

Bodies of Violence, Languages of Resistance
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Introduction

In the upheavals of the last decade Mozambique has witnessed an ever-growing concern with witchcraft accusations and witchcraft practices.² Since the onset of colonial system witchcraft practices have come to epitomize the savage world, as something that should be extirpated by this colonial rationality. Consequently the 'why' behind the persistence of witchcraft practices has been largely unexplored, the clichés left unquestioned.

Nonetheless, early in the 21st century, religion and magic continue to provide some of the most powerful rhetoric of political culture in Africa. Public rumors depict witchcraft as a common way to achieve personal success, wealth, and prestige in times of economic shortage and declining social opportunities. Political leaders are widely believed to recur to witchcraft to ensure electoral success and power, and many skillfully use these perceptions to build visibility and deference. In the domestic arena, familial and social conflicts repeatedly crystallize around accusations of witchcraft, especially during times of sudden death or personal disaster.³

Yet, the magical dimension of politics in Africa is often ignored by political and historical studies. As I will argue in this paper, the magical dimension of politics is not a marginal, but a central dimension of the nature of public authority, leadership, and popular identities in the continent. This paper also calls for a grounded, comparative, and historical exploration of the multiple religious layers of political belief in contemporary Mozambique.

Taking as a reference point the widely reported 2003-2004 cases on the supposed trafficking in human organs in northern Mozambique, this paper seeks to analyze these

accusations as part of a wider cultural context where multiple cultural realities intersect, in a complex network of competition for power, establishing a link between the victims of accusations in so far as they are all traitors to the social solidarity of a specific community. When analyzed in a wider social context, the rumors and accusations are seen to be related to unsettling social, economic and political change.⁴

Witchcraft accusations and suspicions of murder resulting from body trafficking cannot be put into a neatly labeled box with its clear time, place and reason. The further one delves into this, the more complex the situation becomes. This paper suggests that these rumors and accusations of traffic in organs, in body parts stolen across borders, provide an enlarged picture of the vulnerability and the violence at work in the country. Far from seeking to trivialize the realities lived in Mozambique, the paper seeks to reveal more about the world in which people live, seeking to explain their anxieties, desires and the search for solutions to the problems affecting their daily lives. Therefore, what follows is an attempt, no more, to propose a clearer understanding of the current situation regarding witchcraft in Mozambique through the lenses of cultural encounter. By comparing the diverse meanings that rumors, suspicions and accusations entail, I will seek to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how past and present relations of inequality are constructed and maintained. Such discussions help reveal the multiple meanings of the relationship between power, discourse and political institutions and practices, thus casting new light on epistemic interpretations of the colonial and postcolonial experience.⁵

Based on the analysis of the widely disseminated case of 'witchcraft' that occurred in Nampula city in northern Mozambique, this article blends oral and written sources, and historical and contemporary material into an unperiodized portrayal of the struggles over knowledge production in the region.⁶

Shadows haunting modernity

Far from being reminiscent of ancient realities, or of recent inventions answering entirely new needs and new functions, present-day power structures have a long history in the region. Local stories, local representations and misrepresentations are analyzed here as a means of reinserting these questions into broader, regional and global canons of evidence. During the peak of Portuguese colonial intervention, witchcraft was considered in a number of different ways: as a set of beliefs, frequently including inverted patterns of behavior; as patterns of accusation; and as a 'social-strain' judgement. Although many thought that with the inception of modernity -- through colonial intervention - witchcraft would die out, in many parts of the world as one witnesses the increased presence of witches and witchcraft practices, with accusations on the rise (Geschiere, 2003; Caplan, 2004; Stewart and Strathern, 2004). In contemporary Mozambique, witchcraft persists as a concept and a reality, both in rural and urban environments (Meneses, 2004a, 2007, 2009; West, 2005); this fact takes us back, painfully, to the fact that witchcraft is not a hangover from the past, but rather a part of the discourse and the experience of modernity. Thus, it becomes obvious that one cannot deny that there are many threads of continuity, linking the past with the present, the old social orders with the new, but how important are these continuities? One of the assumptions behind this paper is that the continuities remain of crucial importance, and that the so-called traditional concepts survive because they find a new dimension and a new application in contemporary situations. Pre-colonial Africa is now history, mainly oral history, but that does not mean to say it can be ignored. On the contrary, to recognize traditional concepts and to understand their workings in modern Africa, it is first of all necessary to see them as part of a political and social order, which never existed in an untainted form. Indeed, the question of tradition and modernity has been quite widely discussed in numerous recent publications; perhaps, witchcraft is one of the main angles from which to discuss the relationship of 'Africa with the rest'. If

the dichotomy between the West and Africa is often still based upon contrasts between witchcraft, magic and irrationality on the one hand, and scientific, transparent, and rational procedures on the other, one should interrogate the extent to which this phenomenon is particular to Mozambique, or to the African continent. To what extent can we discern similar facts outside of Africa? Or is it a question of translation?⁷

One of the founding moments of colonial intervention is the transformation of the 'other' into an object, upon which the colonial ordering of knowledge can exercise its power. The mainstream descriptive work was aimed at accentuating the differences of the 'other', to make unknown, foreign environments and people seem more intelligible to western audiences. Thus, translation acted as a means of constructing a 'representation' of the other. Nonetheless, the study of the intricacies and contradictions of cross-cultural relationships allows for a broader understanding of the significance of misconceptions, and the legacies of both.

But were the colonial relationship in Eastern Africa all based on misconceptions? And are other forms of knowing possible, other ways to identify common ground among distinct cultures without effacing their autonomy and difference?

Encounters on the coast

The specificity of the encounters that took place during the onset of the first colonial (Iberian) modernity is relevant for discussions of European encounters with non-Europeans,⁸ since, as some authors argue, the Portuguese authors came to see East Africa through the eyes of coastal Muslims (Presthold, 2001: 385). The appropriation of certain expressions by Portuguese narrators is particularly telling as regards their adherence to Swahili concepts and appellations.⁹ As cultural mediators, the Swahili became the interpreters of East Africa for the Portuguese and in so doing were able to maintain

relative control over commerce in the region through a regulation of Portuguese knowledge of and access to East African markets.

This early attitude by the Portuguese contrasts with the dominant approach present in much of the modern colonial approach to cultural and intellectual relations with non-Europeans from the mid-XIX century onwards. Indeed, the second colonial modernity is characterized by Europe's recorded interaction with other world regions as a history of identity and self-construction, revealing a tendency among Europeans to identify themselves as entirely distinct from, and often superior to, what they perceive to be culturally distant (Santos and Meneses, 2006). Thus, knowledge and understanding of the world became the explanation of the world through the monocultural prism of modern science (Santos, Meneses and Nunes, 2004).

The rising hegemony of modern scientific knowledge in Europe coincides with the goal of controlling threatening populations at home and abroad. Modern science, with its sense of order and power became a means of regulating the relations between the 'civilized' and the 'unruly' (Meneses, 2007, 2009). The modern Portuguese colonial enterprise emerged at a time when science lent renewed force and legitimacy to public colonial policy.

Suddenly, scientific knowledge became the means of affirming the superiority of the Portuguese, a move that transformed the 'other' knowledges, with whom they had been in contact for centuries, into local, inferior forms of interpreting the world. The frontiers of civilization became the margins of a European sense of social order; it followed that the natives became the very embodiment of disorder, symbolized by their moral affliction, physical degradation and disordered world.

The denial of diversity in forms of understanding and explaining the world, performed by the translation of the colonial bodies and realities into the world of modern science, is a constitutive and persistent feature of colonialism. But while the political dimension of colonial intervention has been widely criticized, the burden of the colonial epistemic

monoculture is still accepted nowadays as a symbol of development and modernity.

