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إفريقيا وتحديات القرن الواحد والعشرين

**PROPOSTA DE
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"The Future is a Path we don't know..."
Between History and Memory in Mozambique
**"O Futuro é um caminho que não sabemos..." - entre a história e a
memória em Moçambique**

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Introduction

As Pierre Nora wrote, “*memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects*” (1989: 9). The above excerpt of a Mozambican revolutionary song is informed by its strategy of invoking memory as the cornerstone of inspiration, as the bedrock from which the present is brought in and the future confronted.

This song is the reflex of the conditions of historical productions in Mozambique, bringing forward the troubles associated with amnesias and absences in national and world historical analysis.

The bigger purpose of FRELIMO’s memory project in the newly independent country was to establish a shared past as the informing logic that binds the community - Mozambique as a whole - in the present. Accepting that the past is experienced and lived by our bodies, the analysis the personal memories and archival material helps decode social pasts, opening a window to explore the historical consciousness and intersubjectivity of contemporary Mozambique, a situation that contrasts with an attempt, conducted by the State, to produce a single, ‘correct’ version of the heroic nationalist struggle.

This paper aims to discuss the role of memories and history, as a bridge to broaden the debate on the meanings of decolonization and human movement in spaces defined by the ‘memory’ of Africa in the specific geopolitical context of the Portuguese colonization in Africa.

Following Chakrabarty’s challenge (2008), this paper aims to evaluate, at a broader level, how history can have a public life, in a situation when the past is a matter of contestation in everyday life.

1. Africa, history, histories and memories

Regarding the meaning of concepts we often use uncritically, one of the first questions that we have to ask is: What is ‘Africa’? In Portugal, as in other former colonial metropolis, the expression is quite often used to refer to the former African colonies, an expression that seeks to include the complexity of the continent. To speak of ‘Africa’ in an era that is still captive of old colonial epistemological legacies requires that we, above all, open the historic time to challenge representations of space. This situation is neither unique nor original; indeed, many academics have been addressing this matter. What is important when we speak of Africa is seeing to what extent one is not referring to an intellectual construction of western colonialism. This aspect is

particularly important in Mozambique, where many people frequently affirm, vis-à-vis the 'official history' or the 'universal history,' that "*what we remember is not history. History is what is written in the books. We, Mozambicans, we have traditions, other histories...*"¹ pointing out the presence of multiple regimes of historicity.

To speak about Africa and to forget Africa are two different components of relatively recent colonial processes. The imperial European governments, in search of colonies, created civilizing missions to save the souls of Africans. Entrepreneurs and scientists also participated in drawing the map of Africa as they searched for new investments based on the exploitation of natural and human resources. They drew this 'European' map according to their ideas of Africa, a map constructed through their knowledges and scientific horizons. But according to Portuguese official rhetoric of the time, modern colonialism was not about exploitation; rather, it was about civilization. With the superiority of the race, Catholic values, science and economic know-how, the Portuguese colonial doctrine insisted upon the moral obligation to redeem the 'backward heathens' of Africa, to transform the so-called natives into progressive citizens. According to this reasoning, the Portuguese were not actually stealing land from the people that occupied the territory later known as Mozambique,² or exploiting local labor; instead, they presented themselves as self-appointed trustees for supposedly vulnerable natives, who had not yet reached a stage on the evolutionary scale that would allow them to develop or make responsible decisions on their own (Meneses, 2010). The result of this moral, political, economic and scientific appropriation of the continent by the modern colonial machine was to deny, then and now, recognition of the diverse ways that the concept of 'Africa' is hidden and forgotten. Worse, it resulted, as in other situations, in an essay to remove the 'natives' from history, from their history.

This 'new' Africa resulted from the colonial European imagination that constructed Africa as an object to be tamed and brought to the light of knowledge and progress. "*The geographic expansion of Europe and its civilization [...] submitted the world to its memory*" (Mudimbe, 1984: xxi), an imaginary persists in many publications, scientific and literary. With appropriate guidance and paternalistic love, the Portuguese administration assumed that it could make the Africans into progressive men and women, although it would take long time, even centuries, to perform such a radical

¹ Collective interview, Mapulanguene, Mozambique, 2000.

² As they did in other parts of the continent, such as Angola, Guinea Bissau, etc.

transformation. This conception about the 'natives' remained relatively unchanged throughout much of the 20th century; this was the White Man's burden.

