

# “Eating Alone” or When Modernity Feeds Tradition

## Money and Magic in Southern Mozambique<sup>1</sup>

*Luiz Henrique Passador*  
*Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Brazil)*  
*Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade Eduardo Mondlane*  
*(Mozambique)*

This article is the partial result of a study undertaken for my doctoral degree about the field of “tradition” and the universe of disease in southern Mozambique, with special attention to local experience with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The fieldwork was conducted in the District of Homóine, Inhambane Province, from June 2007 – February 2008, and from December 2008 to January 2009.

A proviso must be made from the start. There are many studies with different forms and different results about the tension between tradition and modernity in the African continent. Although this article is inserted in that thematic debate, I will use the terms tradition and modernity in quotes. This is because what is identified and described as modern and traditional in the text is that which the subjects of my study spontaneously define and classify as such. Therefore, these terms should not be understood as theoretical, academic, political, *a priori* and exogenous concepts, which I deliberately applied as analytical categories to the concept studied. I will be using them as emic categories that I found in my ethnographic work, because they were

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expressed in statements regularly made by the subjects studied in reference to certain experiences that they confronted, in the effort to analyze and understand them in the terms of a dichotomic classification. The government also utilizes these categories and imposes them as official realities – as seen in the official use of the term “traditional medicine” when referring to issues related to *curandeirismo* [traditional healing] (a term currently used by the research subjects and for this reason, will be preferentially used in this text). The use of these categories appears to be historically rooted in the colonial and post-colonial problemizing views concerning to the ways of life and beliefs of the “native” populations in Mozambique territory, and in the projects for social, political, economic and religious transformation undertaken during both Portuguese colonial domination, as well as in post-independence projects (at first socialist and now neo-liberal). Given the demand for structural change that should be incorporated by the population, the debate about the need for modernization of Mozambique (regardless of the type of modernity desired) appears to have imposed the historic problem of how the State treats these so called traditions within the political, social, economic and religious agendas. My hypothesis is that this debate was incorporated by civil society due to historic actions of the State, churches and international agencies<sup>2</sup> which acted and act among the population, imposing this problem as a parameter to understand and think about daily life and its transformations. Anyway, in the observed context, “modernity” and “tradition” appear as important categories operated by the subjects in their ways of thinking, describing and analyzing their world and their identities. It is this emic character that the categories assume and their implications in a context of monetarized and globalized economy that I will seek to describe and analyze.

## The Research Context

Homoíne is a district in the southeastern Province of Inhambane and borders the districts of Morrumbene and Funhaloro to the north, Panda to the west, Jangamo to the south and Maxixe to the west. It is located in the interior, 23

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2 In this respect, see the article about the problematic relations between “tradition” and the exogenous models of prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS implanted by international cooperation agencies in southern Mozambique (Passador 2009), and about the action of the State and of cooperation agencies in response to natural calamities in rural areas of the country (Borges Coelho 2004).

km from Maxixe and the National Highway Nr. 1 (the main thoroughfare on the Mozambique coast). According to data from the District Profile of 2005 (Ministério da Administração Estatal 2005), Homoine has an estimated population of 113,359 inhabitants, with a demographic density of 59.1 inhab./km<sup>2</sup>, which is above the average in the country's rural zones. The rate of urbanization, according to the same source, is 7%; the population is young (42% of inhabitants are under 15 years of age) and most feminine (57% are women). Data from the 1997 census shows that only 1% of the population has access to electricity (only in part of the main village, at Chinjinguire locality and in the agricultural school at Inhamússua). At the homonymous main village, seat of the district government administration, piped water supply has not been available since 2005,<sup>3</sup> except at the Health Center, the Administrative Palace, the São João de Deus Catholic Mission and at the Teachers Formation Institute, which have their own artesian wells (the palace has a connection to access water from the Health Center). The rest of the population, both in the main village and in the smaller communities, depend on water collected in rivers and lakes or found in some of the places that have wells, public reservoirs or cisterns. The lack of water has generated an informal labor market, in which mainly women, but also young people, collect water and sell it to residents in the main village – since the collapse of the water supply there, this market is constantly threatened with disappearing by frequent announcements of the return of piped water, generating anxiety and insecurity among these workers.

The economic base in the region is agriculture, predominantly undertaken by so-called “extended families” who, according to the District Profile of 2005 (op. Cit.), form 45.1% of the families in the district, with the others formed by a single person (18.8%), monoparental (12%, with 11% led by women) and nuclear (24.2%). Of the agricultural workers, 65% are women and only 35% men, which demonstrates the dependence of the local economy on feminine agricultural work. Among the salaried workers, who represent only 4% of the active population and are concentrated in commerce and services

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3 Since colonial times, the water supply in the main village is provided by pumps installed in artesian wells and springs. In the second half of 2008, the water supply system of the main village began again to operate, but only for a short period. By the beginning of January 2009 there was still no piped water and the residents of the main village depended on water collected in rivers and sold by informal workers.

in the main village and the centers of the others, 85% of the employees are men. Nevertheless, the total unemployment rate, including all the areas of the formal and informal labor market, is 17% among women and 23% among men. This reflects, once again, a predominantly agricultural and informal economy in which family income depends on feminine labor. The District Profile of 2005 (op. Cit.) also shows that among the women active in the productive sectors and in the generation of income, “96% [...] are agricultural workers (in families or on their own), 3% work in sales or in the formal and informal commercial sector and the remaining 1% work mostly in education, healthcare and other services” (op. Cit.: 35) with the minority in education (35%) and most in healthcare (64%). This employment situation leads to a situation that is quickly perceptible in the main village: there are many unemployed young men circulating in the village or gathering in bars, waiting for odd jobs; while the women are sedentary and concentrated in the houses (as housewives or maids) or in the markets and sidewalks selling agricultural products, soap bars, food, traditional drinks, industrialized utensils, etc. When they circulate, they do so with some purpose: carrying products to sell in the markets, sweeping the streets as city employees, taking purchases home, children to school or even balancing water jugs on the head, which they collect for their own use or for sale.

The education data allow understanding the profile of economic production and the distribution by sex in the labor market: while 65% of men over 5 years of age attend or attended school, only 44% of women do or have done. Even so, only 2% of the boys and 1% of the girls finish elementary school. The illiteracy rates are 62% among women and 41% among men. That is, the level of training for formal jobs that demand some specialization is very low in Homóine and establishes a gender inequality in favor of men, since women have less schooling and literacy and thus lower opportunities in the formal market. However, in a rural context with a prevalence of an agricultural, family-based and informal economy, this inequality is reverted, placing production in the hands of women.