Postcolonial criticism has provided some of the most powerful resources for the criticism of the monoculture of knowledge based on modern science and, in particular, of the way it has historically excluded or marginalized certain subjects.¹⁰

In a world where the hegemonic imposition of modern rationality is widely present, but in contest with other forms of knowledge, one of the main battles concerns what needs to be known (or ignored), how to represent this knowledge, and for whom. To speak of cultural diversity implies speaking of a diversity of knowledges. However, during most of its colonial and contemporary history, in Mozambique the goal has been to establish a modern framework of interpretation for local cultures. In the present day, a significant body of academic research attempts to speak outside the social and historical situation in which it is created. Social sciences perform this task through the trope of the coerced, reduced, translated speech of docile bodies. Thus it 'invents' subjects with a local history and with a local culture, situating them in a temporally indeterminate, yet peripheral time-space.

To invoke the conditions of local knowledge — as illusions go — is a more comforting condition than to recognize a competent, fiercely competitive contemporary who pulls out the rungs on the hierarchy of knowledges. The latter is a genuine source of serious anxiety and fear, the fear that a supposedly less civilized and less endowed being is about to enter the territory of the civilized and the endowed and to prove himself or herself equal, and at worst more accomplished.

Of witches and crises

In Mozambique, as is the case in many African countries, witch-hunting is often described as an aberrant and dysfunctional institution, rather than as a part of a complex spiritual system that has sustained a continent over a long time. What may be interpreted

as an unfortunate, unpredictable occurrence for a western-oriented scientific mind, such as illness, death, accident, loss of property, and any misfortune, is often explained, in the region, as the result of witchcraft. These vary from region to region, from community to community. However, the common denominator in most practices of the craft is its evil nature. But why does this lead to witchcraft suspicions and accusations?

The analysis of rumors on witchcraft practice, together with witchcraft accusations constitutes a privileged window onto the complex reality of conflicts of knowledge and power.¹¹ Recent studies on the relationship between the magic/religious realms and politics in Africa have tried to answer these questions, and have provided scholars with revised typologies and theoretical models in social sciences. Two major lines of argument can be detected: the first one, arguing for the 're-traditionalization' of Africa, defends the analyzes and the solution of contemporary political crises through the recycling of older local beliefs and institutions; the second one argues that the 'modernity' of African politics explains recent politics as emerging from the constraints of modernity and globalization, triggering entirely new contexts and new dynamics (Meneses *et al.*, 2003; Meneses, 2004a, 2006, 2007). A careful study of the meanings attributed to witchcraft in the contemporary Mozambique provides a good example of 'another' modernity in play, involving the manipulation of multiple knowledges, a topic that deserves further analysis.

The research on-going in Mozambique suggests that far from being a reminiscent of ancient, unchanged superstitions, or recent inventions answering entirely new needs and new functions, witchcraft accusations and suspicions have a long history in the region. The reformulation of this traditional vision of Africa through the case study of witchcraft accusations and practices provides a good example of this.

Witches represent behavior that deviates from the accepted norms of a society: they are evil and create disharmony in social relationships, they pose risk to the stability of the community. Therefore, to call someone a 'witch' is to say that the person is a traitor, that

he/she stands in an antagonistic relationship to the rest of the group/society. Because witchcraft practices are impossible to detect or verify by 'normal' means, people accused of witchcraft practices are seen to have broken the social solidarity of the group. Being a threat, they do not deserve any further support or recognition from the community. In a phrase, they are no longer part of the community; they do not exist socially. This latter aspect is central for analyzing the recent suspicions of trafficking in human organs in Mozambique.

A person accused of being a witch represents a threat to the very basis of community life and this must be detected and combated with every means at one's disposal. It is this idea of treason against the group itself, an attack on the very basis of the social structure that transforms the suspicion of witchcraft practice into a heinous offence (Evans, 1992: 50).

In the past those recognizable as public enemies were those who committed treason, contempt of court, assault, verbal abuse of elders, incest, sodomy, bestiality, rape, self-exposure, murder and witchcraft. The punishment for these criminal offences ranged from a fine in livestock, to corporal punishment, banishment, confiscation of property belonging to the indicter's family, to the actual death of the accused.

Some of the descriptions collected more than an hundred years ago are quite similar to some of the witchcraft accusations present today: suspicion of the stealing of human bodies to carry out work for the witches at night, targeting the slumbering villagers' herds of cattle during nocturnal outings, the poisoning of the water supply and the bewitching of fields so that when people went out to cultivate they collapsed and died. Over and beyond these powers, the witches were considered supremely skilled in mixing poison. The accounts of missionaries, traders, travelers and, later on, researchers, imply that they played a central role in identifying witches and in seeking to establish a system of interpretation that could explain the backwardness of witchcraft, as well as the means to defeat this practice.¹²

The meting out of violent punishment to alleged witches was curtailed as colonial ideas about the inappropriateness of witch beliefs became concrete in the form of laws. In South Africa, as well as in neighboring territories under British colonial administration, the so-called 'Witchcraft Acts' passed during the early XX century forbade the practice of witchcraft, accusations of witchcraft and consultation of witchdoctors. In Mozambique, where colonial legislation never formally outlawed witchcraft practice, the identification of witches by pleading for support from traditional healers/diviners led to the prosecution of the latter (Meneses, 2000, 2004a, 2009; Honwana, 2002). As several people interviewed in the course of fieldwork affirmed, anti-witchcraft actions gradually became confined to consulting a diviner/healer and taking protective medicine, fines and occasional banishments. However, the State institutions and most of the scientific research bodies in Mozambique would not dedicate attention to this matter. This sort of 'amnesia' enabled the Western-based scientific narrative to remain ever-present, without ever being questioned for the bias this created in analyzing the spectrum of competing knowledges present in the country. As mentioned previously, in the independent Mozambique, as during the colonial period, the native peoples resorting to traditional healers are still largely perceived as uncivilized, non-modern, because other sources of problem that could resolve witchcraft accusations are viewed as having insufficient modern legal sophistication for their normative systems to be part and parcel of the new national rational (Meneses, 2009). Is it so or do we need to move forward to broaden our understanding of other epistemologies, spaces of resistance against external and poorly understood social and political changes?

Public rumors depict witchcraft as the most common way to achieve personal success, wealth, and prestige in times of economic shortage and declining social opportunities. Political leaders are widely believed to participate in various rituals (including sometimes '*muti* murder') to ensure power and electoral success, and many

skillfully use these perceptions to build visibility and deference. In the domestic arena, familial and social conflicts repeatedly crystallize around accusations of witchcraft, especially during times of sudden death or personal disaster. Permeating the entire social and cultural spectrum, magic stands today as an ambivalent force that helps to promote individual and collective accumulation as well as to control social differentiation.

Yet, the magical dimension of politics in Africa has often been ignored by classic political and historical studies (Santos, 2006a). This preliminary discussion argues first that the magical dimension of politics is not a marginal, but a central dimension of the nature of public authority, leadership, and popular identities in Mozambique.

The understanding of the perseverance of witchcraft in contemporary settings calls for a grounded, comparative, and historical exploration of the multiple religious layers of political belief in contemporary Africa. Only recently has a burgeoning anthropological literature begun to pay attention to the unforeseen proliferation of such practices and beliefs and to their relocation in modern settings, as previously mentioned.

Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildaskvy argue, in the introduction to a book on risk and culture (1982) that societies choose their nightmares according to both social and cultural criteria, and thus their nightmares are different. One of the Portuguese colonial nightmares was that the colonized would take power into their own hands and challenge their 'civilizing' intervention in Mozambique, that is, challenge the very reason of the western civilizing mission. Since political independence of Mozambique a lot of things have changed, and society's nightmares have changed too, but the nightmare of witchcraft persists.

