

Original Paper

Meaning Production in the Civil Religious Mozambique

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Abstract

The Tsonga tribal and Mozambican national identities are civil religious constructs. They resulted from sacrificial ritual performances, the expropriation of traditions and symbols, and the creation of sacred spaces. Formed as a linguistic, cultural, religious and tribal unity, the Tsonga provided a historical genealogy and structural template for the emergence of Moçambicanidade as a civil religion. Drawing upon postcolonial theory and discourse analysis, the essay uses the analytical category “civil religion” as a focusing lens in order to explore the dynamics of national solidarity in selected main archival sources: First, the construction of the Tsonga narratives of the tiMhamba, the Sacred Woods and the expropriation of local traditions recorded in Henri-Alexandre Junod’s, the Life of a South African Tribe; second, the pedigree of a heightened value for union, Protestant work-ethics and education, bequeathed to Eduardo Mondlane and evident in his The Struggle for Mozambique. Since the focus of the essay is on the productions of civil religion rather than their reception, evidence is drawn from textual analysis rather than from fieldwork methods. As a consequence of the analysis, the study argues that both Tsonga and Moçambicanidade are subaltern identities to modernity, perhaps destined to fail, but existing within the frame of modernity as its alter ego.

Keywords

civil, religion, tribal, identity, frelimo, moçambicanidade, Tsonga, sacred

1. Introduction

The paper focus on the ways in which, the Tsonga (civil) religion provided historical template for Moçambicanidade, the Mozambique’s collective identity soul (or an imagined community, a tribe/nation). This occurred through symbolic representation, narrative (myth) creation and spaces consecration. The Tsonga historical and religious influence is found in many persons such as Lina Magaia, Sebastião Mabote and Zedequias Manganhela, who became key personalities in the formation of FRELIMO and the subsequent struggle for national independence (Silva, 1998b). The Romande Mission’s influence is particularly highlighted in the person of Eduardo Mondlane, the founder and the

first president of FRELIMO.

Through informal education programs known as *minlawwa*, the Romande Mission raised the self-esteem associated with and the consciousness of belonging to a group, a nation under a danger of annihilation by *Portugalization* (Ibid. 14). Scholarship on nationalism and religion paid little attention to the role played by the Tsonga civil religion in setting the platform (genealogical and structural) for the emergence of Moçambicanidade, the anti-colonial national consciousness. From the ways in which Mozambique emerged as disputed space in the modern colonial context, i.e. the Ontology of Moçambicanidade the paper will cover matters to do with the ways in which the Tsonga civil religious notions became the platform for the civil religious nature of Moçambicanidade.

Although there are older and better structured nations along the space of Mozambique, the study identified the Tsonga nation as a case model for the new identity largely because the founder of FRELIMO (and the subsequent two leaders) emerge from the same nation; secondly, because there is a considerable scholarship on the subject with which to discuss.

2. Ontology of Moçambicanidade

As in any modern tribal/national identity formation civil religious phenomena plays the key role of consecration and legitimization the emerging identity. By civil religion we mean a belief system that produces self-identity of a collective body of people forming a state, that is, a collectivity. It has to do with a specific kind of discourse that relates state histories to extra-historical forces—gods, spirits of the dead, ancestors, saints, and to a lesser extent, larger-than-life figures—to the degree that they (the state narratives) are ascribed transcendent statuses. Civil religion can be found in one of its two forms: the “organic” and the “instrumental” (Johnson, 2005). Accordingly, in the organic form of civil religion can be identified within the shared repertoire of practices near the will (longings, desires, wishes) of the collective. Whereas, in the instrumental form, it is to be found in the institutions of the state, such as texts: official reports, documents, speeches; and generally enacted through liturgical performances, often following an established calendar in set-aside spaces (Ibid.). Moçambicanidade is that self-identity of a group, a collective of tribes, people who share common values and interests, hence constituting one nation or a cluster of united nations under one banner.

Religion and the construction of collective identities are inseparable. The study of the ways in which semiotics are performed, that is, how images, symbols and language are used, expropriated, manipulated and sometimes created, is part of the work when dealing with civil religion. It is what one finds After 1895, when Portugal consecrated Mozambique as a labor and natural reserve under the colonial political economy. At the same time that, Junod's Tsonga coped with modernity, and its vices, by re-establishing traditional myths and religious rites of passage. Later on the same phenomenon of symbolic expropriation and manipulation takes place for the birth of FRELIMO's postcolonial nation-state in 1975. At this time, the Liberation movement claims Mozambique as a sacred space that belonged to the people, through the creation of the myth of national unity and a new symbolic system

typical of a modern nation-state.

From Axial age to the eighteenth-century AD, ethnic nations existed along the east coast of southeast Africa. Local chiefs and sheiks ruled these nations. The first modern nation, the Tsonga, emerged in 1873-5, followed by the drawing of Mozambique's national frontiers in 1891 (Newitt, 1995). In the period of its birth, the modern nation of Mozambique consisted of no more than a series of natural ancient sea and river ports with their commercial hinterlands. Notwithstanding the demands from the 1885 Berlin Conference, which was that Portugal must fully occupy and govern its colonies, no significant deployment occurred at that time, due to internal political conflicts and the weakness of the monarchy. Portugal experienced a serious political crisis during this period. History records reveal that from 1820, the year a revolution toppled the ruling monarchy and forced a written constitution onto the Portuguese kingdom for the first time ever, until 1910, when yet another revolution established a Republic, Portuguese politics experienced a slight liberal orientation (Ibid.). As far as colonial policy was concerned, this liberal orientation found its expression in a series of laws that were passed and were to culminate in the formal abolition of slavery and forced labor in the year 1879.