Data about income also helps to clarify the position of women in the context described. According to the District Profile 2005 (op. Cit.), the average monthly income for the population is 1.120,00 MTn,<sup>4</sup> with 28.3% of the

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4 In January 2009, the rate of exchange of the New Metical, was approximately 26,0 MTn per US\$ 1.00.

families having monthly income from 500 - 1.000,00 MTn. But this data incorporates the income from production for self-consumption and the income ascribed to owning one's own home. Money is scarce in Homoine and the amounts that circulate, are, to a large degree, in goods. If the income related to holding of a home property in a family-based agricultural society tends to be concentrated by men in a patri-local regimen of agnatic descent, the income resulting from agricultural production for self-consumption and sale is in the hands of women, who are the majority of the producers and sellers of products in the local markets. The stands in the markets of Homoine are occupied by women and their vegetables. Even the sale of manufactured and industrialized products in the markets (*capulanas*, dishes, clothes, utensils, etc) is in the hands of the *mamás*. The markets are markedly feminine universes, except for the circuit of commerce in the stores, which are dominated by families of Hindu Indians and by the "Africanos",<sup>5</sup> and the services are dominated by men (such as public transport and repair workshops in general). This places a significant portion of the scarce circulating money in the hands of women, because they are the principal producers and sellers of agricultural products. For men, with exception once again for the shopkeepers and the owners of small bars and market stands, rest the rare formal jobs, the just odd jobs or the trips as migrant workers to South Africa to acquire money and consumer goods. They no longer work only in the mines, as had been the case since the 19th Century, but seek underemployment and informal jobs, or even illegal ones. Women also go to South Africa because of this diversification of income generation for Mozambicans in the land of the Rand, sharing a source of income that was historically masculine – nowadays some saleswomen in the markets of Homoine also spend periods in the South African markets or work as *mukheristas*.<sup>6</sup> In an economy of predominantly monetar-

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5 The term *africano* (which means African in Portuguese language) is commonly used to refer to the native blacks, in contrast with the non-black foreigners. In 2008 was opened the first shop of manufactured goods owned by Chinese in the main village of Homoine. Until then, the stores were exclusively owned by Indians and "Africans". The presence of Chinese shop owners has increased in recent years in the urban centers, although it still does not seem to threaten the domination of the Indians (Muslims and Hindus).

6 The term *mukherista* arose in the 1980's to designate the women who used to cross the borders of Swaziland and South Africa to supply the informal market with goods that were scarce during the Socialist period. Today, this activity has expanded and diversified, but maintains its informal characteristics and is still a predominantly feminine activity.

ized exchange, as observed in the main village<sup>7</sup>, the scarcity of money causes great anxiety and dispute, and stimulates theft and crime. Therefore, the possession of current money results in the acquisition of power for its owner. This power also passes through the hands of women, given that it is through them that value is produced and among whom the money circulates more constantly and with greater stability, either in the informal market or that for agricultural products. In this socio-economic situation, women are of crucial importance. To access money, men must have access to women. This involves a field of a certain “modernity” related to the market, as well as a field of a certain “tradition” related to the family – traditionally the family agricultural production is a feminine duty and marriage had always been a way to guarantee generation of income for the agnatic nuclear families, due to the incorporation of women through matrimonial alliances. If this situation places women in an ambiguous position of power, privilege and risk (since they are usually the ones accused of producing sorcery and witchcraft), this brings great anxiety to men, since male power involves the possession of women and lands as well as the possession of jobs and other market mechanisms that guarantee access to scarce money. In an environment of constant articulation between “modernity” and “tradition” I intend to explore here, what is seen is a constant use of “tradition” to obtain “modern” resources, triggering the use of sorcery, *curandeirismo* and religions as agencies to access monetary resources as much as to protect people from outside ambition, which is the fuel of market and spells.

## **The Discursive Delimitation of the Field of “Tradition” and the Pragmatic Ruptures of its Frontiers**

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7 On the monetarization of the economy, it is important to note that the economy has been monetarized since the pre-colonial period, because of the commerce undertaken by Arabs and Indians. In the colonial period, the monetary exchanges and the work paid with money intensified. Nevertheless, according to the reports collected in the field research, commercial exchange in goods continues – particularly using cashew nuts, which are exchanged by the peasants to store owners in exchange for manufactured goods. In the Socialist period and during the civil war (1977-1992), money was scarce principally in the rural zones and the more distant urban centers. Currently, the exchanges preferentially use money, largely due to the introduction of a globalized market economy, which necessarily imposes the search for value in money and the monetarization of relations involved in exchanges, even those that were traditionally operated in goods and which had undergone monetarization in the colonial period – for example, the *lobolo* and consultations with traditional diviners and healers.

The first issue that I want to discuss is the conventional separation that is made between “tradition” and modernity” and the operationality of working with this dichotomy for the understanding of the context studied. In the field, I encountered difficulty in separating, classifying and systematizing these “traditional” and “modern” universes. This is because they do not appear clearly in opposition, but rather in a constant of fuzzy input.

In *Homoíne* this recurrent intertwining is observed among “traditional” components” (sorcery, *curandeirismo*, etc) and “modern” ones (State, market, etc) in the building and understanding of the facts that compose social life and its dramas. However, it is not only difficult to trace a clear border between “tradition” and “modernity” and their elements in the field of knowledge and of the dynamics of daily and institutional life – since these elements are constantly combined and recombined in a non-exclusionary manner, being separated at the level of reflexive discourse, but not at the pragmatic level – but any attempt to understand the reality based on this dichotomy results in the formulation of a false problem. What exists in *Homoíne* is a cosmopolitan contemporary context, traversed by modified incorporations, transformations and permanences of a broad and diverse range of local and extra-local references, which are amalgamated in a historic process of abrupt ruptures, deep crises and disparate projects. Above all, these elements are coeval, which turns inoperating any attempting to delimit, identify and analyze them through the construction of temporal alterities. This corroborates Johannes Fabian’s critique (Fabian 1983) on the notions of “tradition” and “modernity”, but does not mean people do not constantly talk about “tradition” and “modernity” in *Homoíne*.

The residents of the main village constantly refer to issues of *curandeirismo*, sorcery, “traditional power”, family, ancestors and “ceremonies” as data from a universe that they call “African tradition” or “Africanism”, and discursively marked by expressions such as “in those times”, “in those zones” and “those people”. Usually the universe of “tradition” is racialized and linked to a discursive world of blacks and “Africans”, in which the *mulungos*<sup>8</sup> do not

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8 *Mulungo* is a term used in southern Mozambique to refer to whites and to individuals who live in urban areas using signs that characterize Western urbanity. It was a term used in the colonial period to refer to assimilated blacks, for example, and which today is used as a marker of urbanity, “modernity” and Westernization, both for whites, as well as for Mozambicans or foreigners mulattoes and blacks. Therefore, color is not the crucial mark of difference in the definition of race in southern Mozambique.

participate and to which theoretically they are immune. Discursively, they operate in a dichotomic register that ties “tradition” to another time, another space, and another social universe, building, by opposition, the field of “modernity” as that one they experience more clearly in the main village – whose urbanity is perceived as being closer to a “modern” life. They thus build discursive fields that establish diverse and contradictory subjects, temporalities and locations. This allows them to identify, classify, hierarchize, systematize and deal with a multiple set of objective and discursive data that randomly interpenetrate daily life. Thus, the village provides them a perceived space of “modernity”, opposed to “tradition” that rules in the *campo* [countryside] or in the *mato* [bush] (expressions used to refer to the rural universes of “those zones”, in which “those people” still live as “in those times”). That is how a binary taxonomy of perceived changes and continuities is produced, and thus we may observe the effectiveness and functionality of discursive strategies of construction of “tradition” and “modernity” in the main village. This taxonomy is constantly updated and re-elaborated in discourses and performances which seizes upon certain signs metonymically recognized as “modern” (clothing, vocabulary, corporal behavior, consumption, etc) to establish borders and ruptures with the universe of the *campo* or *mato*.