Far from being destabilized by colonial rule, witchcraft benefited from the existence of colonial dramaturgies of authority – the monopoly of science and law, secrecy, bodily violence - that fitted local representations of power. The obsessions of Portuguese

colonial administration with witchcraft promoted it as a prominent ground for strategies of resistance and innovation, thus re-centering it at the core of political culture. These developments help us to re-evaluate the colonial period as a moment of strategic cultural reconfiguration rather than as a rupture characterized by the destruction of existing African references and values. Increased salience and changing concepts of a witch's powers reflect the interplay between daily lives and macro-social and economic systems. This interplay is used as the theoretical framework for interpreting witchcraft beliefs and accusations as precipitates of the power relations in contemporary post-colonial contexts, as several authors have underlined (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999, 2006; Geschiere, 1997).

A city structured by conflicts

The reports on trafficking in human organs, in late 2003 and early 2004, had their epicenter in Nampula city, located in northern Mozambique. Cities such as Maputo, Nampula, Johannesburg, or Nairobi have been able to attract and seduce, in their own ways, certain forms of global capital. That such forms of capital are, for the most part, predatory is without doubt. But this is, at least partly, an element of the globalizing process, which includes refracted, splintered, and cracked processes. These cities are not simply made up of social black holes. They are also cities of currency, cities where pockets of privilege coexist with misery. These are 'cities where the circulation of wealth in the form of cash is ostentatious and immense, but the sources of cash are always restricted, mysterious, or unpredictable [...] and the search for cash in order to make ends meet is endless' (Appadurai, 2000: 628). Such fractured, colliding, and splintered orders of urban life can be seen to characterize, increasingly, many cities around the world today, including in Europe and the United States.

Simultaneously, in these urban contexts the specifics of the 'postcolonial' condition gain particular configurations. Here, the vulgarity of politics in the postcolony contributes to what Mbembe describes as 'a practice of conviviality and a stylistic of connivance', where ordinary people 'toy with power rather than confronting it directly' (1992: 22). In Mozambique, similarly to other African situations, people work out identity strategies', in particular in relation to the State, incorporating multiple meanings and knowledges into the monocultural character of the State. However, experiences with the State and State-created domains in the post-independence contexts lead people alternatively to feel that their own well-being depends on that of others (Meneses, 2007). In parallel, the 'informal' recognition of multiple identities leads people to attempt to incorporate the identities and capacities of 'strangers' into their own; or to sustain convictions of identity that are sufficiently flexible to negotiate their interests productively. Such 'identity strategies' reflect contested understandings of what is for whose common good, as well as widespread ambivalence about how and for what purposes power ought to be exercised. The accusations of witchcraft in Nampula can be interpreted as an exercise in historicizing intersubjectivity, that is, in specifying the circumstances under which people recognize their interdependence to be as legitimate and necessary a ground for action as their more individualist aspirations.

Until the late nineteenth century the Portuguese presence was limited to forts and trading posts along the north-central coast and along the Zambezi river. The effective Portuguese occupation of the northern region of Nampula only took place during the transition to the twentieth century. A century earlier, northern Mozambique had witnessed major politico-economic changes mainly resulting from the reinforcement of its involvement in the international trading systems of guns and slaves. This trade left a significant imprint on the internal social and political position of the region. At the very beginning of the twentieth century, when Portugal managed to conquer most of present-day Mozambique,

the tradition of indirect administration was carried out by international concession companies, which were in charge of most of the territory until early 1940s. Only subsequently, with the on-set of the *Estado Novo*, was Mozambique brought under a unified system of colonial administration.

In Nampula region, the colonial occupation did not immediately make a substantial change to relations between the *amakhwã*¹³ and the Portuguese. Whatever their principled views on the topic, Portugal had little option than to resort to indirect rule. The presence of diverse groups in the region, allied to Europeans' own perceptions of relative superiority among Africans, meant that early colonial rule was experienced by the *amakhwã* as the symbol of dominance. With the onset of the *Estado Novo*, the Portuguese brand of colonialism became dominated by highly centralized and authoritarian political control, while the administrative control was much more selective and decentralized. This system was profoundly racialized, espousing both assimilation and the principles of indirect rule.¹⁴

The settling of Nampula city reflects the ethnic landscape of the region. For example, immigrants from Mozambique Island dominate Namicopo-Nametequiliua and Carrupeia neighborhoods, while the migrants from Angoche make up the bulk of the Muhalla Muslims. The Koti began settling these lands at the height of the slave trade during the nineteenth century, but the Mozambique Island immigrants mainly came to the region with the beginning of the urbanization projects in the 1930s (Bonate, 2006: 163-164). Traditional, local authorities were suppressed by the modern independent State,¹⁵ as a means of 'fighting back tribalism to build the nation' – to paraphrase one of the popular mottos in early post-independent Mozambique, aimed at uprooting the national identity from its ethnic past (Meneses, 2007b).¹⁶ The proponents of modernization in Mozambique and elsewhere – whether they were colonial or (post) colonial institutions –

wanted to uproot witchcraft as soon as possible in the name of progress, preferably by legal means and educational, legal and health campaigns.

The struggle over the 'local' communities has been exposed as one of the main vectors of the civil war that ravaged Mozambique for over a decade, soon after independence (Geffray, 1991; Dinerman, 1999, 2004). The war had a profound effect on the reshaping of Nampula; together with the economic hardships and socio-political instability of the post-independence period it drove new waves of immigrants to Nampula city, which became the main economic pole of the northern region (PNUD, 2006).

In the year 2000, local community/traditional authorities were reintroduced, although their role in urban settings remains controversial (Meneses, 2007b). Since their emergence, with the colonial administration, in the early twentieth century, they have been created and dissolved, sub-divided and redrawn with little respite. This volatility has been more than matched by the imprint of diverse political parties, following the civil war. Every time the political game has been redefined, the *amakhwa* have had no choice but to participate, both to protect their position vis à vis the State, and because political office has been the most common route to personal wealth. Each change has required a refashioning of networks of influence, an undertaking that demands a lot of time, as well as the raising and expenditure of financial resources. In short, the *amakhwa* have been both citizens and subjects for much of the past century.

Although the old capital (Mozambique Island) of the colony was nearby, most of the Nampula province was missionized relatively late, by the mid nineteenth century. Simultaneously, conversion to Islam witnessed a significant increase in the nineteenth century. Traditional religion also remained important. In the region, *amakhwa* religious affiliations were set upon a path that is still fairly evident today: whether *amakhwa* are Christians or Muslims may be predicted with a high degree of accuracy on the basis of their present or historic family residence and the influence of the missionary process:

western and southern are predominantly Catholic. Muslims are found all over the province, but they especially prevail in the eastern coastal region (Bonate, 2006). So far, other churches have remained very minor players. The predominance of either religion would upset a delicate balance because, over and above these religious differences, which are common within families, there is a general insistence that where politics is concerned they are all *amakhwava* and have to stick together. This would be a less sweeping commitment were it not also remarked frequently that in Mozambique everything is political (Iavala, 2000). representatives of the State, party leaders, political entrepreneurs, religious leaderships and civil society organizations contested the established power brokers, such as traditional rulers, healers or other leaders, who were now competing strategic players in the local political arena.

Early in the 1990s, with the end of the civil war and the adherence of the State to neo-liberal socio-economic policies, in a context of increasing differences in wealth and increasing generational conflict, suspicions of witchcraft increased dramatically. This process has been interpreted by local populations and their community leadership as the reestablishment of a moral order disrupted by both the colonial and the contemporary independent, State. The current reemergence of articulations between politics and the 'occult', like new local encounters between 'western modernity' and 'traditional African practices' generates new ethnographies. Similar to occurrences in other African contexts, these encounters emphasize the role of 'occult' practices as forms of dealing with rapid and substantial transformations in politics and the economy. Their increasing violence – such as witchcraft accusations and witch hunting, violent rituals - are a spin-off from the pressures of monetarization coupled with the social dislocation of people (Geschiere, 1997; Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999; Niehaus, 2001; Tvedten, Paulo & Rosário, 2006). What these studies highlight is the way in which traditional imaginaries regarding 'invisible forces' view power as 'opaque'. This leads to a counterpoint between 'local'

views and the 'globalized' rationale of transparency and accountability sustained by the states and foreign agencies alike.

