Listing Rivers and Train Stations:

Primary Solidarities and the Colonial Past in Mozambique

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Summary

In understanding present-day Mozambique, stress is usually placed on the colonial/postcolonial temporal boundary as a foundational moment. Colonialism, socialist post colonialism and the present capitalist period appear to annul each other in succession through a chain of successive acts of overcoming. This paper argues that this gives rise to a number of incongruities, for it hides the way in which social persons are linked to historical processes via their primary solidarities. The past and the present are constantly being re-mixed into conglomerates of experience, where each component becomes largely indissociable from the others. The past and the present constantly visit each other in human experience. It is argued that only thus can one make sense of the claims to elite status that are witnessed today.

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One of the recurrent experiences that confront a Portuguese person that goes to Mozambique involves lists of names of rivers and train stations. The experience is uncanny because it produces a strange sense of dislocation that challenges the immediate evidence of the mutual foreignness of the local person and the visitor. The effect it has is mutual, as the friendly baffled smiles on both sides clearly demonstrate. I will report on the last time it happened to me. I must stress, however, that since I started going back to Mozambique for regular short visits, after over 20 years of absence, scenes of this nature have repeated themselves at regular intervals. [2]

I was researching the history of a particular urban park (D.Berta's Garden[3]) in Maputo, so I went to the offices of the municipal services of parks and gardens. There I met the city's Head Gardener, an old "black"[4] man whose initial approach was deeply reserved. Soon enough, however, I had explained what I wanted and who I was (he had heard of my family's earlier presence in Mozambique) and he felt at ease.

"Where are your parents living now?" he said.

"They live in Oporto, where the family comes from."

"And is the Douro River still in the same place?"

"Yes, it still is there, where the Port wine comes from." I decided to enter into the jocular tone, even although at this stage his face was still dead straight.

"And you live there?"

"No, I live in Lisbon. I work at a university, in Lisbon."

"And when you visit them you get into the train in Santa Apolónia, don't you?" and here his face broke into a benevolent but ironic smile, "And you pass Vila Franca de Xira and …" and he proceeded to name the ten or so local train stations that the trains used to stop at thirty or so years ago on their way from Lisbon to Oporto.

We laughed and the atmosphere of the meeting became far friendlier. In fact, thenceforward, he replied to my answers with an open frankness that had not been

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[2] The material here presented was collected during two stays in Maputo, Mozambique, in 2000 and 2001, where I was invited to lecture at the UFICS, University E. Mondlane.

[3] Officially named Jardim Nangade – cf. paper presented at the 6th Easa conference, Krakow, 2000.

[4] Much as I might regret it, I am obliged to situate the people I report about by means of the ethnic categories that are relevant to the context. In urban Maputo, the more salient ethnic categories are "black", "white" and "Indian". The category *mestiço* is also often encountered but it is not really a category of the same status as the others. In simplified versions of the ethnic scale, *mestiços* usually

present earlier on. At that moment, neither of us could identify with any analytical precision what the aim of this interchange had been or how it had worked in symbolic terms. One thing is certain, it had an immediate effect as a conversation warmer and it established some sense of interconnectedness between us.

As it happens, having been a bad student at the time of Primary School, and having emotionally revolted against most of what I was taught by rote in that stuffy school atmosphere of the late Salazarist period, in the 1960's, I have never been capable of producing those long lists of rivers, train stations and cities that we were forced to memorize. Furthermore, I suspect that he knows this and that part of the enjoyable irony in the situation is the fact that there is something he knows about "my world" than I do not.

In this post-Independence encounter, then, the difference in nationality indicated in our passports is only one aspect of the issue. And "colour" here is not beside the point. Whilst this was happening, my white Mozambican friend, who had given me a lift there, was smiling silently. Earlier on, during the introductions, she had discreetly but unwarrantedly explained, "Eu sou moçambicana" ("I am a Mozambican"). To her, he would not make the joke. Neither did she make it to me when we first met, as it would not be funny. Why would she want to show me that she still remembers the "stupid lists" that the teachers made us learn by rote? To him, it was a sign that he had gone to school and thus shared a world of references with me; to her it would have been a sign that she had not continued on to university. So class was also at stake.

The point is, although she is Mozambican, the contrast that made us laugh at his ironic joke does not operate with her, because she is "white" and belongs to a higher socio-educational stratum. Had I been a Portuguese scholar of African ancestry, coming back to visit the land of my ancestors, would he make the joke? And if he did, would it have the same implications? I somehow doubt it. In short, the joke only works because – at some sort of symbolic level – Portugal is "mine" and Mozambique is "his", whilst at another level our identitary referents interpenetrate.

Twenty-five years earlier, neither of us knew each other personally, but we might well have crossed in D. Berta's park. My friend went there to play with her

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come out on the side of whites. Furthermore, its use is not comparable to that of "coloured" in South Africa, being more akin to the Brazilian use of the word *mulato* (cf. Fernando Ribeiro da Rosa, 1995).

nanny; I went there to smoke a secret cigarette with my friends away from parental gaze; he was there as a gardener, as that was where he first worked when he came to the city from a rural area as an adolescent.   So class and race cross with nationality in this encounter, bringing to the fore the fact that, whilst being strangers to each other in one perspective, we are not in others. There lies the irony and that is why the conversation was warmed by the event. At least that is as far as I can interpret it.

Primary solidarities

Allow me now to frame the argument of this essay in more abstract terms.

The early identifications that shape the self of a child carry with them strong bonds of interpersonal solidarity that become major referents in the person's future social insertion. These "primary solidarities" (cf. Pina-Cabral 1991) are an integral part of his or her sense of selfhood. During later life, they may well be changed and others will inevitably be added to them. But the primary solidarities that the person acquires during his or her early socialisation are the ground on which are built the institutional attachments that continue through life – in particular, kinship, ethnicity, class, and religion.

For the largest number of persons in the largest number of contexts, such a description is verifiably adequate. It is correct, therefore, to argue that these are universal facts of human life, if we use the word in its broadest sense. Once we start to apply such general frameworks to specific cases, however, we often discover that historical reality is rarely that simple. Not only are there plentiful exceptions but also, out of such simple frames, exceedingly complex processes can be built.