“Modernity” is also intimately associated to the universe of the State (healthcare, the legal system, education and administration) and to a frankly monetarized market with formal labor. In these “modern” equipments (hospitals, courts, schools, public agencies, stores and small business and market stalls such as *barracas* and *bancas*) one performs, expresses, discourses and negotiates through the use of elements consensually recognized as belonging to a “modern” universe – and the main village is the space where it is recognized that these elements exist in a more constant and established form. On the other hand, “tradition” is settled where the State and its institutions are not found or are precarious, or even subordinated to “traditional” institutions – the *campo* and the *mato*. To sum up, at the level of a discursive taxonomy, what is considered “modern” in Homóine is related to an urban universe and what is related to the rural one is considered “traditional”. This is a dichotomy that Mahmood Mamdani (Mamdani 1996) already identified as

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The racial question in Mozambique has already been discussed in a previously published article (Passador and Thomaz 2006).

structural in the constitution of contemporary African societies and States, as a legacy of colonialism that generated a “bifurcated State” and a society divided between the urban and the rural universes. Conditions in Homoíne, in principle, lead us to believe that this model is an empiric fact.

Nevertheless, when facing critical events such as disease, death, calamities and scarce resources, what one may observe is a pragmatic deconstruction of this discursivity and performativity, and the village is invaded by “tradition” – even because its inhabitants are vulnerable to it, since they are mostly blacks, coming from the *campo* or in permanent relation with it through their families, work and *machambas*.<sup>9</sup> These events implode the social taxonomies concerning to the “modern” and “traditional” universes, triggering a set of actions and discourses that break down any clear border between them. What is thus revealed is the unreality and the fragility of these fields that are only well-defined at the level of discourse, and composed by exclusionary and contradictory alterities. To observe the motives that constitute the social dramas<sup>10</sup> and crises in Homoíne thus demands a questioning of the operability of an analysis that takes for granted the separation between “tradition” and “modernity” in the social processes. What is observed is a social, political, symbolic and pragmatic universe that is more complex than the “tradition-modernity” dichotomy allows us to see. If contemporary African societies, as well as its States, are in fact bifurcated as Mandani affirms (op. Cit.), it can be considered that this bifurcation does not establish well defined, parallel and incommunicable social universes, but is rather diluted in an only apparent duality, clearly and consistently explicated by localities such as Homoíne. Not even the notion of complementarity between tradition and modernity, so commonly found in the discussions about the relations between biomedicine and traditional medicine<sup>11</sup>, for example, appears to contemplate these observed phenomena. Arguing through the existence of this complementarity is to assume that the dichotomic fields are previously well-defined and separated. In the social practice of the universe in question, this does not occur. In the level of pragmatic experience, these conflicts

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9 *Machamba* is the local term for the plantations. It is used both for small family farms, as well as for large private or government farms.

10 I refer here to social drama in the sense that Victor Turner leaned to the concept (Turner 1974).

11 In this respect, see Maria Paula Meneses (Meneses 2004), Edward Green (Green 1996) and Alcinda Honwana (Honwana 2002), among others.

do not occur, nor there is a movement of conscious construction of complementarities. This happens simply because the conceptual separation between “tradition” and “modernity” does not operate at the pragmatic level and is not even recognized as an object of reflection – except *a posteriori*, when one seeks to organize the dichotomy at the level of an analytical discourse. *A posteriori* because they are not present in the pragmatic process of construction of the facts, but simply operate in an attempt to qualify them through a discourse that is external and posterior to them, seeking to discursively reconstruct an experience that took place beneath and beyond these categories. The apparent incongruent combination of elements classified as “traditional” and “modern” is not perceived or seen as problematic by those who produce these facts at the time that they are producing them. The signs and systems manipulated by the subjects are combined in another logic which is not that which recognizes a separation among these fields. Thus, using the categories “uses” and “customs” as markers of difference and delimiters of specific fields between “tradition” and “modernity” is not sufficient to explain what occurs in practice. “Uses” and “customs” are not fixed, or exclusive to one or another field. What is observed is a fluidity of elements manipulated indistinctly and in a non-contradictory form. This makes it necessary to take seriously what and how the subjects say and do. The “things” (objects, words, acts, bodies, performances, rituals) of “tradition” and of “modernity” can be the same, or can also be eventually produced – not only can they be, but to a large degree in fact they are really produced in Homoíne. Thus, the main issue is not related to the use of the same fixed and concrete elements, reified by taxonomies of *a priori* “uses and customs”, but rather related to the ways these elements are produced, updated and arranged, composing intellegible pragmatic realities and universes that one is able to think and to experience as real and minimally coherent at a given moment.

Therefore, at the pragmatic level of social processes there is a point of indetermination prior to the classification of the practices and the definition of the categories, which is not reducible to pre-defined structures. Analysis on social universes such as observed in Homoíne should be focused at this point of indetermination, where “tradition” and “modernity” become dissolved as categories of possible understanding, opening space for analytic possibilities that can overcome what in reality appears to be a false problem. The study of the critical social experiences – such as the scarcity of

resources in a monetarized economy – provides a privileged focus for analyzing these issues, since scarcity provides objective experiences of indetermination and unleashes social processes of categorization for its confrontation – in Homoíne they are objects of constant speculations about their “traditional” or “modern” nature. As Mary Douglas (Douglas 2002) has suggested, in this type of pre-structural and interstitial space of indetermination represented by “disorder” resides the power for construction and deconstruction of structured fields, because it is where the power and the transformation are unlimited – exactly because they are undetermined. As Douglas argues, the notion of “danger” results from this indetermination and from this transformative power that produces unforeseeable realities, because the indetermination is potentially “polluting” and subversive for the structural categories in domains recognized by binary opposition – in this case, the previously delimited “tradition” and “modernity”. There are socially experienced facts that result not from the monotonous repetition of a pre-existing social structure, but from this generative power of unforeseeable and subversive forms of sociality, which are not guided by analytical categories external to their logic, but which establish a point of escape in relation to them. In these cases, classification by these categories is only possible *a posteriori* and is not sufficient to explain these phenomenons in their origin and foundation, or allow recognizing what is new and contemporary in the uses that are made of *curandeirismo* and sorcery, for example. Therefore, using the “tradition-modernity” taxonomy in these cases would shift the analysis to problems that are not in question in social life. In daily social practice in Homoíne, what is observed is precisely the indetermination of the fields of “tradition” and “modernity” in the production of facts and problems experienced by the subjects. To submit these data to an analytical regime by the binary taxonomy cited would be to submit it to a false problem.