The vital importance of solidarity between community members and their neighbors, inhibited witchcraft accusations; it ensured that people did not risk disrupting interpersonal relations. The research carried out on this subject in neighboring countries, following the structural-functionalist tradition (Chanock, 1998; Niehaus, 2001), held that villagization and the consequent break-up of extended households into smaller ones and labor migration to the cities led to the disappearance of such inhibitions and, by implication, made it less risky for people to level witchcraft accusations at neighbors and kin, given that they were no longer as critical to one's existence as had been the case when life was organized communally. In the case of South Africa, Niehaus carries the argument further, and maintains that witchcraft beliefs have less to do with African identity than with experiences of 'misery, marginalization, illness, poverty and insecurity' (2001: 192).

Research in urban and rural areas of Mozambique shows that social and economic differentiation is firmly entrenched and that communities are fundamentally socially heterogeneous (G20 Moçambique, 2004; PNUD, 2006; Tvedten, Paulo & Rosário, 2006). Wide gaps between the better-off and the worse-off cause social tensions, as the former try to avoid excessive demands on them by worse-off neighbors and kin, and as poorer members of the community increasingly perceive the better-off as selfish. As the better-off suspect deprived neighbors, and as deprived neighbors gossip about and accuse the well-to-do of having prospered through witchcraft, the tensions erupt into suspicion and accusations of witchcraft.

As in other areas of Mozambique, witchcraft is a highly ambivalent concept in Nampula. Theoretically, the employment of witchcraft is evil. Yet, anybody with political power and/or economic success needs powers within the realm of witchcraft and, in these cases,

occult powers may be a source of admiration, a force that can be used to achieve some 'positive' purposes (Geschiere 1997: 9-12, 23; Niehaus 2001: 192; Meneses, 2004a), which would benefit a individual or his/her group. Furthermore, political leaders and religious specialists can only ward off the dangers of witchcraft if they themselves have access to such powers, and so they have a legitimate right to use them. The outcome is a clash of values that in time leads to strains and tensions in social relationships and eventually to suspicion and accusations of witchcraft.

Disputes outlining bodies

Early in 2004 accounts of ghastly crimes were very widely disseminated, shaking Mozambique and the world. Supposedly there was a network operating in northern Nampula province trafficking in children and in human body parts. Due to the resonance of the macabre news, they spread internationally, with the speed of wild fire.¹⁷

At the core of this international campaign was a Brazilian Catholic missionary, then living in a convent, situated on the outskirts of Nampula city.¹⁸ She was the one who initially denounced the supposed existence of an international network active in the city, engaged in trafficking body parts. The interesting factor, though, was that at the epicenter of this accusation was a white couple - 'neighbors' of the convent, engaged in a major poultry project, described as being the leaders of an 'organ stealing criminal gang'.

The hysteria that followed the news - that made the headlines of international media for a while - led to an urgent investigation by Mozambique Attorney General's office.

However, the investigations were inconclusive, without any serious evidence produced (Procuradoria Geral da República, 2004).¹⁹ Worse, because the findings of the professionals on that team did not support the wave of rumors, they were accused of lying and of covering up for serious crimes.²⁰ What could explain this fact? The constantly

claimed incompetence of the Mozambican institutions? A cultural misunderstanding?

Both? Which other threads were hidden in this densely woven story?

The accusations brought by the missionary,²¹ and the early attitude of the Catholic Church, reproduced by most of the media resembled an inquisition. The Mozambican and international media described in detail how, supposedly, one of those accused of being involved in the human traffic (a woman) had physically attacked the Nampula prosecutor, even though eye-witnesses report that the prosecutor was armed and the woman was not, and that it was the prosecutor who attacked her.²²

In short, the parties were judged and condemned, even before the official judicial process was finished. It could not be otherwise. Guided by an ideology of modernity, the media, with the strong support of the Catholic Church could not tolerate being challenged in its hegemony by 'local traditions'.

In six months, there were three probes which failed to come up with any evidence regarding the allegations. When the last investigation was finished, of the supposed more than 50 disappeared children and adolescents (listed by the missionaries), the Attorney General's office could only identify fourteen bodies, but no confirmation on the supposed traffic in human body parts.²³ But the case was not closed. The reticent opinions expressed by some of the people living in the region of the poultry farm suggested the presence of a strong conflict of interests.

One woman by the name of Arufina Omar, but who commonly used the nickname Pia Mone, opened up the scene, by stating 'that foreigner prevents us from farming our fields, and he is doing away with our children. When we used to go to the fields, we found bloodstained clothing and sometime amputated bodies en route'.²⁴

The couple of foreigners under suspicion got partial financial support for the poultry farm from GAPI²⁵ in September 2002. The 300 hectares allocated to the project were located on the outskirts of the city, a plot of land that was once part of a large state-owned farm –

a remnant of the socialist period -, but was apparently long since abandoned. The provincial land tenure department, GAPI confirmed, had granted the couple a land use title already in December 2000, in accordance with Mozambican land law. However, due to bureaucratic delays, the project had only taken off, on the ground, in the last months of 2003.

However, although GAPI assumed the non-existence of a farm in the area, and did not recognize the right of peasants to the land, nearby peasants had occupied plots of land on a 'provisional' basis. In a country characterized by the persistence of a subsistence economy, the rural sector remains important for the national economy. Since the state-owned farm had long been not in use, it was a 'normal' routine for peasants – mainly women - to plant un-utilized land. This happened while land titles were being introduced in the country, something new that came with the burgeoning neoliberal initiative that has been in place since the mid 1990s in the country.

Thus, a corner stone of this contention is a strong 'land dispute'. Although it was planned to contribute to generate jobs and income, the project seems to have been poorly discussed at grassroots level, one of the requirements of the Land Law approved in 1997 (Negrão, 2003).

Several of the people that have been frontrunners in these witchcraft accusations are people who claim right to the land which the Nampula provincial government (via GAPI) allocated to the poultry project. Some of the people contesting this land titling decision even sent a petition to the Provincial Governor, back in February 2002, claiming rights over the land.²⁶ The solution proposed by the official authorities was to give the petitioners land elsewhere, but this did not stop them from continuing to incite invasions of the land granted to the poultry project.

One of the disputants interviewed affirmed that his father had been a traditional chief, with rights over that land, but it had been taken from him by a group of settlers, probably prior to Mozambican independence in 1975.

In November 2002, when the project kicked off, the tensions increased with several land invasions, forcing the land-titled project-owners of the poultry farm to seek assistance from the police. A couple of months later, already in 2003, the Brazilian missionary began spreading rumors that the couple was involved in the disappearance of children and trafficking in body parts, under cover of the poultry farm. These allegations took a disturbing turn when the missionary spoke to the international press about 'the horrible situation and mutilated bodies found on public roads'.²⁷ The allegations were reinforced because the 'white foreign couple' has apparently built a private runway on their land plot, from which, the missionaries claimed, planes frequently would take off for South Africa, the crossroads for this kind of traffic.²⁸

It is also important to bear in mind that Nampula city marks the transition from a strong Muslim coastal area to a Catholic dominant interior. A struggle for ideological influence may also have played a strong role in this discussion, although the Catholic Church never took officially a formal position regarding the alleged body trafficking.²⁹ However, either out of ignorance or malice, some of the Catholic clergy and much of the press strongly opposed the project, and the apparent ambitions of the missionary, with a view to controlling the plot of land under contestation, adjacent to the convent.³⁰

Throughout the interviews, several people affirmed that the 300 hectares had been promised (without formalization) by the previous Governor, to the Catholic Church. Also, several 'traditional leaders' had benefited from rents collected from the peasants that had occupied several plots. Some of them were called upon as witnesses by the missionary, and many of the people involved in the process were Muslims.

