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Memories of Violence, Cultural Transformations of Cannibals, and Indigenous State-Building in Post-Conflict Mozambique

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This article analyzes idiosyncratic cultural and political implications of accusations of cannibalism. I explore two sensational family dispute cases that emerged in two Mozambican villages in 2006, in which children were allegedly killed and their bodies consumed. I also examine subsequent related though less publicized cases. These events took place in Gorongosa, a district of Sofala province in central Mozambique that was much affected by the postcolonial civil war (1976–1992) between the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) regime and the rebel movement, Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO).[1] Due to converging interests of local elites and national and international media organizations, what were at first conventional disputes were transformed through a series of sensational revelations in which people confessed to terrifying, cannibalistic activities. These residents lived in the valleys and mountains of the Gorongosa district.[2] My analysis of these cases

Acknowledgments: I wish to thank all my interlocutors in Gorongosa district, which unfortunately since October 2013 has once again been exposed to civil war violence between the Renamo and the Frelimo government forces. I thank them along with my interlocutors in the institutions of the Mozambican state for their valuable conversations and insights on the dynamics of state-building in the post-civil war era. Extended thanks go also to the anonymous *CSSH* reviewers for their constructive criticisms and comments. I also appreciate the intellectual support of David Akin.

[1] The Gorongosa district is characterized by political, legal, and religious pluralism. The society is founded on patrilineal kinship, polygyny, and monogamy, and an agricultural-based economy. As this *CSSH* Issue goes to print, the Gorongosa region has since 2013 been embroiled in a new civil war, with the FRELIMO government once again pitted against the armed wing of RENAMO. The conflict is claiming many lives and preventing the local people from carrying out agricultural production.

[2] For more than a century, Portuguese colonial officials attempted to classify the Gorongosas by attributing a variety of ethnicities to them. The local people identify themselves with a place rather than an ethnicity, calling themselves "Ma-Gorongosianos." This refers to the constellation of Gorongosa Mountains. The people speak "Chi-Gorongose" and a minority also speaks Portuguese. In Anuário de Moçambique, 1930. Maputo: Mozambican Historical Archive.

reveals processes of post-conflict transformation as they were shaped by attempts to advance personal interests. These attempts, in turn, had wide local, national, and international repercussions. At their epicenter was a committee composed of local elites. Unlike the "Twelve Who Ruled France during the Terror" (Palmer 2005 [1941]), this committee, which was granted powers to contain the cannibalistic terrors, was ruled by a trio of former soldiers (henceforth "the trio") who had fought in the Mozambican civil war. All three were also indigenous healers from the Associação dos Médicos Tradicionais de Moçambique (AMETRAMO).

My argument is that the accusations of cannibalism were part of a larger project involving complex performances, in which the trio's *lider do grupo* (hereafter *lider*)[3] played a central role, reflecting serious personal grievances he had accumulated while working for the Mozambican state. The trio deployed a synthesizing strategy that at once conflated and decoupled cannibalism and witchcraft, and transformed the latter into a "powerful language" worthy of being believed by the state agents (Bourdieu 2003: 69). Politics of memory were also part of their strategy—contested civil war memories of cannibalism were selectively exploited to make postwar cannibal accusations more credible. A language of "physical evidence" and violent memories were strategically deployed, but exactly what it was that the trio hoped to transform was not self-evident (Shaw 2002).

In what follows, I explore the interconnections between these various processes of post-conflict transformation and the interactions and performances of state and non-state agents. Although these all involved ongoing struggles for recognition and political authority that were local in nature, they had broad implications for state-building in post-conflict Mozambique. I will outline how the actions of a variety of state actors and a few aggrieved individuals helped to legitimize state authority, sometimes in unintended ways. In so doing, I expose the diverse origins of state-transformation processes in this post-conflict society.

One of the most complex issues related to state-building in colonial and postcolonial worlds is how states meet the challenge to materially and morally transform the entire national population while acknowledging the variety of local meanings of state legitimacy, order, and security (Asad 2003: 191; Sharma and Gupta 2006; Young 1994). In Africa, colonial and postcolonial state elites have found their efforts to establish nationwide authority hampered by indigenous fears of cannibalism and witchcraft, which people experience as attacks on the "foundations of the moral and social order" (Turner 1957: 126), and as practices of power and authority originating in spiritual forces (Fields 1985; Luongo 2012; Mesaki 2009; Niehaus 2001; Pels 1999;

[3] *Lider do grupo* (Portuguese) is what some healers and state officials used to call AMETRAMO's president.

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West 2005). To understand how state power "penetrates local communities" requires a comprehensive analysis of how contingent and programmatic events, and the actions of individuals and collective actors, contribute to the "upward" growth of state powers (Donham 1999: 159). I will examine how what I term an "indigenous state authority" in the post-civil war Gorongosa district has involved an ongoing and uneasy interplay between indigenous actors and state agents (principally from the police and judiciary), formal and informal processes, and material and spiritual forces.

The prevailing analytical foci of indigeneity studies have typically been people's claims and struggles to gain recognition of their primordial attachments to land (Trigger and Dalley 2010). People's claims to indigenous status and official initiatives to legally attribute foundational status to certain groups have been criticized for their ahistorical tendencies (Fortun, Fortun, and Rubenstein 2010; Merlan 2009). But the indigenization of state authority that I analyze here is not anchored in claims to or perspectives of local primordiality; instead, indigenization here "refers to shifts in meaning" whereby new ideas and practices are translated to fit with "existing cultural norms, values, and practices" (Merry 2006: 39). These shifts become meaningful only if we consider past and ongoing troubled relations between the Mozambican state and large segments of the population, due to the state's post-independence revolutionary agenda of socialist modernization, which included projects to violently eradicate various cultural beliefs and practices (Cahen 2005; Bowen 2000; Geffray 1990; West 2005).

The goal of eradication was never attained, and as Donham has observed, revolutions are hardly unitary entities (1999: 35). At a higher level, "both local and global systems are at once systemic and contradictory," and they become "engaged with one another in relations characterized by symbiosis as well as struggle" (Comaroff 1985: 3). Regarding the Gorongosa case, I use indigenization to refer to an ongoing and contentious shift in practices and processes driven by alienation and neglect—through the trio's actions, in interaction with evolving state policies, this culminated in a state that was integrated with and driven by local beliefs and fears concerning spirits of the dead, cannibalism, and witchcraft.

Various authors have recognized that "the signifying capacity of cannibalism and consumption is so large and versatile" (Masquelier 2000: 89), that it has the "ability to describe and articulate African concerns over a wide cultural and geographic area" (White 2000: 7; Ellis and Ter Haar 2004; Pottier 2007). In Gorongosa, the versatility and articulations of cannibal practice were made visible through the unrelenting actions of a few aggrieved individuals—the trio that came to operate as de facto members of the state. Their accusations of cannibal practice and the unrest that these generated forced the state to assimilate three interconnected cultural ideas: the belief that cannibals and witches posed a serious threat, the perspective that violence is transformative,

and the notion that the body is a multiple and fragmentable entity that retains power beyond death and dismemberment (Bernault 2006: 213). Under the trio's control, the state bureaucracy began to surveil and punish people accused of creating societal insecurity through acts of cannibalism and witchcraft. Over time, one of the trio's most significant achievements was to create a conviction among state officials, and the people generally, that the state had gained the capacity to command obedience in local cultural terms, but had at the same time become subject to local cultural logics.