It is important, therefore to understand these forms of sociality based on the logics that produce them, what necessarily lead us to face the issues of sorcery, *curandeirismo*, family and the other categories said to be “traditional”, which are unquestionably contemporary and effective in social realities such as those observed in Homoíne. Therefore, they should no longer be understood as “traditional” categories in the sense of being archaic and pre-erit, but as logical components that are at the origin of these contemporary, complex facts and processes, since they are the foundations of the socialities

and agencyings that raise the experiences of the subjects. They are essential because they establish an ethics for the relations that compose the social matrix that is being observed. A secondary gain from this methodological attitude is that it is free of the constraints caused by the notion that “tradition”, is a backwards and obscure condition to be overcome in a world that wants to be “modern”. After all, if in the West, “we have never been modern”, as Bruno Latour affirms (Latour 1993), there is no reason to be silent about the components of social life that truly operate in a universe permeated both by a modern State and markets, as well as by spells and spiritual and religious cures. Therefore, what I have proposed during my research is essentially to take seriously the discourses about sorcery, *curandeirismo* and other local “traditions”, not as testaments of the veracity of their metaphysical presumptions, nor as metaphors of a human universal thought, but as cosmological, pragmatic and metonymic systematizations that construct particular social and political worlds that are irreducible, except to themselves – whether in the “city” of the the State, or in the “mato of those people”. My suspicion is that this is the key to understand universes as complex and refractory to dichotomic analysis as I found in Homoíne – if not also to understand a sociocultural matrix beyond Homoíne that would allow considering broader realities in southern Mozambique and elsewhere.

### **Spirits, Ambition, Sorcery, *Curandeirismo*, Wars, Enemies and the “Traditional” Circuit of the “Modern” Economy**

In Homoíne I found an environment of generalized fear, which relates to a context of routine social predation by potential enemies – which is similar to that found by Viveiros de Castro (Viveiros de Castro 2002a) among the Amerindians. People fear each other and fear the spirits that can act on them or their protective spirits. The world of the spirits is that to which sorcery and *curandeirismo* apply their precepts and procedures – in the same way that Africanized Christian churches do, incorporating elements of the “traditional religions”, in order to deal with the demands of their faithful.<sup>12</sup> This world is not separate from the world of the living people – Alcinda Honwana (op. cit.)

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<sup>12</sup> This fact is indicated by various authors, including Peter Fry (2000), Alcinda Honwana (op. Cit.) and James Pfeiffer (2002).

indicates that this is recurring in southern Mozambique. A constant agency of potential protector and aggressor spirits on daily life is recognized. Sorcery and *curandeirismo* are specialized forms of knowledge which act on the spirits as much as use them to trigger social and interpersonal processes. Thus, the notions of personal and social security and insecurity are also intimately linked to the recognition of the relations with and among spirits. This is how the harms may always be assigned to the actions of spirits – whether related to illness and death, or to a drop in production in the *machambas*, natural calamities, cycles of scarcity, loss of capital, etc. Therefore, the market is also affected and determined by spiritual agencies and gains and losses can be attributed to the actions of the spirits.

One factor that causes insecurity and triggers speeches about imminent danger concerns the management of the ancestors on individual and family life and the nature. Protectors on the one hand, the ancestors are also sources of anxiety for people, because their discontent may result in problems and punishments for the living. Breaks in kinship ties, disobedience to rules and taboos and disrespect for the natural elements that are under their protection may cause harms for the living. Recognized as the “owners” of land and of the natural cycles and elements, the ancestors are also “owners” of certain women to whom they are conceded as wives. and whose authorization is required for their marriage to living men.<sup>13</sup> Not only the access to these elements and people demands authorization, but improper uses of their possessions and non-compliance with their mandates result in punishment. Thus, ancestors often transform themselves from protectors into punitive beings – and in this case, ancestors and transgressors operate as mutual enemies, even if they are kins or affines. Ancestors are blamed for diseases that for years affect the cashew trees and have been causing disruption in production. It is

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13 The subjects investigated refer generically to the ancestors as “owners” of certain elements related to a family group, without specifying their structural position in the kinship structure. They refer to them always in the male gender, although they may have feminine ancestors who act on reality. As David Webster affirmed (Webster 1976), kinship in the region is fluid and the generational memory does not go beyond two or three generations. Therefore, more important and significant than defining the kinship relations and positions of the ancestors in their supposed lineages, is to indicate their “traditional” and spiritual possession of the land, of women and of other elements under their management and influence. The male gender that predominates in a generic form in the statements about ancestors is due to the predominance of the agnatic ideology in the definition of descendance and inheritance.

argued that the low productivity is due to the discontent ancestors because the trading of cashew nuts and fruit, which “traditionally” were distributed among the relatives and neighbors at the harvest time. The progressive rise in the price of coconut in 2007, due to a short supply at the time, also wound up causing speculation about the possible and future discontent of the ancestors with their unregulated and ambitious trading – it was feared that soon there would be a regular coconut shortage, as occurred with cashew nuts and fruit, due to the possibility of discontent ancestors send diseases to the coconut plantations, because the high prices and exclusively commercial use of the product. What the ancestors were punishing, in these cases, was the ambitious use of those who seek monetary accumulation through “modern” trading. Thus the scarcity of foods or an increase in their prices are assigned to spiritual causes and to discontent of ancestors with “modernization” represented by a monetarized market.

I also found a parallel between *curandeirismo* and sorcery in Homóine. It was with surprise that I encountered the equivalence and even the lack of distinction that the people in Homóine make between *curandeiros* [traditional healers] and sorcerers. I was surprised because I expected to find in my fieldwork the “traditional medicine” and the practitioners that Honwana (op. Cit.) describes. Instead of being integrators, the *curandeiros* often operate, according to the statements of village residents, as disintegrators of social life. They are often described as producers of spells, as often as the closer they are to the village – therefore, the *curandeiros* of the *mato* would still provide cures and would not produce evil spells. The statements concern the *curandeiros* who produce evil spells, who instigate disputes between family members and neighbors, who enslave those who consult them to endless and unpayable debts and who are sought to provide spells that benefit their “ambitious” clients (who often wind up becoming victims of the debts that, if not paid, turn the evil spells against themselves). The world of the spirits, therefore, appears in the statements of my interlocutors as a world of predatory risks. The “African tradition” to which these people refer when they mention this universe permeated by spirits (who are not only ancestors), causes great fear and triggers the flight of those who do not have possessions to the churches, in search of protection<sup>14</sup>. Because of their high cost, the *curandeiros* are only

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14 The same fact was observed and described by James Pfeiffer (op. Cit.) in Chimoio, Manica Province

accessible to those who have greater wealth (especially those *curandeiros* associated to AMETRAMO)<sup>15</sup> – thus constituting a class phenomenon in Homoíne. Those who do not have economic wealth, protect themselves in the churches against the *curandeiros* and their “ambitious” clients. It is significant that the majority of the faithful who take refuge in the churches are women, who are most often accused of being sorcerers and also who most fear being victims of spells moved by ambition of others. Consultations with *curandeiros* are seen as a way to obtain benefits for social ascension and capital gains in an extremely competitive labor market, because there are very few jobs – in this case, they are sought by men because they have greater access to the formal market. Therefore, in a market economy marked by gender, “traditional” mechanisms are used according to the same logic. There is even a specific verb for this search for benefits: *kukhendla*, in Citsua – which is the predominant local language in the district. When Portuguese is spoken, the verb is transformed into a neologism: *khendlar*. *Kukhendla* traditionally means seeking magic and spiritual powers from the *curandeiros* to obtain goods, physical strength, protection against enemies and personal qualities that make someone socially respected and well positioned, as for example an ability to speak well in public. It can also have a playful nature: one can obtain powers used in entertainment, such as the ability to make people appear inside a bottle or lifting automobiles through physical force. The ability to entertain is associated to the construction of the fame of a magician, which constitutes symbolic and social capital in the construction of the “great man”.