In a sentence, the disinformation provided by the media led to a total misunderstanding of the situation, where distinct actors were actively playing their political strategies to guarantee the rights to land. To claim that someone is selling bodies or body parts is equivalent to accusing him/her of cannibalism, a practice that is identified with witchcraft. Since the witch has to be expelled from the community, this was the goal aimed at by the Nampula peasants, while struggling to keep their plots.

The ideological function of this political struggle has to be understood in terms of the exigencies posed by the monocultural politics of the global North. Exploration of society's nightmares, via witchcraft, enlightens us about how societies work, and about power and control, compliance and resistance and how these are achieved, rather than simply heading for the overtly political domain. Some of the subjects represented in this struggle, although without direct access to the texts produced about them, conveyed their opinions by manipulating the worse nightmare of modernity – the persistence of practices considered to be remnants of a 'traditional', pre-civilization stage.

This grassroots movement used witchcraft accusations as a form of violence against political enemies. In fact, Nampula residents, together with Brazilian missionaries, created a wave of suspicion regarding State achievements, by raising fears of the involvement of local police officers, and other state actors, in the organization of the illegal trade. In a sense, it was a sort of popular political action, directed towards promoting the dawn of a new democratic order, towards equalizing the distribution of income and wealth, or towards defending the ideal of solidarity within communities. Simultaneously, one should not forget that some bodies were found in several areas of Nampula, suggesting clearly that this explanation is not sufficient. Indeed, there have been some very real murders and ritual mutilations in the province of Nampula, as well as in other parts of the country.³¹ As a result of the investigations carried out in the country, the then minister of Interior confirmed the presence of witchcraft practices involving

human body parts.³² This statement triggered a widespread wave of repudiation by traditional healers in the country.³³

The persistence of epistemic violence, when bodies and contexts are repeatedly inscribed in modern scientific logic does not help to solve the violence inscribed on these bodies. Regarding the possibility that Nampula citizens were being butchered so that their organs could be used in transplants, nothing seems to confirm this possibility, including the forensic analysis of the evidence found (Procuradoria Geral da República, 2004). Most of the organs removed from the murdered people are not yet widely used for transplant, e.g. genitals, tongues, hands, etc. Additionally, the sections of the organs to be transplanted were conducted using a butcher's knife in a barn, and the organs used for these purposes were preserved in a domestic fridge, among vegetables. Finally, the records from airport traffic control did not show evidence of additional planes landing in the area, to carry possible organs.

The medical doctors interviewed addressed issues that their peers deemed credible: the impossibility of performing transplants in Nampula; the lawyers could not make sense of the accusations, since witchcraft practices are not taken into account in modern legal discourse; the international journalists could only broadcast the representations that 'made sense' to them. Acting this way, they all contributed, somehow, to promoting the colonial idea about Mozambique, of a space of disorder, to be organized and saved by the ghost of modernity.

Affluence of knowledge, wealth of power

In witchcraft, the body becomes a political arena: the suffering body becomes an extension of, and a metaphor for, the social conflicts which are consuming people. The intruding body becomes an extension for the foreignness of the aggression, initially embodied by the European colonialist, and later, in a postcolonial context, by the foreign

(extra local or international) economic and political interventions. The environment is inhabited by new influences, new objects which compromise one's body, which invade the body if this is unprotected. This also reflects a concern with social boundaries, with the integrity of the community culture.

Nowadays there is a large body of thought on the erosive qualities of money and commodity production (Taussig, 1980; Snodgrass, 2002; West, 2005). More recent research has put aside the stereotype defining 'traditional societies' as resistant to the market economy. The dominant thought is that monetarization exacerbates people's frustrations and desires by theoretically placing many commodities in accessibility but in practice making them unattainable (Parry and Bloch, 1989). Monetarization tends to increase the range of differences of wealth between people in village communities because of their different life opportunities (Tvedten, Paulo & Rosário, 2006). And it may enable people to withdraw from or deny the kinds of 'leveling' obligations of reciprocity and redistribution entailed by the norms of village life.

The rumor of witchcraft organ trafficking should be analyzed in the wider context of Mozambican political and economic well-being. Indeed, as the Comaroffs wrote, 'witches embody all the contradictions of the experience of modernity itself' (1991: xxxix)

This analysis aims at broadening the scope of the study on the role witchcraft plays in local politics in contemporary Mozambique. Nampula emerges thus as an example of many cities of the global South, where over the *longue durée* city dwellers have learnt to produce multiple, sometimes conflicting, cultural paradigms—or to juggle with multiple perspectives—in order to make sense of the world they inhabit. In short the goal is to account for the changing inventory and the rich textuality of Nampula's citiness, its unsettled appearances, and its restlessness: the simultaneity of order, disruption, and abrupt interruptions; the incessant labor of framing, reframing, and unframing; of destroying, renovating, and reconstructing; of juxtaposing and segregating; of reiterating

and deleting; of triviality, vulgarity, and refinement; of shock, ephemerality, and enchantment.

The move from the apparent hegemony of modern rationality towards an understanding of a setting where arguments are presented as culturally inscribed and normatively encoded reminds us that cultural encounters have political as well as epistemological dimensions. They both converge, while striving to achieve what Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) poetically calls the decolonization of the mind.

Contrasting with the discourse on socialist modernization, or contemporary structural development, promising perfectly structured and rationalized economic, political and social institutions, the social context of witchcraft has warned Mozambicans of the fine line between socially constructive power and power that produces social disruption and ruin. Within this scheme, the constantly shifting terrain of power and the actors that move across this terrain have been constantly subject to social assessment. No pronouncement has been accepted as definitive, no judgment final. Following this approach, the economic and social forces that play upon household and kin or community dynamics are seen as exacerbating tensions and hostilities among its members, who become suspect of both causing and benefiting from the problems and afflictions of others.

The socio-economic and socio-political policies in place since the mid 1980s have produced high levels of political and economic instability in Mozambique. Many people have lost their jobs, while many others cannot find work. The harsh climatic events (droughts and floodings) that afflict the country have pushed large numbers of people out of rural areas to seek opportunities in urban areas. The political conflict between the two main political parties, coupled with the rising level of property crimes owing to poor economic conditions, has left most people feeling vulnerable.

Although postcolonial studies have demonstrated how Europeans used witchcraft to stigmatize, classify, and distance Africa, there are almost no grounded studies on how

colonial rule used these visions to organize concrete attacks on African beliefs at the local level, nor on how Africans interpreted and participated in such grassroots schemes.

The idiom of witchcraft is used as a persuasive way of explaining sickness, misfortune or even death, relating these to patterns of envy and distrust among people. The data available suggest that it is always some misfortune that triggers accusations (Meneses, 2000; 2004b, 2007, 2009). Sickness (physical or economic) in particular may set these mills rolling in the absence of other convincing explanations of it, or even in spite of them.

Assuming witchcraft is like any concealed action manipulated by people, willingly or unwillingly in contact with a supernatural reality, in order to acquire power over other people, one has to accept that these practices belong to the sphere of the sacred, and activate the realm of the individual, the intimate, and the secret. At the same time, witchcraft frames and codifies political action within the public realm.