In this paper I explore the way in which primary solidarities are elaborated and reshaped as the result of stark political changes. In particular, the abrupt ending of a colonial regime gives rise to considerable changes in the contexts within which people exercise their personal identities. In the immediate post-Independence period, the institutional frameworks that previously supported the primary solidarities are prone to change, running counter to those that were in place during the colonial period, when these same persons constituted themselves as social agents.

Furthermore, in Africa, we are often dealing with territories where no encompassing political structure existed before colonial rule and where, therefore, the

State apparatus is a direct inheritance from the colonial State.[5] Once the legitimacy of the colonial State is erased, new forms of legitimating State domination become necessary. As a rule, the new State-controlling elites of the immediate postcolonial period attempted to base their power on the constitution *ex novo* of a nationalist rhetoric – modelling themselves on the pattern established in the modern period by European nation-States. The institutional bases of the primary solidarities were perceived as divisionistic and as inimical to this new nationalist identity, and consequently to the State. They were, therefore, challenged.

This turned out to have unpredictably large implications. The road to nationalism could not be built at the expense of the primary solidarities of the nation's citizens, as this jeopardised their integrity as persons. In terms of their own individual identities as social beings, each of these ex-colonial subjects depended on the institutional bases that supported each one's primary solidarities. The attempt to de-legitimise (or even downright to ban) these institutions led inevitably either to revolt or to widespread corruption.[6]

In this paper I will explore this question by taking recourse to information gathered informally in the capital city of Mozambique, Maputo, in 2000 and 2001.[7]

The historical context

Mozambique was a Portuguese colony until 1975. Ever since the sixteenth century the Portuguese State had a stake on portions of the Mozambican coast and on trading in this vast territory. Administrative presence, however, was limited to small commercial towns in strategic places. In the central area of the country, the Zambezi River valley, Portuguese presence was increasingly felt from the eighteenth century onwards. Nevertheless, it was only at the end of the nineteenth century, and largely due to the pressure exerted by British colonial interests, that systematic territorial administration of Mozambique was undertaken.

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[5] Even in Gaza, the area more fully controlled by the Nguni State, there was no administrative system properly speaking. Henri Pélissier claims that the lack of such an apparatus meant that, in order to support the army, the Nguni were obliged to take recourse to "successive operations of devastation." (1988: II, 189)

[6] Here understood in the dictionary sense of "a departure from the original or from what is pure or correct" (*Merriam-Webster*).

[7] The paper is written as a sequel to "O Retorno da Laurentina: A simbolização das relações étnicas no Moçambique colonial e pós-colonial" (Pina-Cabral 1999) and to "Galvão among the Canibals: The emotional constitution of colonial power" (Pina-Cabral 2001).

The military campaigns that paved the way to effective colonial administration in the 1890's (cf. Alexandre 1998: 182-193) were principally directed against a group of Nguni warriors under the paramount chiefship of Gungunhana, a descendant of Shoshangane,[8] one of the generals that escaped from the grip of Shaka Zulu in the 1820's (cf. Wilson 1969, I: 346). The famous *mfecane*[9] revolutionised completely the political map of the region that stretches northward from today's Maputo to the Save River (cf. Pelissier 1988: II, 187-208).

As in many other areas of southern and eastern Africa, these Zulu warriors came to constitute the core of a military leadership that ruled over the local population. The Nguni warriors received allegiance from a vast number of Tsonga and Ndau subjects –these are called *angonizados* in Portuguese, to imply that they adapted Nguni ways.[10] In Mozambique, though, the Zulu elite never managed to impose their own language, as was the case in Zimbabwe, for example. *Shangane*, the language that the *angonizados* speak today, is a dialect of Tsonga with Zulu influences.[11]

After these wars, the main centre of Portuguese interests in the territory shifted from the northern coast (Mozambique Island and Quelimane) where it had been since the sixteenth century, to the south. The two main modern towns were Beira and Lourenço Marques. The former, lying in swampy ground between the Save and the Zambezi, was a newly founded sea gate to British dominated Southern Rhodesia. Lourenço Marques, the new capital city (today Maputo), played a similar role for the British mining interests that controlled the central plateau of Transvaal in South Africa.

In 1964, a war of liberation was started in the north of the country mostly fuelled by agrarian protest. Actual independence, however, resulted from a brusque change in Portuguese colonial policy. In April 1974, seeing that no political solution

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[8] Also known as Manicusse.

[9] For a recent discussion of the *mfecane* debate, cf. Hamilton 1998.

[10] The Empire of "Gaza sustained itself for better or for worse for three quarters of a century thanks to: (a) State centralism and the reinforcement of local power; (b) the regular mobilization of subjects into a permanent army; (c) the cultural and linguistic assimilation of the defeated, in particular the keeping as hostages of the children of *régulos* [chiefs] and the adoption of male captives." – René Pélissier 1988: II, 189. See also p. 191: the process of assimilation "produced *angonizados*, that were known in Gaza by the name Shangane (ou Changane). Without having the means of demonstrating it, we have the distinct impression that the phenomenon of partial "*angonização*" was far more advanced south of the Save River (among the Tsonga) than north of it (among the Shona)."

[11] The *locus classicus* of this discussion is the famous argument by Monica Wilson on the importance of conquered women and their status in the history of language contact, cf. Wilson, 1969, I: 101.

had been prepared to end an African war that was increasingly wearing them out, the Portuguese military overthrew the dictatorship. This led to the institution of a democratic regime in Portugal and the granting of independence to the African colonies.

Whilst the first acts of armed rebellion against colonial rule were mostly carried out by northern people, the political party that ultimately saw the war through to its end and established a new independent country in 1975 – Frelimo – was mostly staffed by southern people, many of whom have strong links to the Nguni elite.