I collected reports that indicated that during the civil war, soldiers (both government troops, as well as those of RENAMO<sup>16</sup>) also used *kukhendla* to obtain protection against enemy weapons, to be able to attack them or to

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in central Mozambique. The author refers to the phenomenon as being markedly feminine, which can also be seen in Homoíne. This leads us to suppose that it is relatively generalized phenomenon in the country.

15 AMETRAMO is the initials for the Associação dos Médicos Tradicionais de Moçambique [Association of Traditional Doctors of Mozambique], which is officially recognized by the Mozambican State as representative of the category since the late 1980s. The association has national scope, including working with State agencies such as the Ministry of Health. In Homoíne there is a district office in the main village and representatives in each locality. The AMETRAMO offices in the district are housed in buildings provided by the Administration of the District.

16 RENAMO is the acronym for Resistência Nacional Moçambicana [Mozambican National Resistance], which was organized in armed opposition to the government of FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique [Mozambique National Liberation Front]), triggering the civil war in 1977.

guarantee that, if killed, they would return as spirits and make revenges against their opponents<sup>17</sup>. In Homóine, where on July 18, 1987 occurred the largest massacre during the civil war, it is usual to hear stories referring to someone who was a key player in the organization and execution of these actions, that resulted in the death of hundreds of people. This person was known as Hombelwane Sabão<sup>18</sup>, and he was said to have used magic and spiritual powers obtained from the *maziones*<sup>19</sup> to become untouchable by enemy arms. Hombelwane had been a government soldier and after a dispute with his commanders, joined the RENAMO guerrillas and provided them strategic data that allowed them to invade the main-village. The “fury” of the guerrillas, which is repeatedly cited in the accounts that I collected about the massacre, and which was responsible for the nature of the attack, is attributed to Hombelwane’s quest for revenge and that of others who had also abandoned the main village to join the guerrillas in the *mato*. Although Hombelwane did not seek *kukhendla* in *curandeiros*, the logic of obtaining magic and spiritual powers from the *maziones* is linked to the same logic as the *kukhendla*, which my informants indicated was a procedure widely used by soldiers on both sides during the war. This data reinforces the great approximation between “Africanized” Christianity and the “traditional” Mozambican religions.

The current environment of peace and liberal, frankly monetarized market shifted demands to the obtaining money, labor and material benefits. The scarce money inflates the prices of the *curandeiros*, who especially in the main village demand payments for the consultations and the *kukhendla* in money – according to my informants, “in those times” and until today “in those zones”, the *curandeiros* still accept payments in goods (farm products and domestic animals, for instance). Therefore, what we have is a constant historic updating of this phenomenon. The problem related to those who make use of the *kukhendla* is that for the effectiveness and continuity of the powers provided by the *curandeiros*, animal sacrifices and/or deaths of people

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17 Authors such as Alcinda Honwana (op. Cit.), Christian Geffray (Geffray 1989) and Michel Cahen (Cahen 2002) pointed out the uses of “tradition” during the civil war, both for the soldiers of RENAMO and the government, as well as for the organization of RENAMO’s political and ideological discourse.

18 Jonas Mahumane (Mahumane 2003) analyzes the Homóine massacre and the role of the *mazione* during the war in the district, describing and discussing more in-depth the Hombelwane case.

19 *Mazione* is the term used to designate the members of the Zionist churches. Important studies on these churches were conducted by Victor Agadjanian (Agadjanian 1999), Teresa Cruz and Silva (Cruz and Silva 2001 and 2002), Peter Fry (op. Cit.) and Alcinda Honwana (op. Cit.), among other authors.

are demanded as a counterpart – animals that cost money and people who, in general, belong to the family of the solicitant and can lead to the demise of a family in extreme cases, because the continuity of the powers demands the continuity of the corresponding sacrifices and deaths. The spirits of the dead are given to the *curandeiros* who use them to increase their own powers – by both using them in their work, as well as selling them to those who seek the *kukhendla*. In this way it is possible to become a *curandeiro* through the *kukhendla*: purchasing spirits from a *curandeiro* and, in this way, also becoming a *curandeiro* who obtains money for consultations. In practice, this allows breaking the racial boundary that is discursively reiterated, because *mulungos* can become *curandeiros* by purchasing spirits – and, become more powerful ones, because they have more money and can pay for these greater powers. This fact has transformed *curandeirismo* into a labor market and a personal investment for obtaining financial resources. *Kukhendla* is one of the phenomenon associated to the current notion of sorcery that I found in Homóine, and the principal factor for the construction of equivalence between *curandeirismo* and sorcery that the statements express. The current demands brought to *curandeiros* in the village shifted from cures to obtaining personal benefits related to the needs for a “modern” life marked by the money, the market and the commodities, linking them to the universe of contemporary spells. This is one of the fields in which the discourses establish a clear distinction between “tradition” and “modernity”, but to problematize the latter. For instance, one informant told me once that “one should not mix tradition with modernity”, when explaining why the *curandeiros* lost their powers of cure and returned to the production and sale of spells. He said that the spirits that loan the healing power to the “traditional” medicines do not accept the monetarization and sale of the consultations, and remove the powers that they loan to the herbs and roots used by the *curandeiros* – the same logic indicated to explain the disease that afflicted the cashew trees and caused the drop in their productivity, due to the anger of the ancestors with the sale of the product through monetary exchange that sought individual profit.

