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Article in *Development and Change* · September 2006

DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-7660.2006.00504.x

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# Contested Sources of Authority: Re-claiming State Sovereignty by Formalizing Traditional Authority in Mozambique

Lars Buur and Helene Maria Kyed

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## ABSTRACT

In Mozambique, the current legal framework institutionalizes a rural–urban differentiation of local governance, allowing for elected representation in thirty-three urban settings and the recognition of ‘community authorities’ in rural areas. This article deals with the latter by exploring the implementation of Decree 15/2000, which is the first legislation in post-colonial Mozambique to formalize ‘traditional authority’. Views of traditional authority as either a ‘genuine’ African form of authority legitimized by traditional beliefs and practices, or as a form of power ‘corrupted’ by colonial rule, are inadequate for understanding the current situation. In formerly war-torn Susundenga District, kin-based authorities drew on elements from ‘traditional’ and ‘state-administrative’ domains of authority in order to be recognized. Varied definitions of tradition came to justify leadership, but the content on which legitimization was based defies any generalized Weberian dichotomy between traditional and modern/state types of office. Different sources of legitimacy sometimes foregrounded administrative needs and at other times maintained what became defined as traditional.

## INTRODUCTION

In post-war Mozambique, decentralization and the delegation of administrative tasks to non-state actors have increasingly been seen as the means to make the state more efficient and responsive to local needs. The shift of the 1990 Constitution from a one-party Marxist–Leninist state to a liberal and political pluralist model has resulted in novel imaginings of rural local governance. Formally, governance has moved from a Marxist preoccupation with class and party structures to a focus on chieftaincy, culture and civil society. Post-war constitutional commitments to democratic decentralization led in 1997 to the institution of a system of elected local governments. Unlike reform initiatives in other Southern African states, the Municipal Law 2/1997 only made provision for elected local governments in thirty-three urban municipalities (*autarquias*) and not in any rural areas. As a consequence, no elected organs are in place outside urban centres.

In rural districts, a three-tiered local state administrative structure enacts local governance; since 2000 this has been supplemented by Decree 15/2000. Mirroring the processes of re-traditionalization across sub-Saharan Africa since the 1990s (Englebert, 2002; Oomen, 2002), Decree 15/2000 is the first piece of post-colonial legislation to officially recognize 'traditional authority' in Mozambique. The Decree includes three categories of 'community authorities' that can be legally recognized by the state on the basis of local community legitimization: 'traditional chiefs', former Frelimo 'secretaries of suburban-quarters or villages', and 'other leaders legitimized as such by the respective local communities' (Republica de Moçambique, 2000a: Art. 1). Recognized authorities are envisaged as performing the double role of representatives of rural communities and assistants of the state. They are delegated a range of key state-administrative tasks that include, *inter alia*, policing, taxation, population registration, justice enforcement, land allocation and rural development. Besides administrative tasks, they are expected to perform various elements of civic education in their communities, for example, fostering a patriotic spirit, supporting the celebration of national days, promoting environmental sustainability, encouraging payment of taxes, and preventing crime, epidemics, HIV/AIDS, and premature pregnancy and marriage (Republica de Moçambique, 2000a: Art. 5). Since 2002, around 4,000 former Frelimo secretaries and traditional leaders have been officially recognized, have signed a contract with the state and have received emblems of the republic to wear and a national flag to place at their homestead. No persons falling within the category of 'other leaders' have been recognized (MAE, 2004).

In this article, we explore the process of legitimizing community authorities in the rural areas of Sussundenga District where traditional chiefs were the first authorities to be recognized. Avenues to legal recognition based on various, highly negotiable claims to traditional legitimacy did not fit neatly within the understanding of traditional authority at the heart of the Decree. Publications by the Ministry of State Administration (Ministério de Administração Estatal, or MAE), which provided the basis of the Decree, set out to prove the existence of truly traditional authority, stating that: 'This institution of the community is a reality that manifests itself before the state and its juridical system. They are not created by the Law, but are generated by the respective communities' (Lundin and Machava, 1995: 151; see also MAE, 1996: 24.). Traditional authority was thus distanced both from its colonial past and from party politics, in answer to various critics who claim that today's traditional authority has been corrupted by externally imposed regimes (Artur and Weimer, 1998: 19). Despite the acknowledgement of the chief's role in shifting political arrangements, it was nonetheless established that 'true' traditional authority exists and is legitimized by pre-colonial practices and beliefs. As West and Kloeck-Jenson have illustrated, the tag 'traditional' in the work of the MAE marked both the institution and its office holders as anachronisms (1999: 457). The reified and timeless notion of community

and traditional authority in this understanding of tradition or the traditional is not new. Weber's ideal-typical model of different forms of legitimacy presents tradition as 'that which has always been' (Weber, 1978: 36). Present articulations of traditional forms of authority and legitimacy then become a question of simple continuity and not, as Handler and Linnekin (1984) have pointed out, symbolic processes that take past symbolisms for granted and productively render them present anew by reinterpreting them according to current requirements. As the process of legitimizing traditional authority shows, kin-based authorities are not alone in deriving 'influence and/or power from positions held within institutions built upon the organizing principles of kinship' (West and Kloeck-Jenson, 1999: 457). Influence, status and legitimacy also derive from the symbols and performative skills related to the domain of state-administration that to a large extent has its origin in colonial governance.