Mozambique's independence, however, had a bitter taste as, soon after the institution of a communist regime, a civil war erupted that bled the country dry and killed vast numbers of its population (cf. Geffray 1990). After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the parts to the struggle finally managed to achieve a durable peace. Since the elections of 1994, the country is governed by outwardly democratic governments that favour private enterprise and civil freedom, even though Frelimo remains the ruling party.

The colonial wound

In 1997 I visited a small town in Mozambique where I had lived when I was an adolescent. I went to have lunch with an old man of about 75 years of age. This man was considered an important local figure and, being related by affinity with my Mozambican travelling companion, I was told he would be offended if I had not gone to his house.

He turned out to be a reasonably wealthy man by local standards and to be very lucid and he spent two hours telling me his life story. He had been a younger child of a local lineage of chiefs; he had been brought up by priests and had carried out his education well into the secondary school. He had been *assimilado*[12] and had spent most of his life as *administrador de posto* (District Administrator), having achieved some respect in his profession to the point of having been promoted to the capital in the 1970's. The Independence shook him very deeply, but he soon turned

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[12] Lit. "Assimilated". In the African continental colonies (Mozambique, Angola and Guiné-Bissau) during the first part of the twentieth century, a legal distinction was instituted between citizens and natives. An African could become a citizen by undergoing a process of *assimilação* which involved being literate in Portuguese and living in an European fashion. This status involved considerable privileges (aside from access to higher paid employment, the most important was not being subject to

out to be useful to the new regime and again worked for the State in a number of capacities. Being now very old and living in retirement, he had nevertheless retained a high level of self-respect, which he still formulated in the old language of assimilation.

I am reporting this perfectly common set of events with the aim of showing how normal people are deeply marked by their socialization. In many senses the socialization that this man received was not dissimilar from all other forms of socialization. It so happened, however, that it took place within a colonial context, where he was from the start marked by the brand of subalternity, much as he managed to avoid the worst of it through sheer intelligence, hard work and forbearance.

Having been an *assimilado*, this man had to reject some of his primary solidarities in order to achieve some success within the colonial setting. By "becoming Portuguese" this man had to become less of what he had been earlier – there were patent incompatibilities. This means that he had had to deal with the internal conflict between his primary solidarities and his acquired Portugueseness. This conflict was somehow lessened by the prestige, success and security he acquired as a result of this move in social class. The move reflected on his relatives, friends and neighbours and was plainly useful to them in those colonial days. He never became fully "Portuguese", however, as he was "black". This means that the move was a move in social class and not in ethnicity. Thus, it entered into conflict with the perceived correspondence between ethnicity and social class that characterised this colonial setting. Thus, he carried an identitary wound, of which he was constantly being reminded through his own role as administrator.[13]

The process, however, involved not only considerable financial gain and increased security, but also the acquisition of new ties – new forms of identification. What this meant is that, when Independence came, he was faced with a world where social class and ethnicity need no longer be incompatible. Being associated with the colonial regime he was at first despised and rejected, but the evidence of his administrative gifts and his intelligence soon imposed itself. He was fully re-integrated into the new status quo.

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forced labour) as well as a certain amount of identitary ambiguity. To my knowledge, the theme has not yet been studied in the manner it deserves, cf. Isabel Castro Henriques (1999: 225-229).

[13] Isabel Castro Henriques (1999), in her treatment of the theme of assimilation emphasises this identitary ambiguity.

When he became an *assimilado*, he was faced with a conflict of identities that imposed upon him difficult choices – he had to sever some of his primary solidarities. But when he became *moçambicano* he also had to sever some of the attachments that he had acquired in the meantime. He severed social links, but he never lost the memory of the earlier identifications – neither those he had acquired as part of his primary solidarities as "black", nor those he acquired later, during the schooling process, which led him into becoming an *assimilado.* Twenty-seven years after Independence, he shared with me a sense of identification, much as I am sure he shares also with his kinsman who is a local *régulo* (chief) in a neighbouring rural area.

In short, the act of Independence does not involve only the casting away of the oppressor by a subaltern population. It also involves a confrontation with the fact that the oppressor has become part of the oppressed. The postcolonial subject finds within him or herself the distorted reflection of the imperial domination. The identitary ambiguity that this process implies may be called a wound and bears all the marks of a stigma (cf. Goffman 1963).

Colonial occupation does not only impose subalternity over a part of the population, it also de-legitimises the institutions that support the primary solidarities of that sector of the population. Thus, it creates identitary wounds that do not simply vanish with the withdrawal of the colonising State. Colonisation casts the shadow of subalternity not only over people but also over people's categories of corporate classification, thus heightening their stigmatic potential. This process establishes a dynamic of compensation that has long-term implications particularly as the processes of ethnic classification that characterised the colonial subordination continue to have implications in the postcolonial period.

Here, of course, different historical and geographic contexts give rise to different situations. Whether the aboriginal population was wiped out or nearly wiped out, or whether it continues to be the majority is a centrally differentiating factor. The specific nature of the ethnic polarisation during the colonial period leads to rather different implications – as the comparison between China and Africa clearly highlights. Precisely one of the problems with the categories "colonialism" and "post colonialism" is the way in which they are used in the socio-scientific discourse to hide the deep differences between these different contexts (cf. Pina-Cabral 2001).

When we classify Macao, Mozambique and Brazil under the category of "Portuguese post colonialism" we are really running more risks than we ought to, for

we are likely not to be able to, so to speak, sanitise the enormous confusions that such a usage necessarily fosters. What this means is that the first implication of the expression (that which places the stress on the colonising country as the source of definition of an historical condition) imposes itself, whether we want it or not.

A colonial territory becomes postcolonial when it becomes an independent country. But what is it to be independent? It is to assume "self-rule" – to govern itself. Thus, we become aware of something that is not immediately apparent in the concept of "independence", and that is that it implies a subject – a self that is no longer dependent on another.

This self, then, is the now independent country. This entity, however, appears to us as if it could be externally defined. In fact, such a thing cannot happen, as a country is a political entity and so it necessarily involves a process of internal political organisation. No country can exist independently of the social organisation of its population. The process of colonisation, however, has changed this population so deeply that even the ground level categories of collective organisation (villages, kin groups, associations, local schools, local churches) bear the marks of history.