Maria Paula Meneses (Meneses op. Cit.) also pointed to the fact that the afflictions of “modernity”, related to the market and the accumulation of private financial capital, wind up stimulating the search for benefits from “traditional doctors”. In fact, a quick observation of the ads for “traditional medicines” printed in Maputo newspapers reveals the nature of the services

offered to urban readers: in addition to curing diseases and providing sexual benefits, the ads promise success in professional life in a formal and salaried labor market and in business. The same takes place in Homoíne, although it carries a consequence explained in the statements I heard: benefits for some involve harms for others, which can result in generalized insecurity and distrust in relation to those who have success in their lives, because they are seen as probable perpetrators of spells to achieve success. *Curandeirismo* is therefore linked to the discursive field of violence, of which sorcery is one of its parts. If the search for well-being and success referred to the accumulation of monetary capital is one of the principal experiences of “modernity”, this process takes place in constant experience of potential risks and dangers related to the field of “tradition” and involves permanent disputes and negotiations with elements that can guarantee or obstruct their realization. A successful person may be accused of having benefited from sorcery (may have used *kukhendla*), but may also fear being the victim of “ambitions” and spells from someones sorcery and *kukhendla*. The basis of these suspicions and accusations seems to be not only the breaking of “traditional uses and customs” (which would be regularly punished by the ancestors or by the community itself), but mainly the aspect of individualization in the “modern” form of accumulation of capital, which refers to the critical act of “eating alone” – which is the principal metaphor for ambition that is recognized as triggering the search for sorcery and which indicates a questioning of an individualism that is similar to that characteristically found in the Western culture and economic system. Such metaphor, however, is largely carried out by individual and private ownership of money, and thus we encounter the metonymic character that money assumes as a marker of “modernity”. It can also be questioned if “eating alone” does not also have a metonymic character in a context of constant threat of hunger because of the cyclic droughts that afflict the region. In the main village of Homoíne, one also does not eat if one does not have money to purchase food in the markets and stores, mainly among those who abandoned their *machambas* to enter the fragile market for salaried or informal labor. Without money, one also cannot purchase farm products from the producers in the *mato* to re-sell them in the markets and then obtain money, which is what the market sellers of Homoíne do after having abandoned their *machambas* or maintaining them only for their own subsistence. Thus, it is through the metonymic character of having money

that it can be understood why money should not be mixed with *curandeirismo* or with the management of cashew production, for example: to not mix “modernity” with “tradition”.

All these facts indicate that the monetarization of the economy, with the aspect of individualism associated to a capitalistic globalized market, does not operate as a “modernizing” and transformative agent in the sense of overcoming the components of “traditional” life towards a globalized “modernity”. If this was the case, “tradition” would have disappeared in the colonial period, given that there was already commerce and monetary exchange at that time. The current forms of market and monetarized relations thus allow the persistence of socialities said to be and considered as “traditional” ones, because they are constantly updated through the pragmatic contemporary practice of sorcery and *curandeirismo*, and money is problematized in this circuit of relations as a vehicle for the “traditional” exchanges that involve ambition and risks. Possession of currency is a metonymic act of incorporation of a presupposed and imagined “modernity”, that is accessible by money. Nevertheless, this “modernity” is performed within a “traditional” logic and through the presumptions of a social matrix in which sorcery and *curandeirismo* express a specific ethic of “tradition”. The same occurs with other elements metonymically taken as “modern” and performed as experience of “modernity” by the subjects, which is the case, for example, of clothing and music among youth. Young people may dress like rappers (even those from the *mato*) and continue to pay *lobolo*, to respect the ancestors, to fear the spells and to consult the *curandeiros*. This performative incorporation does not necessarily result in a “modernization” or substitution of the cosmological universe, of the ontological principles and of the social systems considered “traditional”. In a more constant way, “modernity” is encompassed by “tradition”, what was already usual during the entire colonial and post-colonial period.

This movement of encompassment seems also to be expanded to the sphere of relations with the State and even to the actions of this one. Perhaps the most striking indication of this situation would be the recognition of AMETRAMO in the 1980s and the reincorporation of the former *régulos* and *cabos* of the colonial period to the contemporary State structure as “traditional leaders” through the law decree nr. 15/2000 of June 20, 2000. As indicated by Geffray (op. Cit.), Honwana (op. Cit.) and others, these representatives of “tradition” had an important role in the dynamic of war and in the post-war

period. Today, AMETRAMO judges complaints filled in courts of justice that involve accusations of sorcery, which civil and criminal law do not allow to judge because they do not recognize the agency of spirits and spells in the determination of criminal actions. Nevertheless, these complaints account for a significant portion of those sent to the courts. I observed cases of this type at the District Court and at AMETRAMO, in the main village of Homoíne. In the same way, the governance of the most remote inland zones now depends on the legitimacy of the traditional leaders before the population – it is even they who guarantee some influence and governability to the District Administration in those zones that housed the provincial military bases of RENAMO in Homoíne. This data seems to indicate that the modern State in Mozambique is dependent on the structures said to be “traditional” to guarantee its governance and legitimacy before the population.

### **Towards an Ontology of Predation: Pre-Colonial Wars and the Meaning of Sorcery and *Curandeirismo***

In relation to cosmology, ontology and “traditional” social systems that allow understanding the logic that governs the notions of sorcery and *curandeirismo*, it is possible to find in the history of the wars in Southern Mozambique the roots of these orders and understand their logic and operability.<sup>20</sup> Constituted as an area of invasion and occupation during the pre-colonial period by various peoples coming from the south, west and north, the formation of southern Mozambique must be considered beginning from the wars of occupation, which established the dynamics of the relations and the social matrix that operates in the region. Even before the *mfecane* and the installation of the empire of Gaza under Ngungunyane (or Gungunhane, different spellings are used by different sources), the region experienced a succession of invasions and settlements of various peoples as “owners of the land”. This is the root of the notion of conquest and possession of territories as a fact

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20 The following data about the pre-colonial period and its wars were collected from published studies and original documents found at the Historical Archive of Mozambique, Eduardo Mondlane University, in Maputo. From the published sources I highlight the works of António Rita-Ferreira (Rita-Ferreira 1975, 1982a and 1982b), Gerhard Liesegang (Liesegang 1986 and 1996) and the first volume of *História de Moçambique*, written and published by the Department of History of the Eduardo Mondlane University (Departamento de História, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane 2000).

that overlaps and organizes the notions of agnatic descent, matrimonial alliance and inheritance of property and wealth. The relations of occupation and possession of territories were marked by the subordination and vassalage of the defeated. The apex of this regime occurred under the domain of Ngungunyane, of Nguni (Zulu) origin and who inherited and expanded the domain initiated by his grandfather Shoshangane (or Manicusse) and succeeded by the brother of his father (Mawewe) and his own father (Muzila). Pacification, domination and subordination found in vassalage and in the matrimonial alliances their principal achieving mechanisms. This is how the relations between the Vanguni, who dominated southern Mozambique, the Vandau who were brought by them from the Central region to assist them to dominate and occupy the region, and the Tsongas<sup>21</sup> who were dominated and subordinated to both of them, gave order to the hierarchical and spiritual relations which brought out the current traditional medicine found in the region.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, war is the historic and logical principle that orders the cosmological concepts that give origin to *curandeirismo*. The “traditional” cure operates as a process of pacification of spirits that cause harms, in which Vanguni, Vandau and Tinguluve (the Tsonga’s ancestors) spirits act together and in specific ways for the resolution of problems and disorder. Similarly, the spells are conceived as attacks of vengeful spirits or manipulated by enemies, referring sorcery to a process whose meaning is aggression, predation and war.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, matrimonial alliances operate as mechanisms of pacification and establishment of broader alliances among groups.<sup>24</sup>

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21 Term that designates a vast and diverse set of people who occupied the region before the Nguni invasion.