Based on ethnographic material from Sussundenga District, the article explores how the implementation of Decree 15/2000 has involved a contested process of stabilizing traditional authority and territorially-bounded communities as a prerequisite for state recognition.<sup>1</sup> In competing claims to leadership, the traditional was internally contested and its practical manifestations and procedures of instalment were the outcome of both redefinition and reproduction. Sources used to settle the legitimacy of community authorities had multiple origins: some derived from the colonial register and others from interpretations of the Decree or fragmented recollections of historical material scattered in time and space; others derived from different abilities to perform and engage with the state and pragmatic requirements arising from present needs and challenges. Implementation is explored in the context of struggles over legitimate leadership in three different arenas in the Mathica, Mouha and Dombe administrative areas. The first example shows a failed attempt by a state functionary to get a sub-chief recognized as a community authority in his area of jurisdiction; the second shows the competition within a chiefly family over the position of chief; the third illustrates the struggles between two sub-chiefs over their ranking in the chiefly hierarchy. Conflicts varied in intensity, scope and make-up. Common among the case studies was the tension between different sources of legitimacy in the quest for state recognition. Some appealed to needs and requirements arising from public administration and others to ideas about ascribed status based on succession lines and spiritual power. The Decree underscores the twilight character of traditional institutions, through the dual position granted to the recognized leaders as both community representatives and agents of state administration. Before examining the three cases in greater detail, a brief note on the historical background of traditional authority and the Decree is necessary to provide some context.

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1. This article is based on fieldwork conducted between May and November 2002.

## FROM BANNING TO RECOGNITION

The strong position held by traditional chiefs or *régulos* (small kings) during Portuguese colonial rule came to an official end at Independence in 1975. As part of attempts to break with the colonial bifurcated system of governance and to build a single-party state along Marxist–Leninist lines, the new Frelimo (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*) government replaced the chieftainship system with *grupos dinamizadores* (dynamizing groups) led by party secretaries. Chiefs were formally excluded from participation in Frelimo's new party-state hierarchies (O'Laughlin, 2000: 26–30). They were portrayed as collaborators of the Portuguese colonial state and their practices were branded detrimental to the modernization of society and the production of national unity (see Artur and Weimer, 1998: 4). Since 1992, when the General Peace Agreement (GPA) was signed by Frelimo and Renamo (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*), the rise of traditional authority in local governance gained momentum in national political circles. The increasing impetus for formalizing kin-based institutions was influenced by a complex interplay between political and academic agendas, the vision of donor agencies and actual, on-the-ground conditions in the rural areas following the war. The academic celebration of the democratic potential of traditional African forms of governance coupled with donor agencies' calls for decentralization and localization of governance were profound. Unable to identify a civil society that could democratically and effectively represent community interests in rural Mozambique, Western donors and NGOs increasingly looked to 'traditional authority' as a site for local or community-based governance (West and Kloeck-Jenson, 1999: 461). For the Frelimo government, the prime impetus for formalizing traditional authority has been overwhelmingly political and administrative. This must be seen against the background of what Alexander (1997: 20) refers to as a 'profound crises of authority' in the post-war rural areas. As in other post-conflict countries, one of the key concerns facing the central government and policy designers was contestation over state sovereignty and state institutions. Both held very meagre sway in formerly war-torn areas like Sussundenga District.

This did not mean a *terra nullius* of *de facto* public authority. During and immediately after the war, non-state forms of authority competed for the socio-economic and cultural space outside the primarily urban and semi-urban areas controlled by Frelimo and state institutions. Apart from the dispersed presence of emergency relief NGOs and the fragile Frelimo party structures, these actors mainly comprised institutions forged in opposition to and operating outside the sovereign power of the Frelimo-state (Alexander, 1997; Artur and Weimer, 1998). Renamo's strategic links with those chiefs that had operated during colonial rule and/or with newly imposed ones, made the question of traditional authority in post-war local governance not merely one of administrative effectiveness, but also one of political alliance.

Arguments such as Geffray's (1990), which held that Frelimo's banning of the chieftainship system was one of the prime reasons for Renamo's support during the civil war and for the state's loss of legitimacy, increasingly won support within Frelimo and the donor community (West and Kloeck-Jenson, 1999: 460–1). Following the war, Renamo's electoral victory (1994/99) in the rural areas and media-documented acts of chiefs' hostility towards the re-establishment of state institutions contributed further to this interpretation (for Dombe in Sussundenga, see articles in the newspaper *Noticias*, 1995a; 1995b). At the national level it was increasingly believed that Frelimo's attempt to substitute traditional leadership with new local party-based institutions at Independence had proven detrimental to the legitimacy of the Frelimo state. At the local level, the fragmented kin-based institutions had continued to exercise public authority. The authority of chiefs had been interwoven directly in Renamo strongholds but also unofficially with Frelimo party state structures. As documented by Alexander (1997) and West and Kloeck-Jenson (1999), local state officials in some areas relied more on informal day-to-day collaboration with chiefs than on the new Frelimo secretaries. In other areas they punished chiefs caught solving community problems.

Decree 15/2000 hence emerged from a complex history of shifting roles and allegiances and can be seen as an attempt to bring these *de facto*, loosely organized forms of traditional authority and their subject populations under state control. The Decree combines the objective of re-claiming state sovereignty by extending administrative and territorial reach to rural authorities with the recognition of local forms of organization. This has been loosely formulated in the Decree as instituting an articulation between local state organs and community authorities: 'For the process of administrative decentralization, for the valuation of the social organization of communities and for the improvement of the conditions of their participation in public administration for the socio-economic and cultural development of the country, it is necessary to establish forms of articulation between the local state organs and those of the community authorities' (Republica de Moçambique, 2000b: Introduction; authors' translation).<sup>2</sup>

The key objective of the 'participation of local communities' meets potential contradictions in the remaining articles of the Decree, its regulation and in practice. Leaders to be recognized as community authorities within the category of traditional are to be chosen according to 'traditional rules of

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2. Local state organs cover the three-tiered hierarchy of district, administrative post and *localidade*. The law on local organs of the state (*Lei dos órgãos locais do Estado*) was only approved at the beginning of 2003 by parliament, in other words, after the passing of the Decree. It was supposed to have included the institution of consultative forums comprising elected people's representatives (*consehlos consultativos*) at *localidade* level. In October 2002 these were erased from the law, with the argument by the MAE that Decree 15/2000 catered for community participation in local government and development.