Furthermore, perceptions of the colonial past affect the postcolonial present. In Mozambique, in particular, the sharp contrast between the relative social peace and considerable prosperity of the immediate pre-Independence period, and the political upheavals and economic collapse of the post-Independence period is striking. The troubles the country has lived through and the form it is being governed contrast with a past that becomes all too easily idealised, thus casting a sense of woundedness over the new national self.

Recently, Gabriel Mithá Ribeiro carried out a study of the Mozambicans' "social representations" of their political condition. He concluded that: "Portuguese colonization is, on the whole, represented as a positive thing. As far as that is concerned, a special stress is placed on issues related to material conditions (food, employment, availability of goods, aspects of consumption) and to the stability of social relations (in particular the existence of clear and efficient laws that regulated social life). In this way, the colonial State is seen as efficient and authoritarian and, for that very same reason, it is admired." (2000:177)

The other side of the coin to this is a sense of detachment from the new national image – a new form of colonial wound.

Having many lives

The following events took place in Maputo during a meal at a restaurant. I hope they highlight how the processes described above are, at the same time, part of and wrought within the lives of individual persons.

I was explaining to my dinning companions how strange it felt to be back in a city where I had lived the most significant years of my youth but which had changed so profoundly. One of them turned to me and stated emphatically, "Yes, but you know nothing, because I, on the other hand, have had three lives." And he repeated, "Three lives!" – as if to leave it plainly evident to all of us that he was making no light comment.

I asked him to explain what he meant. He replied that he had a life as a Portuguese; then, Machel (the first charismatic leader of the independent country) had turned him into a socialist; then, the war finished, and he discovered that all those ideals had been empty rhetoric, so he had to start out his life again as a businessman.

Earlier on he had told me that he had received a full Portuguese education and started his adult life as a soldier of the Portuguese Army, where he rose to an intermediary administrative post. He then went on to work for a State department. What this means is that, as he himself pointed out, he has all the cultural baggage that is expected of a Portuguese middle-class male: Portuguese is his native language; he is an expert in matters of football, being a fanatic *Sportinguista*; he has all the middle-class "social graces"; he has all the necessary knowledge of the popular historical and geographical referents of Portuguese daily life; etc.

In a colonial setting dominated by Catholic Europeans, being a member of a Euroafrican Muslim family did not free him from some discordant ambiguities. In truth, however, during the final years of the colonial regime, changes were taking place in government policy and racial attitudes, which implied that youngsters such as he were no longer faced with the discriminatory impediments that marred the lives of previous generations.

When Mozambique received its independence, he decided to remain behind and opted for Mozambican citizenship. I do not presume to know why he took that step, particularly as other members of his family opted for going to live in Portugal. There may well have been a good dose of youthful idealism involved. I am certain, however, that his primary solidarities – kinship, religion, ethnicity – were central factors in framing his decision. But he was immediately faced with a potentially

traumatic event – Mozambican men who had been Portuguese soldiers were under suspicion of being disloyal to the new regime, which was headed by the very same people they had fought against.

For some people this meant that they had to undergo a veritable initiatory ordeal. A person who had been a soldier in the Portuguese shock troops gave me an account of it. The event, as performed in Maputo, was personally chaired by President Samora Machel. Many hundreds of men were gathered in the grand dance hall of the more prestigious High School of the city, which had shed its previous name (that of the Portuguese dictator, Salazar) and had been renamed after Machel's first wife (Josina Machel). At the time, the government was in the habit of meting out harsh sentences of deportation to the distant northern provinces, to re-education camps in isolated regions, and even death penalties. These men, therefore, had all the reasons to suspect that theirs would be a similar fate.

The President carried out a "popular style" judgement where he personally interviewed the men and had them confess publicly to their "crimes". They were there for nearly a week from morning till night, but were allowed to return to their families at sunset. Then the final day arrived. They were sent home and told to return next morning, to hear the sentence. At home, that night, they debated on whether that would be the last day of their lives or the last time they would see their families. But the next morning the President simply decided to relieve them of their burden of guilt. Machel earned many a man's allegiance on that day.

My friend with the three lives, however, was met by a different fate. Being a civil servant, and due to his connections with some white members of Frelimo, he was put into a list of people who were sent to Zambia to be re-trained in a Russian military establishment. He spent two years there, living in barracks and being subjected to communist indoctrination. Thus started his second life – as the citizen of a socialist state.

In the beginning, as with so many other middle-class urbanites, he was deeply involved in the task of building the new country. The sacrifices that were asked of him, however, were increasingly difficult to deliver. Disappointment soon started to be felt. The civil war broke out and living conditions deteriorated below acceptable standards, particularly as the traditional staple foods were taken out of the market – either because they were not being produced or because they were being exported to pay for Soviet armament. Increasingly, his primary solidarities were being

challenged. How could he ensure his family's survival? Could he totally forget his religious upbringing? How could he shed the values of civility that he had been brought up to cherish?

Furthermore, something else started happening that challenged his sense of identification with the regime. As the war developed, an atmosphere of corruption, brutality and irresponsibility started to pervade the relationship between the people in control of the State apparatus and the general population. As soon as the opportunity presented itself, my friend took early retirement so as not to have to become increasingly involved in processes that he felt would later turn out of control.

By the time the war came to an end as the result of the Rome Agreements in October 1992, he was happy to start a new life. Elections were held and the regime shed off its ill-fitting socialist clothing. He used his talents to open up a series of small business ventures. Now, he was starting a third life. One in which it was a good thing to be thrifty, to earn money, to achieve a middle-class standard of living, to cherish one's family, to practice one's religion, to remember one's ancestors, to link up with the rural ties that had been inherited from the family's past, etc. Now, one had to have a flashy house and car, to educate one's children as well as possible and to make savings in dollars in order to achieve some economic security. After all, one had to face the uncertainties of living in a country that, by then, was classified as one of the poorest in the world and whose economic and administrative infrastructures were totally demolished.