1.1. The Burden of a Single History

Questions of the memory or memories of colonization, and the probing of the meanings and impacts of the modern colonial abyssal fracture, continue to profoundly affect the contemporary academic and political field. Forgetting and silencing are central moments of colonization as part of process of taming the past. To question colonialism and its impact on knowledges, and the persistence of misunderstandings and misreadings, demands the historicization of the spaces, times, and the analysis of power relationships entailed in the multiplicity of contacts that occurred between Europe, Africa and the other regions of the world. In short, it requires another history, rewritten by people made invisible by colonial power, through the artifice of exceptionalism. Indeed, exceptionalism turn European thought into the supreme example of world development, the very embodiment of 'world history'. In Mudimbe's words, "*offering and imposing the desirability of its own memory, colonization promises a vision of progressive enrichment to the colonized*" (1994: 129). When the European colonizers contemplated Africa through the prism of their desire to conquer and dominate, they saw nothing but desolate lands, diseases and 'natives' to be tamed.³ This memory of Africa erased, and still erases, all traces of African cultural imprints on the land. It became part of what Hegel termed 'unconscious nature.'⁴

Before history became part of structure of modern scientific knowledge, taught in universities, other histories existed, reflecting memories of struggles that made up the social. When history became an academic discipline, it became aligned with the civilizing mission, a project of economic, political and social domination. The peoples that were part of the territory of contemporary Mozambique suffered systemic discrimination since the beginning of the Portuguese modern colonization. The

³ t is interesting to note that European medieval world, as Du Bois puts it, "*knew the black man chiefly as a legend or occasional curiosity, but still as a fellow man – an Othello or a Prester John or an Antar*" (1915: 6). The modern, capitalist colonial world, knows Africa only as a place of inferiority, symbolized in Hegel, who, in his lectures on the philosophy of history, describes the African continent as having no history for it was still enveloped in the dark mantle of the night.

⁴ hen any part of the African continent exhibits marks that might compare favorably with the Western world, it was 'removed' from African history and annexed to it, such being, for example, the case of Egyptian civilization, portrayed as being part of 'Mediterranean world,' the European Africa.

Eurocentric memory became the beginning of history for all the colonized—a process that means the loss of their own history. When colonized peoples have their memories, land, and power torn away from them, the result is the destruction of the base from which people launch themselves into the world. World (Eurocentric) history⁵ became the imperial road to power and domination.

An alternative reconstruction of world history that includes voices that question and problematize the continuing dominant, Eurocentric perspective would fulfill a responsible pedagogical public function. An ‘other’ possible historiography would need to address controversial issues that challenge the position and legitimacy of dominant representations. Rather than generalizations and simplifications that try to ‘confine’ Africa into a scheme developed to explain in linear fashion the progress of Occidental civilization, we face a double challenge: to explain the persistence of the colonial relation in the construction of world history while at the same time proposing alternatives as to how this story is interpreted. These struggles are taking place both inside and outside the academy, since the university has always been a major site of methodological and ideological battles, and the struggle over the past remains a fiery space of conflict.

The history of Africa has been marked by the devaluing of memories—in the plural—where the past acquires similar forms to the future, full of problems and populated with dense silences. The crises of time — when it seems that one does not have time for memories — do not occur only because of the increasingly dominant presence of neoliberal globalization; they also derive from a present replete with amnesias. Further, they are connected to the crises of singular explanations of the world, the crisis of the meta-narrative in history, specifically regimes of totalitarian power that sought to control the regimes of memory in a centralized manner.

Strategies of colonial interpretation of post-colonial situations operate by essentially trying to conserve an explanation that justifies and does not challenge the underlying colonial presence in the knowledge produced. Even today, years after achievements of political independence, the countries of the African continent are often identified as Lusophone, Francophone or Anglophone. For the case I am analyzing, the so-called Portuguese Africa was transformed into ‘Lusophone Africa’; ‘Our [Portuguese] Africa’; the ‘PALOPs,’ or Portuguese-speaking African Countries. The

⁵ Planted on places and bodies, by imposing the right to name, to inscribe other knowledges and epistemic references.

exceptionality of these countries draws from their 'belonging' to an old colonial project, relentlessly present in their foundation, erasing other histories or exceeding them – the ubiquitous link to Portugal.⁶

But colonialism is a confrontation of different societies, each with its own memory. The Portuguese colonial ideology, seemingly monolithic and supported by expansionist practices, regarded the mass of African social formations—each having different and often particular memories, competing with each other – as a single entity, binding them together. This pitiful picture persists and is reproduced in many ways (Meneses, 2010).

One can no longer speak of a single macro-narrative, of only one interpretation of history. In other words, the problem operates inside of a 'single analytical field' and is seen only at the discursive level. The issues, the scale, and the location of these places remain unresolved. And this brings back the question of decolonization. How did 'decolonization reshape the former colonies and metropolises? This thorny concept claims for a broader reconceptualization of the ruptures associated with the end of political colonization. As several authors have referred to (Bragança, 1986; Le Sueur, 2003; Shepard, 2006), decolonization was one of the XX century foundational events, although this subject has not attained the given importance in the West. But what decolonization means has preoccupied many scholars of Africa and Asia. As Ochieng and Atieno Odhiambo (1995), writing about Kenya, argue, decolonization is a much wider concept than the mere winning of independence or transfer of powers. It entails the exploration of dreams, the analysis of the struggles, compromises, pledges and achievements, and the rethinking of the fundamentals. A difference has to be brought into consideration – between the concepts of winning independence and the transfer of powers. The former focus on nationalist, anti-colonial struggle, whereas the latter foregrounds negotiations and planning among colonial officials and colonized elites. Within Europe, itself, decolonization meant the break point between empire and after, the moment when the colonial question ended and the immigrant question started (Shepard, 2006: 4). Decolonization is a concept that deserves a in-depth study, in different contexts, to evaluate how a prescriptive term became an historical category, a stage in the teleological tide of history. The dominant version in historical analysis has