Methodologically, my analysis draws on lengthy, multi-sited research and experiences. I followed the lives of participants in these events and their institutions while working in the region intermittently from 1997–2011. I established relations with various social actors, which, combined with my personal experiences and a set of "fortuitous conjunctions" (Sahlins 2004), were pivotal in enabling me to scrutinize the various processes and multiple temporalities at play in the cannibal accusations and people's personal struggles. I observed and interviewed various key participants before and during the peak of these accusations, and also months afterward. These data highlighted for me the mediating roles that cultural categories can play, and the mobilizing effects that social actors' accumulated grievances, memories, and attitudes can have as they are forged through shifting biographical trajectories (Palmer 2005 [1941]).

PEACE BUILDING, STATES OF DENIAL, AND THE ERUPTION OF GRIEVANCES

The trio's experiences in Gorongosa during and after the civil war were crucial to the emergence of the cannibal accusations, and their implications for the reconfiguration of local state-society relations. During the war, the FRELIMO central state officials considered Gorongosa, and the country's center generally, "the territory of the enemy" due to the prevalence there of RENAMO rebels, who were officially designated "armed bandits." FRELIMO authorities associated Christian religious groups, indigenous chiefs (named *regulos* by Portuguese colonial authorities), healers, and the people in general with resistance against the socialist revolution, and accused them of supporting the "armed bandits." The late President Samora Machel publicly ordered troops to "make Sofala and Manica provinces the graveyards of the armed bandits" (Igreja 2008). Many in Gorongosa were tortured and killed, and others were imprisoned or deported to reeducation camps in the country's north.

Since the colonial era, the future *lider* had been a healer and nurse's assistant, and had shunned these so-called "excesses of the revolution" by joining the government militias in Gorongosa's main village of Vila Paiva (Igreja and Skaar 2013). Around the end of the 1980s, the Mozambican army's military counterintelligence section stationed in Gorongosa created a special group to

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secretly negotiate with RENAMO's military leadership in the region. The future *lider* participated in these "bush" peace negotiations, which facilitated the official FRELIMO-RENAMO peace negotiations that took place in Italy from 1990–1992.

The combination of the *lider*'s fluency in Portuguese and his high sense of duty helped him to gain the position of neighborhood chief of the government militias. His group was specially trained, and its leaders were promised that the Mozambican government would compensate them both financially and materially. Their operations were risky, and government soldiers killed one of the *lider*'s colleagues because some branches of the army had not been informed of the secret negotiations.

On 4 October 1992, the General Peace Agreement was signed in Rome. RENAMO became a political party and has participated in various elections since then. The agreement also incorporated a protocol on the demobilization and socioeconomic reintegration of the soldiers from the formerly belligerent armies (Schafer 1998). Although the reintegration process from 1994–1996 was comprehensive, the *lider* and his former colleagues were left uncompensated for their covert sacrifices in the pursuit of the nation's peace. For five years, they presented various complaints to government officials, but to no avail. The *lider* grew angry, and suspicious that Gorongosa government officials had not communicated his concerns to the central state in Maputo, the capital city.

When I began fieldwork in Gorongosa in April of 1997, the *lider* was one of the people I became familiar with. I met him several times while he was conducting his healing activities, before he was the *lider* of AMETRAMO. Over time, he told me about his secret wartime activities and his difficulties in obtaining state recognition. He revealed his story to me so that I could write a letter to the president demanding that the government honor its past promises, and since I was based in Maputo, he asked me to deliver it to the president's office. I did as he asked and delivered the letter to the state's inspector, who was linked directly to the presidential cabinet.

I had expected the presidential office would handle the matter through appropriate governmental channels, but instead the inspector arranged a meeting to officially inform me, "Many people sacrificed their lives during the war and if the Mozambican state was obligated to financially compensate everyone, the state would clearly be unable to attain this goal. We have reconciliation now."[4] I informed the *lider* to be, and he seemed at once angered by and happy to hear the news, telling me, "At least my case was received by the chiefs in Maputo; perhaps with more pressure this situation will change."[5] Yet despite a decade of enduring the government's denials and accumulating his

[4] Meeting at the office of the state's inspector, Maputo, 16 Dec. 1997.
[5] Informal talk with the *lider*, 28 June 1998.

grievances, the *lider* kept devising strategies to break the state silence and obtain official acknowledgement and compensation. In the meantime, the central state actors were engaged in legal reforms that created new contexts for the *lider*'s strategies and struggles.

POLITICAL REFORMS AND STATE-BUILDING DURING THE 1980S AND 1990S

In the mid-1980s, the FRELIMO government, in a concessionary move, attempted to modify the course of the revolutionary socialist state project that had been established soon after independence in 1975. As in other socialist-inspired revolutions in postcolonial Africa, Mozambican state officials had declared war on religious influences.[6] But unlike other countries, which enacted legislation forbidding local indigenous practices related to crime and justice, Mozambican authorities relied on official discourses to name and order persecution of individuals believed to be involved in so-called "obscurantist practices," who were alleged to be "enemies of the people."[7] However, once the Cold War diminished, and the government realized it could not win the civil war by military means, the socialist revolution waned, and the government initiated serious state reforms. Authorities publicly stated, "There is a space for religion in the revolution" (Igreja and Dias-Lambranca 2009), and gradually became "sympathetic towards traditional chiefs, very concerned with religious issues, and open to African mother tongues" (Cahen 2005: 226; Pitcher 2002).

In 1990, a new constitution expanded citizens' rights by recognizing the legitimacy of cultural and religious practices and introducing economic liberalization and a multi-party democratic system (Pitcher 2002). This constitution and the 1992 peace agreement accelerated a legal reform process. This was intended to reconcile the state with various segments of the population that had been alienated by the revolutionary policies and practices. The reforms were also meant to establish the state's authority nationwide. The National Parliament, after a period of procrastination about how to distribute authority and power to local constituencies, in 1997 approved the law of decentralization (Igreja 2013a). They had hesitated due to a conundrum that has vexed many state elites in Africa (Bayart 2008)—the fear that a formalized and comprehensive decentralization processes might open political spaces for opposition parties to actively participate in state processes, and "fragment the principle of the unitary state" (Igreja 2013a). Parliament tried to centrally control the impact of decentralization with Decree Law 15/2000 of the Autoridade Comunitária (Community Authority), which recognized various community leaders

[6] Newspaper, Noticias da Beira, 27 Nov. 1979.
[7] See Donham 1999 for Ethiopia; Mesaki 2009 for Tanzania; and Niehaus 2001 for South Africa.

including the former *regulos* and healers, and the *secretários* who were local FRELIMO representatives (Kyed and Buur 2006; West 2005).[8]

Despite the scale of these reforms, the state remained formally secular and state elites insisted on using "scientific methods" to pursue modernization goals at both central and local levels.[9] Yet we must regard these policies as different parts of "interlinked projects" (Asad 2003) that did not strictly reinforce the state's legal and bureaucratic procedures (Sharma and Gupta 2006). Instead, the policies widened the possibilities for flourishing "chaotic plurality," which creates "enormous spaces open to improvisation" (Mbembe 2006: 385), expands in unpredictable ways people's participation in state processes, and renders visible culturally inspired discourses about state inadequacies (Bayart 2009; Das and Poole 2004; Fisiy and Geschiere 1990; Santos 2006; West 2005). Various central and local state agents let the weight of their complex biographies and attitudes—including fears of spirits, cannibals, and witches—shape the state's quotidian practices. In Mozambique, this contributed to the uncontrolled coexistence of different political cultures within different levels of the state (Santos 2006: 44).