Leaders of men

So started a new era for the country, which has not yet come to an end. The new era brought about civil freedom, a new economic prosperity and greater international recognition and saw the end of the civil war. Moreover, it called forth a whole series of institutional changes and adaptations.

One thing was plain for all to see: the blatant disregard of the citizen's primary solidarities had been one of the main reasons for the civil war. The now outwardly democratic governments soon became aware of the need to deal with this.

I will not delve here on the issue of ethnicity in Mozambique, for it is too large a topic and it is presently still inadequately researched. To be brief, although roughly 40% of the population belongs to the northern ethnic conglomerate of the Macuas,

political and economic power is solidly in the hands of Frelimo – a political party whose leadership is dominantly of southern Shangane extraction.[14]

To list just two significant examples: the President of the Republic is a scion of one of the main chiefly lines, vassals of the royal family;[15] whilst the principal representative of the royal line (a direct descendant of Gungunhana from the N'gumayo lineage) was until recently Governor of Gaza, the area where Shoshangane established his principal strongholds. This is the meaning of the critical but humorous references that one hears today to the rebirth of the *Império de Gaza* (Gungunhana's ancient realm). Even Machel – the plebeian charismatic leader of the socialist period – has been linked up posthumously to the Nguni southeast African aristocratic network, by virtue of the marriage of his widow to President Mandela, a Xhosa aristocrat, previously married to a Dlhamini princess.

As the country started to rise out of the civil war it became clear that State control was largely limited to urban areas. Rural populations remain on the whole self-ruled. Outside urban limits, the chiefs are the sole dispensers of justice and the only force capable of organising collective action. Any hope of achieving State control over these areas depends on an alliance with the "traditional authorities", as they are called by Mozambican urbanites[16]. This process has been started, but the daunting complexity of it all is becoming increasingly apparent.

Who are these "traditional authorities" that, via people's primary solidarities, come to assume so much importance?

The answer is complex, because the very concept "traditional authority" points to a political reality that Mozambican urbanites thought they had shed off: the colonial State. Many of the present *chefes* are former *régulos* and *cabos* of Portuguese colonial administration and the only experience that they have had historically of a linkage to the national State is based on colonial practice. Any attempt to link them up to an unmediated pre-colonial and "traditional" past is met by the most serious obstacles. In the case of Shangane aristocrats this might appear

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[14] The association between the civil war (Renamo/Frelimo in the 1980's) and the earlier Nguni overlordship is recognized even by authors whose perspective on the history of the country is centered on the experiences of the Frelimo Maputo elite, cfr. Honwana 2002:185.

[15] His better known son is called after the famous Zulu battalions – the much feared *impi* – cf. Hamilton 1998: 3 and 218.

[16] I am grateful to Fernando Florêncio, José Langa and Agostinho Manganhela for their generous conversations with me about this subject. I am, however, solely responsible for the views here expressed.

simpler than in others, but it is not. The example of Joaquim Chissano, the President of the Republic, is again interesting. His apical ancestor was an important *induna* of one of Gungunhana's paternal uncles (Dlhambuye N'gumayo) but who sided with the Portuguese army at the end of the war, when the Nguni king was showing signs of weakness. [17]

Primary solidarities are constantly placing quandaries before the builders of independent Mozambique, which they do not always know how to resolve. As it turned out, the intervention of the Portuguese colonial administration on the business of local chiefs had been far more extensive than was at first apparent. Firstly, matters of succession had often been decided unilaterally by the administration in terms of its own interests. The descendants of the unsuccessful heirs, however, remained behind, often continuing to claim legitimacy in terms of "traditional" rules of succession. Secondly, in areas where two ethnic groups cohabited – and there are many such areas in the country – the colonial administration had to opt for one group over the other. Ethnic complexity was disregarded, as Portuguese administrative legislation had to impose strict territorial boundaries for the power of each local chief (*régulo*).

In practical terms, the administrator was forced to decide for one instead of another of the claimants. This ran counter to African ways of constituting primary solidarities. European legal systems are based on a sedentary ideology, where political representation is the product of territorial belonging and not of kinship connection. When people move in the course of time, they are not supposed to move as a political unit, but as individual citizens who either remain politically not represented, as foreigners, or find their political representation within the framework of the new territory they inhabit.

Thus, colonial administration affected significantly the determination of who was to be incumbent of chiefly posts and who was to be subject. Although this led to numberless different and complex situations, the fact is that time came to legitimise the rule of certain lines over others. Particularly since the administration endowed the incumbents it chose with the power to back their legitimacy. For example, should a subject fail to greet the chief in the fashion he deemed correct, he might well have him captured and taken to the administrative post. This placed the administrator in an embarrassing situation, for Portuguese law did not contemplate penalties of

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[17] In spite of that, later on, in 1902, he participated in a revolt against the imposition of colonial rule.

imprisonment for being rude to a chief. But he was bound to resolve the situation with an admonition to the "rude" subject in order not to offend the chief.

The problem is increased by the early attitudes of Frelimo towards these organic leaders. Ever since its second congress, in 1968, when the party adopted a Marxist line, traditional authorities were classified as "lackeys" and "puppets" of colonialism, and were excluded from the right to representation. A very telling example of what this meant can be provided by the events surrounding the election of representatives to the People's Assembly in 1977, as they took place in the two communal Macua villages studied by Christian Geffray in the Erati region, near Nacala, northern Mozambique.

> *The former* régulos *and* cabos *were not allowed to run as deputies for the People's Assembly. This ban was also extended to all intermediary chiefs (*mpewe*, pl.* mapewe*), even those who had not occupied any function in the colonial hierarchy. This, regardless of the fact that the majority of* mapewe *represented for the rural populations something totally different from agents of colonial power, and that their authority did not originate essentially in the role attributed to them by the Portuguese. The reaction of the villagers was remarkable and identical in both villages. As the chiefs were put aside, the inhabitants voted massively for the men that they saw as their legitimate representatives, the only ones they deemed capable of speaking in their stead and defending their interests: the lineage chiefs, the* mahumu *(sing.* humu*). Faced with this unpredictable and inopportune "feudalist" response, the district administrator cancelled the election, and put a ban on all chiefs and lineage elders. At this point, without any previous arrangement between them, the electors of the two villages (lying over twenty kilometres apart) reacted again in similar fashion: they voted massively for people thought to be inoffensive and especially illiterate, the village idiots. (Geffray 1990: 31)*

How can the present government resolve these various problems? If the only representatives whom the people trust are those who depend on primary solidarities, how will they find new ways of grafting these representatives into the State apparatus? How will they decide who is to be a chief and what line should rule in which territory? Will they have the technical and legal capacity to alter the sedentary presuppositions written into modern government, so as to break the territorial integrity

of each of the chiefdoms, allowing for different citizens to be ruled by different chiefs according to their different ethnic belongings?