Four decades passed before a consistent political and social order became visible in the overseas Portuguese territory of Mozambique. The setting apart or consecration of a place entails the hard work of attention, memory, design, construction and control, and calls for cultural labor and ritual performance in specific historical circumstances that Portugal, was not ready to handle. Financial bankruptcy and political anarchy plagued Portugal in the transitional period. Only in the 1930s did Mozambique become a unified colonial state. Accordingly, two factors were at the heart of the changes (Ibid). Firstly, the emergence of the *Estado Novo* of Salazar in Portugal, among other changes, promulgated new labor and citizenship laws for the Portuguese colonies. The second was the defeat and the takeover of the Nguni, Karanga, Maravi, Barue, Kiteve, and Monomotapa states and of the Afro-Portuguese's feudal political system along the shoreline of the central and northern region. It was in Salazar's era that Mozambique, as a sacred colony of Portugal, was fully recognized. However, this was after nearly forty years of contending with regional powers. Mozambique, the sacred space, became a product of dispute, an intersection of many sacred spaces.

The labor laws were conceived in a context of political crisis and financial bankruptcy in Portugal and territorial disputes and vassalage in the southeast African colony. Several local political powers formidably challenged Portuguese regional claims in the years 1885 to 1895, particularly by the "prominent ruler of Gaza, Ngungunhane" (Liesegang, 1996, p. 55). The Maravi chiefs, from up North of Zambeze River, were still attempting to assure themselves of their power and trade route control in their territories. The colonial officers, for their part, were busy persuading their superiors in Lisbon to develop a political strategy different from the assimilationist one that was proving unsuccessful. The spokesperson for these colonial officials in the field was Antonio Enes, a man of letters who had come to fame in Lisbon through his newspaper criticisms of his own government's colonial policy. He was appointed Royal Commissioner to Mozambique in 1891 and soon after his appointment, called and

chaired a commission entrusted with the task of looking into the problem of native labor and drawing up proposals for its reform (Newitt, 1995).

A sharp critic of Portugal's colonial policies, Enes, along with a number of other officials, felt that by joining the antislavery movement without a proper replacement of cheap labor force, Portugal was misusing her resources at a very critical time. Even though opposed to slavery he argued that Portugal could not do without native labor. In a manner reminiscent of the Portuguese standard argument against international pressure to abolish slavery, Enes insisted that work was the only tool the Portuguese had to carry out their civilizational mission in Africa. A close look at the spirit of the colonial labor law that Antonio Enes proposed in 1893, better reveals the dynamics of the making of Mozambique as a sacred space. Labor power was, in his view, "the only valuable resource the African native population had" (Enes, 1893, p. 7). Therefore, it was up to Portugal to use this resource in an intelligent way to fulfill its twin objectives of achieving glory and civilizing Africans.

While probing the role of colonialism in denying modernity to Mozambicans, Macamo argued that Enes and the critics of liberal assimilationist politics heavily influenced the law that emerged from the deliberations of the commission on native labor in 1899. It was based on two central concerns, namely to introduce the obligation to work on the part of the native, and to make the colonial state responsible for the well-being of the natives. In the first instance, Macamo reveals, "the single most important innovation introduced by the Labor Laws was the obligation to work along the lines argued for by Enes" (Macamo, 2002, p. 2). In Macamo's words, "the relationship between the Portuguese colonial authorities and their African subjects was mediated by what the former saw as their duty towards the African, namely forcing him to earn a living from his own toil" (Ibid.).

For the advocates of *Portugalization* of Africa, the new law has a basis on the distinction that the lawmakers made between Europeans and Africans. Or as Macamo further explains, "the law presumed that an African can only be human, civilized or Portuguese, until he has proven himself through work" (Ibid.). Therefore, along with Macamo, one can argue that the regulation of native labor not only produced the colonial state but also the colonial subjects. It produced the colonial state in the sense that, over time, the institutional requirements for the implementation of the regulations became consistent with the management of social relations within the framework of Portuguese authority claims over their subject population. In other words, the regulation of native labor became the *raison d'être* of the Portuguese colonial state, and to the extent that this was so, it was the main vehicle for the management of social relations (Ibid.). The law comprised of 65 paragraphs, reasserting the obligation to work on the part of the Black native population and calling for the institutions that would ensure its execution (Enes, 1893).

European agents in southeast Africa, such as Junod, who claimed to have knowledge from within the Black native population, contributed to the shaping not only of colonial laws but also of national colonialism. Colonial officers actually had insufficient knowledge of the Black 'natives' to form an intelligent judgment; hence, they relied on the surrogate agents in the field, Junod for one. His

“scientific” advice was taken very seriously in their administrative daily affairs. Macamo enlightens the above as his research led him to argue that the labor law defined work as wage labor and in so doing, was responding both to a perceived need to turn African labor into the backbone of the economic exploitation of the colony, and the framework for the institutionalization of colonial rule (2002, p. 3). Thus, work, as it came to be defined and practiced, became the means through which Portuguese claims over Mozambique were given substance and legitimacy (Ibid.). Therefore, the substance derived from the way in which the management of labor became the *raison d’être* of colonial rule.