For Gorongosa's rural populations, some of the state reforms granted informal access to state institutions to once-alienated individuals and groups, albeit on terms defined by state agents. Associations such as AMETRAMO gained legal recognition, and since its inception AMETRAMO has taken the lead in conflict interventions through informal partnerships with various local state institutions.[10] Though AMETRAMO is a formal organization and its members pay a fee and carry an identity card, it is ruled as an informal aggregate of individual healers. Its headquarters are usually the leading healer's house. While the healer-in-command works with close subordinates, one secretary, and a membership-fee collector, the various leaders often fight among themselves. Such infighting culminated in the removal of the former AMETRAMO leader, the late Bola, and the current *lider*'s ascendance in 2005.[11] His rise to the presidency of AMETRAMO was an important biographical shift. It converged with his protracted anger at the state's unpaid debts

[8] One criticism at the time was that it was counterproductive to provide de jure recognition for the *regulos* alone, and that an effective law would have also included the *regulos'* assistants, namely *n'fumos* and chiefs of the zones. The government recently changed the Decree Law to include other figures of power and authority.

[9] In the early 1990s, during the political transformations triggered by the signing of the General Peace Agreement, Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano insisted, "We will find a scientific way of articulating the relations between the traditional authorities and the state administration which requires a more modern execution; we will know how to coordinate, we will not copy what used to be done during the colonial times." Archives of the Assembly of the Republic, 9 Oct., Maputo. 1992.

[10] These informal partnerships were initiated in the health sector (Igreja 2004), but they never attained the level of connection or mutual influence between state institutions and indigenous beliefs and practices as occurred in the trio's everyday interactions with state agents.

[11] Interview with the late healer Bola, Gorongosa, 5 Jan. 2004.

and his struggles to fix that, and his desire to assuage the humiliation felt by some of the healers, to shape his approach. His strategy was not to disengage from the state (Bayart 2009), or to form an alternative to state authority (Herbst 2000). Instead, he worked to draw the state into the center of struggles to contain the proliferation of cannibals and witches, and to expose the state to the harsh realities of witches and cannibal strikes.

THE PROLIFERATION OF CANNIBALISM AND WITCHCRAFT FEARS AND ACCUSATIONS

The recent, extensive literature on the anthropology of cannibalism has generally recognized that there is more to the topic of cannibalism than considerations of eating human flesh (Goldman 1999: 13). The variety of contexts in which cannibalism accusations occur, and the ways in which they evolve, expose complex power struggles (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Kilgour 1998). In colonial times, cannibalism was interpreted as a powerful marker of the alien "Other" (Arens 1978; Obeyesekere 2005). But beliefs about cannibalism also articulated forms of political contestation directed at "bloodsucking Europeans" (White 2000) and "despotic African rulers and nefarious local traders" (Thornton 2003: 282), who, driven by greed, transformed "their dependents into medicines" (Shaw 2002: 246).[12]

In many parts of Africa, these sorts of indigenous beliefs and practices constituted serious challenges to colonial authorities, who enacted suppression laws that were enforced with varying degrees of severity (Fields 1985; Pels 1999; Isaacman and Isaacman 2004). In some contexts, colonial officials hesitantly adopted what Fields called a "principle of calculated noninterference" (1985: 52). In others, where they suspected links between witchcraft practices and armed anti-colonial resistance, authorities neglected their own laws and, through various local brokers, violently persecuted and punished alleged witches (Luongo 2012; Mesaki 2009). In colonial Mozambique, though Portuguese officials studied and codified local customs and outlawed poison oracles (Cota 1946; Fry 2000), the few administrators on the ground were not passionate about eradicating indigenous ways (West 2005). In Gorongosa, their main commitment was to the hut tax, and they relied on the *cipaios* (African police) to rigidly persecute and punish people who failed to pay it (Isaacman and Isaacman 2004).[13] In this regard, colonial policies ranged from uncompromising attitudes to "ongoing negotiations and compromises with Africans and

[12] According to Rosalind Shaw (2002) the inhabitants of the Sierra Leone hinterland interpreted the slave trade as practiced by Europeans as part of a scheme whereby Europeans devoured slaves and sacrificed them to their God. This interpretation was reconfigured when the slave traders where African chiefs; these were then accused of using slaves to make powerful medicines.

[13] The bravery and intransigency of the Portuguese colonial officers and the *cipaios* was culturally codified through their vernacular nicknames, which evoked violence and fear, and through the emergence of spirits named *mucipaios* (see details in Igreja 2012).

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among themselves" (Spear 2003: 26). Local communities were unable to dominate the state structures, and colonial institutions held only slender legitimacy in the eyes of colonial subjects.

This reality, with people and their states existing in meshed worlds, both proximate and distant, was sustained into the postcolonial period through ongoing projects of radical social transformation. In some places, state officials maintained the witchcraft-suppression laws of the colonial era (Mesaki 2009; Niehaus 2001). In Cameroon, state judges, in collaboration with healers, convicted accused witches (Fisiy and Geschiere 1990). However, many aspects of these trials remain unclear, particularly who the judges were, the sorts of results these joint actions produced, and how the state's participation may have changed its image in the eyes of the public. Unfortunately, this dearth of information makes it hard to compare the Cameroon situation with the Mozambique one that I analyze here, despite their tantalizing surface similarities.

Various recent studies of accusations of cannibalism and witchcraft report that their origins are unknown (Masquelier 2000), but that they nonetheless come to dominate events in the public sphere, giving the impression of "a dramatic intensification" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Geschiere 1997; Moore and Sanders 2001). The cases that erupted in Gorongosa, by contrast, allow us to contextualize the mobilizing force of beliefs and fears about cannibals and witches (Ernst 1999) because we know the role played by a few aggrieved individuals. They expose how cannibal fears and accusations can shape the dynamics of state legitimacy, authority, and submission.

In Gorongosa, accusations of cannibalism are relatively common, and are related to the "wider constellation of ideas concerning mystical power in general and witchcraft in particular" (Lewis 1986: 92). Linguistically, there is no specific Chi-Gorongose term for cannibalism, only *uroi* (witches). Yet, cannibalism is feared and abhorred across the area's various religious affiliations and loyalties (Strathern 1982; Turner 1957). These ubiquitous anxieties are grounded in beliefs that certain aspects of a person's constitution can trigger magical malevolence. It is believed that everyone is born with six spirits—two each from the father, the mother, and the man or woman themselves—that are, in principle, inoffensive. Witchcraft can originate from either conscious or unconscious desires to do *ku timizira*, that is, to increase the number of spirits that a person is born with. The means through which one acquires these extra spirits entails the risk that one will become a witch and cannibalistic, and thus harm people and create major conflicts.

Also key to the vibrancy of these beliefs is the condition of uncertainty and vulnerability that is embedded in the culture and people's social relations. This is expressed, for instance, in people continuously developing new medicines to enhance abilities in almost every aspect of social life: talking, sexual intercourse, marriage, birth, harvesting, and stealing, and obtaining power, submission, and so forth. The sense of uncertainty and vulnerability was

intensified by the protracted years of civil war. The prewar social world was dominated by ancestral spirits called *madzoca*, which possess people who belong to lineages descended from them. The civil war provoked different syntheses and continuities in the spiritual realm. The *madzoca* no longer dominate society today because of *gamba*, the spirits of male soldiers who died in the civil war (Igreja, Dias-Lambranca, and Richters 2008). They afflict people of the wartime and postwar generations because, allegedly, living people during the war killed innocents or violated the bodies of fallen soldiers by consuming their flesh or bones to make medicines against the war suffering (Igreja et al. 2010). *Gamba* spirits can vindicate these wartime violations, but only if their bodies were medicinally prepared before they died (Honwana 2003).[14] The emergence of *gamba* spirits intensified the concerns with violence and human flesh consumption in postwar Gorongosa (Igreja 2013b), and also expressed the emergence of new representations of power and the sacred (Bernault 2006: 210). Those afflicted by *gamba* spirits are believed to have eaten a soldier's penis and testicles, while those accused of witchcraft are said to have eaten any part of a living and dead body.