The problems with chiefs, however, are not limited to who they are. What they do is also a major matter for debate. As soon as chiefs were given the opportunity to manifest themselves, they started to make claims from the government. They felt that their allegiance could only be acquired if certain prerogatives were recognised. The principal demand of the chiefs north of the Save River is that the new State should grant to them the insignia of chiefly distinction that the colonial State awarded: namely, a medal, a uniform and the right to fly a national flag over one's house. In the south, where their ethnic and kinship connection to the Maputo elite is stronger, they demand to receive a salary. Furthermore, they demand to be legally attributed rights to exercise judgement and to carry out short-term incarceration, which they presently exercise in continuation with colonial practice, but which the State does not officially recognise.

All this is compounded by the fact that, during the immediate postcolonial period, Frelimo banned ancestor worship. Thus, this major form of connecting political allegiance to community feeling and to personal primary solidarities suddenly came to an end. Added to political insecurity, to severe hunger and to civil war, this meant that witchcraft accusations started to mount in unprecedented fashion. Only chiefs are capable of judging such accusations, but the State does not recognise their right to do this. As local communities felt an increased need for the mediation of chiefs to solve this perceived threat from witchcraft, a sense of bitterness against the new State developed. This was one of the fuels of the civil war.

Even today, this situation is a major threat to the urban elite, particularly as chiefs are most difficult to control in the vast regions north of the Save River, where Frelimo's legitimacy to rule is strongly denied by the majority of the population. The problem cannot be solved simply, as it demands two seemingly incompatible feats. On the one hand, to be able to overcome the sedentary, Eurocentric bias that is written into the structure of all modern States. On the other hand, to be able to deal with the fact that colonial institutions and historical events are no longer exogenous facts, but are integral parts of the past that future Mozambique and each future Mozambican will have.

"Tradition" was essentialised by these postcolonial modernists, unwittingly adopting the essentialisation of African subjects that Portuguese colonialism had

enshrined in its legislation by using the notion of "native" (*indígena*) – the permanently pre-modern subject whose citizenship was diminished.[18]

Nowadays, however, the problem is compounded: it turns out that history cannot be re-written and that "tradition" mixes with "colonialism" in ways that are often indissociable. Worse than that, the utopian project of creating a nation out of people's sense of the common good, turns out to have been unfeasible. People do not dispense easily with their primary solidarities. Moreover, the latter are historically constructed. The line between colonialism and post colonialism is not there to be neatly demarcated.

My present suggestion is that anthropological analysis itself has often suffered from this modernist disposition to believe in the possibility of sudden re-constitutive breaks in sociality. We have to shed the caesurist cast of mind,[19] which focuses on moments of discontinuity in historical development as privileged foci for cognition, casting aside the relevance of continuity.

The colonial/postcolonial temporal and structural frontier has been overemphasised of late, often with dangerous ideological and practical implications. Among other things, this means that there is a tendency to forget the fact that postcolonial States are directly and inescapably grafted onto processes of modern State building that started in the colonial period. Such an effacing effect has often been used to attempt to impose forms of domination that are not negotiated with the citizens, disregarding the operation of institutions that arise from primary solidarities. This is highly problematic, for it has two effects: (a) further de-legitimising the new national elite and (b) further confronting the Mozambicans with the distorted mirror of the empire.

We have to question ourselves as to whether Mozambicans are indeed living a "postcolonial period", since the project of nation building was, after all, an authoritarian mirage – a distorted mirror of empire. Only a slow process of negotiation of legitimacy with the citizens, which will inevitably partially empower them, will allow for the constitution of a new legitimacy. The exercises in "democracy" which we have witnessed during the 1990's have been deeply

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[18] According to people such as Adriano Moreira (1952), the reason for this was primarily to protect them, because their atavism prevented them from exercising their rights correctly.

frustrating and unsatisfactory, failing to move in this direction, as the political crises that took place in 2000 patently evince.[20]

"99.9% of Mozambicans are black"

The emphasis on "colonialism" as an explanatory category, furthermore, carries with itself the problematic notion that it is a condition that might suddenly disappear. As it happens, however, this hides the fact that hegemonic domination is always built in layers – it is never univocal. In short-lived situations of violent domination, the break between domination and subalternity may indeed be univocal, clear and giving rise to monolithic categories of people. Contrarily, in normal, long-term situations of colonial domination there are always gradations of domination.

The ex-*assimilado* to whom I referred above managed to achieve a position of relative power. Nevertheless, being "black", he never managed to have as much access to power as a "white" man with the same gifts and capacity for work would have managed. But he did succeed in offloading much of the burden of subalternity. For example, he escaped most forms of direct, physical domination as were systematically imposed on his fellow "blacks". Being an *assimilado* he could not be beaten by the administrator's sipoys (native police forces) with their *palmatórias*.[21] If he committed or was suspected of having committed a felony he would be taken to prison with relative civility in order to await judgement.

In short, the colonial regime – as it turned itself over time from a form of direct violent domination into a system based on negotiated forms of domination – instituted a tiered system of power, within which people positioned themselves. This system was characterised by a central marker of differentiation – "colour", the phenotypic differentiation into "black", "white" and "Indian". Again I will not repeat here arguments adduced elsewhere (cf. Pina-Cabral 2001) to show that racial differentiation is not the same thing everywhere. Racial differentiation does not vary only in terms of the categories used; it differs also according to the formal nature of

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[19] Cf. Pina-Cabral 1992: 49 – where, following Hermínio Martins, attention is called to the need to overcome 'caesurism', that is, theories and concepts which "stress discontinuity in change as the privileged 'moment' of our experience and reflexive cognition of it" (Martins 1974: 280).