22 See Honwana (op. Cit.).

23 António Rita-Ferreira (Rita-Ferreira 1975) and David Beach (Beach 1984) pointed out a revealing etymological root of the terms that designate sorcerer in southern Mozambique and among the Shona of Zimbabwe, respectively. The former draws attention to the coincidence of the term *wuloyi* and its plural *valoyi* with the name of one of the groups that invaded the region in the pre-colonial region, the Baloyi, who were feared warriors and gave origin to the Makwakwa. Beach, meanwhile, sees a similar relationship between the term *rozwi*, which designates a sorcerer, and the Rozwi, people who constituted an empire and were considerably feared, even accused of cannibalism practitioners. Rita-Ferreira (op. Cit.) affirms that some of the Rozwi migrated to the zone of the Inhambane and it was this Shona-Karanga group that gave origin to the Baloyi. The idea of sorcery, therefore, appears to be closely related to wars in the pre-colonial period, characterizing the “foreign” and predatory (even cannibal) enemy.

24 Concerning kinship relations and alliances as forms of pacification of enemies, I conducted more in-depth discussions of this issue in my research project (Passador 2006) and in a paper presented at the 32nd ANPOCS meeting (Passador 2008b).

One of the ways for the defeated Tsonga to establish pacific relations during the Nguni invasion was to marry their women to Vanguni and Vandau men. These matrimonial alliances permitted land possession and pacific integration – even if hierarchical – of these “foreign” groups to the groups of agnatic descent in southern Mozambique, and whose spirits transmitted by kinship establish the base of the formation of the current *curandeiros*. This historic and social framework allowed the constitution of an ontology based on presumption of war and of the enemy as elements that trigger socialities, in which the primordial meaning is the hierarchical pacification of enemies. “Traditional medicine” and kinship (through matrimonial alliances) operate in this way. So too is conceived sorcery and all sorts of harm that is experienced as an interpersonal relationship and that place at risk the alliances which constitute the socialities, the subjects and their guarantee of peaceful possession of conquered properties. For this reason, a structural parallel is found in Homóine in the discourses about the civil war, sorcery and criminality. These speeches, which convey the predatory violence of their agents, refer to the enemy (whether sorcerer, “bandit”<sup>25</sup> or “*matsanga*”<sup>26</sup>) as someone who acts in an unpredictable, sneaky and precise manner. For the same reason, spells and *curandeirismo* were also used as weapons during the civil war as well as are objects of complaints taken to the courts. So, finally, all are feared in principle (mainly the *vientes*<sup>27</sup>) and the spell is a presumed agency of any subject, which must be the object of constant surveillance, suspicion and actions of pacification through the establishment of ties of kinship, formal friendship, pacific neighborly relations and exchange of names (the *xarás*<sup>28</sup>), alliances that ensure the persistence of the won order and possession of properties by their “owners”. However, these alliances seem to not

25 Term generically used to refer to criminals of all types. The use of the expression *bandidos armados* [armed bandits] to refer to RENAMO soliders during the civil war is quite significant in this context.

26 Term used to refer to the RENAMO soliders. The etymological root is the name of the first leader of RENAMO, André Matsangaíssa.

27 *Viente* is the term used to refer to outsiders. It is equivalent to foreigner, for example. *Viente* can be any subject who comes from another region, whether a foreign country or a neighboring locality.

28 Concerning the uses of the term *xará* and of the role of agnatic and matrilineal relatives, neighbors and formal friends, see the work of David Webster (Webster op. Cit.). *Xarás* are individuals who share the same name because of negotiations between donors and receivers of these names. The exchange of names establishes a form of alliance that establishes a *xará* as a type of (even classified as) relative of the other. Neighbors and formal friends also represents important and formal alliances.

completely deconstruct the virtual enemy presupposed in each subject and the ambition that it carries, which indicates the fact that there is an ontology based on war and on the notion of the enemy. I believe this is the root of the suspicion and accusations of sorcery that fall mainly on relatives and neighbors, and preferably on women. In a system of agnatic descent, women are incorporated by matrimonial alliances from other groups of descent and, in this sense, are as *vientes* as neighbors, friends and foreigners. Nevertheless, they are closer than the later, they know the spirits of the ancestors who protect the families to whom they were incorporated and know the value of the possessions that these families accumulate, and can more effectively make use of spells driven by ambition. For this reason they present higher risk – one enemy, the closer, more dangerous he or she becomes. I heard from a 20-year old man who came to classify me as a “friend”, a phrase that perhaps sums up the principle that governs interpersonal relations in this environment. Upon making explicit his distrust in relation to the nature of my presence in Homoíne, he affirmed: “you must distrust to be able to trust”.

### **The Occult in a Predatory Economy**

This matrix reveals a specific logic of dealing with tensions and conflicts that result from asymmetric relations related to reciprocity and possessions. This logic permeates through trade and monetary exchanges and potentially transforms money into a sign of ambition, linking it to the universe of sorcery. The possession and accumulation of monetary capital in a free market environment associated to scarce resources (including shortage of money<sup>29</sup>) routinely unleashes suspicions and activates the mechanisms of suspicion and accusations of sorcery against those who possesses wealth resources. Among the markets’ sellers of the main village of Homoíne, for example, accusations of

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29 The civil war produced the displacement of rural populations from the *mato* to the cities. With end of the war and the return of part of the displaced to their areas of origin, a scarcity of money was experienced in these areas. I could clearly observe this phenomenon in Punguene, a locality on the border of the districts of Homoíne and Panda. Money reaches Punguene through the merchants of the main village who use to purchase farm products there and resell them in the main village market. The difficulty of access to the locality, due to the precariousness road conditions left by the war time, requires farmers to lower their prices to remain competitive in the market and to accept payments in goods brought from the village. The result is a shortage of money and a common practice of exchanging goods among the inhabitants of that location.

spells practiced by those who gain success in business are as usual as accusations of spells practiced by competing as a cause of failures.

Another modality of sorcery that I found in my fieldwork, the *sonica*, articulates in a more explicit way than the *kukhendla* those dangers associated to the foreign enemy, and its direct relationship with the possession, accumulation and predation of money and goods. In speeches, this type of spell always appears as related to the “foreigners” who works as merchants and those considered to be excellent businessmen who get rich easily: the *baneanes* (Indian Hindus), the *monhés* (Indian, Pakistani or Arab Muslims,) and the Nigerians. In Homóine I heard references to the *sônica* from the *curandeiros* who struggled to undo the “magic” [sic] of the *baneanes* and *monhés*. The *curandeiros* alleged that through the *sonica*, these “foreigners” were able to produce money that disappeared soon after it was used to pay for goods and services, or even were magically able to steal money from someone. In Maputo, the *sonica* appeared in reports that linked them to the Nigerians who sell commodities in the markets. In this case, the spell would occurs through the use of zombies or spirits of the Nigerians brought by their fellow merchants, whose function was either to seduce someone to buy goods in the stands of their “bosses” or to consume the goods purchased by the Mozambicans, so that the costumers would soon return to buy more goods and make the merchants wealthy more quickly.