Ideas about spiritual forces (understood here as both benevolent and malevolent, able to heal or to destroy – Meneses, 2004a, 2004b) do not derive mechanically from an old, unchanging stock of ancient beliefs. Contemporary knowledge that circulates in distinct regions of the country creatively connects different spheres of continuously accumulated power: local rituals, Muslim traditions, Christian traditions, Western material culture, science, transnational cults. The fusing and interpenetration of these various repertoires, illuminates the flexibility of local beliefs and their capacity to articulate with foreign 'modern' elements.

Rather than embracing a set of 'abstract universals', the challenge is to embrace specific moments of epistemic diversity or, a conversation rather than a blueprint remains to be seen. It is an oppositional, necessarily minority position, an incitement to think differently about difference. The 'occult' power of witchcraft is associated with physical fragility, with risk, a crucial dimension of politics today. Competing political factions derive unity

and strength from sacred sites as much as from popular support. Political or ethnic strongholds are often perceived as geographical receptacles of 'occult' forces. However, the connection between witchcraft, collective identities, and sacred territories, is not synonymous with the confinement of politics to a protected, stabilized physical space. Each region can to some extent be redrawn, incorporated or enlarged according to dominant political power relations.

Shedding light on these patterns can help us understand the dissemination of politics in Mozambique, particularly in time of crises. Any ambitious situation, either in economic or political terms, can borrow from the stock of existing emblems of 'occult' power, or invent new ones, while the public dimension of power and healing power are replaced by rituals of secrecy and invisibility.

If in the past witchcraft was perhaps used as a social equalizer, the notions of both wealth and prestige altered due to contacts with the colonial State. As the commoditization and annihilation of communities became more intense, witchcraft was perceived less as an instrument of social adjustment, and more as a tool for competitive (and quite often destructive) intervention, attracting dependents against their will, or capturing the spiritual and material vitality of their rivals. At the turn of the twentieth century, colonial rulers, helped by a wide range of colonial actors, directly attacked and partly destroyed old beliefs, as well as the functions of traditional leaders. However, as they monopolized the exercise of official authority, the European colonialists were perceived as the holders of new 'occult' forces, characterized by secrecy, violence, and direct exploitation of Africans, hence involuntarily reinforcing local ideologies that connected power with the exercise of supernatural, hidden, and malevolent actions.

By studying the savage, the West set up a mirror in which it might find a concrete, if inverted, self-image, providing the contrast against which the cultivated man could come into full view. However, colonial law simultaneously ignored all unlawful acts that

resorted to the 'supernatural' and remained, in western eyes, impossible to prove by rational, scientific research (infliction of disease and evil, etc.), and they strictly forbade local populations to try and punish alleged witches. The criminalization of local beliefs struck at the core of African social and moral orders. Yet, through daily struggles with death and disaster, and against discrimination, Mozambicans strove to resist, appropriate, and change the ideological system that the Portuguese colonial and postcolonial State sought to impose.

Today, the circulation of ideas and artifacts from worldwide networks (medias, circulation of commodities, printed and visual culture, foreign religions), provides new resources for the popular perception and configuration of politics. The reconfiguration of repertoires of sacred power has always been strategically connected with local grassroots culture and magical leadership throughout the twenty-first century. Indeed, nowadays local, grassroots' perceptions of economic globalization, combined with an increasing circulation of goods and people, and a situation of increasing economic debilitation, continue to feed rumors of human exploitation by invisible powers, or fears about commodities as hungry and malevolent fetishes, as in the case of alleged human organ trafficking in northern Mozambique.

The manipulation of witchcraft accusations, on the ground, corresponds to local responses to economic globalization. It represents one aspect of the intimate link between witchcraft and modernity, between Africa and the 'rest'. The idea that rumors of witchcraft existence/practice function as a means of intimidation is useful in understanding some of the alleged practices of organ trafficking; however, it must be considered as part of an explanation and not the entire reason for describing it in terms of 'traditional' practices. As described earlier in this paper, a witch deviates from the expected norms in the same way as political subversives do. Any of these deviants, as defined by the society, can be

subject to witchcraft accusation. It is probably the most powerful argument of litigation for grassroots communities.

Life for people in Nampula, as well as for most of the Mozambican population is quite difficult and insecure.³⁴ Life for people is difficult, the crisis is widespread. Widespread unemployment, a high incidence of violence (including a high incidence of assaulting), the prevalence of various epidemics, and a feeling of uprootedness are a common pattern. Indeed, the government's economic and political reforms carried out since the 1980s, led to an increasing class differentiation, as rapid urbanization led to a shortage of space and resources. The struggle for new economic and social positions by the poorer and more marginalized sectors of Mozambican society, within shifting and uncertain social and economic contexts, is one of the fundamental roots of the violence observed in the country.

Throughout contemporary Mozambique, witchcraft accusations are often directed at individuals empowered by their participation in new economic forms: cash cropping, the informal economy, and government administration. In Nampula, those who do well in business, have power or earn large salaries, are the most susceptible to envy and witchcraft suspicion. Witchcraft acts as mirror, reflecting and enlarging the inequalities and conflicts that the new economic and social conditions bring about. Here, witchcraft accusations are made against government officers and businessmen. Several of these people come from outside the region, from groups empowered by their better access to education and state power. Some of these officials, businessmen, are seen to have become the new bearers of evil and their alliance with external economic sources and commodity production as the source of evil's power.

Witchcraft here is not a continuation of the 'traditional', an archaic superstition which stubbornly clings on and which is destined to disappear with the growth of modern knowledge and development. Rather, the encounter clashes with development and

modernity and together these spawn new forms of witchcraft, new narratives on evil, where the narratives of witchcraft accusation reflect a struggle against development that does not bear local specific interests in mind.

As it stands today, an evaluation of multiple accusations of traffic in body parts indicates that these accusations are a warning of potential punishment for all those involved in relationships that the members of the community define as anti-social, as deviant, violent behavior against the community. It is an implicit threat and it produces fear and anxiety; simultaneously, these accusations are an active means of removing the agents of oppression, since the suspicion of being a witch will mark a person's behavior throughout their whole life.

In a fluid and uncertain political world, power and talk tend to collapse in on themselves. Communities use rumors and innuendo to criticize rich, potentially problematic newcomers, without condemning wealth in itself, expressing their frustration and hope in an uneasy juxtaposition with each other. It is especially in such awkward situations of suspense and limbo that rumors and ideas of witchcraft tend most to flourish.

Thus it would seem that changes in the social, political and economic arenas can result in the fierce hunting out of traitors or witches or scapegoats, as a means of overcoming uncertainty and restoring order. People need meaning to exist as social beings; I would agree that this becomes an important part of why these accusations and widespread rumors of body part trafficking occur. Through these communal acts, sense can be created where none seems to exist.

As acknowledged by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2000), rumors of abduction and stealing of body parts serve to alert the poor to the state of alert they live in, reflecting the fact that witchcraft ideas and urban legends are not simply metaphors that express ideas of exploitation and trickery; rather they grow out of people's bodily experiences in daily life – and their regular encounters with risk, danger and death. The repeatedly suspicions of

organ trafficking in Mozambique suggests that these cases acted as ritual mechanisms for the periodic rejuvenation of collective sentiments, while simultaneously acting as a mechanism for renewing common moral sentiments and redefining the contours of social reality. Some of the crimes may have been imaginary but this becomes irrelevant; what is critical is that people believe that they are cleansing their society and through this, they feel the collective morality of their political goals is being reaffirmed (Meneses, 2009). In a complex cultural environment of persistent violence in which history, memory and rumor are entangled, and where word of mouth communication binds people together against oppositional forces, the force of accusation is simultaneously a force for mobilization and resistance in these highly politicized contexts.