From the political economy of the colonial state, two key factors characterized territory or the set-aside space. First, was that Portuguese claims over the country relied almost entirely on the ability of its colonial administration to control the movement of labor. Second, for the Portuguese colonial administrators, Mozambique was nothing more than a labor reserve for foreign companies operating in the territory or for neighboring countries. Extensive research has been conducted on this fact (of Mozambique being a labor reserve for the neighboring countries,) particularly Ruth First (1983), Penvenne (1982a, 1982b, 1994, 1995), and Harries (1994; 2007). In the midst of the pressure to curb slave trade by the Berlin Conference decision, Portuguese officials advanced an argument that the obligation of native men to work was part of bringing Africans to civilization. It entailed getting two things for the price of one: getting the Blacks to work at producing for Portugal, while they were becoming civilized. Accordingly, Macamo refers to Brito Camacho, a Portuguese governor of Mozambique in the 1920s, who commented, “civilization was concerned with creating new needs and the means to meet them” (Macamo, 2002, p. 7). Such comment meant, in other words, that only the creation of such needs would make the African see the value of work and make it easier for Portugal to take a better advantage of the native’s labor (Ibid.).

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the nation, Mozambique, was created through labor laws for the benefit of Portugal. Minor changes over the years occurred with an insignificant impact on the spirit of the colonial law. However, a number of amendments to the labor laws occurred over the years, influenced by the centralizing-decentralizing and legislative definitions of citizens as *assimilados* and *indigenas* (Penvenne, 1994). These amendments adjusted the law to suit regional markets, particularly to the growing mining industry in South Africa, but the philosophy behind the laws, which was of service to metropolitan Portugal, was never in question. In Salazar’s Estado Novo, Portugal’s labor laws for the overseas Portuguese territories were articulated more forcefully and reinforced by addendums, such as the *Portugalization* Act, the 1928 Agreement in Respect of Labor, and the Parallel 22 Clause of 1914, which established the relationship between the state and its subjects (First, 1983). Although it could be argued that underneath all the colonial enterprise there was a belief system that produced self-identity of the emerging Portuguese state, one cannot avoid the notion that Mozambique was Portugal’s set aside as colonial space. Mozambique as a sacred space was not merely found, discovered or constructed; it was claimed, owned and operated by Portugal with specific capitalist and imperial interests. In Portugal’s process of manufacturing Mozambique, meaning and power came

together, making the “sacred space entangled with politics” (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995, p. 15).

The subjects distinguished themselves from the objects, served and servers; the superior and the subalterns could not be confused. As a sacred space, Mozambique has been an arena of power relations in which conflicts between insiders and outsiders, rulers and subjects, elders and juniors, males and females were manifestly played out. Or as Macamo puts it: there were those, on the one hand, who had the duty to ensure that the others work, and through work, become civilized into true Portuguese citizens. On the other, there were those who had to toil without any pay and rest in order to qualify to humanity (2002). In this process, the national question was answered in the ritualization of memory and the divination of a shared future. The Portuguese colons understood themselves as playing an important role in building a nation. Just as in Bellah’s United States of the 1960s, which he described as being animated by a collective, public, or civil religion, an understanding of the nation’s historical destiny in the light of transcendence served as a religious warrant for nationalism.

Portuguese colonial officials and Romande missionaries arrived in the same period had common as well as different goals. They had one aspect on common: they both needed land thus, the dispute over ownership of the land and its inhabitants. How did Junod’s Tsonga deal with migrant labor? The Tsonga tribe that Junod created was intended to be culturally and economically self-contained and autonomous. He conceived the Tsonga tribe as a unit that would independently produce and manage all its moral, political, theological and economic values. Migrant labor was not a welcome phenomenon as far as Junod’s conception of the Tsonga identity was concerned, as it revealed his failing efforts to contain the problems of modernity. Migrant workers often brought back with them, vices of alcohol, prostitution, and moral degradation. Accordingly, Junod’s Tsonga developed a range of rituals for almost every important social matter, such as birth, death, sickness, marriage and others. However, for the men departing to distant countries there were three national religious *tiMhamba*, (the term for rituals in Ronga language) to be performed: the Separation rite, which was done to prepare the departing. Secondly, the Liminal *Mhamba*, performed with the person coming to the homestead, that is, the person has not yet entered the homestead, but standing at the gate ready to be welcomed back to the tribe. And once the person has arrived and almost settled the head of the clan was report to the chief of the tribe and on a decided date the recently arrived paid a visit to the chief where an Aggregation *Mhamba*, which is the last *Mhamba*, takes place. For a detailed account on how the *tiMhamba*.

Van Gennep had a profound influence in the way in which Junod established a classification system of the Tsonga, particularly, that liminality ritual had key role regeneration and in keeping the order intact. These rituals were not national in the sense that the elder member of each family had the authority to perform them, thus, they did not need the whole clan to participate nor the ritual to be presided over by the head chief of the tribe. The rituals were performed in the Sacred Woods at the clan’s sacred spot within the homestead space. Perhaps, as a way of acknowledging the chief, the head of the clan might share the news of the arrival or departure of the son from the clan; and, on that occasion, the head of the clan usually brought a gift from the son for the head of the tribe.

Mondlane's FRELIMO stood against the colonial political economy. Under the new revolution Mondlane argued that "migrant labor was drain of human power into the capitalist scheme, which left the country poor, underdeveloped and in ruins" (Mondlane, 1969); henceforth, migrant labor was a system with numbered days. FRELIMO was a political movement set to change the colonial system into a modern nation-state in which, everyone would feel welcome, no fear for all. Such a feat, however, was to be achieved by a balance between modern style nation-state and a recycling of non-oppressive local traditions. Not a mechanical return to the cultural roots or revert to some glorious African and often nebulous past, without a critical screening for oppressive elements. In the light of Mondlane's paradigm the liberated zones were the places in which FRELIMO began to change the colonial political economic system (Silva, 1998b). It did this by imparting basic reading and counting skills and by fostering agricultural cooperatives where locals produced their own food, hence, freeing them from external dependence and from selling themselves as cheap migrant labor to the capitalist corporations. It was through providing an atmosphere of production backed by labor laws that FRELIMO consecrated the territorial space to the cause of the masses. Once the myth of unity for freedom was established, every project was conceived around it.