What is found in southern Mozambique today, therefore, is a market that operates on the basis of relations linked to the universe of “African tradition” and not to the universe of a “modern” and globalized economy. Even the incorporation of market logic and monetary exchanges to sorcery and *curandeirismo* rather causes a recrudescence of their “traditional” foundations, not a sliding towards a projected “modernity”. Free trade, in its monetarized and globalized forms, presupposes individualism and the freedom of agents for a private accumulation of capital. This situation, in the terms of “tradition”, is fuel for the accusations of sorcery based on the concept of ambition and food for the significant act of “eating alone”. What exists, therefore, is a “modernity” that feeds “tradition” and elements that paradoxically and metonymically associate “modern” benefits to “traditional” evils.

It is in the ontological and cosmological foundations of these forms of sociality that one finds the explanations for a persistence of logics based on sorcery and on the agency of predatory spirits that are observed in the relations

of the “Africans” with an economy considered “modern” and monetarized. More than a simple persistence of “tradition”, what is argued here is that the monetarized economy is encompassed by a symbolic economy of predation, expressed in sorcery and *curandeirismo* terms, which metonymically subordinates the circulation of goods, values and money to an exchange circuit of harms and benefits in the terms of the so-called “African tradition” identified by those subjects observed in *Homoíne*. Studies about the so-called “economies of the occult”, such as those undertaken by Jean and John Comaroff (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999) and Stephen Ellis and Gerrie Ter Haar (Ellis and Haar 2004) emphasize an approach that tends to a sociology of the contact, based on relations of alterity and conflict, structural transformation and accommodation between “Western” and “African” systems, in the terms of a colonial and post-colonial system that emerges from that friction. These studies tend to seek generalizing functionalist models to understand the contact system, as is most clearly the case of Ellis and Haar (*op. Cit.*), to explain processes perceived as structural and generalized on the African continent. In this way, they analyze the forms of appropriation of the “Western” systems by the “Africans”, indicating their tensions and transformations, but losing sight of the foundations that operate the logic of these appropriations. Thus, they tend to take “traditional” phenomena that deal with “modernity”, such as sorcery and “traditional” religions, as metaphoric appropriations of an alien system.

Understanding a historical process of conflicts and contacts with alterities as begun with the colonial encounter is to lose sight of the fact that this process precedes colonization and that the systemic dealing with conflicts and alterities was organized in cosmological and ontological terms in previous periods, in which the same problematic incorporation of predatory enemies and strangers was already experienced. The transformation in southern Mozambique did not begin with the arrival of the Portuguese settlers, in the same way that it did not cease with the country’s independence. Prior to the alterity of the settler and the “Western system”, the peoples of southern Mozambique were constituted in a process of invasions and wars that defined their regimen of systemic dealings with the Other. Therefore, attention should be driven to the modes of production and management of alterities that, before the colonization process, historically formulated those forms of sociality and dealing with the enemy and the foreigner, and the benefits and harms they brought out. Prior to the colonial and post-colonial Other, there

was the pre-colonial Other. The symbolic economy of the cosmos that operates the relations with alterities is not first organized from the beginning of the colonial period and through the contact with the “West”. In this way, as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (Viveiros de Castro 2002b) proposes, based on Deleuze’s theoretic and philosophic proposals, it is in the relationship with the Others (or the Other of the Other) that we should seek the foundations for an understanding of the management of relations with the Other. That means it is in the forms that enemies and strangers were produced in pre-colonial times and wars that we may find the logical principles that operate the relations with colonial and post-colonial “modernity”, whether they are pacific or conflict ridden.

I have been working on analysis of the southern Mozambican context based on a contemporary ethnological literature on the Amerindians, which allowed a review of Africanist theories and questioned their applicability to understanding the American context. Returning these critiques to the analysis of an African context seems to make possible to review and rethink the cannons that have marked discussions about the role of systems said to be “traditional” in the context of colonialism and post-colonialism (such as lineages, traditional healing and sorcery), pointing the investigations toward an understanding of the cosmological and ontological basis formulated in the pre-colonial period, which necessarily leads us to an understanding of the pre-colonial wars and their central role in the structuring of agencies and socialities that persist despite the later historical transformations. Studies and discussions developed by ethnologists such as Viveiros de Castro (Viveiros de Castro 2002a and 2002b) and Carlos Fausto (Fausto 2001) may bring new theoretical and methodological perspectives to face and investigate these issues in the context of southern Mozambique. In the same way, studies such as that published by Bruce Albert and Alcida Rita Ramos (Albert and Ramos 2002) may allow us to observe the relations of contact, transformation and persistence of cultural forms from the perspective of a symbolic economy of the cosmos and the pragmatic dealing with Western signs.

For this reason I defend here and in other works (Passador 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009) that it is in the persisting ontological and cosmological principles observed in southern Mozambique – and in the persistent or transformed forms in which they are expressed and in the objective means through which they conduct their agencyings – that one must seek the key to understanding

phenomenon such as the monetarization of *curandeirismo* and sorcery. Thus is possible to alter the most common assertion and then question if, instead of simply monetarizing “tradition”, it is not money being encompassed by the logic of ambition, which triggers the sorcery. Similarly, questioning if the capitalist profit is not being encompassed by the predatory logic that asymmetrically subordinates defeated enemies to their “owner” and enriches sorcerers and *curandeiros*, who ambitiously and cannibalistically “eat alone”.

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**Abstract:** The 1992 peace agreement allowed the establishment of a globalized market economy in Mozambique, in which “traditional” forms persist amid the impact of these changes. The strong monetarization of the economy, combined with a scarcity of formal jobs and money in circulation places great pressure on the search for money and triggers conflicts experienced under the terms of the “traditional” systems. The result is a growing monetarization of “tradition” and consequent inflation of prices charged by *curandeiros* – who are sought to provide spells to guarantee “traditional” means of obtaining benefits in a competitive market. The poorest turn to the churches for protection from the spells sold by the *curandeiros*; while the rich are regularly open to accusations of practicing sorcery. It is an environment in which globalized “modernity” deepens the search for “traditional” mechanisms to obtain benefits, triggering conflicts and associating money to sorcery and evil magic fueled by “ambition”.

**Key words:** Mozambique – sorcery – market

Luiz Henrique Passador is Ph.D. student at Social Anthropology Post-Graduation Program of State University of Campinas (PPGAS-Unicamp) in Brazil and associated researcher at African Studies Center of Eduardo Mondlane University (CEA-UEM) in Mozambique. He conducts ethnographic investigations in Southern Mozambique on issues related to social and cultural aspects of the HIV/Aids epidemics. He has former experience as activist APTA, a Brazilian NGO, where developed and coordinated projects for ITS/HIV/Aids prevention among marginalized populations, specially female and transgender sex workers. E-mail: [passador@unicamp.br](mailto:passador@unicamp.br).