The trio in Gorongosa ignited new cannibal accusation cases, but these differed from the more mundane variety. Most important to us here, they brought national and international media coverage of cannibal activities in Mozambique in 2006, and they implicated state institutions in extraordinary ways and over an extended period. The cases were located in a conceptual field that includes anthropophagy and eating human flesh as part of witchcraft.

The first case involved families from places in the valleys of Casa Banana, particularly those near RENAMO's former military headquarters, where people have memories of great ill fortune and peril. During the 1985 civil war, the Mozambican and Zimbabwean government armies joined forces to destroy RENAMO in an operation known as "the battle of Casa Banana." In the aftermath government officials reported in the state media that "Gorongosa is an enemy territory," and "the bandits, that were active in the Gorongosa region, are heavy drug consumers." They also said that the "armed bandits" practiced cannibalism as part of witchcraft rituals.[15] At the time, there were no independent verifications of these charges, and the only "evidence" presented was published pictures of human skulls. Twenty years later, in 2006, people from areas once controlled by RENAMO fed the cannibalism accusations and boosted their credibility, and this had geopolitical implications.

The case involved the death of a sick baby and intersected with cannibalism, witchcraft, and gender and fertility issues (Livingston 2005; Turner 1957). Immediately after the baby's burial, a second baby from the same extended

[14] On spirits vindicating violations perpetrated in contexts of political violence, compare Perera 2001 for Sri Lanka; and Mueggler 2001 for southwest China.
[15] Magazine *TEMPO*, 22 Sept. 1985.

family became seriously ill. The father, a young man named Samuel, accused his father of causing the tragedy, and threatened him. Both then consulted a female healer to determine the cause. Her diagnosis was that Samuel's grandmother, Joanota, was a witch involved in eating (*ku irdja*) babies. Joanota was summoned, and when she arrived the healer accused her again and commanded her to reveal her witchcraft activities. According to Samuel, "The baby spent twenty-four hours without crying, and every time we gave her something to eat the baby vomited; the baby was going to die." Joanota adamantly denied the accusations, even though she was threatened with violence if she refused (*upoca*) to take responsibility. Samuel claimed, "The healer ordered us to pass my sick baby to Joanota so that she could untie the witchcraft. When she carried the baby, the baby started crying, and when she gave her some food, the baby did not vomit anymore."[16]

Samuel said the baby's positive response to Joanota's care was proof to the accusers that she "was indeed a witch," who had carried out activities due to "malice" and for "appropriation of energy" (Colson 2000: 340; Lewis 1986). Just as this case appeared to be closed, one member of the trio arrived at the healer's house. He came in his capacity as the regional AMETRAMO membership-fee collector. He asked what was happening and when told said, "This is our case. This case cannot end here."[17] He took Joanota to the AMETRAMO headquarters in Vila, which is also the *lider*'s house, and the *lider* and his team took her to the Police District Command of the Republic of Mozambique (CD-PRM).

Presenting this case to the police was usual procedure. I had observed many family disputes related to spirits and witchcraft in which the sick person found it hard to gain his or her patrikin's help in pursuing the case. The former AMETRAMO leader Bola had often reported such cases to the police, whose officers, at their own discretion, officially ordered relatives to participate in resolving the conflict, under AMETRAMO's auspices. In these police-AMETRAMO relationships, state officials usually remained aloof and simply allowed AMETRAMO members to carry on their work at the state's margins. This self-distancing hampered both AMETRAMO's and the state's abilities to play central roles in addressing, in local terms, "the individual demand for order and coherence and control of uncertainty" (Douglas 1986: 19). In this case, however, the *lider* reported to the police, in Portuguese, that the accused had been "eating" people in her family. His use of the generic word for "eating" led the police officer to think the case was one of premeditated homicide for cannibalistic purposes, and that it was therefore a case for the police rather than AMETRAMO.

[16] Interview with Samuel, Casa Banana, 29 Dec. 2008.
[17] This was relayed to me in an interview with Azeite, Joanota's brother, 30 Dec. 2008.

Following Paul Ricoeur's (1976: 17) discussion of "the dialectic of event and meaning," it might be argued that, since "eating" is polysemic, the *lider* was caught in the trap of the ambiguity of discourse.[18] But in fact the *lider* intentionally transformed the usual terms of reference, and rather than eating as witchcraft, it became eating as cannibalism. This transformation proved crucial for changing the attitude of detachment that had characterized state officials in their relations with Gorongosa people. Had the *lider* clarified that he meant "eating as witchcraft," the officer would have given the family the usual official notification to facilitate AMETRAMO's work in a conflict resolution setting. The *lider* acted as he did because he wanted to initiate an intervention that would place him, as AMETRAMO's leader, and state institutions within the same realm of authority in maintaining Gorongosa's public safety. He hoped this strategy would lead state officials to recognize his protracted services to and sacrifices for the nation, and speed up the recognition and compensation he was still owed.

An immediate result was that Joanota's case entered the state's bureaucratic lexicon as an official report of an "accusation of homicide for eating human flesh." This report reached the Gorongosa district's police commander, who summoned the *lider* to learn more. The *lider* confirmed the report, adding that practices of "eating people" were a serious problem and that during the civil war there had been official reports of RENAMO cannibalism throughout the Casa Banana region.[19] The *lider*'s reference to these contested wartime memories were effective in providing historical continuity, and kept Joanota in prison pending further investigation.

That same week another case occurred, which brought with it an important "accident of geography" (Sahlins 1985). It happened in the middle of the Gorongosa Mountains, a region linked to both the RENAMO civil war rebels and the existence of mysterious forces. The case involved two brothers from a large family of healers named Samatendje, who live in a few small villages isolated in the hills commonly known as Samatendje area. It is believed that ferocious reptiles inhabit this area and protect the spirits of peace. Although the image of peace is projected to the external world, it does not prevail there. When I undertook research in this area in July 1997, the Samatendje were involved in serious family disputes. In a rare interview, one told me that he had replaced the patriarch, his deceased father, but that his elder brothers had not agreed to this. Such internal conflicts often end in killings of principal Samatendje healers.

The Samatendje man who initiated the 2006 case had lost several young babies to premature deaths, and had also been losing clients for some time. He accused one of his younger brothers, who suffered from impotence

[18] In the African Swahili-speaking region, taking advantage of public resources for purposes other than those officially prescribed is referred to as *ku kula*, which means "to eat" (Hyden 1983).
[19] Magazine *TEMPO*, 22 Sept. 1985.

(*ngomua*), of "eating his babies," and tortured him (see Turner 1957). The brother confessed to having received treatment from a neighboring healer, named Neva, who was not kin, but said the treatment was unrelated to witchcraft. The elder brother, in the company of his close aides, nevertheless tortured and threatened to kill Neva and his wives. They tied up both Neva and the *ngomua* brother and dragged them to the community court located in the valley below their village. In conversations with me, Neva asserted, "[The elder Samatendje] accused me of plotting with his brother to kill his babies and ruin his healing activities."[20] After hearing the case in the community court, the main judge ordered the accused released and proposed an official hearing at a later date.