The first president of the Popular Republic, Machel, established the socialist economic system at the Independence Day celebration of June 25, 1975. He drew his inspiration from the founder of the movement but also learned from Nyerere's model of Ujamaa and from Mao-Tse-Tung's Chinese rural economic revolution (Negrão, 2001). At the eighth FRELIMO Central Committee meeting of 1976, a plan to solve what was then called "the question of peasantry" was decided. Based on the typology of the areas used by household production units and by the Portuguese farmers, it was decided that people should live in Communal Villages (Frelimo, 1977). Land ownership thus became a nationalist question, and so there was nothing more natural than the liberation of the land in the name and for the use of all Mozambican people in the Communal Villages.

However, can it be said that his national project truly consecrated the space for its citizens? The three editions of the Mozambican Constitution, when analyzed, indicate key philosophical differences, revealing the challenges facing the postcolonial nation. The central theme of the 1975 Constitution was liberty and independence, whereas the focus of the 1990 and 2004 Constitutions and their amendments has been liberty and democracy. In the 1992 document, liberty, as opposed to colonialism, allies itself with democracy, which is, theoretically, a noble claim. However, Mozambican public opinion holds, at least at the level of basic liberty (independence and sovereignty), that Mozambique—and Moçambicanidade by default—has gone backwards and has actually degraded (Ngoenha, 2009). The recent massive return of Portuguese entrepreneurs backed by Portuguese financial credit lines, and that Mozambique's economy is under tutelage under Bretons Woods institutions only confirms the point. The question perhaps to be posed is whether it is possible to progress in democracy (politics) and regress in sovereignty (liberty)? The Second Republic was born out of the ashes of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War. The values being conveyed by the West, the victorious bloc from the Cold

War, were diametrically opposed to the values and spirit defended by the First Republic.

So far it has been argued that Portugal claimed the southeast Africa as its own sacred space through the force of highly trained and equipped military force, the myth of *Portugalization* backed by the colonial labor laws, whereas, the Tsonga tribe dealt with migrant labor through rites of passage, separation and of liminality and reincorporation. Finally, FRELIMO constructed the myth of unity, established its own national symbols through the dispute of the space with the colonial state. As it claimed to be a modern egalitarian state, it established labor laws, which also reinforced the myth of national unity.

3. The Impact of the Tsonga Rituals

Upon reading Junod's *oeuvre* it becomes evident that what clearly distinguished the Tsonga Sacred Woods from any other space was the *Mhamba*; particularly the sacrificial *tiMhamba*. Important sacrificial *tiMhamba* were done or delivered in the Sacred Woods. These *tiMhamba* had various purposes but the most important were those performed for national interests. *TiMhamba* at the national level were, for the most part, petitions for peace, success at the next harvest, victory in the next battle, rainmaking and appeasement of the *Psikwembu*, in case they were angry over some offense that often was inadvertent. An example is the story of the woman who defiled the Libombo Sacred Woods by trying to help what appeared to be a child hanging on branches, eating berries on a rainy day. She thought, according to the Junod's narrative, "Poor child, let me give some comfort by carrying the child home." When the apparent child, however, did not want to come out of her back, the whole scenario changed. By trying to help, the woman desecrated the holy woods, upsetting the *Psikwembu*, causing her family embarrassment and ultimately, the loss of her life. The Sacred Wood's keeper had to perform a cleansing sacrificial ritual in order to set things back to normal.

The story above is replicated four times in Junod's work, under the heading of Sacred Woods, using different characters. In it, a cycle of consecration and desecration is repeated time after time in order to justify and assert the Tsonga as a comprehensive body of tradition worth preserving. *TiMhamba* were key for national unity and the building of a sense of group identity amongst the members. Did FRELIMO's founders learn any of these values and implement them in the process of nation building? The Tsonga rites, particularly the sacrificial rites, were the occasion for civil religious display and performance. Rituals were the platform upon which common cultural habits and attitudes of everyday life acquired transcendental meaning. The same phenomenon is experienced in the process of inventing the myth of Moçambicanidade. The Sacred Woods of the postcolonial Moçambicanidade are located in the cities, that is, the National Heroes Plaza, Shrines of Independence Plaza and even statues of national heroes, placed in key corners of the city, are the contemporary "Sacred Woods" of the postcolonial Moçambicanidade. These chosen (sacred or set-aside) places are settings for national memorial worship services, occurring in an established liturgical calendar. That is, the sacred places are stages for sacrificial *tiMhamba*, which in themselves provide a platform for civil religious performances with a purpose that resembles the one found in the Tsonga tribal civil religion.