the respective community' (Republica de Moçambique, 2000a: Art.1.a). In practice, no precise criteria for 'traditional rules' could be specified. This is not surprising when we note existing divisions within local populations and the shifting historical-political contexts in which 'traditional chiefs' have operated (West and Kloeck-Jenson, 1999: 455). The Decree's definition of community as 'the collective of people comprised in a unified territorial organization' (Republica de Moçambique, 2000a: Art. 8) takes for granted the existence of consensual traditional communities and, perhaps for that reason, provides no legal mechanisms to ensure broad-based participation. This ethos followed the results of a series of donor-funded studies on traditional authority conducted by the MAE in the period 1991–97. Here it was asserted that traditional leaders 'represent the whole community, beyond political differences, embodying the will of all people and not excluding anyone' (MAE, 1996: 11).

Another ambiguity is the relationship between state and community authority. The recognition of community authority is aimed at forging a new partnership, but the Decree insists that the two structures should remain separate. Maintaining that the state cannot intervene in community matters, the Decree at the same time obligates the community authorities to fulfil a long list of state-administrative functions in 'concord with the consolidation of national unity' (ibid.) and 'within the limits of the law' (Republica de Moçambique, 2000a: Art. 5). In fact, the first item on the list of 'obligations' of community authorities is to 'divulge the laws and deliberations of state organs' (ibid.). The ideal separation between state and community authority, as we will illustrate in the following sections, also proved highly unrealistic in the actual acts of legitimization and recognition. In Sussundenga District, the conceptual distinctions of state and non-state appeared to converge, as did those of the traditional and state/modern/party. Practice highlighted the unfixed character of these domains.

Implementation of the Decree at *localidade* level began in most areas of the country in 2001. However, the process was characterized by an increase in conflict. This was influenced by the diverse local political landscapes across the country, by tense struggles over positions and by local state officials' interpretations of the Decree in line with different ideas about rural authority and pragmatic strategies of governance (Dava et al., 2003). Although the new term 'community authority' opens space for the recognition of any leader that a designated group of people finds fit to represent them, only former Frelimo secretaries and traditional leaders have been recognized. In the Frelimo-dominated south and in Capo Delgado in the North, former Frelimo secretaries have won most seats. In the Renamo strongholds of Manica and Sofala Provinces, traditional leaders took close to 100 per cent of the seats (MAE, 2004).

The absence of any persons falling within the category of 'other leaders' or 'secretaries' in the Sussundenga District, in Manica Province, was determined largely by local state officials' interpretation of 'community

authority' as being traditional chiefs or rather those bearing the name of an already registered *régulo* area. No space was opened and no awareness was raised of the possibility for actors who could not define themselves as traditional (such as NGO workers, teachers, religious leaders or businessmen) to stand as candidates for the post of community authority. Although nine secretaries were in fact recognized in 2004, two years after the traditional leaders, this was exclusively done in areas around administrative heads.<sup>3</sup> To have recognized secretaries in rural Renamo strongholds would in any case not have been a strategic choice. Here, secretaries have a history as Frelimo partisans, as former implementers of unpopular policies and as a threat to the position of *régulos* (Alexander, 1997). The conviction of state officials that traditional leaders have 'a lot of power' (interview, DA, September 2002) was a significant factor in focusing on their recognition. This was not only a calculated means to ease the execution of administrative tasks: many state officials were also guided by belief in the spiritual power of chiefs and their ability to use witchcraft against oppositional forces. Despite the exclusive focus on the category of traditional leaders while implementing the Decree, there was space for manoeuvrability.

#### MATHICA: WHEN THE *RÉGULO* IS NOT A *RÉGULO*

Mathica, a *localidade* of Sussundenga Sede in the north, is surrounded by fallow agricultural fields that used to belong to a post-independence agricultural co-operative. During the colonial era, this land was privately owned, yielding high agricultural outputs and employing hundreds of workers. During the war, the population increased dramatically as internally displaced people settled on or at the fringes of the co-op. They had come from Dombe in the south and from the nearby mountains where bloody battles had been fought. Today, Mathica has a donor-funded state school, a privately-owned mill and an influx of private investors, NGOs and white Zimbabwean and South African farmers looking for land and business opportunities.

In July 2002, a 'recognition ceremony' was staged for *régulo* Ganda, who was to be the community authority for Mathica *localidade*. At the time of 'identification and formal registration of community authority', the assistant of the district administrator called out for the person to be recognized. Ganda stepped forward onto the raised platform where state representatives were seated. The assistant asked: 'Are you *régulo* Ganda?'. Before he could answer, another person moved forward. The assistant burst out: 'Who are you?' to which the person answered: 'I am *régulo* Buapua'. After moments of silence

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3. The recognition of secretaries in Sussundenga District was widely considered to be part of Frelimo's mobilization of its constituencies before the elections held in December 2004. It spurred a new wave of discontent amongst sub-chiefs who considered themselves superior to secretaries, but who now held an inferior position in the state register.

the district administrator went forward. Looking at the audience, he asked ‘Which of them is the *régulo*?’. Ganda looked down and said nothing. Buapua looked straight at the administrator, and repeated, ‘I am *régulo* Buapua’. The administrator shook his head in disbelief. After a while, comments slowly started to flow from the audience, some supporting Buapua, others supporting Ganda. The *chefe da localidade*, who was in charge of the ceremony, retreated to his office together with the district administrator.<sup>4</sup> When they returned, the first secretary of Frelimo stood up, asked people to be quiet and then began to question Buapua, Ganda and the audience in the Shona vernacular. A heated discussion followed. From the audience, the name Zixixi came up several times. It emerged that neither Buapua nor Ganda was the *Régulo Grande* (the paramount chief). The real *régulo* was Zixixi who lived on the western side of the mountains in an area belonging to Mouha administrative post. Buapua and Ganda were sub-chiefs (*chefes do grupo*) under Zixixi. In the end, the district administrator, clearly shocked, stated loudly: ‘I have to consult the register, so we know who the *régulo* is’. The signing of ‘the Act of Recognition’ was postponed. Two weeks later, Zixixi was recognized as *régulo* with both Ganda and Buapua at his side. They were now formally established as sub-chiefs.