The elder Samatendje was displeased with this decision; according to the judge, he had expected him to use his authority to further torture the accused to make them publicly confess their evil deeds.[21] Dissatisfied with the outcome, he took his case to the local AMETRAMO delegation and, together with a member of the trio, reported the case in Vila da Gorongosa. Upon learning of the case there, the *lider* took it to police, presenting it, again, as a case of cannibalism. In a meeting with the commander the *lider* reiterated the perils that the cannibals represented for public order, and added that the community court judge was complicit since he had failed to refer the case to the police. The police commander included the two alleged cannibalism cases in his semestral (January–June 2006) report of criminal occurrences in the district, which he submitted to the Police Provincial Command based in Sofala province's capital, Beira. As I have said, the Mozambican state had in the 1990s initiated reforms, and these created public relations departments in every ministry, which were to communicate the results of their activities to the media at periodic briefings. It was at this stage that the cannibalism cases gained heightened attention—based on the police media briefing, journalists declared the cases "newsworthy." This was to change their very nature.

MEDIA, LANGUAGE, AND THE POPULARIZATION OF THE CANNIBAL ACCUSATIONS

The majority of the journalists in Sofala province were based in Beira, working for either the private or public media. They demanded the police release more information about the cannibals in Gorongosa. A leading state criminologist told me that the media had forced them to take the case more seriously.[22] The involvement of journalists created a double contingency (Sahlins 1985: 145): it accelerated the police investigation of the criminal offenses, and led

[20] Interview with Neva, Gorongosa Mountains, 6 Aug. 2007.
[21] Interview with Manessa, Sandjundjira, 6 Aug. 2007.
[22] Interview with director of the Police of Criminal Investigation Branch A., Filipe, Beira, 19 Dec. 2008.

to the rapid ascendancy of the trio to dominate state structures in Gorongosa. Both police and journalists were operating within the familiar Eurocentric view that "cannibalism by definition is an observable phenomenon" (Arens 1978: 21). The police tried to keep control of the news by restricting the flow of information, while journalists were interested in sensationalism, financial considerations, and to a certain extent political factors. The journalists and criminologists possessed variable language skills; some interviewed the accused using Chi-Sena, which is similar to the local language, and others Portuguese with translations provided by the trio of gatekeepers.

The provincial commander asked the district office to provide him with more information so he could complete his semester report. According to the *lider*, when "the police commander ordered his subordinates to pick me up at home so that I could participate in the investigation of these cases," it seemed as if he was starting to get the recognition he had sought for so long.[23] He and his two subordinates were given a police convoy to search for the healer Neva. When they arrived at Neva's house the *lider* put aside the Eurocentric view of cannibalism, and warned the police officers not to move too much, because "when viewing human remains there is a need to follow a traditional process, otherwise the person risks becoming blind."[24] The *lider*'s ruling that there should be traditional mediation in the case enhanced his position of authority. The police officer told me, "I was afraid to get closer to the sites of the human remains." When asked if he believed in witchcraft, he replied, "As a police officer I do not believe, but as a human being I believe." Consequently, the officer did not apply the indigenous medicines and stood at a remove. Retrospectively, he thought that he had made the right decision because his "colleague, Vasco Mambo, who went to Casa Banana and got closer, ended up dying some months later."[25] When the police stood aside, this allowed the trio to control how events unfolded and to entangle the state in their personal self-conceptions and interests (Sahlins 1985: 138).

DRAWING THE STATE INTO LOCAL PRACTICES

Over the several months that followed, the trio succeeded in integrating cannibal and witchcraft language, and the techniques deemed necessary to eliminate it, into the outlook and practice of the secular state. The state's indigenization included the trio's use of physical violence, as well as the use of "vaccinations" with remedies obtained from cannibals and witches in the state's prison. Treatments of police officers and the police station were staged. The state employed its lethal weapons, prison system, automobiles, phones, and typewriters, all to

[23] Interview with the *lider*, Gorongosa, 7 Jan. 2009.
[24] Interview with police officer, Gorongosa, 14 Jan. 2009.
[25] Ibid.

capture cannibals and witches, prevent their reproduction in society, and command their obedience. The *lider* also managed to make the district police commander and his subordinates obey his orders. As the state rehearsed these new techniques securing obedience in local cultural terms, the state itself became vulnerable to strikes by witches and cannibals.

As the trio and the accompanying police convoy arrested Neva, they tried to force him to show them where the human remains were hidden. When Neva denied their accusations, the *lider* told me, "I beat the wife of Neva so that she would reveal the instruments of witchcraft." The use of violence as such is not alien to the culture, and people recognize that violence can be transformative. "Neva succumbed to the pressure," the *lider* told me. "We went to the cemetery and he released a corpse of someone that had passed away three years earlier but the body was clean; it looked like new." These observations led the *lider* to conclude, "The case of Neva is the one that really helped us understand how witches work; Neva extracted small bags of fresh human flesh."[26]

If the *lider*'s observations seem to us to "threaten the alterity of the indigenous" (Fortun, Fortun, and Rubenstein 2010: 231), this did not concerned him or his group. He was thoroughly convinced that the trio had managed to uncover the most terrifying techniques of cannibals and witches only by appropriating the state's powers. Locally, this was a significant achievement since it responded to the peoples' desire for revelations that would bring them order and security. This notion of borrowed powers was articulated with no hint of inconsistency, because people in Gorongosa, as in many parts of the African continent, do not always distinguish between secular and religious forms of power (Pels 1999).

These allegations were problematic nonetheless, since the *lider*'s version of the events in the cemetery differs from that given by the police, and Neva and his wives denied his accusations.[27] Neva said that the bones were those of lamb and pigs, and that the trio picked up his *ntsango* (basket which contains the healing spirits and instruments) and placed it in the mortuary house in Vila.[28] The trio, always accompanied by an entourage of heavily armed police, continued to arrest people, including the community court judge. Their contemporaries saw the process the trio unleashed to be noteworthy. The president of the community court acknowledged, "AMETRAMO and the police had unleashed an *ofensiva* [crusade] in Gorongosa against cannibals. I spent nine days in prison in Vila da Gorongosa and during two days I was severely interrogated about human remains."[29]

[26] Interview with the *lider*, Gorongosa, 7 Jan. 2009.
[27] Office of the Prosecutor, Sofala Province, Report of Abstention, File 110/PRS/2007. Beira, 16 May 2007.
[28] Interview with Neva, Gorongosa, 6 Aug. 2007.
[29] Interview with Manessa, Gorongosa, 6 Aug. 2007.

Meanwhile, journalists were escalating their demands for access to and interviews with the alleged cannibals. The police were pressured to generate more convincing evidence of human remains and cannibalism to corroborate their official report. The trio intensified their torture techniques and extracted a confession from Joanota, the first suspect incarcerated in the state prison. The *lider* said that she admitted to having hidden human remains inside her hut and that she was not alone in this activity.[30] The trio, the police, and Joanota all went back to her house in Casa Banana and also to that of her relative and neighbor Chinanazi. During this operation, the *lider* confidently revealed to me, "I beat them three times and Chinanazi fell down and pretended to have died. We carried her and laid her beneath the sun, and I ordered my colleagues to bring me a cutlass so that I could cut her legs and arms. She woke up, alarmed and afraid, and told us to go into her hut to extract the human remains."[31]

Yet Chinanazi gave me a different account: "They were ordering us to pick up our hoes and dig inside our huts to remove the instruments of witchcraft."[32] The technique of linking the witch's body to his or her hut, and the extraction of material evidence of witchcraft by digging it up inside it, had been highlighted by a group of witch-finders (*tsica-mutandas*) that swept through Gorongosa before these cannibal cases surfaced (see Green 1997; Pels 1999). The Gorongosa healers, and the people generally, believed that this technique increased authenticity and transparency in the struggle against witches, and over time more healers started to use it. Coerced by the violence, Chinanazi accused her sister-in-law Faraminha, who was also her neighbor, of being a witch. The torture and the confessions it induced generated a chain of denunciations among older women. The spread of guilty operates as a mechanism of defense among witches. The Maka in East Cameroon use a similar strategy of spreading guilt as a defense mechanism (Fisiy and Geschiere 1990). In Gorongosa, this tactic exhausted both the accusers and police investigators. The net results of this *ofensiva* were the arrest of six persons and the gathering of various kinds of objects said to be human remains and instruments of cannibals. The latter became important in the media coverage of the cannibalism accusations.