The global non-understanding of these local political practices creates situations such as the rumors on body trafficking, related to the globalized circulation of such problems. Mozambicans feared to lose their land, meaning their sources of income, a symbol of life. This hostility and panic found expression in the rumors spread about the foreigners (whites), that they had taken human organs from locals to cure western people. A careful analysis of the situation of 2004 suggests a deep conflict in Nampula over land, resources, security, well-being, where some community members use this fear as a political tool to promote a feeling of mistrust against foreigners. These accusations should be seen as a concealed attempt to eliminate misfortune, perform a valuable social service, and thereby attain legitimacy. This form of local political engagement in the management of misfortune presents a potent source of political legitimacy.

In fact, the political gain of the community – the political power to be gained through accusation of the practice of illegal behaviors – intimidated those who would oppose it. As a result, the white couple quit the region a while later, giving up on the project. The spreading of rumors and accusations defines what behavior is expected of the community, and defines the power relationship. On a broader scale it can define the relationship of the

community to the system of the Mozambican State, that it is considered unjust and that it must be contested.

Ingenious Cosmopolitanism?

In Mozambique, contemporary struggles over the 'occult', through intensified circulation of rumors, artifacts, ideas, and anxieties, have persistently reconfigured and enriched local repertoires and strategies. Ongoing research indicates that witchcraft cannot be analyzed as a product of the past (Meneses, 2007, 2009). Patterns of innovation and borrowing indicate that such dynamics are both in constant flux. Rather, we need to reflect upon what makes these dynamics specific and original to this particular region and time, and to investigate the distinct networking and associations that people creatively intertwine between local, regional, national, and global ideas about witchcraft and politics. In doing so, we will be able to shed fresh light on the complex nature of the 'moral matrix' of politics in this region, and to provide new insights into the local history of power and knowledge accumulation. The politics of 'modern' witchcraft also provides for a new angle of study on the nature of modern ethnicity and social identities in contemporary Mozambique.

In Mozambique, the colonial regime shaped the realm of the 'customary' while simultaneously repressing 'traditional cults'. The postcolonial State did away with both, by favoring a 'rational modernization'. These legacies haunt the contemporary political landscape of the country, triggering different meanings and forms for institutional conflicts.

The paradox which many insist constitutes an impediment to progress and development - the persistence of 'traditional' values - deserves careful analysis. Traditionalism is only thus to the extent that it is distinguished from western modernity by their differences, but in fact traditionalism is continuously fed by modernity.

The tension between the transformation of the State, and the reaction of communities demanding the State to do something meaningful to them, has produced new structures of social control that can be analyzed as a continuity from the past: the (re)invention of a 'modern' traditional power. In any case, the situations lived in Mozambique call for a better understanding as reflexes of competition for power, a competition where different structures' spheres of intervention overlap – with distinct perceptions about the sources of problems and possible solutions.

Some of the current mismatches - in terms of interpreting the nature of the social conflicts in the country – are a reflection of the complex character of the encounters between Western political ideologies and local imaginaries of power; a careful and multisided analysis of the circumstances that have prompted these accusations is crucial to understanding the struggle for power, where distinct forms of knowledge compete to introduce their meaning.

The discourse about witchcraft power and activities is clearly a critique of today's rich and powerful, a threat against any possible attack on the economic morality of a community. Such critiques might have a leveling effect where they challenge witchcraft itself as a form of social differentiation. Indeed, witchcraft discourses cut both ways. People could just as easily suggest in the language of witchcraft, that the wealth and power of particular individuals was the target of jealous witches of ruin that sought to prevent their communities (neighbors and kin) from improving their condition. Such a critique of jealousy-motivated witch practice and its leveling effects supposes processes of social differentiation. Accumulation is justified in a world where the 'haves' are victims and the 'have nots' are perpetrators of occult crimes. In either case, talk about witchcraft is a phenomenon distinct from, but intimately bound up with, witchcraft itself. By momentarily exposing to imaginative view a realm normally understood to be hidden, talk about witchcraft refers to phenomena in the supposedly visible world that, in fact,

remain hidden (such as jealousy and feelings of insecurity). Such revelations challenge hidden truths even when they neither claim nor seek to do so.

Discourses concerning witchcraft do not express a resistance to modernity; rather they constitute reflexes of constant struggle for a better life, for a broader sense of health and well-being, which includes 'social peace' and manageable risk. Because 'community well-being' is an open system, formally delimited only in its practice, the possibilities of explanation for the problems of life are innumerable, making anthropophagic interaction between different elements possible. In this sense, witchcraft accusations, far from reinforcing a radically different or alternative means of conflict resolution, constitute discourse concerning problems affecting the family, community and society.

The case discussed in this paper clearly points out the possibility of 'marginal', ingenious cosmopolitanism.³⁵ The multi-centered world with numerous instances of vernacular, ethnic rootedness marks the possibility of openness to cultural difference or the fostering of a universalist civic consciousness and a sense of moral responsibility beyond the local. This poses the question whether the local, parochial, rooted, culturally specific and demotic may co-exist with the translocal, transnational, transcendent, elitist, enlightened, universalist and modernist global North. Indeed, the question is often reversed to ask whether there can be an enlightened normative cosmopolitanism which is not rooted, in the final analysis, in local and culturally committed loyalties and understandings.

The exploration of 'marginal' cosmopolitanisms is an example of an argument, in the postcolonial context, on dignity, cultural rights and a broad rule of law that includes the right to cognitive justice (Bhabha, 1996; Masolo, 2003; Santos, 2006b, 2006c). It is my opinion that an emancipatory postcolonial scholarship has to stem from a constructive engagement with the role of power in the formation of identities and subjectivities, as well as from the relationship between knowledges and political practices.

Nampula represents a palimpsest of cultures, a contact zone represents the locus for the exercise of translation, aimed at identifying and amplifying what is common in the diversity (Santos, 2006c). The 'contact zone' represents the human drive to build communities grounded on memories and experiences that constitute the dwelling place of different people. Despite having different referential worlds, the presents in the contact zones share knowledges which imply that there might be points of communality where the horizons of memories and experiences overlap and translation takes place.

These horizons allow difference, but following Santos' proposal (2006), as a condition through which diversity is celebrated, not as a factor of fragmentation and isolationism, but rather as a condition of sharing and solidarity. The presumption is that equivalent processes in the accounts can lead to similarities, and these similarities are vital to any translation, as a means of broadening and deepening the intercultural dialogue between forms and processes of knowing. Translation here, the identification of similar, equivalent processes is a key moment in the process of translating the similitude of these memories and experiences. This process moves away from the Cartesian certainty, where reasonable epistemological questioning and uncertainty and ignorance can exist.

At the core of the postcolonial discussion is, as several authors have underlined, the need to build upon existing experiences and knowledges, a broader space of knowledge production and ways of thinking. In sum, 'other', radical epistemologies should contribute towards a critical intervention in the very discursivity of the modern sciences in order to craft another space for the production of knowledge – another way of thinking, the very possibility of talking *with* - instead of *about* - other worlds and other knowledges.

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²I am aware of the unsatisfactory nature of 'witchcraft' as an analytical term. For a detailed discussion of definitions and concepts of witchcraft, sorcery and magic in different local contexts, as well as of the limitations and fallacies of the general delimitations of witchcraft, particularly in Mozambique, see Meneses, 2009.

³More recently, the subject of witchcraft has met with renewed interest, with multiple researchers paying attention to the unforeseen proliferation of such practices and beliefs, and to their relocation in modern settings. See, for example, Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, 1999, 2006; Geschiere 1997, 2002, 2006; Ashforth, 1998, 2001; Niehaus 2002; West, 2005, Harris, 2007, as well as the contributors to collections edited by Moore & Sanders 2001, Meyer & Pels, 2003, Kiernan, 2006, and Israel, 2008.

⁴On this subject in the context of Mozambique, see Liga dos Direitos Humanos – Moçambique, 2009, as well as Meneses, 2009.