⁶ What made Mozambique unique in 'Portuguese colonial Africa,' along with Angola, was the settlement of white colonists who were expected to form the economic and political leading backbone of the colony.

transformed decolonization into a narrative of progress, the extension of national self-determination and its corollary values: liberty, equality, human rights, whose main reference became France. Following the French approach, Portugal sought to avoid grappling the question of racial or ethnic difference or with racism. With independences, it seemed no longer any need to try to explain that Mozambicans were not the same as the Portuguese.⁷ Yet, the difficulty of making policy based on this difference was what made it so difficult for Portugal to admit the independence of Mozambique. For ten years, the bloody conflict – the colonial war - had forced Portugal to confront how they defined the boundaries of the nation. By conceiving of decolonization as a tide of history, Portugal, part of the imperial west, could avoid coming to terms with what many saw in the worldwide flowering of nationalist, anti-colonial struggles – a tidal wave of other political projects, other ambitious emancipator projects. The various revolutions that swapped the African continent summoned the world to see the limits, paradoxes and incoherencies of western universalism as well as the violence it required and thus produced. The critics of colonialism, seeking to answer to Césaire’s question – colonization and civilization? – did not reject all the values associated with western universalism; they also fought for a new humanism, opening up unimagined possibilities.

1.2. Tides of Memories

Colonialism planted its memory in the very core of Africa. This phenomenon is not particularly European; rather, is in the nature of all colonial conquests and systems of foreign occupation. Attempting to (re)create the land and its people, to reconfigure the territory, the Portuguese, like other colonizers, asserted their right to name the land and its subjects, demanding that the subjects accept the names, references, culture and history of the conqueror (Thiong’o, 2009: 9). Thus, one must question why there is such a resistance to opening up the canon of macro-history, the macro-narrative of world history. As several people interviewed in Mozambique would state, it does not make sense to exist without remembering the past and without imagining the future. Walter Benjamin writes that memory “*is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium*” to do so (1999: 576). Memory is essential to constructing an identity, that of an

⁷ eolonization allowed Portugal to forget that the people from its colonies had become, since 1961, Portuguese citizens – with the abolition of the Statute of the Indigenous -, and to escape many of the larger implications of a shared past. Through this forgetting, there emerged novel definitions of Portuguese identity and new institutions of the Portuguese state.

individual as much as that of a collective. To starve or destroy memories results in liquidating the past, the history that binds people together, that makes them what they are.

To impose a single history is to impose the weight of experiences it carries and its conceptions of self and otherness—indeed, the weight of its memory, which includes several factors, such as religion and education.⁸ The signs of this project can be traced everywhere, especially in claiming the memory or memories of collective pasts which, being unique, are distinct from a single and vague general past. The quality of being unique is not allowing them/others to identify with us. While the persistent routes of nationalisms are not always healthy in their principles and intentions, they at least signify that the situation of amnesia generates much conflict when imposed on a global scale, as Aquino de Bragança and Jacques Depelchin once anticipated (1986) when analyzing the construction of Mozambican history after the country's independence.

This, in part, signifies that we remain involved in the search for other parts of history/histories, of other people/peoples, facts, and other institutions that are silenced and almost erased. This is a sign of the continuation of the struggle for liberation, against amnesia, against attempts at silencing. Again, one needs to cautiously approach the relationship between forgetting, these intentional memory lapses and the work of the ethnographic collection undertaken by Africanist researchers, by ethnographers that fill the infinite shelves of the colonial library. The practices of producing knowledge about the African continent were, in actuality, guided by objectives designed to operate and legitimize one determined project: the colonial mission (Meneses, 2008). Possibly one central problem of this work has not been failing to develop some conceptual aspects such as rituals, magic, fetishism, paternalism, and the traditional local authorities, but the reaffirmation of tradition, of a primal space and the continent's inescapable mark of delay. This is not to argue that the colonial archives cannot be used, quite the contrary. They should be used with necessary precautions that analytically take their potential biases into consideration. Accentuating tradition obstructs a broader perspective about Mozambique, a perspective that brings to the front many questions and perspectives, including the

⁸ Cheikh Hamidou Kane, in his novel *Ambiguous Adventure*, insightfully remarks the power of colonial schools in the subjugation of the colonized. He credits the schools as having even more power than the cannons for they made conquest permanent, as "*the cannon compels the body and the school bewitches the soul*" (1963: 49).

problems of a Mozambican working class that has been present for more than a century,⁹ and the dilemmas it confronts with the current economic crisis. Emphasizing the study of rural tradition prevents the analysis and conceptualization of the urban complexity of many African countries. Or rather, one risk to make the people immune to the modernization that also happens within these spaces and within the present. One risks making them immune to discussing the implication of authoritarian regimes in situations of multiparty, of the implication of cultural 'uprootings,' etc. The present, which constructs narratives about the past, is also worth celebrating.