The first report of the story in a Mozambican newspaper had a carefully worded title: "Presumed Cannibals Arrested in Gorongosa: A Husband and Wife."[33] This title was significant in that it linked cannibalism with Gorongosa, a place associated with the RENAMO opposition, and in this regard this news story carried political connotations. The news story that was circulated internationally, via the BBC, did not specify what part of the country was involved:

[30] Interview with the *lider*, Gorongosa, 7 Jan. 2009.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Interview with Chinanazi, Casa Banana, 26 Dec. 2008.
[33] Newspaper Diário de Moçambique, 15 Aug. 2006, Beira.

"Cannibals confess in Mozambique: A husband and wife in Mozambique face multiple charges after confessing to exhuming corpses to eat the flesh and powdered bones, say police."[34] The journalistic investigation for this story was shoddy, being based solely on what police told the BBC journalist. A subsequent report in the Mozambican newspaper carried a more assertive title: "A Couple from Gorongosa Confesses Cannibalism: Children's Flesh Is the Most Preferred."[35] This time, the newspaper included a picture of Neva and his wife standing together beside a collection of objects said to be human bones. Its grainy quality makes it difficult to decipher.

Although the trio had arrested six people, both newspapers singled out the couple. Perhaps the couple made the "probable more attractive" (Ricoeur 1976: 48) in that they related cannibalism to family obligations and intimacy. In this respect, the couple constituted a "composite imagetext" involving "complex intersections of representation and discourse" (Mitchell 1994: 327), which consistently corresponded with the interests of the written media, the trio, and urban newspaper readers. Only Mozambican state television (TVM), which filmed the prison yard as a whole, showed all of the detainees.[36]

SCREENING THE CANNIBALS AND THEIR ACCUSERS

The provincial police commander in Beira created an ad-hoc commission of inquiry, headed by the provincial director of the Criminal Investigation Branch, to investigate the allegations using a scientific approach. To respond to the questions posed by the procession of criminologists and journalists, Joanota instructed her relatives, "We are no longer living people; we are just flesh, so we have to make similar confessions."[37] This approach followed a cultural practice called *tchitso* (to surrender), and it proved an adroit strategy in this context, and indicated the elderly women's intelligence.[38] They exaggerated their confessions with surreal claims of their witching capabilities. This bewildered the state criminologists and the journalists, and left them confused about the trio's cannibalism accusations.

According to the Criminal Investigation Branch director, "These defendants told very bizarre stories. They said that they used to open the graves in the cemetery without touching them." He concluded that either "this case was either related to black magic or these people were mentally ill."[39] This

[34] BBC MMVIII. At: http://www.rawstory.com/showoutarticle.php?src=http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4801177.stm (accessed, 17 Aug. 2006).
[35] Diário de Moçambique, 16 Aug. 2006.
[36] Newscast of the Mozambican Television company (TVM), 18 Aug. 2006.
[37] Interview with Chinanazi, Casa Banana, 26 Dec. 2008.
[38] In cases where the accused feels overwhelmed by an accusation, it is possible to do *tchitso* (or *xittso*, *phitso*), which means to surrender and accept culpability, even if allegedly innocent, in the face of unbearable pressures.
[39] Interview with Criminal Investigation Branch director, Beira, 19 Dec. 2008.

conclusion perplexed the Gorongosa police. Their leaders were split between those who defined the case as a homicide and those who saw it as a matter of grave robbing. But since no corpses had been found, neither view made much sense.[40] Journalists from the print media were also confounded because, as one later told me, "When we used to pose the questions [the alleged cannibals] used to say 'yes, yes.' When we repeated the same question, they would answer 'no, no'; these people were not mentally well…."[41]

Although the journalists received confusing answers, they did not mention this in their news stories. Faced with the strategies employed by the accused, and the Criminal Investigation Branch director's position that these "issues were not empirically, neither scientifically, detectable," both the commission of inquiry and the journalists shifted the onus onto the *lider*, who was asked to clarify the relationship between cannibalism and what the accused were saying.[42] The *lider* grew defensive when the journalists pointed out that "*gamba* healers" were the real cannibals. Although he is not a *gamba* healer himself, he countered this innuendo by insisting that traditional medicines were necessary to finding cannibals.

Confronting mounting skepticism, the *lider* tried to redeem himself by revealing to journalists, "On the first night that the alleged cannibal couple was arrested, a huge cobra appeared in the prison cell … because unlike the other police agents, who had been treated before going into the cemetery, the agents who started working during that night shift had not been treated."[43] The journalist who published this statement failed to grasp its implications;[44] the *lider* was revealing that he had been in control of the police station, giving police officers treatments and cleansing their offices because the station had become vulnerable to witch and cannibal attacks. The *lider* told me of a phone conversation, which he had with the provincial governor, after this episode, "The provincial governor furiously warned me not to reveal state secrets to the public."[45] If true, then the notion of state secrets had been expanded to include techniques of disarming witches and cannibals when state institutions were threatened.

Based on the results obtained by the Criminal Investigation Branch director, the provincial police commander gave a nationally televised press conference. After presenting the institutional understanding of cannibalism, he stated, "Hitherto there has been no evidence found that indicates the existence of homicidal practices aimed at the consumption of human flesh."[46] He was

[40] Interview with Gorongosa police officer, Gorongosa, 14 Jan. 2009.
[41] Interview with A. Chimundo, Gorongosa, 18 Jan. 2009.
[42] Interview with Dr. A. Filipe, Beira, 19 Dec. 2008.
[43] Diário de Moçambique, 16 Aug. 2006.
[44] Diário de Moçambique, 16 Aug. 2006.
[45] Interview with the *lider*, Gorongosa, 10 Dec. 2006.
[46] Press conference, Mozambican state television (TVM), Beira, 18 Aug. 2006.

less conclusive about the authenticity of the alleged human bones. Despite this, one journalist reported that there were "human bones found in the possession of the five detainees in the Gorongosa district prison," and that "the investigation continues in the Gorongosa region to determine the circumstances and the mystery of humans possessing bones of other humans in an act that can only be called heinous."[47] This claim that human bones had been found in the detainees' possession is problematic since the journalist-photographer told me that he had not entered the mortuary house to photograph the bones because he was afraid to wash his face with the potions.[48] Moreover, the defendants had denied it all, and claimed the objects consisted of "little pieces of wood, spiders, ashes, and sand."[49] The community court judge stated, "If they found remnants of human bones, these were bones of victims who died during the famine in the civil war."

The trio eventually captured the remaining fugitive, but no further evidence was produced. The alleged cannibals were incarcerated for three months until they were released under the Identity Residence Term, which meant that the prosecutor could have them re-arrested if new evidence were found. On the occasion of their release, the trio closely monitored the process, performing a treatment on them inside the prison: "We vaccinated the bodies of the witches; we vaccinated their arms and legs inside the prison."[50] The group was also given a warning: "They told us that if we continued to practice cannibalism then we would die."[51]

VIOLENCE AND THE TRIO'S DECLINE

During the nearly eight months that the trio routinely worked as state representatives, they proved unable to control their postwar frustrations, and the more they captured alleged cannibals, the more violence they used against them. I observed earlier that the local culture accommodates violence, and in some contexts violence or the threat of it have been the real drivers of state formation in Mozambique. But the problem of the trio was that, at this stage, they ceased to deploy violence strategically—they imagined that they might control and dominate everyone solely through violence.