### Governmental Considerations

The crux of the matter was that the *chefe da localidade* had managed to get Ganda registered as *régulo* for the area of Mathica. This had happened during the process of identification, which provided the initial step of implementing the Decree in Sussundenga District, and was followed by the registration of the *régulo verdadeiro* — true *régulo* — in the official register of *régulos*. These two steps were to have taken place at so-called ‘legitimization meetings’ where local communities should formally appoint their leader. In practice, state officials had gone out to communities only after registration to verify that the person inscribed in the official register was indeed considered legitimate by the community. These meetings took place at a venue close to the homestead of an already registered chief and in all cases included the participation of between 100 and 200 people (against the 1997 census figures, this meant never more than 10 per cent of the population registered within a *regulado*). Approximately a year later, the ‘recognition ceremonies’ were held and the final contract between community authorities and the state signed (July–August 2002).<sup>5</sup>

State officials expended considerable energy on creating the register, as it formed part of the process of re-establishing the presence of the state in

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4. The title *chefe da localidade* designates state officials in charge of localities, the lowest level of the state administration.
  5. For a detailed description of the recognition ceremonies, see Buur and Kyed (2003).

formerly hostile Renamo territories. Part of identifying *régulos* involved indexing the wider hierarchical system of sub-chiefs — *chefe do grupo* [second sub-chief] and *chefe da povoação* [third sub-chief]. *Régulos* had also been told to produce ‘registers of the population’ with ‘the number of families and inhabitants according to sex’, so that the tax base could be measured and health services and school buildings planned.<sup>6</sup> The register was not created from scratch. It had slowly been established against the old colonial registers’ three-tiered hierarchy of *autoridades gentílicas*, which had incorporated pre-existing hierarchies as well as imposing new ones (see West and Kloeck-Jenson, 1999: 471). The MAE studies had also used the colonial register as a point of reference. Names had been either changed or confirmed during the registration for food relief after the GPA and again during the 2000 floods, and the register had been consulted during the workshops held by the administration as part of preparing for the implementation of the Decree. For lower level state officials, the emic name for the register was *O Livro*. Its name in local dialect was *Ma-Bhuku*, which had also been the name used for its colonial version.

When the administrator went to consult the register in order to clarify the status of Ganda, he had to go further than the new register. This register would merely have confirmed the status of Ganda due to the *chefe da localidade*’s manipulation. Against the colonial register it was declared that by ‘mistake Ganda had been registered as a *régulo* in *O Livro*. The real *régulo* was Zixixi’.<sup>7</sup> The *chefe da localidade* was aware of this. He knew the kin-based hierarchy from working in Mathica for several years. Concerns for the future status of his *localidade* had made him manipulate the new register, as he later confessed: ‘Now we are going to lose out on development, now there is no community leader when the NGOs come’.<sup>8</sup> That he could have personal interest in getting Ganda recognized should not make us lose sight of government considerations that recognition of traditional leaders attempts to address. His comment reflects a specific understanding of the Decree, that development provisions by state and aid agencies would be channelled through the new governmental grid of a *régulo* in charge of a territorially defined unit. Rightly or wrongly, he assumed that his *localidade* would not benefit from recognition of community authorities, because the individual to be recognized belonged to a different administrative post. However, this was not the only problem.

From the perspective of the kin-based hierarchy, the status of *régulo* Zixixi was undisputed. He has power (*têm papel*), as people living in the area framed it, but from a public administrative point of view he was a disaster. Zixixi was not interested in any engagement with public administrative tasks, because he did not trust ‘them’ (the Frelimo government). He lived 74 km away from

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6. Interview, *Chefe do Posto* Dombe, September 2002.

7. Interview, district administrator, Sussundenga, August 2002.

8. Interview, *Chefe da Localidade* Mathica, August 2002.

the *Posto* of Mouha where he formally reported. There was no road into his homestead and when he was told to build one he simply declined. Two years after recognition, the flag post had still not been set up to mark his ‘articulation with the state’. He did not enforce any tax collection nor draft manpower for maintenance of the school even though a young assistant was keen to do so. Without Zixixi’s input, nobody would take the initiative and when the young assistant did, the population lambasted him for ‘thinking he was something’ and for ‘not respecting the hierarchy’.<sup>9</sup> Seen from the perspective of the *chefe da localidade*, the fact that Zixixi was not interested in engagement with the state and belonged to a different administrative area of jurisdiction would not help him in his administrative tasks. *Ma-Bhuku* had spoken and there was not much the *chefe* could do. If to govern was, for the state and its officials, to seek an authoritative figure for their own authority, by converting the authority in one field into another, then governing could run into problems. Such problems emerged partly because the use of a mediating leader in charge of a territorially-defined unit did not necessarily fit well within the kin-based institution’s hierarchy of territorial space and partly because legitimacy based on ascribed status does not necessarily follow legitimacy based on performance. The potential conflict between administrative concerns for adequate performance and justification of leadership against non-performative criteria also appeared in the Gudza area.