2. Mozambique: the struggle continues

The nationalist struggle in Mozambique, as in other contexts, brought about the need to reconstruct the history, confronting the dominant colonial narrative. In short, independence called for a reanalysis of the histories, now in the plural.

The end of authoritarian narratives does not necessarily mean that delayed realities remain incompatible with time forever, or even worse, suspended outside of it. It is not a synonym for the end of history because whatever existing society is, it is part of time. On June 25, 1975, Mozambique woke up independent, with a sense of urgency regarding the reconstruction of its history. As we sang at the time, "*we will not forget the time that passed.*" A current challenge is the recuperation and the production of memories. Identities were created and political alliances forged, to give a meaning to life and to help explain the importance of fighting Portugal's colonial-fascist presence in Mozambique.

Colonial relations came in many forms. In addition to the absolute denial of the colonized, colonial relations, often marked by domination and violence, are also characterized by multifaceted processes of appropriation. There were numerous forms of appropriation, such as religious, economic, demographic, political, linguistic, artistic, intellectual, etc. With different intensities in space and in time, these appropriations and (re)creations generated contradictions and conflicts throughout this process. Although asymmetrical, any process of appropriation encompassed a double relationship. This aspect is extraordinarily important because it reveals how colonization describes situations of political control over a given territory by a foreign force with objectives to incorporate and exploit it. Colonization hence goes much

⁹ In this sense, the role of migrants from Mozambique in the mines of South Africa since the nineteenth century must also be taken into consideration to broaden studies on how the revolutionary consciousness was developed in this region of the continent.

further than the restricted meanings we sometimes use to discuss the subject. Secondly, questioning these colonial relations in present time opens the subject to perceiving the ruptures and continuities of the colonial relation. Assuming that decolonization is a political relationship, as a political process it impacts upon the multiple parts involved in the colonial relation, now confronted with a dramatic change of power relations. Analyzing the Mozambican reality, with the end of the national liberation struggle, Aquino de Bragança would affirm that the power transfer occurred without any impositions from the former colonizer, Portugal. Thus, the Mozambican case could mean the possibility of a political transformation – independence – without the weight of the neocolonial relationships usually attached to these transitions (Bragança, 1986).

Portugal's colonization of the African continent can be analyzed in terms of how the situation impacted the regions where the process took place and by examining how the very meaning of being European was objectively and subjectively constructed by the colonial experience. Within colonial juridical thought, the concept of Portuguese citizenship does not refer to an abstract category – quite the contrary. Portuguese citizenship identified a specific, socially concrete, and moral standard: it applied only to white men and women born in Portugal, well-educated and wealthy, the "*genteel soul of colonization*."¹⁰ In such a manner, to be European became a category that defined a status and determined these relationships.¹¹ To be European came to mean being part of a certain geopolitical strategy of power, a space dominated by a modern rationality which wore the color white.

In this context, to speak of colonial legacies is to recognize, firstly, that colonial relationships contributed to formatting any history, suggesting that this relationship persists in how the world is perceived today – even though this legacy is not always recognized in a legal or cognitive sense by its potential heirs. This means that what remains in the past is more than a memory. To question the place of memories implies questioning the place where from one inquires about the memories of oneself.

¹⁰ "*Amor e vinho (idílio pagão)*" article published in the newspaper, *O Africano*, 11 June 1913.

¹¹ An attentive reading of the legal codes reveals an abyssal frontier between nationality and citizenship. The 'blacks' were nationals of Mozambique and were deprived of rights to citizenship and submitted to a specific and extremely repressive disciplinary regime, the already mentioned Statute of Indigenous". Under this regime, legal citizens (legal being the Portuguese) – acknowledged themselves as invested with the right to govern the subjects that were declared to be further behind on the road to progress and civilization. The legitimacy of their political power rested on the colonial mission to assimilate the 'less developed' into a model of life that was defined superior by the 'citizens' (Meneses, 2007).

The political turbulence of the 1970s and the 1980s in Mozambique was informed by scholarship, including empirical analysis, debates about agency and intervention, philosophy and history. It also included scholarly and activist publications (Borges Coelho, 2007). A peculiar aspect of this knowledge production was the fact that many of the persons involved in its production were not professionally trained academics. Still, it became possible to bring other voices, other problematics to the process of decolonizing Mozambique and freeing the country from the weight of colonial history.