⁵Postcolonialism should not be treated as one unified body of thought; instead, it is multiple, diverse and eschews any easy generalizations. Although the 'post' in postcolonialism is indicative of the end of colonialism and imperialism as direct political dominance, it does not imply the demise of imperialism as a global system of hegemonic power. A post-colonial approach seeks to capture the continuities, ruptures and complexities of specific historical periods, and attempts to go beyond the strict unilinear chronological and dichotomous conceptions that dominate contemporary social and political thinking, challenging the ontological roots of colonialism (Santos and Meneses, 2009).

⁶The field data discussed in this paper refer to the period between 2003 and 2007, although previous materials were also incorporated to allow for a broader, in-depth discussion. Documental data were gathered in libraries and research institutions. Important material was supplemented by official government documents and publications, press reports, newspapers' articles and related studies on this subject. The research also included interviews with actors involved in the case under study.

⁷On the subject of translation, I build my approach on the ideas earlier suggested by Asad, 1986 and Clifford, 1997, but mainly I follow Santos' proposal regarding intercultural translation (2006b and 2006c).

⁸On this subject, see Dussel, 1995 and Santos 2006c.

⁹For example, the western coast and southern part of the Indian Ocean were described as settled by 'negros', and the Muslims, though described as being 'black', called 'mouros'. Non-Muslim Africans who were called 'negros' in the earliest accounts of the eastern African coast, quickly became 'cafres', a Lusophonized version of the Swahili word of Arabic derivation, 'kafiri', or 'unbelievers'. That is, the Portuguese came to understand the coastal area of Eastern Africa as populated by believers and non-believers.

¹⁰Describing science as the epitome of a monoculture of the mind does not mean that science is not internally diverse. Rather, this 'monocultural' quality is here described in its relation to the wide range of forms of knowledge and experience that modern science regards and classifies as subaltern, through the use of adjectives such as 'local', 'lay', 'traditional', knowledges.

¹¹Although the subject of rumors is beyond the scope of this paper, rumors resolve the confusions that result from experience. They are a kind of 'ambiguous' source of news, poised between an explanation and an assertion, giving access to local concerns in the national realm. In this sense, rumors are perceived and use by community members as a means of exercising social control.

¹²On this subject in Mozambique, see, for example, Silva, 1884; Gomes da Costa, 1899; Cruz, 1910; Lacerda e Almeida, 1944; Gonçalves Cota, 1946; Alberto, 1965; Junod, 1996; and Santos, 1999.

¹³*Amakhuwa* is the plural of *makhuwa*, the main ethno-linguistic group in Mozambique, spread over Nampula, Cape Delgado, Nyassa and Zambezia provinces. The language spoken is the *emakhuwa*.

¹⁴Traditional authorities applied private, customary law for the resolution of problems in local societies, whereas in urban areas, civilians (mostly Portuguese colonists) operated predominantly under the rule of law.

¹⁵Through Decree n. 6/78, of April 22nd 1978.

¹⁶In the first decade after independence, however, healers or diviners were only rarely engaged to prove or disprove civilians' accusations of witchcraft, since they were perceived as part of the 'oppressive colonial ideology' In the majority of cases, accusations were then brought to community courts, which would investigate the matter (Meneses, 2004).

¹⁷This case was widely discussed in the local and international media. See, for example, the news published in the various Mozambican newspapers, such as *O País*, *Notícias*, *Expresso da Tarde*, *Diário de Moçambique*, *Zambeze* and *Savana* as well as in international press (such as the Portuguese *Público*, the Spanish *El País*, the French *Le Monde*, the British *BBC* and the *Catholic Post*). The case of Nampula gave rise to a strong interest in the subject and led to the disclosure, in the Mozambican news, of a large number of cases supposedly involving kidnapping and human trafficking; on this subject, see Serra, 2006.

¹⁸*Domingo* newspaper, of January 25, 2004, and of February 29, 2004.

¹⁹A different version persisted in the media. See, for example, 'Conclusões válidas para 4 corpos exumados', by Arménia Mucavele, published in *Vertical*, March 12, 2004.

²⁰As reported by several journalists, the reaction was not the sigh of relief that one might have expected - instead the team from the Attorney-General's Office was vilified and insulted in parts of the press and even by several members of the Catholic Church. (Paul Fauvet, *AIM*, March 6, 2004).

²¹As reported by *Savana* newspaper, this missionary, who had been in the region for several years, had had a complicated and somehow conflictual relationship (see 'História de uma mistificação em nome da Criança' by Paola Rolletta and Naita Ussene, published on March 12, 2004).

²²Interviews carried out in Nampula city, in 2004.

²³'Mozambique deaths blamed on foreign witch doctors' (*AFP*, April 6, 2004). Surprisingly, in 2007, a website wrote that the research carried out in Mozambique had proved that the organs from these people had ended up in Israeli hospitals ('Tráfico de órgãos en Internet' <http://www.milenio.com/edomex/milenio/nota.asp?id=43315>, of January 2007).

²⁴Paul Fauvet, *AIM*, April 18, 2004.

²⁵Support Office for Small Scale Industry (GAPI). GAPI is fully recognized by the Bank of Mozambique as a financial institution. Created in 1990, GAPI has become a major source of loans for small and medium size industrial projects.

²⁶When the crisis broke, the former Provincial Governor had been replaced by a new one. The then new State figure was of Muslim descent.

²⁷Jordane Bertrand, 'Mozambique organ trafficking scandal peters out', *IOL Africa*, March 16, 2004.

²⁸The South African cities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg are where the transplants were being carried out materially to the advantage of people from Europe and North America who could afford to buy an organ on 'commission' (Scheper-Hughes, 2000). Late in 2003 the South African police broke up an international network of organ traffickers whose 'outlet' was a private hospital in Durban. The organ 'donors' in this case, were recruited in the poorest provinces of Brazil. This probably explains the report, to the media, on 'organ trafficking' prompted by the Brazilian missionary.

²⁹One of the provincial representatives of the Islamic Council, one of the country's main bodies of Muslim representatives expressed his regrets at the fact that the then newly (Mozambican) appointed Catholic Bishop of Nampula had apparently discontinued the weekly meetings with the Muslim community, carried out by the previous Bishop.

³⁰It should be said that several priests and missionaries dissociated themselves from the sensationalist case, even accusing the Brazilian of having no credibility (*Savama*, March 12, 004).

³¹This is also the case in other regions of the country. Indeed, the Mozambican government had already, in 2000, acknowledged the existence of trafficking in human organs in the country. Investigations so far have established that trafficking in Mozambique is mostly organized by Southern African crime rings. Most of the organs - kidneys and corneas - are trafficked for the purpose of transplants, although trafficking of organs for witchcraft purposes also exists.

³²'Há extracção de órgãos para efeitos de feitiçaria' (*Noticias*, March 16, 2004).

³³See, for example, the newspaper *Savama*, of March 19, 2004.

³⁴On similar situations in Africa see Evans, 1992.

³⁵The decoloniality of beings and the decoloniality of knowledge are both necessary and sufficient conditions to really capture alternative forms of cosmopolitanism, that some have defined as 'vernacular' (Bhabha, 1996), ethnic (Werbner, 2002) or 'insurgent and subaltern' (Santos, 2006b). The possibility of non-westerncentric thinking needs to be developed through the lens of coloniality, by locating the spatial and temporal origins of modernity. While the colonial difference - which refers to the knowledge and cultural dimensions of the subalternization processes effected by the colonial encounter - brings forward persistent cultural differences within global power structures, the coloniality of being, as the ontological dimension of the persistence of colonialism, seeks to identify the expressions with which the 'other' responds to subalternity or the destruction of other knowledges due to the colonial encounter (Santos, 2006b; Santos and Meneses, 2009).