#### GUDZA: BETWEEN TRADITION AND ADMINISTRATIVE APTITUDE

The *regulado* of Gudza is situated in Javela *localidade*, a few kilometres west of Lucite River where the Dombe administration is located. During the war it functioned as a combat frontier between Renamo, which controlled the rural parts, and Frelimo, which managed to hold on to the Dombe administrative head until the last year of the war, when Renamo successfully captured the entire territory. Renamo control of Javela was only gradually eroded from 1996 when the administrative head came under state control. The western part was not reached by state and police officials until 2001. This coincided with the implementation of the Decree. The ‘legitimization meetings’ marked the first visit of a post-colonial state official to all of the chieftaincy homes. In Javela, three *regulados* — Gudza, Chibue and Cóa — were recognized in 2002. While there were no disputes in the Chibue and Cóa areas, the Gudza *regulado* was fraught with conflicts over leadership between sub-chiefs and within the main *régulo* lineage.

Benjamin, who had been pointed out at the ‘legitimization meeting’ in the Gudza *regulado* a year previously, did not turn up for his recognition. The reason given was that he had ‘fallen sick’. It later emerged that his ‘sickness’ was due to a conflict between him and his uncle, João, who had

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9. Interview, Jorge, September 2002.

previously acted as *régulo*. The *chefe do posto*, who needed to pursue the recognition ceremonies within the MAE timeframe, reacted by instructing the members of the Gudza lineage to solve the matter quickly. Within six days a new ceremony was completed. Much to the surprise of people outside the chiefly organization, Benjamin's 27-year-old half-sister, Concessão, signed the contract with the state. She was inaugurated as *régulo*-queen. João and Benjamin were stripped of any kind of formal power and Mateus, a second uncle, was made her assistant.

The moment of state recognition became, in the Gudza area, one of internal stabilization of tradition. One particular story was established as the official genesis of the Gudza *regulado*. It justified the young woman's legitimacy as an indisputable resurrection of the tradition, articulated as 'this is how it has always been'. Perhaps not surprisingly, it was a story agreed upon by the group of people who comprised the core of the governing organization of the *regulado*: the council of (male) elders (*madotas*) and the closest family members of the Gudza lineage. The basis of justification was the true succession line which, despite ardent claims to the contrary, was in fact only reconstructed during the six days between the two ceremonies. Joachim, the only member of the *madotas* who had a long formal education, stated: 'No one knew that Concessão would be recognized. This we found out through a study when the ancestral spirits were consulted'.<sup>10</sup> Despite disparities produced through the collective memory, the following account was given.

For more than four hundred years, a queen with supreme spiritual power (*nhacuaua*) had ruled the Gudza *regulado*. She was always assisted by a man of her lineage to take care of non-spiritual tasks such as tax-collection, policing and forced labour recruitment. The latest queen they could recall was referred to as Mumera, who was assisted by Ofisse, the father of João and Mateus. After him came Jemusse, Ofisse's oldest son and Benjamin and Concessão's father. He reigned from the last years of Portuguese rule until his death in 1989. During the war he was in exile in the mountains near Zimbabwe. No queen ruled during this time. The war and Concessão's infancy were given as reasons. The course of events from Jemusse's death to the present was a story of conflict and instability. Mateus, who was the full younger brother of Jemusse (both were sons of Ofisse's first wife), had been appointed as successor and as assistant of Concessão, but Mateus had been captured by Renamo troops and the twenty-five year old Benjamin was chosen as replacement. He ruled from 1989 until 1996 when he took up migrant work in South Africa. João, also a brother of Jemusse, but the son of Ofisse's second wife, who was working in Beira at the time, was called to assume the position in the meantime. The choice fell on him because he was the eldest of the lineage. When Benjamin returned in 2000 he was not reinstated until a year later when the state-arranged legitimization meeting

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10. Interview, Joachim, September 2002.

was held. Although some of the elders referred to João's 'selfish ambition for power' as an obstacle to Benjamin's reassertion of rule, this was not given as the reason why Benjamin did not turn up at the recognition ceremony. The true cause was the ferocity of the ancestral spirits. Speaking through the *curandeiros* (healers and spirit mediums), the spirits had explained that Benjamin fell sick because it was Concessão who was the true leader. Not only was she the eldest living daughter of Jemusse's first wife, she was also imbued with the spiritual power, *nhacuaua*. Upholding the indisputability of this (female) spiritual basis of legitimacy, Concessão's enthronement was presented as a return to normalcy. It was justified by the notion that 'if the spirits are not kept happy everything will ultimately go wrong'.<sup>11</sup> In a rather tautological line of argument, the disruptions of the tradition that had occurred over time were both ascribed to, and blamed for, the ills that had inflicted the *regulado* — namely floods, war, sickness and lack of prosperity.

### Tradition Revisited

The official colonial register challenges the historical justification for Concessão's enthronement. No queen is mentioned in the 1969 register outlining the names of Gudza *régulos* six generations back.<sup>12</sup> The name 'Umera' does figure, but here as the elder brother of Ofisse. This does not necessarily falsify the reconstructed succession line, as the colonial powers were known to remove or deny recognition of locally supported leaders (Artur, 1999). It does, however, negate the claim that a queen was officially the Gudza *régulo* under colonial rule. Interestingly, under the *regulado* of Ingomane, 100 km north of Gudza, a queen of the name 'Numera' figures in the register two generations prior to the queen ruling in 1969. Oral history collected by Artur (1999) also suggests that the Murivane predecessors of the Gudza *regulado*, arriving from M'bire in central Zimbabwe, installed female chiefs as a strategy of expansion due to lack of sons. This suggests that the *madotas* drew on memories of other areas prior to Portuguese rule. That such a conglomeration of historical 'facts' was a strategic means for contemporary ends is suggested by alternative stories of why Concessão was recognized.