[20] Some instances are: the murder of the journalist Carlos Cardoso, the military occupation of Beira, or the barbaric murder of hundreds of northern Macua citizens by police, of which the Montepuez murders were tragically representative.

[21] The ferule – *palmatória* – was an instrument that was also widely used at the time in schools as a means of correcting students.

the internal boundaries between the categories. One may have more or less permeable boundaries; shaded or sharp boundaries; segmentarily related or hierarchical boundaries; etc. In the particular system that was at work in Mozambique in the immediate pre-Independence period, racial boundaries had become fluid and uncertain, allowing for assimilated "blacks" to live much as if they were *mestiços* and for *mestiços* to enter most "white" environments of sociability (depending on class and education). This was further accompanied by economic growth leading to a generalised growing prosperity. This meant that a lower middle class of *mestiços* was being formed who had considerable expectations of social promotion. At the time of Independence many of these people despaired of making a living in a country that would now be dominated by "blacks" and decided to move to Portugal, where they were integrated as *retornados*.[22]

To return to my earlier argument, an emphasis on "colonial" in historical description carries with it two dangerous tendencies: (a) to treat colonial domination as if it was univocal and not tiered; (b) to treat the social groups that constitute colonial society as if they were monolithic and absolutely isomorphic with the "white/black" ethnic distinction. This, however, was not the case. Political domination was negotiated and, indeed, during the last years of the colonial regime, economic prosperity and global trends in the "Western" camp of the Cold War allowed for increased softening of the boundaries of ethnic classification and increased negotiation of political domination.

The political principles on which Independence was granted, however, were not based on ideological constructs produced within the local ethnic system. Rather, Independence was carried out in the throes of the Cold War and by means of a system of international allegiances that took Mozambique violently from the Anglo-American (Western) camp into the Soviet camp. The symbol of the Kalashnikov in the Mozambican National Emblem and Flag marks clearly what was the force upon which the new people in power depended in order to take over both the State apparatus and, due to nationalisation, private enterprises.

At global level, the discourse of racial domination was formed in terms of conceptions of "white/black" boundary formation that were distinct from the trends

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[22] Lit. "returnees" – a category that has since fallen into disuse largely due to the success such people had in integrating themselves into normal networks of sociability (cf. Pena Pires, 1999).

prevailing in Mozambican society at the time. On the one hand, the anti-racist discourse was dominated by a generalised presupposition of the Anglo-American "one-drop" system, which pushes all the *mestiços* into the "black" camp. On the other hand, the Chinese and Soviet foreign aids that dominated the first period of independence manifested spontaneous forms of racism that were not characteristic of the Iberian cast of colonialism previously dominant. For example, Russian diplomatic personnel used to close off sections of the beaches with armed guards whenever they went to swim in Maputo. Although forms of racial discrimination did exist during the late colonialist period, they were ambivalent, shaded and tended to depend on self-exclusion rather than violent demarcation. These new forms of racial segregation baffled and deeply wounded the new "black" population that had come to occupy the capital city that the Portuguese had evacuated.

More important, however, is that the post-Independence period came to be marked by a new form of legitimation that had deep political implications. Globally dominant ideological positions at the time stressed how the new State ought to be dominated by "blacks" – as the revolution was aimed at liberating "blacks". There was, however, no significant "black" elite. The majority of the new middle-classes were "white", *mestiço* or "Indian". Furthermore, the boundary between *mestiços* and "whites" was undergoing a process of softening, as became quite clear later on when they found themselves together in Portugal as *retornados*.[23]

This meant that the State-controlling elite of the immediate post-Independence period (which, due to "socialist" policies, was also in control of all economic activities) was discretely divided by a racial boundary. There were those who, being "black", were legitimate owners of the land, now that "blacks" had been "liberated"; and there were those who, being equally Mozambican and similarly involved in the "process of construction of the new nation", were "white" or *mestiço* or "Indian".[24] Such people were not felt to be as legitimate as "blacks" in their rights to overlordship. They were, therefore, granted reduced rights of access to State power and its corresponding financial benefits.

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[23] But note Pena Pires' comment that, since racial differences tended to correspond to (a) less social links in Portugal and (b) lower levels of education, the integration of *retornados* who were not of European origin was not as spectacularly successful as that of those who had left for Africa in the recent past (1999: 195).

[24] Or still *caneco*, a old term of abuse that is today used with surprising readiness to describe people of mixed "Indian", "black" and "white" ancestry.

This created a system of elite participation that instituted a mode of struggle for power over the State apparatus and its respective benefits.[25] This system of graded rights is jokingly referred in the capital by saying that there are *moçambicanos* and *moçambiquenhos* – by this implying that the later ("whites" or "Indians") are somewhat less legitimated as citizens.[26]

What is at stake here is a form of elite differentiation leading to differential claims over the pickings resulting from the control of the State apparatus. Indeed, the vast majority of the "white" and *mestiço* population is in the cities, particularly the capital. So, they are members of the elite, but their claims to elite-status are reduced by reference to those of the "black" sector of the same elite.

For example, a junior lecturer at the university, recently arrived from finishing his Ph.D. in Sweden, justifies in the following way the struggle for the control over university resources[27] that was taking place in 2000:

> As a matter of fact, there is a conflict of change of generations (...) and then, in Mozambique, unfortunately, this change of generations always carries a racial signature, for obvious reasons. As I said earlier, up until 1975 only 40 blacks had gone to the University of Lourenço Marques and at this moment we have more than 6000 people with university degrees; there are necessarily more blacks among them, as the country has 99.9% of blacks. Thus, this change in generations that is taking place, almost always implies the appearance of a new scientific profile – black, young – so it has a racial marking and there is a movement around this of which the media has become aware. Thus, in a certain way, the problem of skin colour came to the fore. (Savana *24/3/2000, p. 2*)

Only the future will tell whether this system of racial discrimination among the elite will lead to a reinforcement of racial boundaries – with the aim of reproducing across generations the privilege of racial preference in access to State-

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[25] I have in mind in particular the considerable pickings resulting from the access to the funds provided by international cooperation agencies and NGO's. In a country ravaged by civil war and economic mismanagement this is the principal source of elite income.