Portugal and Mozambique shared places with each other but they hardly share memories. In the more than three decades since its independence, Mozambique has come to grasp the difficulties that recognizing this aspect of sharing entails. This awareness raises very complex questions inherent to the memory of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. Beyond historiography of a common period, it would be more precise to speak of two historical macro-narratives developed upon a common denominator within the same territory and the same conflict: a macro-narrative about a colonial war in the final era of the Portuguese imperial colonization,¹² and another one, seen from the Mozambican side, about the process that led to the national independence of Mozambique. These two histories have distinct paths that were influenced by the social memory of what 'happened' and by how it was politically generated.

Throughout most of its short history, the Mozambican state has pursued a nation-building policy that includes the political adoption of an official history grounded in a set of public (and intensely publicized) memories about its colonial past, both recent and distant (Meneses, 2007a). The Mozambican state has thereby sought to eliminate, silence or make invisible the diversity of memories generated by the complex social interactions between the colonizers and colonized over the long period of Portuguese colonialism. Soon after independence, Frelimo,¹³ the leading political force in the country, carried out a complex political strategy that sought to deal with the ambivalent and hybrid identities that constitute the intricate colonial legacy. To put an end to all forms of possible continuities with the colonial past, the target of this

¹² The Portuguese colonial war, fought simultaneously in Angola, Guinea Bissau and Mozambique.

¹³ FRELIMO is the nationalist movement that led the fight for the independence of Mozambique from Portuguese colonization. Afterwards, it turned into a political party and has been in power since independence, both during the single-party and multi-party periods.

policy became those caught in 'transition,' i.e., the 'collaborators' – a rather diverse group that is rarely spoken of, if not virtually omitted (the estimated size of the group is 100,000 people).¹⁴ The 'collaborators' were accused of having teamed up with the colonial system, up to the independence of Mozambique; Frelimo's politics of memory was founded upon the idea of "*not forgetting the time that passed.*" This strategy aimed "*to transform the collaborators based on presumption of guilt, repentance, punishment and re-education*" (Borges Coelho, 2003: 191). In the aftermath of this political process, by the early 1980s, most of the 'collaborators' were recognized as politically re-educated and accepted as full citizens. Their subsequent rehabilitation was obtained at the cost of erasing their past from the public sphere and treating it as a past that was to be kept a private, silenced memory.

2.1. Manufacturing Myths

The guerrilla nationalist was projected as the icon of the truly Mozambican citizen, the model of the 'new man.' The myth of the guerrilla nationalist was created as an attempt to generate new political identities during the first years of independence. Mozambique was cast as being made up of two main groups: those who had fought for independence and the others who made up the mass majority of Mozambican society. These moments of hierarchization after independence derived from the necessity to "*limit the electoral capacity of the citizens who were committed to fascist colonialism.*"¹⁵ The category of second-class citizens included many of those whom Frelimo identified as having been allies or supporters of the Portuguese colonial presence (Meneses, 2007b). Shortly after independence, Frelimo sought to overcome the separation thus created between those deemed to be 'collaborators' and the 'Mozambican population.' In 1977-78, the first signs of a political strategy seeking to deal with the memory of these colonial connections emerged. Samora Machel, then the president of Mozambique, had not opted to form a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He addressed this issue in several speeches, culminating in an important

¹⁴ A process of 'Portuguese indoctrination' started in Mozambique during the 1960s (Borges Coelho 2003; Souto, 2007) when colonial enlargement policy sought to extend Portuguese identity to the overseas populations overseas in Africa. When the pressure of the liberation movement increased, especially in the military, such actions were taken to convey the idea that Mozambique was an integral part of the Portuguese nation and that all the former colonial subjects were Portuguese.

¹⁵ In this manner, the introduction to the first electoral law in 1977 distinguished between those that were involved "*in the colonial structures of the oppressor*" and the "*Mozambican people,*" the former being prohibited from political participation.

public meeting in 1982. The multiple meetings and the integration processes for the ‘collaborators’ can be seen as an unofficial Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which sought to elucidate, clarify, and offer knowledge about the complexity of these Mozambicans’ history.

The ‘collaborators’ were a significant and extremely heterogeneous group, lumping together all who did not ‘fit’ into the epic story that fabricated the ‘new man’: the project of the new Mozambican citizen.¹⁶ They were those who had given in to temptation, having committed themselves to the colonial system. Among them were former members of the Portuguese political colonial police, the PIDE-DGS; members of ANP,¹⁷ soldiers in the Portuguese army; the godmothers of war, traditional authorities, politicians, members of the lower echelons of the administrative apparatus, or those who “*were not with us* [with Frelimo].” Seen as latent seeds of the colonial ideology, re-routing and re-educating memory through forgetting was an important task that Mozambique sought to fulfill.

In this context, the core of national history was placed in the memory of the nationalist struggle for liberation. The heroes are those produced by this struggle, with which the ‘new’ Mozambique was inaugurated. The construction of this history rests upon a politicization that was exacerbated by the process of constructing the national political memory. The construction of membership was founded upon a political analysis that accentuated the dichotomization of spaces between “*liberated areas*” where “*the new man was being produced*” and the colonial territory perceived as a negative space of past legacies. Even if the territory was inhabited by a great majority of Mozambicans up to that point in time, it was, as previously mentioned, necessary to extirpate it. These too are colonial legacies (Mbembe, 2002).