The official version was challenged by people who did not hold a position in the Gudza organization, not least by those supportive of Benjamin. A teacher and a Red Cross worker of the area suggested that Concessão's appointment should not be understood as an inevitable outcome of traditional resurgence or as a matter of spiritual belief *per se*. It was also a pragmatic solution to long-standing power conflicts within the Gudza family. Emphasizing the

11. Interview, Joachim, September 2002.

12. The register emanates from a study made by the Portuguese in the 1960s of local political organization in the Manica and Sofala areas (*Secreto, Portugal: Serviços de centralização e coordenação de informações. Prospecção das forças tradicional. Manica e Sofala, Provincia de Moçambique 1969*).

possibility of other sources of justification, among which performative skills were significant, they were convinced that the outcome could have been otherwise. They stressed that when Benjamin arrived from the family's place of exile after the war, Jemusse's nephew had asserted the position as *régulo* and refused to resign. To solve the problem Benjamin called João 'because he knows about the *botânica*' [a word used to describe plants applied in witchcraft]. Soon after João's advent, the nephew suspiciously died. João ruled when Benjamin was in South Africa.

Troubles over leadership arose again when João declined to resign on Benjamin's return. He used witchcraft to keep Benjamin at bay. When explaining how Benjamin succeeded in becoming legitimized at the state meeting, neither succession line nor spiritual indication was presented as a significant basis of legitimacy. Rather, the case was made that João had ruled shoddily. Besides being a heavy drinker, he was inconsiderate of the needs of the wider population. The most frequent example recounted was that João had not turned up at meetings with donors when food relief was given out after the 2000 floods, resulting in the loss of emergency packages for the Gudza population. As a leader he was also deemed highly immoral, seen as an ambitious person who wanted all the power, at any cost, and as one ruled by fear. He used his status as elder and his capacity to engage in witchcraft for his own ends. Many believed he had killed Benjamin's mother with poison as an act of revenge following the legitimization meeting. In contrast, Benjamin was characterized by all informants as an excellent performer. Notably consistent with criteria conducive to state assistance, he was described as good at collecting taxes, at speaking with NGOs and state officials, and at holding court sessions. Benjamin was also regarded as a good leader on moral grounds: he was portrayed as neither egotistical nor greedy for power, but as an open-minded, generous and consultative person.

According to unofficial stories, constant fear of João and the inability to deal with him within the timeframe set by the state had been the primary reasons for why Benjamin was never recognized. The choice had fallen on Concessão because the *madotas* believed that she would be immune to witchcraft given her spiritual power. Accentuating João's status as the eldest in the lineage, it was accepted that he could have succeeded in being recognized had he performed well. The performative aspect of achieved authority differed noticeably from the ascribed status of Concessão. The various stories that we were told suggest that the state-organized legitimization meeting opened a space for replacing a 'bad' (João) with a 'good' performing ruler (Benjamin), although still from within the lineage registered in *O Livro*. Legitimacy according to authentic spiritual power and succession line, as used for recognizing Concessão, apparently sacrificed the bureaucratic outcome and popular supportive aspect of the legitimization meeting.

The choice of Concessão was a compromise. Her lack of aptitude not only applied to the delegated tasks of the Decree, but also to what were defined as traditional functions — court sessions (*banjas*), annual

rainmaking ceremonies and smaller rites of consulting ancestral spirits. Concessão completely lacked the performative skills and knowledge that were required for practical rule. She explicitly stated to us that she was not interested in doing the job of men or of ‘talk(ing) politics’, as she termed those tasks that lay outside domestic work.<sup>13</sup> The rather pragmatic reasons behind Concessão’s enthronement were however, according to critics of her appointment, kept ‘secret’ by the family and the elders in order to cover up for their inability to keep the popular Benjamin in power.

While not rejecting the significance of spiritual belief behind Concessão’s inauguration, it does seem probable that such secrecy also had to do with the interests of those organized around the *regulado* in stabilizing an undisputable order. Not only did their own position depend on such an order, it was a necessary prerequisite for state recognition and its possible benefits. The impetus for stabilizing leadership was in fact broadly shared. Even the critical NGO workers and school teachers referred to above expressed support for the pragmatic stand. Their work too depended on the stability of the *regulado*. For state functionaries it was important that the conflict was settled so that administrative work could begin. The negative effects of recognizing less able leaders from within the Gudza *regulado* could always be taken up at a later stage and changes made if necessary. Exactly how this would be done was a contentious issue. The revised state register — intriguingly enough — verified the official version. In the MAE list of persons legitimized and recognized at district level in 2003, Concessão’s name also appears on the date of legitimization in 2001, although it had in fact been Benjamin on that date (MAE, 2004). This clearly points to attempts by local state officials to downplay discrepancies that had occurred in the process of recognition, adding to the idea that the Decree was simply an act of recognizing ‘what already exists’.<sup>14</sup>

### SUB-CHIEFS: STRUGGLES OVER ‘SMALL’ BIGNESS

Implementation of the Decree went beyond recognizing the paramount *régulos*. It also attempted to fix the three-tiered hierarchy beneath a *régulo*. The most significant of sub-chiefs is the *chefe do grupo* who holds sway over a designated area within the larger territory of a *regulado*. During the implementation process these sub-chiefs were promised official recognition and a uniform different from the community authorities. Although this is not legally borne out by the Decree, the MAE was planning in 2004 to go ahead with these promises.<sup>15</sup> It is in this context that the power-struggle between the two Gudza sub-chiefs, Jossias and Struba, should be situated.

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13. Interview, Concessão, August 2002.

