

**Chronopolitics:
Public events and the temporalities of state power in Mozambique**

Euclides Gonçalves

A thesis submitted to the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg, February 2012

Abstract

This thesis examines state organised public events as a way to understand the nature and modalities of state power in contemporary Mozambique. My research is based on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork in the districts of Inharrime and Zavala, in the Southern Province of Inhambane. During this period I interviewed and followed the everyday work of state officials and bureaucrats and observed public meetings, political rallies, inauguration ceremonies, celebrations of commemorative dates and public holidays, state visits by “high dignitaries” and resulting *orientações* - authoritative written and oral documents that are generally taken by local state officials and bureaucrats as guidelines for the implementation of government policies and programs. I also conducted archival research at the district and provincial level from where I obtained some of the regulatory documents and reports referred to in my analysis.

I argue that state organised public events produce a chronopolitics upon which rests the reproduction of the state. The research highlights three temporalities that are constitutive of such chronopolitics. The first temporality I have called the “time of agitation” in which the quiet days of the routine bureaucratic practices are punctuated by the *nhima-nhima* (agitation) caused by visits of “high dignitaries.” Such visits constitute occasions for the performance of state visibility and the presentation of hierarchies. This is done through the marshalling of crowds to participate in “warm receptions” and “mass rallies” for the visiting “high dignitaries.” It is also during visits of “high dignitaries” that state officials mark the territory by displaying state symbols, disseminating official discourse and presenting high ranking officials as the embodiment of the state. The second temporality I have termed the “time of performativity.” Here the analysis focuses on platforms set up for public rallies on which state officials, bureaucrats and members of the public negotiate what can be said and how it can be said. It is also on these platforms that government declared policies and programs are performatively accomplished by “talking” about them. The third temporality is the “time of provisionality”, a result of state officials and bureaucrats’ strategic use of timing. Here the key resources are *orientações*. In everyday bureaucratic practice, the continuous revision of these regulatory documents determines the pace of policy implementation.

While for analytical purposes I have distinguished three temporalities, my ethnographic accounts point to the intersections between them to reveal a mode of state power I have termed chronopolitics. In doing so, this thesis provides an analytical counterpoint to dominant instrumental readings of power that see political action only in terms of the negotiation of consent. The results of my interpretation of state organized public events show that neither state officials and bureaucrats nor members of the public work only with instrumental interests of that kind in view. The immediate effect occasioned by the staging and participation in state organised public events is the inscription of state officials, bureaucrats and members of the public alike in the temporalities of the state.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work, and has never been published elsewhere or submitted to fulfill the requirements of any other degree. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Johannesburg, 15 February 2012

Table of contents

ACRONYMS.....	III
GLOSSARY	IV
NOTES ON THE TEXT AND TERMINOLOGY	V
LIST OF CASES.....	VII
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	VIII
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	IX
INTRODUCTION	1
PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	1
STUDYING THE STATE	7
RITUALIZING PUBLIC EVENTS.....	12
AFRICAN STATE ORGANIZED PUBLIC EVENTS.....	16
STUDY AREA AND DATA	23
<i>Data generation</i>	26
THESIS OUTLINE	32
PART I. HISTORICAL SCENES	36
CHAPTER ONE.....	37
THE BUREAUCRATIC ETHOS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE	37
INTRODUCTION	37
COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION.....	39
THE ENEMY IN STATE BUREAUCRACY	42
<i>Offensives and purges</i>	44
IN CONTINUOUS VIGILANCE	48
A “RULE OF PRACTICE...”	53
CONCLUSION	58
CHAPTER TWO	60
QUIET DAYS: SCENES OF INTERACTION.....	60
INTRODUCTION	60
ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS.....	60
<i>The povoado</i>	60
<i>The localidade</i>	67
<i>The administrative post</i>	72
<i>The District Administration</i>	74
OFFICIALS AND BUREAUCRATS IN ACTION	76
<i>Mobilization: “government” and “political work”</i>	76
<i>Of tax collection</i>	79
<i>Of patriotic education</i>	81
CONCLUSION	82
PART II. THE TIME OF AGITATION	84
CHAPTER THREE	85
NHIMA-NHIMA: STATE VISITS BY “HIGH DIGNITARIES”	85
INTRODUCTION	85
THE USUAL ACTORS... ..	87
IN CONTINUOUS PREPARATION	91
<i>Preparatory meetings</i>	92
<i>Mobilization, platforms and quick fixes</i>	93

<i>Continuous changes of dates</i>	97
NHIMA-NHIMA!	98
THE TIME OF AGITATION: <i>NHIMA-NHIMA</i> AS PERFORMANCE	108
CONCLUSION	109
CHAPTER FOUR.....	111
<i>XITIKU NI MBAULA</i> AND THE PERFORMANCE OF TERRITORIALITY.....	111
INTRODUCTION	111
ON “OPEN GOVERNANCE”	113
EXCHANGING EXPERIENCES, MARKING TERRITORY	115
THE <i>XITIKU NI MBAULA</i>	118
THE <i>XITIKU NI MBAULA</i> AS AN EVENT OF PRESENTATION	127
CONCLUSION	128
PART III. THE TIME OF PERFORMATIVITY	130
CHAPTER FIVE.....	131
OFFICIALDOM ON THE PLATFORM	131
INTRODUCTION	131
THE SPEECH GENRES OF OFFICIALDOM	132
<i>The hortatory speech: mobilization through identification</i>	138
<i>The pedagogic speech: the enemies of the people</i>	140
<i>The celebratory speech and “the great accomplishments”</i>	142
POLITICO-LITURGICAL DIALOGUES, SLOGANS AND JOKES	144
CONCLUSION	148
CHAPTER SIX.....	150
THE PEOPLE ON THE PLATFORM	150
“THE PEOPLE” IN STATE-ORGANISED PUBLIC EVENTS	151
THE PEOPLE IN THREE REGISTERS	153
PEOPLE ON THE PLATFORM.....	157
<i>Creative uses of official discourse</i>	157
<i>Negotiating meaning in authoritative discourse</i>	161
ON PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN STATE EVENTS.....	165
CONCLUSION	166
PART IV. THE TIME OF PROVISIONALITY	168
CHAPTER SEVEN	169
<i>ORIENTAÇÕES</i> AS PROVISIONAL AND AMBIGUOUS REGULATORY DOCUMENTS.....	169
INTRODUCTION	169
OF WRITTEN AND ORAL DOCUMENTS	171
THE POLITICAL LIFE OF <i>ORIENTAÇÕES</i>	173
PROVISIONALITY AND AMBIGUITY.....	177
<i>Donors and NGOs</i>	186
SYMBOLS OF AUTHORITY.....	188
CONCLUSION	190
CONCLUSION	192