In pursuit of the invention of the new nation, the Mozambique's Liberation Front created sacred spaces, rituals, and symbols in chosen geographical locations in order to generate meaning and purpose for the new national myth of origin. The National Heroes' Plaza was built in the middle of the capital, Maputo, shortly after National Independence Celebration Day in 1975, with the purpose of honoring fallen national heroes. It is located on a large circle in the middle of the city on one of the large avenues that links the downtown and Maputo International Airport, so anyone visiting or leaving the capital will go around the heroes' shrine. In a star format, the structure is over two meters high, with a large cavern underneath ready to hold over fifteen coffins. Flat on the ground, the five-point star symbolizes the birth of a new, powerful, and brilliant nation. It represents a sense of national unity, love of freedom, and memory of sacrifice, pain and suffering. The Maputo Heroes' Plaza has been replicated, a smaller in size, in every District town centers throughout the country. The same star that is on the national flag takes center stage on the monument. The flag has five colors, one of them being red to symbolize the blood spilled in the war. On the right side of the star lays one broken cannon with two large iron wheels.

On the eastern side of the area is a four by fifty-meter mural. Painted by Malangatana Valente Ngwenha, the famous nationalist painter; colorfully, it tells the whole national myth of origin, from the people chained and oppressed by the colonial state through the time of national awakening and going to Tanzania to start the Liberation Front. All the national saints, Eduardo Mondlane, Samora Machel, Josina Machel, Francisco Manyanga, Filipe S. Magaia and others are honored there. Anyone who arrives in Maputo at the Heroes' Plaza is confronted with a sight that informs or defines what Mozambican nationals are today. A curious omission is of the Nguni monarch, Ngungunhane, whose remains are at the Maputo Fortress downtown. However, Ngungunhane's absence has to do with the fact that when the mural and the nationalist paintings were done, the nation did not need him as a hero. FRELIMO was still benefiting from its high popularity for delivering the nation from colonialism, political capital that, began to decline sharply soon after the Third Congress of 1977. This decline called for a fast-tracking of a hero canonization process that saw Ngungunhane become, in 1985, one of the exalted. Thus, Frelimo ideologues were pressed into speeding up Ngungunhane into canonization to legitimate an ideological program created in order to solve an immediate political crisis caused by the destabilizing war waged by RENAMO. Here is a good example of an organic civil religious element being turned into an instrumental civil religious one. It should be recalled that Mondlane's FRELIMO was skeptical of the old Nguni Empire's. Although brought up near Mandlakaze, the Nguni capital, Mondlane was not a supporter of the methods of the Nguni Empire (Manghezi, 2001). FRELIMO was not only against Portuguese oppression but also against any locally produced oppressive traditions, which the Nguni Empire was known to have been. Ngungunhane's canonization indicated a profound political crisis that ushered in the Second Republic as well as the deliberate rise of instrumental civil religious massive tendencies within Frelimo.

The new postcolonial national monument deals with matters of sovereignty and identity. The space

defines Mozambican politics of protest by Africans against colonial domination. It defines the restoration of decency to black people who, under the colonial state, were sacrificed for the benefit of Portuguese interests. The National Heroes' Plaza also symbolizes a national shrine, a memorial place that honors the freedom fighters that lost their lives during the war. Their memory is venerated there, as families convene at the site on National Day are able to feel that the sacrifices made by their beloved ones are remembered, to experience the honor that has been bestowed on those lost and to experience the continuing connection between the living and the dead. This honor is extended to surviving relatives in a real way, as a government program compensates families of ex-combatants, giving them a sense of security at both family and national levels.

Built shortly after Independence Day, the National Heroes' Plaza has a visible religious symbolism. Machel, the first President of the First Republic, oversaw the initial liturgical ceremony, a gathering of the members of the government, the military elite, various diplomatic members accredited in the country, various non-government organization representatives, the Youth League, retired military, and the public. The national anthem was sung to announce the President's arrival. In a military commando style, the President walked up to the front stone on which he placed a wreath of flowers. This was followed by the Presidential address, which ended with the authorization of the opening of the Plaza, allowing the crowds to place their flowers inside the monument. This religious ritual is reenacted each year. The Plaza is a sacred center that inspires a sense of unity. It symbolizes the idea of nation building and the ideals of racial harmony and national reconciliation.

A similar public monument to heroes can be found in many other modern nations. The phenomenon is common in the southern region of Africa (see Verrier 1986 for Zimbabwe's national story; Tylden 1945 for Lesotho, and Westerlund 1980 for Tanzania). The description of the national myth of origin of Mozambique is thus, not a novelty. The current study uses historical phenomenon in order to indicate the subtle civil religious ritual that the whole myth of national origin symbolizes as well as to indicate the sacredness of the stage on which the political drama is performed. As such, the National Heroes' Plaza is a significant space that functions as a place of order and citizen classification. It is a place where national identity is re-created with each ritual reenactment; it is where super-humans are separated from ordinary humans in order to be worshiped and ordinary humans are excluded, manipulated, dominated, degraded and or sacrificed for the national ideals. It is in sacred places that the center is distinguished from the periphery, inside from outside and a recollected past from a meaningful present or anticipated future.

Through the figure of Mondlane, a genealogical Tsonga influence was manifested in his educational trail from the *mintlawas* (a Changaan word for groups; education or youth groups) to the PhD at Northwestern University, Illinois-USA, but also in Mondlane's political choice of shaping FRELIMO as a movement meant to deliver the people from Portuguese colonialism as well as from other African oppressive systems. FRELIMO emerged from an assemblage of small political organizations namely, MANO, UDENAMO and UNAMI (Mondlane, 1969). These organizations represented the masses of

Mozambicans living under the difficult conditions imposed by the colonial state (Ibid.). Mondlane, the founder of FRELIMO, attested to having lived under these same conditions from childhood up to his high school years (Faris, 2007). His visit in the late fifties to oppressed and rebellious Mozambicans made him decide to gather evidence of a need for a national group identity construction. Accordingly, FRELIMO was an outcome of negotiations between the leading elites of the aforementioned movements, with Mondlane at the helm, unfolding his notion of what and how the future imagined community was to be.