Eventually, three things happened that compromised the trio's future: the prosecutor's office released its final judgment on the accused cannibals, a new district commander was appointed for the Gorongosa police, and opinion turned against the trio when they badly beat a woman and she was left lying in front of the police station. Let me briefly summarize these.

[47] Journalist reporting at the occasion of the press conference, Mozambican state television (TVM), 18 Aug. 2006.
[48] Informal talk with a journalist-photographer, Beira, 18 Jan. 2009.
[49] Interview with Chinanazi, Casa Banana, 26 Dec. 2008.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Interview with Faraminha, Casa Banana, 26 Dec. 2008.

In his final judgment, the prosecutor's office magistrate acquitted the defendants, citing insufficient evidence. Regarding the human bones, he wrote, "[The] lawsuit indicates that the solicitation made to the Beira Central Hospital's Department of Forensic Medicine to analyze the alleged human bones was never responded to."[52] This point was controversial because during the national press conference the provincial police commander had told the media that the examination of human bones "was done by a competent scientific authority linked to the health sector."[53]

As to the charge of violating graves, the magistrate said the lawsuit records did not indicate that the cemeteries had been examined directly, and that "the president of AMETRAMO [the *lider*] affirmed that he also closed his eyes based on the request made by Neva in the cemetery."[54] Perhaps this means that even the *lider*, who had ordered the police and journalists to wash their faces with potions as a precondition for seeing the remnants of human flesh, had not seen the alleged violations of graves. Or the magistrate in Beira may have misunderstood the *lider*'s testimony because it was loaded with local cultural meanings. The *lider*'s testimony may also have been misinterpreted in order to close the case quickly, to avoid engaging a new series of investigations that could cause the case to drag on. In any case, the magistrate concluded that the defendants had been unfairly charged. While four of them survived the ordeal, two died from illnesses due to a lack of proper treatment.

In September of 2007, the trio severely beat a woman and broke her arm because she refused to confess to cannibalism. I happened to be visiting the Gorongosa police station to interview the new commander, and saw her body lying, as if dead, in front of it. With this, the commander turned against the trio, at least momentarily, and ordered their arrest. They spent fourteen days in prison and were tried and convicted in the Gorongosa official court. Because of their intimate relations with state agents their sentences were commuted to fines. However, their actions in this case were to have a lasting impact on their position.

By this time, though, the trio and their actions had ceased to be the central issue. More meaningful was that people in Gorongosa had taken in, and were debating, the idea that state institutions were effectively involved in the struggles against witches and cannibals. Police officers, and to a certain extent the judiciary, were convinced that the state's authority and legitimacy were being seriously compromised by their ignorance of the dynamics of local culture.

[52] Office of the Prosecutor, file 110/PRS/2007, Beira, 16 May 2007.
[53] Press conference, Mozambican state television (TVM), 18 Aug. 2006.
[54] Office of the Prosecutor, File no. 110/PRS/2007, Beira, 16 May 2007.

THE FUTURE OF THE STATE'S INDIGENIZATION

This article has outlined a process of contested social transformation, constituted by an ongoing synthesis of individual interests and struggles, and cultural, geopolitical, and mass media formations. This process was shaped by the trio's strategic and contingent use of fears and accusations of cannibalism and witchcraft, and its acme was the unintended establishment of an indigenous state government in Gorongosa. This is particularly striking when we consider that the FRELIMO postcolonial government had vowed in the late 1970s to establish a socialist revolution that would violently eradicate indigenous ways. Those goals were never achieved, but the revolution did alienate large segments of the population, and in some regions it fueled popular support for the RENAMO rebels in their insurgent war against the FRELIMO government.

By the 1980s, the revolution had left state structures in disarray nationwide, with their legitimacy and authority undermined. Starting in the mid-1980s, Mozambican state officials enacted political reforms to address the postcolonial predicament. Their goals were to reconcile with large segments of the alienated population, establish a basis for ending the civil war, and pave the way for establishing state legitimacy and authority. Mozambique's postcolonial government differed from those African states that maintained colonial policies of suppressing accusations of witchcraft and cannibalism; it created no mechanisms to address the fears and insecurity people felt due to what they believed was the evolving power of witches and cannibals. State officials remained aloof, and failed to address the need to establish meaningful social order and security everywhere. As a result, while the state was present in many rural areas around the country, its legitimacy and authority were felt only on the fringes of people's everyday lives. Few people saw the state institutions to be valid interlocutors in their search for solutions to immediate problems.

Within this larger context, the trio addressed the problem by rescuing specific elements of local cultural practices, and making them central to state structures. As a result, locals perceived the state to have acquired the capacity to command obedience from cannibals and witches both old and new. From a state-building perspective, such perceptions are crucial to political order because it is the perceived legitimacy of the government that binds together a population willing to accept its authority (Fukuyama 2011). At a general level, the trio's actions paralleled processes of indigenization that involved translating transnational ideas of human rights to make them meaningful in local settings (Merry 2006). There are also parallels with historical instances of colonial state officials engaging witchcraft-related methods and actors to combat witchcraft-driven challenges to state authority (Luongo 2012: 5).

What made the trio's actions a peculiar form of state-building was the way in which they elevated the state's powers to dominate witches and cannibals, while also forcing the state to submit to the powers of witches and cannibals. As a result, the state's power unexpectedly "grew upward" (Donham 1999).

The trio believed that they garnered the sympathy of one important state official in Sofala Province, the *lider* claiming: "The provincial governor solicited me twice for meetings in his office in Beira to report about the unfolding of events and he used to phone me to gain clarification of the situation." As to the *lider*'s overdue reparation for his wartime services and losses, he reported, "The governor said 'the state knows you and the state does not forget its sons….'" The governor, the *lider* said, "advised me to buy a television so that I can watch the government news about veterans' issues."[55] The words "the state knows you" did not resolve the *lider*'s grievances, but they were reassuring. When I also discussed with the *lider* his imprisonment, he stated, "The previous police commander, José Cumbe, knew the situation required for the people to live with freedom; that was a real commander." He also lamented, "The new police commander, Inácio Cipriano, defends the witches. He is worthless," implying that the trio's efforts had been in vain.[56]

These comments reveal that the *lider* underestimated the trio's impact, and this is consistent with the idea that in the midst of transformative events, "people are often unclear about precisely what kind of event it is they are witnessing" (Asad 2003: 222). On the occasion of our interview, the *lider* was unaware of the metamorphosis that the new police commander and the state prosecutor were to undergo over time. One police officer told me, with a certain sense of triumph, that the trio in partnership with the state had gained the reputation of dislodging witchcraft from the land to the extent that "the witches are afraid now."[57] I heard this assertion repeated often by various Gorongosa inhabitants, and it displays the emergence of a new way of thinking about the state's power and authority. When the police officer told me that the witches were afraid "now," he implied that the state had subdued the witches and that if they disturbed the order again, the state would respond appropriately. As the memories of these events flow and are reproduced in local communities, the people internalize and consolidate the idea that only centralized authorities can deal effectively with witches and cannibals.