14. Interview, District Administrator, Sussundenga, August 2002.

15. Interview, Director of rural development and planning, MAE, April 2004.

Although the dispute went back some years, and was extensively prolonged by shifting positions within the main lineage, it was intensified and given new content by the implementation of Decree 15/2000. The primary point of dispute was identifying the number one *chefe do grupo* below the new queen. The strategies and criteria of legitimacy invoked in claims to this position were complex. They included disagreements over areas of jurisdiction, spiritual power, performative skills, popular legitimization at state-arranged meetings and the name in the state 'book'. Finally, claims also began to be raised in relation to the newly established succession line of the Gudza Queen.

### Spirits, 'Feeding' and Performance

At Benjamin's aborted recognition ceremony at Chibue's homestead, we met Struba, a middle-aged, strong, well-dressed man who spoke some Portuguese. He told us that he had come to represent the Gudza *regulado* as the '*chefe de grupo* number one' and to bring the message that 'Benjamin had fallen sick'. His status as '*chefe de grupo* number one' was confirmed not only in the state register from 2001, but also by Concessão's recognition ceremony. Here, Struba took a leading role in organizing the ceremonial venue together with the local state official and in escorting and supporting Concessão during all steps of the ceremony. We were quickly convinced that he was a well-esteemed sub-chief, which the state officials also constantly confirmed in speech and actions. Despite these observable acts and his name in *O Livro*, we found that Struba was not recognized as such by the Gudza *regulado*. Reflecting the opinion of this group, the queen's assistant, Mateus, stated: 'He is nothing; he is just a small *Saguta* [lowest sub-chief with no area of jurisdiction]. He just likes to be in the front of things, but he does not have spiritual power and cannot make ceremonies. Jossias is the real *chefe do grupo* number one'.<sup>16</sup> While recognized by the *regulado* as *Sabuko*, Jossias' family name was not mentioned in the register. Different explanations of this discrepancy between the truth of *O Livro* and that of the *regulado* were proffered.

The version agreed upon by Jossias, Mateus and the *madotas* emphasized that according to the Gudza tradition, Struba could only be *Saguta*, because that position was given to his forefathers by the old queen as a reward for 'sacrificing' a son to the Portuguese army. Given that this position was purely 'achieved', it had never been invested with spiritual power. Jossias, who was a timid person, drew up a succession line with some difficulty to illustrate his ancestry from the first queen's number one *chefe do grupo*. He evoked the spiritual power attached to this position: 'My lineage has always had the honourable task of going up in the mountains for annual offerings to

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16. Interview, Mateus, August 2002.

*Zviquiro* [the supreme spirit medium] on behalf of the whole *regulado*. This is to ensure rain and the well-being of the population'.<sup>17</sup>

His position came under threat just after the end of the war when the government needed the numbers of people in each area of the *regulado* for distribution of relief-packages. At this point, Struba had seized the opportunity to 'steal land' from Jossias by registering under his own name people residing within the area belonging to Jossias' lineage. This had repeated itself after the floods in 2000 when Jossias' family name was removed from the 'book'. João was blamed. He had secured Struba's lineage by registering him when the administration called for lists of sub-chiefs. Jossias and Mateus were convinced that Struba had 'corrupted' João with good food and drink. This notion of 'feeding' should be understood not only literally, but also metaphorically as a common way of describing the achievement and consumption of the fruits of power in Mozambique (and elsewhere on the continent) (Mbembe, 2001). In light of Struba's lack of spiritual legitimacy, his opponents presented this notion of 'feeding' as a clever strategy, but also as an immoral means of achieving, enlarging and sustaining power. According to several members of the *regulado*, the 'feeding' had been extended to the state officials whom, they believed, had been fed with good food by Struba. The latter's presumed conversion from Renamo to Frelimo was also recounted as one of his clever ways of being in good favour with the government people. One sub-chief explained it as follows: 'Struba is only *chefe de grupo* because he is clever. He always stands in front when the state officials come. And he gives them good food. . . . Do you know if I am lying? No? Well Struba lies to the state officials and they believe him because he is always the first to tell them the story'.<sup>18</sup>

### Merging the Spirits and the Book

Struba's energy and performative skills were undeniable and he fed state officials and other visitors significant food such as meat and local liquor. He was popular outside the Gudza *regulado* and was much better equipped to meet the expectations of the Decree than any other person we met. He had collected the highest amount of tax during 2001 and 2002 and was one of the few people speaking at all the public meetings arranged by state employees and NGOs. By making frequent visits to the administration in Dombe and by turning up on time for meetings he also differed from the other chiefs. He had succeeded in attracting smaller income-generating projects and food relief to his area so the general population were gaining from his success. Beyond his performative skills, Struba also stood out as one of the wealthiest persons that we met outside the administrative headquarters. He had seven wives and

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17. Interview, Jossias, September 2002.

18. Interview, Magheba, August 2002.

a large area of extremely fertile land that was extensively cultivated. The types and quantities of material items that he owned far exceeded any other chief — items that he had acquired through migrant work in South Africa. He was also well-organized. Struba had four police assistants, six *sagutas* (two more than the Gudza queen) and he held well-attended weekly court sessions (*banjas*).

From this, we may conclude that Struba's avenue to the position that he claimed lay outside the spiritual domain and, rather, within the sphere of achieved status — in other words, through performative skills, wealth and popularity. According to Struba's own justification of leadership, this was not entirely the case. In fact, he emphasized his historical relation to the old queen and to spiritual power as the most significant basis of his legitimacy. The noteworthy difference from Jossias was that he combined this set of justifications with other registers of power. According to Struba's version of his lineage history, the old queen had given his grandfather the title of 'number one *chefe do grupo*' after he had served in the army. Subsequently, he was registered in the colonial book and given land, people and spiritual power. As a piece of evidence, Struba showed us a wooden copy of the gun that his grandfather had been given by the colonial army. It was now kept safely in the house of ancestral spirits as a token of his lineage's powerful position in the *regulado*. Frelimo had taken the gun after Independence so he had made a copy for the house of spirits to symbolize the double foundation of his legitimacy. To further legitimize his position, he ensured that Jemusse Gudza had supported his enthronement as superior sub-chief in 1978.