3. A Map of Conflicts: the national history

The tension between the national project, or the modern territorial base that was mapped, legislated and historicized by the hand of colonialism, and the successive (re)constructions of various identities that were present in the geocultural territory identifiable as the Mozambique of our times, has translated into a co-habitation that was never peaceful (even when interpreted as such by those in power) and involved very little dialogue. This reality manifests itself in the successive reconfigurations of

¹⁶ See, on this subject, Meneses, 2007b.

¹⁷ PIDE-DGS: the repressive police during the dictatorship. *Acção Nacional Popular*: the single political party that ruled Portugal throughout the period of the dictatorship.

conflicting identities (ideological, ethnic, racial, and religious) that have generated other presuppositions and concepts that have helped to define other geo-cultural places that came to be named as Mozambique, but in which other peoples, other cultural, linguistic, and religious archives were also present. The long duration of the history requires some analytical breath when focusing on the specificity that Mozambique is today.

In modern times, the most visible expression of opposite narratives to those of the colonizers is the grand narrative generated by the anti-colonial struggle, centered upon denouncing colonialism and its vices (discrimination, subalternization, concealing of knowledges, etc.) and the elaboration of a national project for the future. From this narrative, promising more of a new future than of a possible review of the past—and nationalist although quite Eurocentric in its core, but organically local—emerged the idea of a Mozambique for Mozambicans, and what came to be designated as Mozambican-ness. The country's call for equality caused the dramatic erasure of the differences that made its social fabric, generating profound contradictions, synonymous with the continuities of imperial mechanisms that remain active (Meneses & Ribeiro, 2008). For example, how does one situate the idea of the nation driven by the anti-colonial struggle with other grand narratives, such as ethnicity, race, religions, and gender? Where is it situated in relation to the 'new' discursive hegemony that is linked to the national project? Before independence, but mainly with independence, the political project of Mozambique and the political project of Frelimo seemed to coincide. The 'literature of combat'¹⁸ was one of armored weapons; it promoted the nation's struggle for 'recovery' and was imbued with the mission of inventing a single past that could create 'Mozambicans,' who, without fracture and without difference, were united against a common enemy, colonization. In short, proposals that rejected, amended and, finally, posed a challenge to the hegemony of the national project created in the midst of an exogenous proposal,¹⁹ questioning its value as representing the Mozambican nation, while simultaneously debating its discontinuity with the Mozambican state.²⁰ Such narratives question the single sense of historiography, with

¹⁸ Literature produced during the nationalist army struggle.

¹⁹ As a geopolitical project, Mozambique is the result of the division of Africa carried out in the Berlin Conference in the late 19th century.

²⁰ The 2004 national constitution, for example, recognizes the multicultural character of the country (art. 4).

its heroes and national myths, which are more elaborated than organic.²¹ In fact, in the literature of combat, found upon the figure of revolutionary ‘combatant,’ it became possible to integrate only very partially and in a very subaltern way the urban intellectual. The project of constructing the ‘new man’ did not captivate the memories of the past or the diversity of the present. Nevertheless, diversity insisted upon its presence, finding other forms of protests and affirmation: art, music, literature, etc.

The construction of proposed political alternatives to the colonial situation both denounced the empire and sought, simultaneously, to make a “*new revolutionary subject*” visible—the revolutionary Mozambican who identified with the people and whose purity was filtered by the modern nationalism distinguished by Frelimo. This political context explains the trial of various nationalist ex-political prisoners (including such renowned poets as José Caveirinha and Rui Nogar, writers as Albino Magai and Luis Bernardo Honwana, and the painter Malangatana Valente²²), in 1977, for contradicting the monopolizing vision of Frelimo over the meaning of nationalism.²³

If one allows decolonization to question the impact of violent and exploitative relationships, one finds out that the legacies and memories are far short of decolonization. Recognizing this problem call for the urgency of a critical engagement with current political consequences, both intellectual and social, of centuries of Western ‘expansion’ in the colonized world to dispute the naturalization and depoliticization of the world. In one sense, postcolonialism is greater than the meeting of various perspectives and concepts of power, for it is a language which seeks to reflect upon processes of ‘decolonization’ as they take place in the spaces of the metropole and those in colonized spaces.

In the latter, historical reinterpretations were necessary to rescue Mozambique from the silence of interpretations imposed by colonial history. From the outset, this reinterpretation was imbued with revolutionary purity and was indisputable because it was constructed from the testimonies of Frelimo’s leaders, the living heroes that fought for national liberation. This process did not need a mediating historiography; rather,

²¹ For example, see Ncomo, 2003.

²² See Laban, 1998.