[26] The use of this sort of rhetoric device is very characteristic of Portuguese colonial settings where racial boundaries were often graded and subject to individual negotiation. For example, in Macao, at mid-twentieth century, when racial discrimination was most strongly felt, a similarly informal distinction was drawn between *macaenses*, people of old Eurasian ancestry, and *macaístas*, people whose parents had an inter-ethnic marriage - and who were, therefore, less prestigious.

[27] Mostly originating in foreign programs of cooperation.

controlled benefits – or whether a process of elite racial interbreeding similar to the one existing in Brazil[28] will prevail.

Claims to political and economic privilege are being grounded on a discourse of race. It hardly needs to be pointed out that, if the question had been that academic distinction validates differential access to university resources, then the "problem of skin colour" would be irrelevant in settling the dispute. In short, it is either "a new scientific profile" or it is "black and young" – the two systems of validating claims are incompatible.

Finally, I argue that the boundary of Independence has brought to play a set of factors of internal differentiation that are inscribed into people's formation as social persons in terms of their primary solidarities. Contrary to what this young lecturer openly advocates, skin colour is only one among a number of factors of social insertion. Interests and identifications based on different systems of classification intertwine in complex ways. These are grounded on historical processes that, in turn, are inscribed in people's own constitution as social agents, via their primary solidarities.

In Mozambique, today, such claims to ethnic privilege based on "blackness" are, in fact, deeply problematic for they hide other forms of socio-economic exploitation that have immense impact on the country and on its population. Although this man's claim that 99.9% of the population is "black" may well be statistically unfounded, that is not what matters. Far more importantly, it hides the fact that 99.9% of the population are not southern Shangane-Portuguese bilingual urbanites. There are other axes of ethnic differentiation in Mozambique that partly explain, in fact, the civil war that shook the country as well as the sense of political frustration and economic morass that is in the grip of most of the country north of the Save River.

People such as this man who aim to control the State apparatus are not only "black" and "young", they are also "urbanites" and too often directly descended from the *angonizado* gentry of southern Mozambique that played such an important role in

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[28] And also being challenged there at the moment, largely due to the same pressures from international agencies and their financial support.

Portugal's colonial regime, both as *régulos* (chiefs) and as members of the *tropas landins* (the Portuguese correspondent to the Gurkhas).[29]

Whilst basing his claims to privilege on ethnically defined "rights", this man is hiding the (sub)ethnic bases of the distinction that places him in the position of making those claims. Of itself this process is common to many of the elites of democratic regimes the world over.

Two aspects in this case, however, deserve specific notice. Firstly, as it happens, in Mozambique, the economic and political marginalisation of most regions north of the Save River has come to assume particularly tragic proportions. Secondly, the historical continuity with the colonial regime again comes to light – both in the way in which the *angonizado* elite achieved distinction and in the way the post-Independence State inherited the centralist traditions that have always marred the Portuguese polity. The obvious need for a form of regional autonomy in such a large and diversified country is banished from political discussion by the capital's elite in the name of a supposed "national unity" – the nature of which would be really hard to determine in any substantive form.

Thus, this man's claims to distinction are quite as grounded on pre-Independence history (even whilst couched in anti-colonial terms) as the sense of nostalgic identification of the *assimilado* to whom I referred above.

Conclusion

In our normal view of history, colonialism, socialist post colonialism and the present capitalist period seem to annul each other in succession, neatly lined as they are in a chain of successive acts of overcoming. The power of "whites" was handed over to "blacks". But in fact, social time is seldom linear. The past and the present are constantly being re-mixed into conglomerates of experience, where each component becomes largely indissociable from the others. The past and the present constantly visit each other in human experience. The man who had three lives or the ex-*assimilado*, struggle daily with their sense of personal incompatibility; the chiefs whose influence can no longer be denied, or the *angonizado* aristocrats whose power

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[29] Who were so bitterly hated by the populations of other colonies, such as Macao, for example, where there were a number of popular risings against the *hak gwai* – Cantonese, "black devils".

has become so blatant, cannot simply shed their rootedness in a past made up of identitary (political and ethnic) complexity.

Thus, in the first place, we must make much more careful use of the concept of "colonialism". It may well turn out to be one of the most potent tools of anachronism that exist in our socio-scientific tool-kit. In the second place, colonialism is not the only form of violence and oppression that existed in the history of mankind. All forms of violent and systematic oppression lead to processes of identitary ambiguity and of political de-legitimation. The effects of these prolong themselves through time in the manner that we have been mapping out for Mozambique.[30]

In this sense, nineteenth and twentieth century European colonialism is far from being anything specific. We are historically so close to the events of African colonialism, however, that we find it difficult to draw out the obvious conclusion that the only way to heal the wounds created by the violence and oppression of the past is by transforming them into a source of fraternity (cf. Pina-Cabral 1999).

The Europeans of today, therefore, live as much in a postcolonial condition as the Africans – the two senses of the word "postcolonial" do have some connection between them after all. The links created by colonialism are as ineffaceable for the dominators of the past as they are for the oppressed of the past. The lack of a clear policy of support for countries that, formed by colonialism, lack the economic means of self-support – such as São Tomé, Cape Verde or Guiné-Bissau – or the blatant unwillingness to take a courageous and truthful stance towards the violent and corrupt nature of the post-Independence regimes of Mozambique and Angola, is something that the future will doubtlessly lay at the doorstep of present European governments.

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[30] The ambiguities resulting from Portuguese conquest have not terminated, but the ambiguities resulting from the previous Nguni conquest have not terminated either, as is clearly evinced by the common and recurrent local conflicts between different chiefly lines in Gaza.

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