As in the Tsonga nation, the performance of sacrificial rites on and at the established dates and places gave religious connotations to the organization. The Tsonga notion of sacrificial *tiMhamba*, which were focused on the creation of national unity, provided a model for the ways in which Moçambicanidade as a civil religious entity practiced its liturgy. As with the Tsonga nation that centered its *tiMhamba* in the Sacred Woods, the Memorial Plaza is the central space where the Mozambican state performs its *tiMhamba* of a national magnitude. The leader of the civil religious performances does not change significantly in either nation: the consecrated national chief for the Tsonga and the elected president for FRELIMO both lead the main course of the celebrations.

4. The Significance of Production

Space consecration involves a concerted effort in meaning production through symbol and sign creation or manipulation. Symbols and different from signs. Symbols are simultaneously the tools and means through which significance occurs, that is, the whole process of national formation. Naming processes, for the most part, rely on the actors expropriation and management capabilities. From a political standpoint, Moçambicanidade, as an emerging identity, illustrated a skillful handling of symbols and signs. In most cases, this process occurred through aesthetic representation under the background of a repressive colonial state. The lyrics found in village songs of Chopis, the Maconde sculptures and in the poems of Craveirinha and other, are just some examples.

Although symbols and signs may appear to be synonymous, they are, in reality, different. A symbol stands for something that cannot be known and that cannot be made clear or precise (Saussure, 2006). An object, a picture, a written word, a sound, or a particular mark that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention is a symbol. For instance, a raised clenched fist may be a symbol for a fight. The red stripe on the Mozambican flag may symbolize the blood spilled in the liberation war against the Portuguese colonial state. Numerals are symbols for numbers. Symbols are never entirely arbitrary; they are not empty configurations because they show at least a vestige of a natural connection between the signal and its signification (Ibid. 23). For instance, a violin could hardly replace a coffin inside the Heroes' Plaza of Maputo.

Signs, on the other hand, tend to be more formal, that is, they are conventions constructed by society and bear meaning, particularly to those who conceive them. The distinction between a symbol and a sign is important when studying religious phenomena because religion generates a succession of

symbols that can be easily mixed. The Heroes' Plaza in Maputo symbolizes a special place for the citizens, as it honors those who are held in great esteem by the nation. It is a sacred space, and sacred space is a symbol, as it is barely known except as a space that symbolizes something; i.e., the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, the connotation given to the place has nothing to do with the physical space itself. Mondlane symbolizes national unity and freedom for the citizens of Moçambique. He united the exiled small and weakened political organization to form one strong unit. Malangatana's mural at the National Heroes' Plaza in Maputo, narrating the trials of the national struggle for independence, is a sign within the Plaza. Signs and symbols were there before the space; without them, there cannot be any meaning. Hence, space, be it sacred or profane, depends entirely on the meaning attributed to it by the social process of signification.

Symbols create space by making it one of their own, i.e. by turning the chaos into something meaningful and significant. Every space means something; it is a symbol of something to someone. Once invented, a place is ascribed a certain value or meaning according to local political criteria. Valdezia, for the Tsonga tribe, was the materialization of a promised land (Berthoud, 1875). It may be recalled that upon arriving at this plain, a calm valley in the foothills of the Zoutpansberg in July of 1873, Creux and Berthoud thought of it as the New Jerusalem, the Promised Land for the wandering children of God in the desert (Ibid.). Creux and Berthoud began to carve the space, giving it a new meaning, which made sense to Romande agents in a turbulent political situation generated by the fast changing regional context of industrialization and proletarianization. One might recall that the treaties and conventions between the Boers, the British, and the Portuguese over the ownership of land, cheap labor of Blacks, diamonds, and ports were the major reasons for the tensions between them. The Tsonga nation or tribe emerged out of a turbulent political and social context in the region. The new entity was represented by symbols, which gave it value and its sense of a sacred entity. Symbols and phenomena are inseparable; there cannot be a thing outside symbols; every occurrence means something. Therefore, symbols are meaning makers.

A space increases its value when it gains the status of a set-aside, as the sacred itself is already a value added to the commonplace or mundane (Johnson, 2005). Those Mozambicans who could not afford a decent living in Salazar's Estado Novo crossed the border into South Africa, Rhodesia or Zambia to the nearest farm where work was better (First, 1983). At least, out of Portuguese territory, they would not be hunted like wild savages and humiliated in the many ways in which colonial agents were known to specialize. Mozambique's neighboring countries increased their value, as they became safe places for Mozambicans in need for better working conditions. These refugees did not have an easy life in exile (Harries, 1994). Squatting on farms and depending on menial day jobs is never easy, yet that was better than staying home. The labor market has been, since the advent of modernity an influential phenomenon in southern Africa. Since the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and Transvaal in the nineteenth century, the labor market has been following the same path. Due to the Portuguese colonial labor laws of the 1930s, Mozambique has been the largest supplier of cheap labor to the burgeoning

capitalist world of South Africa (First, 1983).

Values in the labor market have not changed significantly in the last one hundred and seventy years despite radical political regime changes; life for refugees, whether of two hundred years ago or of two days ago, has not changed significantly. Could this mean that the changing of symbols and signs depends largely on factors such as political paradigm shifts? What is it that makes symbols and signs take on new meaning? When some Mozambican refugees heard of the independence movement in their country, they thought it was time to return, restore their homes and start life anew.