²³ As Craveirinha later explained, these former political prisoners, who were accused of treason and then submitted to re-education processes, underwent a difficult period of political marginalization after independence (Laban 1998). This subject it present in very detail in a series of interviews carried out by Dalila Cabrita Mateus (2006).

what was needed was to avoid inquiring about sources and about alternative interpretations that were likely to cause disputes.

Thus, the time and space of liberation came to be 'made history,' which was more likely to be disseminated than questioned or interpreted. For academic consolation, the colonial situation emerged into an excellent space for research and inquiry into a new history from silenced memories. For Aquino de Bragança and Jacques Depelchin (1986), history, as an academic discipline, had to play a key role in constructing national political memory. However, the opening to democracy and to a multiparty system that Mozambique witnessed in the 90s allowed the surfacing of other moments of questioning and other hidden spaces of violence. (Re)constructing 'Mozambican-ness' was necessary, yet this new political project now had to integrate these other, less politically instrumental memories. These memories, however, did not meet great challenges through new interpretations and new versions. A political reading of the complex situation in Mozambique reveals a peculiar characteristic of its political process: the multipartidarism of a single party (Meneses & Santos, 2009).

The armed struggle for national liberation could not be claimed as the only foundation of Mozambican unity since there were other conflicts and other political processes. As the elders frequently say, "*because our dead still speak very loud,*" in Mozambique it was not worth speaking of the past because that brings back the shadows of memories some are not willing to remember. As referred, the emphasis in was on the need to struggle for liberation, the roots of the struggle and not the struggle itself. Nevertheless, the evolution of the nationalist movement can only be understood within its broader context, taking into account, not just influential internal factors, but all the factors resulting from the confrontation with colonial power. In this sense, the conjoining of memories was due to a convocation of all memories—nationalist and colonial—to comprehend this moment of rupture. In this sense Mozambican history needs colonial sources, and Portuguese history also needs to analyze the sources of the liberation movements involved in the war.

Time constructs the past. An immaterial shadow of what happened, the past is a narrative created in the present. Its discourse approaches the past, but it is not the past. Besides written narratives, glimpses of the past can be captured in music, art pieces, oral history, etc.; all are forms of conjugating the past into the present.

Public narratives, explanations, constructions of official memories are always complex due to the number of players and the number of intentions that produce them.

Yet again, these plural memories reflect power relations by being one of many versions produced by players that predominate over others. There are many actors that participate in the production of memories: individual actors, collective actors, institutional, private, etc. A historical memory that is produced by historians is only one of many strands.

There are in fact others that we cannot forget if we seek to make the analysis of contemporary societies more complex. It is not possible to construct official narratives by ignoring the collective memories of groups that are silenced for some reason. Political memory or official history already seeks to construct a unifying narrative within the national space to create social cohesion and legitimize political options. The *History of Mozambique* is the history found and taught through textbooks, but it collides with other, parallel memories.

Therefore, one needs to address these various 'locations' of memories, the epistemic 'discovery' of an otherness, the presence of multiple memories. This is the first moment that announces changes in relation to the official memory, with history as a macro-narrative of our societies. The second is recognizing the process of constructing history from this otherness and from its recuperation.

4. Weaving Narratives, Constructing History

The debate about investigation and presentation of the African continent exposes a problematic reality, a "*theoretical extroversion*" characterized by the importation of uncritical paradigms, problems and perspectives, by politicians and African intellectuals alike (Hountondji, 2002, 2009). Today, contemporary Africa needs to confront two major inquiries: analysis of the implications of the colonial legacy for itself, and the quest to recover that which came before colonization and has remained present in its social structures, its political structures and its identities. The objective is not to create a conceptual space for the other, but recognizing that otherness is a constant in processes of social development.

During the colonial period, the denial of this condition resulted in keeping otherness outside the time of civilization and its transformation into the time of culture, the time outside the space of western (read: colonial) modernity.

Today the problem is more complex. On one hand, we often continue to make our interpretations from a center that still has not been 'decolonized.' It is hence through the eyes of Imperial Europe that these African spaces are still perceived

through epistemically colonial lenses. On the other hand, while we want to (re)construct other histories and (re)introduce ourselves to the debate of other memories, the situation we observe reflects the difficulty of constructing another analytical grid which would escape from dominant interpretations and allow us to introduce the memories of other actors.

Imperial projects have hardly been reformulated, maintaining themselves in the essentially hegemonic conception of the Global North over the Global South despite the independence of African countries and the end of the so-called Cold War.²⁴ The questions raised by debt, migration, weak or “problem” states, world poverty, and institutional and epistemic racism are among the moments that bring to our attention the persistence of colonization. Many academic relations in the fields of anthropology and history express and treat this colonial expression as the persistent memory of colonization and as a power relation. In this sense, constructing contemporary histories in our times is perhaps one of the principal elements necessary for the (re)emergence of another subject as well as an active political actor. We become aware of ourselves and others, recognizing that the presence of an ‘other’ implies that we must know the past and the paths of other(s).

