for example, that a woman can say mass in a Grail meeting. Wouldn't it be an important, innovative step, either under the point of view of cultural changes in our time or under the point of view of spiritual challenges within an international movement like ours? Couldn't that be our contribution, both cultural and spiritual, to help us learn how to live unity within diversity?

I understand that, as human beings, change is often difficult for us. One doesn’t get rid of one’s habits easily, but for all the reasons above explained, respect and tolerance should be values that guide our collective behaviour and the elimination of stereotypes and prejudices should be “our daily bread” in the pursuit of the social inclusion we proclaim and intend to live. It’s urgent to let the winds of change blow and shape our attitudes, so as to pull down the walls that keep us apart.

Sara Jona, Grail member Mozambique, November 2009. Contact: saralaisse@yahoo.com.br

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4 Religious syncretism: The Principle of Religious Syncretism holds that when any two cultures meet and interact they will exchange religious ideas with the dominant culture prevailing in the exchange. The word “dominant” in this definition does not necessarily mean numerical superiority. For example, a small group of Spanish conquistadors essentially made Catholicism the religion of Latin America. In the first five Christian centuries, it was neo-Platonic (Greek) philosophy that had the most impact on the development of a systematic Christian theology. Undoubtedly the most significant element of this synthesis was the acceptance of Greek humanism by thinkers such as first Justin Martyr and then later Thomas Aquinas and Erasmus.
TXINTXA: PHASE TWO

During this round, we are asking Grail countries to work together on ONE paper and ONE exercise before answering the reflection questions on Cultural Changes and Spiritual Challenges. A sheet with suggested additional resource materials is included.

1. **Paper to stimulate our shared reflection** - Winds of Change are Blowing: we lack the attitude needed to break down the walls that obstruct human relationships, prepared by Sara Jona, Grail member Mozambique.

2. **Consciousness-raising exercise – please choose one**

   A. **Colored Cards**: Anita Saisi shared the following reflection about ‘Diversity and/or Plurality’.

   “**DIVERSITY** is the word that appears the most times in the first round of responses with a sincere need to understand it better. My suggestion is to make a shift towards another concept less quoted, but present in the answers: **PLURALITY**.

   Let us imagine how we feel about these two words. To me the word *diversity* suggests division, while *plurality* sounds more like togetherness, wholeness. For example, if you enter a garden, you may stop and look at each flower and appreciate its uniqueness and beauty. You may also get an impression of the garden as a whole. This could be our approach to diversity and plurality.”

   With this as background look at the Coloured cards attached and reflect on the question: What do these pictures suggest to you as regards cultural ‘diversity’ and/or ‘plurality’?

   B. **Shape of your culture** (adapted from *Training for Transformation Handbook No.111*, pp. 4-5)

   This introductory exercise helps groups share perceptions as the basis for analysis. We hope it will help groups to share their perceptions of the most important cultural influences impacting their society today by trying to identify the forces that are changing the culture, for better or worse. Best done in groups of 5.

   Procedure
   a. In small groups, draw a circle on a piece of paper – this represents the culture in which you live. If appropriate, more than one paper with a circle can be used to represent cultures within the group.

   b. **Discuss the question**: “What do we see as the main cultural influences impacting on our society today, and which will continue to affect it strongly over the next few years?” Show these by putting arrows into the circle and labelling them. Arrows going directly into the centre show the strongest influence, while arrows near the edge describe those that are less powerful.
c. **Discuss the question:** “What cultural influences do we see dying out in our society now or in the next few years?” **Show these by drawing arrows which are going OUT of the circle and labelling them.**

d. **List the main spiritual challenges** being faced by our Grail grouping today as a result of the impact of these cultural influences.

C. **Story telling:** Do you have an example from your own life or that of your Grail group about handling diversity/plurality? Could you tell the story...?
Resource materials

‘Culture is a system or set of meanings, values, models and patterns, incorporated in or underlying the actions and communications of the life of one specific human group or society. This system or set is consciously or unconsciously lived and assumed by the group as the expression of its own human identity and reality. This system or set is learned (it is not a biological inheritance) and passes from generation to generation, whether received directly as it is or changed by the group itself’.

- Marcello Azevedo, SJ

(This definition was used by Alison Healey in her presentation on ‘Typology of Cultures’ at the 2007 Spirituality Forum.)

“We may think of cultures as wholes, but they are wholes marked as much by fractures and discontinuities as by continuities. Cultures are not pure, clearly distinguished from another, they’re hybrids…Culture binds people into engagement, not permanent identity.”

“Cultures themselves have very many internal strains. Their members interact with these and transform them - or resist transforming them - over time, often involving conflict. It’s a messier process than the simple word ‘culture’ seems to suggest.”

- Excerpts from Marian Ronan, USA Grail member (see below)


i) Culture and Spiritual Challenges in the International Grail (2009)
   Prepared by Marian Ronan (USA Grail member)

ii) 2007 Spirituality Forum website references -
   Day 1. Theme: Cultural Change and Spiritual Challenges
   Papers by Alison Healey, Lucy Kimaro and Isabel Allegro

   Day 2
   Paper by Sara Jona Laisse in which she concluded that Biblical values and traditional African values were not far from each other. For example, in both, love, peace and harmony among each other are central. She made a plea to work on this dialogue between traditional and Christian values.