Still riding the wave of political popularity after the conquest of the country, Machel's political programs, after the party's Third Congress of 1977, were directed toward having every Mozambican come home to rebuild their broken country. Irrigation systems were imported for the extensive fertile Limpopo valley; local communities were encouraged (or gently coerced) to join together in farming cooperatives; and education and health programs designed for the population and sponsored by the state, backed all of these development programs (Frelimo, 1977). Ideas for bettering citizens' lives in the First and Second Republic abounded, but the problems were real, large and could not be wished away. That is, Mozambicanidade's welfare depended not only on the good will of some Frelimo elite members but, perhaps more seriously, on the external world order (Geffray, 1990). In most cases, political propaganda did not match expectations. Life in Mozambique was not favorable for those who came back hoping to find jobs and a good livelihood (Harries, 1994). Most of the returning refugees ended up unemployed with no social programs to secure their dignity. Even those who, under exchange programs between Eastern Europe and Asia, managed to go to East Germany, China, and Russia for technical training came home after the training unable to find jobs (Rasmussen, 2010). Even today, a group called "Madgermani" still holds regular rallies throughout the capital asking for their pay which has never reached them since their arrival from Europe in the late 1980s (O Pais, 2010). The promise of building a new nation, a just and socialist society that does not practice exploitation, never materialized for the common citizen. Some critics even question whether there was a Mozambican nation or if FRELIMO itself was possible (Cahen, 1993).

Such disenchantment had numerous causes, whether due to miscommunication or misunderstanding, intentional or otherwise. Yet, it could be also due to the arbitrary attributes of symbols. Symbols change according to the meaning given to them by the users (Saussure, 2006). According to Saussure, users are in a particular culture it follows that symbols tend to change as much as the cultures that create them. Hence, symbols cannot have a fixed reference in the sense of always representing the same object. For instance, Mondlane tells a story about the irony of a place called Bagamoyo, the village where FRELIMO set up its first camp in exile (Mondlane, 1969, p. 106). The name Bagamoyo means "broken heart" and it originated from the time of the slave trade, when the village was one of the main points of departure for the slaving ports of the East Coast. After the slave business ended, the same village became the capital of the German imperialist venture in East Africa. However, with the Liberation Front "the broken heart" (Ibid.), Bagamoyo, acquired a completely different significance, for it was

here that FRELIMO was able to take the first practical steps towards stamping out servitude in Mozambique. In Mondlane's account, Bagamoyo changed from being the place of heartbreak to the place of building a new nation. Bagamoyo, in the myth of FRELIMO, is no longer the place of despair but of hope and inspiration for liberation. In honor of the place, a beautiful street in the capital, Maputo, is named Bagamoyo and a large residential barrio in the outskirts of the city bears the same name. In the same vein, symbols usually acquire new significance in conformity with the dominant paradigm.

In Mozambique, wherever the presence of the colonizing power was felt, some kind of resistance was shown. This took various forms ranging from armed insurrection to wholesale exodus (Newitt, 1995). However, Mondlane's understanding was that this resistance often took place in a disorderly and isolated fashion, making it easy for the colonial state to control. Narratives from local peasants from different corners of the country convinced Mondlane of the need to organize these sparks of small resistance (Manghezi, 2001), toward forming one strong unit that could withstand the power of the colonial state. There was a widespread psychological rejection of the colonizer and his culture (Mondlane, 1969), but such reaction was not an organized or consciously rationalized act; it was an attitude bound up with the cultural tradition of divided groups, their past struggles with the Portuguese and the present experience of subjugation. This revulsion for Portuguese culture was often conveyed through songs, dances, and even carvings—traditional forms of expression, which the colonizer did not understand, and through which he could thus be secretly ridiculed, denounced and threatened.

Mondlane's *The Struggle for Mozambique* describes in detail the aesthetic manifestation of Moçambicanidade. Mondlane identified numerous songs, poems and paintings throughout his work. Yet, the true meeting of religious symbols, art and culture occurs in Makonde crafts. Mondlane observed that some of the carvings of the Makonde people expressed a deep-seated hostility to the alien culture. It happened that in the Cabo Delgado region, the place of the Makonde people, Catholic missionaries had been very active, and under their influence, many carvers made Madonnas and crucifixes, imitating European models. However, Mondlane points out that, unlike Makonde work on traditional themes, these Christian images were often rigidly stereotyped and lifeless. Sometimes, however, a piece departed from the stereotype, and when it did it was nearly always because an element of subversion or ridicule or defiance had been worked into it. In such cases, Mondlane observed, "a Madonna is given a demon to hold instead of the Christ child; a priest is represented with the feet of a wild animal, a pieta becomes a study not of sorrow but of revenge, with the mother raising a spear over the body of her dead child" (Mondlane, 1969, p. 101).

A number of observations can be drawn from of this hybrid, imitative, and ambiguous context of organic nationalist identity production. First, stable conventional symbols of a well-established religious order are used to convey nationalistic messages in an organic civil religious style. Mondlane used aesthetic organic production to de-legitimize the colonial state. In a subtle way and beneath the Roman Church's religious symbols there was a new religion emerging: a strong belief that the nation state, Moçambicanidade, was better than the pharisaic Roman Church was. It should be recalled that

throughout his work Mondlane clearly demonstrated his disfavor of the Roman Church because of its support of the Portuguese state. There was a subtle suggestion to depose the established religious order of the Roman Church and replace it with the national state. Such a suggestion that a nation can be better than an established religious order already creates the rationale for a civil religious order. The distortion of established religious symbols by the masses (organic religious expression), thus, serves in the construction of an instrumental civil religion. While a particular group of people can create symbols that represent and strengthen their group identity in a particular space/time, those symbols cannot be owned absolutely.