To think of memories in the plural, placing them as diverse narratives of histories about locations, involves an obligation to think of identity processes, or the social and political metamorphoses known to societies. If we agree that recognizing signifies remembering the other, the relationships between ‘I’ and the ‘other’ become spaces of struggle for recognition, spaces of democratizing memory and of the knowledges that they convey.

Even the collective memory described as ‘our memory’ and which seems to overlap with others, is not anything real or concrete. On the contrary, ‘our memory’ is also a narration, a story of ‘arrival’ and the resulting construction of memories (history, community, etc.) articulated within present power relations. The integration of memories into a whole occurs through political filter managed by political memory; or rather, by the ‘officially’ established bodies of power.

Historians tend to use the notion of memory to incorporate unauthorized or unofficial versions of the past while groups whose identities rest upon a specific

²⁴ Indeed, the cold war, as a concept, applies to very restricted areas of the globe; specifically, in the case of the African continent, wars and severe conflict situations were experienced throughout the entire 20th century, thus questioning the validity of the use of ‘cold war.’

history challenge legitimate versions of the past and the monopoly of experts, as a “*duty to memory*” (Bensoussan, 1998; Ferenczi & Boltanski, 2002; Ruscio, 2005).

As a result, new silencing are produced. Because there are many variables at work in constructing memories, there will always be segments of memory that feel excluded or insufficiently integrated. The way to address the questions of memory is therefore to recognize two essential questions. On the one hand, collective memories have various producers originating from a plural origin, whether it be the point of view of the distinct locations of distinct narrators or perspective of that which is being narrated and the forms the material assumes. On the other hand, if one accepts the plural origin of collective memory, it is fundamental to manage these diverse producers in an inclusive and democratic manner (Borges Coelho, 2007). There are plenty of references about the need to democratize Mozambique; yet the histories, memories, knowledges and experiences of the groups that constitute present-day Mozambique escape from the space of this democratization. In this sense, and borrowing from Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), the ‘silences’ that other memories have been subjected to and their absence from imperial academic circuits strongly indicates the presence of alternative discourses that question insistently the centrality of a single, universal history.

Questioning the colonial raises infinite questions in both imperial metropolitan and colonized spaces. The struggle for Mozambique’s independence was linked not only to other political processes via aid from the African continent, but also to other outside processes including the struggle against fascism in Portugal. This involved rejecting racial discrimination and the boundaries of difference in a call to join forces to resist colonial and fascist oppression, transforming them into a unified cause against a common oppressor.

As Chakrabarty (2008: 184) argues, in almost every democracy the discussions on the academic subject of history “*has given rise to the question of whether the distinction between ‘testimony’ and ‘historiography’ should be dissolved in the interest of challenging the authority of the academic historian*”. A general history is becoming growingly under pressure, in democratic, postcolonial times, with the idea of multiple perspectives taking more and more visibility.

To reclaim the past, as Frantz Fanon insisted, “*triggers a chance of fundamental importance*” (1963: 210) for the subaltern other. Instead of shame, the past should be branded with “*dignity, glory and solemnity*” (Ibid.). From this perspective, the silences of

the Otherness are not a synonym for the victimization of alterity, but of an increasingly active, and even radical presence of these 'other' historical actors—a condition for transforming the memories and narratives they produce. This kind of knowledge, or better yet, inter-knowledge, rests upon recognizing the mutuality of differences and similarities, which allows relationships between societies to be reconstructed. The legacies distilled in the memories would not simply be transmitted: they would be repudiated, selectively accepted, falsified and modified through numerous demands and negotiations. They would involve sentiments, nostalgia and envy, remembering and forgetting, fighting for recognition and suspicions of illegitimacy. Like the colonial question, historical legacies create relations (many times quite conflictive) between the potential heirs, simultaneously dividing and connecting the parts together.

Because there can be multiple narratives of the same event, history has attempted to accommodate multiple perspectives while expressing uneasiness over the danger of 'relativism'. It gives shape to a robust realism and to a strong objectivity, a clear awareness of the need to accurately and precisely identify the conditions in which knowledge is produced and its assessment on the basis of its observed or expected consequences. This allows a rigorous account of the situatedness, partiality and constructedness of all knowledges, while rejecting relativism as an epistemological and moral stance.

Historical scholarship entails distancing the self from the objects of knowledge, which in the case of the activist involvement with a 'new subject'—the history of Mozambique—is the unfair world present 'out there,' which the researcher only tackles minimally. On the other side, and as Radha d'Souza reminds us, "*activism involves transcending the subject-object divide, crossing the boundaries between the self as the knower and the knowledge of the world, about a state of being when the knower identifies with the knowledge so completely, where the distinction between the knower and the knowledge is so blurred that the knower is able to make a qualitative leap into the unknown*" (2009: 35). The production of this 'new' historical knowledge requires the acknowledgment of and distinguishing between the subject *and* the object. Speaking about others will therefore always have to be sustained by knowledge produced with others in a complex and symbiotic relationship. As such, history speaks of politics to come.

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