All of that said, when the trio implanted cultural modes and strategies of conflict resolution in state practices, it had political implications, and some healers disparaged it. During the heyday of the trio's operations, victims of witchcraft accessed the ability of state institutions to deal with their cases,

[55] Interview with the *lider*, Gorongosa, 7 Jan. 2009.
[56] ibid.
[57] Interview, police officer, Gorongosa, 5 Jan. 2009.

and came to recognize them as legitimate institutions for resolving local problems.

The flip side of the trio's impact was changes in the local procedures for handling these types of cases. Before, when people suffered misfortunes that they believed to be caused by harmful spirits or witchcraft, they and their patrikin consulted multiple healers. For, in order to determine the culprits, and decide with finality whether a suspect ate people or not, at least three healers had to be consulted. From the perspective of healers, this procedure reduced the uncertainty that always surrounds such cases, whereas from a legal perspective it expressed an aversion to the centralizing tendencies in conflict resolution.[58] One healer lamented that, under the *lider* and his group, instead of people consulting different healers, "they used to arrive in someone's house without warning and take the person to have the case resolved in Vila."[59]

These same healers who criticized the *lider* were negotiating with various defendants in their neighborhoods—in exchange for full disclosure of their cannibal activities, they would ignore the new rule that required them to turn the case over to the state institutions represented by the trio. Because people feared being taken to Vila—a place synonymous with state police and imprisonment—they accepted this deal. This generated paradoxical results: by accepting it, defendants consolidated the perception that state institutions were directly involved in the struggle against witches and cannibals, but at the same time their acceptance of the healers' offers weakened the consolidation process of the new rule.

When we contextualize the impacts of the trio and the state, it becomes evident that, as Comaroff and Comaroff have said, ethnographers and their interlocutors "only 'see' fragments of a cultural field" (1992: 16). Long-term research is required to better grasp the full implications of these fragments. In this case, that means understanding of the constitutive power of certain indigenous beliefs and practices in post-conflict state-building, as well as the roles played by social actors and their sometimes perfidious strategies. Through my long-term research in Gorongosa, I was able to observe these events as they evolved. I saw how, during the trio's rule, one state agent's premature death was interpreted by his fellow police officers, and the people in general, as having been the result of malevolent powers of cannibals and witches. I saw the serious consequences this had for the state's everyday processes and practices in Gorongosa. As memories of this event circulated and triggered fears, this continuously shaped how state agents interacted with local people.

[58] When I initiated my fieldwork in 1997, judges in traditional courts often demanded of the litigants to say whether they had first consulted low courts and, if so, the resolution that they had been given.

[59] Interview with healer Macorreia, leader of a neighborhood AMETRAMO delegation, Casa Banana, 30 Dec. 2008.

Subsequent, similar cases fortified the links between state institutions and indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices. A few final examples will help to illustrate this.

In January of 2009, a detainee escaped from the state prison, while the guards said they felt paralyzed and unable to stop him. Some weeks later, with the help of an AMETRAMO affiliated healer, the police managed to recapture him, and he told them a healer named "The-Stretcher" had given him a medicine that allowed him to escape unmolested. Their commander summoned The-Stretcher to his office and warned him not to render state institutions powerless through witchcraft again. He asked him to instead use his techniques to help the government's quinquennial program of crime reduction and prevention, in the same way that AMETRAMO did.[60]

In a related case involving the judiciary, The-Stretcher employed his techniques to mobilize his village to rebel against the community leader, whom the aforementioned Decree Law 15/2000 had made a de jure member of the state. The population suspected that this leader had sold the Gorongosa Mountains to the white officials of Gorongosa National Park. These officials had placed radio communication antennas in the mountains, and people blamed this for a drought in 2010, the worst since the end of the civil war.

Through an oracle revelation, The-Stretcher confirmed the truth of this, and that the spirits that inhabit the mountains were offended by the presence of metals. He also revealed that the community leader was, as people had often charged, *folgado* (relaxed) during the drought and resulting food crisis because he had made a deal with park officials that brought him food, money, and a car that was being shipped to Gorongosa. This sparked a revolt during which the leader was beaten and the antennas destroyed. The state's Rapid Intervention Force was summoned from Beira city to control the uprising, and they arrested The-Stretcher and other men and charged them with various criminal offenses (see Igreja and Racin 2013, for a comprehensive analysis of this popular revolt).

Some months after The-Stretcher had been tried and sentenced to prison, the case's prosecutor—who had recently completed his university legal education and knew that I was investigating such cases—asked me for my thoughts on the case. He told me that he was asking because, while he and the chief judge had sentenced The-Stretcher to prison, he thought there was something amiss with the trial. Some days after the destruction of the antennas, he said, it started raining heavily in Gorongosa. This made him suspect The-Stretcher's oracle revelations had been correct, and that he had been unfairly convicted. While The-Stretcher was in prison he continued to perform oracle revelations and various clients visited him for consultations and treatments. The-Stretcher

[60] AMETRAMO is mentioned because The-Stretcher fought with and split from AMETRAMO led by the *lider*, and joined a new association of healers specializing in botanical medicines.

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told me that he used part of the money he earned in this way to provide prison guards with stipends, since the state often delayed their salary payments for months on end.[61]

These various cases of healers, witches, cannibals, oracles, and spirits influencing societal order and disorder have changed state court procedures. Between January and May of 2011, the court decided in favor of young men (*fiancés*) who argued that spirits had infiltrated their girls' (*fiancées*) bicycle saddles and were breaking their virginity as they rode them. The young men were entitled to receive *ku fewa* (financial and material compensation) from the girl's parents for the loss of their honor.[62]

One cumulative effect of these and similar cases is that central state officials have tried to further reform the state in ways that will promote culturally localized state bureaucracies.[63] The Mozambican Council of Ministers recently approved a resolution to introduce the figure of the "interpreter" into local administrations. In the colonial past, this figure translated local languages and cultural beliefs and practices for the colonial administrator in order to facilitate his rule. The Mozambican government also approved an extension of the de jure recognition of community authorities to include assistants of the former *regulos* (*n'fumos* and chiefs of the zones).[64] These measures will expand the apparatus of indigenous and religious leaders within state institutions, and deepen in further, complex ways the dynamic process of state indigenization.

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[61] Informal conversation in Gorongosa, 11 June 2010. At the time, The-Stretcher was still serving his prison sentence, but the prison guards allowed him to go home and visit his family. I met him and chatted with him at a Vila Paiva main bus stop.

[62] These cases caught by surprise the judges of the community courts, one of the enforcers of customary rulings, because in one case the state court had resolved, when the female judges of the community court took the girl to determine her virginity status, they declared to the court, "There is no space even for an ant to penetrate it." This declaration contradicted the state court, which had agreed that the girl was no longer a virgin and that her fiancé was entitled to *ku fewa*.

[63] In the aftermath of the cannibal case, another type of case has kept police officers busy with local beliefs and practices. These are related to the emergence in 2009 of *wanapatchi* (dwarfs), said to be slaves of some rich people. They are said to use *wanapatchi*, through sophisticated techniques, to steal large sums of money from other rich people.

[64] See note 10.

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Abstract: This article explores how accusations of cannibalism in post-conflict Mozambique, which were leveled in the context of individually driven and protracted struggles, albeit with cultural spinoffs, have contributed to ongoing and contested forms of social transformation in the country. The accusations were accentuated by the mobilizing effects of memories of violence and interventions of the mass media, which in turn highlighted the enduring struggle over the politics of local recognition and authority and its dynamic and broader links to state-building and legitimacy in Mozambique. This analysis traces the origins of cannibal accusations in culture and politics and, through a discussion of the biographies of concrete social actors and their open and discreet struggles, has wider repercussions for the study of the role of indigenous beliefs about, and fears of, cannibals and witches on state-building in post-conflict countries.