FRELIMO's first two years in power were characterized by promises of a better life for the people, yet the state had inherited a complex and heavy administrative apparatus and there were not enough people with the skills to handle it (Abrahamsson & Nilsson, 1995). Moreover, soon after the independence, insubordination plagued the political order. The Third Congress was organized to address these problems. It was in this context that the State Information Ministry decided to create a cartoon figure called Xiconhoca. What the Information Ministry team meant to accomplish by creating the Xiconhoca cartoon in the First Republic was, certainly not what the Frelimo vanguard party wanted it to be. Xiconhoca was a comic cartoon created by FRELIMO's Department of Information and Publicity in 1976 (Frelimo, 1977) and was meant to alert good citizens to the internal enemies of the state, those (insubordinates) who were working undercover in collaboration with the imperialist powers attempting to nullify the gains of the free Mozambique.

Xiconhoca missed the old colonial state where he could exploit and mistreat good Mozambican citizens; he embodied evil and depravity in society. He helped the colonial invaders in their oppression of the people. At times Xiconhoca was pictured to be a lazy alcoholic person who lived at the expense of the hard-working citizens of the Republic (*Tempo*, 1977). Xiconhoca was a powerful symbol used as political propaganda to further the work ethic directed toward building national unity. This cartoon figure emerged a few months before the Third Congress of FRELIMO, which was perceived as the total ideological overhaul of the movement. Xiconhoca came to announce the direction the nation was taking, where new lines were conceived, detailed and put into practice. There was a need to define who was in or out of Moçambicanidade (Graça, 2003). In such a context, Xiconhoca, like any other symbol, signified both an argument over definition and a contest over appropriation. Although the FRELIMO of the First Republic (1975 to 1990), might have tried to show the symbol of Xiconhoca as the enemy of the people who collaborated with the enemy to invade, control and oppress people, Xiconhoca resisted their characterization and remained available for reinterpretation.

At some point in the transition to the multi-party democratic period, Xiconhoca was no longer used in the media, and disappeared from circulation. This banishment could be attributed to his refusal to be pinned down and frozen in one absolute persona. The creators of Xiconhoca did not know what to use him for, as they were now what Xiconhoca was conceived to attack. Xiconhoca re-emerged in the Second Republic of 1992, and continues today, with the booming of private media. Leftist media,

particularly the Savana weekly newspaper, uses Xiconhoca to point to the aberrations of greed and corruption perpetrated by senior members of the ruling Frelimo party, in the face of an attitude of indifference from the other elite members and the impotence of the opposition party in its ability to take measures of any significance.

Moçambicanidade, as a civil religious phenomenon, is manifested through symbols and signs of the state such as the coat of arms, the national anthem, the flag and events such as Independence Day, Women's Organization Day, Youth Day, and Heroes Day. These special days are not just liturgical days when committed citizens get together to performing rituals, but they also can be regarded as symbolic phenomena with civil religious significance. Symbols and signs are made meaningful through competing claims on their ownership. Religious symbols are product of cultural dynamics of stealing and recycling which, in turn, generate sacred symbols in a process highly charged with activity of appropriation and re-appropriation (Chidester, 2005). What can be seen with the cartoon figure of Xiconhoca is that, as a symbol, it was never quite completely fixed, even by its creators. It always defied all the claims of privilege and exclusive ownership, keeping itself available for new appropriation and new interpretation.

Based on the study of *The Struggle for Mozambique*, it can be safely stated that Mondlane used established religious symbols to discredit mostly the Roman Church as well as to affirm his own immediate ideological plan, the new national identity agenda. There was an intense semiotic reinterpretation process going on, hence, no pure invention, but a hermeneutical reworking of old symbols into an emerging new identity. The nexus between aesthetic, religious symbols and national representations is, without any doubt, illustrative of the ingenuity involved in the construction of Moçambicanidade, and it reflects the postcolonial nature of a collectivity construction that is captured by Bhabha's terms "hybrid," "ambiguous" and "imitation."

5. Conclusion

Distilling from across social science disciplines, ranging from history to anthropology, sociology to religion and philosophy the study of Moçambicanidade as a civil religious construction brings to the fore of politics the religion element as one of a key factor in the analysis of nationalism. Under the spectrum of cultures, languages, extreme poverty, post-liberation political apathy and globalization, the construction of Mozambican nationalism (or Moçambicanidade) proves to be a challenge far beyond common classic approaches. Classic theories in social sciences view of religion, the religious and the sacred as mere suppliers of positive values in the process of nation building; for example, the raising political consciousness on the local elites who, latter staged wide popular political revolts against western colonial state. This approach often takes religion as an outside contributing factor in the making of nation, rendering it of little help in the analysis of the complexities of collective identity construction.

The analysis of Moçambicanidade as civil religion, or any other national identity, helps understand that

a nation is made of sacred and religious matter; meaning that, religion is part of the very fiber, not merely as a supplier of positive elements, that make up a nation. Therefore, the current study argues, any analysis of nationalism must take into account the religious elements. Further, it suggests that the religion, the religious and the sacred not only take part as outside factors but that, they are the very fiber of nationalism. Religion legitimates and justifies the emerging political powers, rendering their political agendas urgent and indispensable in the process of building collective identity or the nation.

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