For Struba, the current conflict began after the war when people had lost a sense of who the right leaders were. Matters had been complicated when people like Jossias and João manipulated the true tradition. Struba was nonetheless certain that his success at the legitimization meeting, where he had managed to remain in *O Livro*, was sufficient to win the case against Jossias. *O Livro*, Struba insisted, 'is the thing that identifies [leaders], because if one is lying and the other is telling the truth, the book is what can tell you the truth'. Particularly illustrative of Struba's ability to merge different sources of legitimacy was the way in which he held out the state register not as secondary evidence, but as actual testimony of his traditional, spiritual status. Combined with active performance and strategic alliances across the spectrum of officials, such a merger became momentous in the actual upshot of the conflict.

While Jossias and Mateus held on to the idea that it was the Gudza queen who had the authority to make the final judgment, no actions were taken in that regard. Struba, by contrast, went directly to the *chefe da localidade*, Raul, and demanded a public hearing. Drawing on the legal language of the state, he assured Raul that he would take the case to Sussundenga and even to Maputo if anyone changed the register. He reminded him that falsification of names would bring the lawbreaker to prison. Shortly hereafter, a public meeting was held at the Gudza School. Since it is not legally permissible

for state officials to intervene in conflicts within the traditional organization, the event was launched as a ‘tax-collection meeting’, spearheaded by Raul and the local Frelimo secretary. After discussing the case, the meeting’s protagonists — Struba, Jossias, Raul and Mateus — decided that the school director should travel to Dombe, make a written copy of the register and bring it back to the *regulado*.

According to Struba and Raul, the case was solved when the director came back and read aloud the names in the register. For them, *O Livro* became the final arbitrator, which naturally suited Struba as it left Jossias with no *de jure* position. Jossias and Mateus still maintained that the case was unsolved. Surprisingly, this was not because they awaited the judgment of Concessão or the ancestral spirits. Rather, they expected Raul to return and make the final judgment in their favour. This reliance on a state official contradicted not only the principle of spiritual judgment, held as supreme in the appointment of Concessão, but also the state’s legal mandate. It nonetheless illustrates how the advent of state recognition may in practice lead to a convergence of two ideally separate spheres of leadership arbitration. Despite no direct appointment of leaders by state officials, conflicts over positions cannot be understood independently of more or less direct actions taken by and in the name of the state: registration of the population for food relief, names in the state register, legitimization meetings and promises of recognition, regalia and subsidies. In addition, strategies of legitimization were usurped as well as interpreted and evaluated in relation to what was regarded as favourable to the state or to government. In Struba’s case, the ability to perform the tasks of the Decree, popular support and the ability to convince state officials about traditional status vested in the past served to secure his authority.

Struba’s success should be seen against the background of his ability to manoeuvre within different registers of legitimacy that straddled across any ideal boundary between traditional, modern/bureaucratic and democratic/community types of legitimacy of political office. While Struba held out his ancestors and *O Livro* as the basis of traditional status, he recognized the pragmatic strategies of being ‘known by the government people’, working hard and showing respect, in public, for the order of the state. Yet, Struba’s on-stage compliance with the state and Frelimo representatives did not mean straightforward support for the government. Off-stage, he was much more critical than his opponents believed, and in fact more so than any of the other chiefs we met. Interpreting the Decree as driven by political interests, Struba was convinced that state recognition was aimed at *ganhar as pessoas* (winning the people):

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We can see that it is politics . . . All that [recognition] is to win the people. They hope that to gain the *régulo* is to win the people, because the *régulo* can mobilize the people. We know that this is what it is about. But we have to be quiet because we know that it is them who are in the government. If I speak tomorrow, I will go to prison or be killed.<sup>19</sup>

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19. Interview, Struba, October 2002.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

With its incorporation into the universal order of the state and in partnership in public administration, one might expect a homogenization or fixing of 'traditional authority'. Granting to community authorities the right to display the national flag and wear national emblems along with a universal set of state-defined tasks to pursue seems to indicate that homogenization was indeed an objective of Decree 15/2000. To simply assume such a result would be to overlook the fact that different brokers and intermediaries — state as well as non-state — translated the Decree in the course of its implementation (Wilson, 2001: 313–18). While *de jure* recognition by the state is expected to influence local politics beyond the initial acts of putting the Decree into practice, we cannot assume that legalization *per se* assures the kind of public authority envisaged in the Decree (Lund, 2001). Equally, the legitimacy of community authority that is now inscribed in *O Livro* and displayed by 'the flag' does not guarantee *de facto* broad-based legitimacy of either the institution or its office holder. The meagre participation in state-convened legitimization meetings, the negotiability of and disagreement on what counts as *the* tradition and the shifting positioning and vigour of chieftaincy over time all make it tricky to equate *de jure* with *de facto* authority. Whether local populations and external agents are practically able to use the institution and whether newly recognized leaders are able to effectively enforce collective decisions remains to be seen. Divisions within those communities defined in the Decree as 'the collective of people comprised in a unified territorial organization' (Republica de Moçambique, 2000a: Art. 8) will influence the recognized leaders' ability to entrench and maintain the kind of public authority that is envisaged.

So far, the process of legitimization and recognition suggests a (re)production of both complementary and conflicting notions of legitimate authority. While all protagonists in the cases analysed drew on tradition as essential to their legitimacy, the question of what comprises the truly or most significantly traditional rules of appointment and basis of authority were negotiable and situation-specific. As we have noted, these could range from *ascribed* assets — spiritual power and succession line — to *performative* abilities regarded as qualities of a good traditional leader, such as knowledge of practices defined as traditional and the ability to perform them (court sessions, annual rainmaking ceremonies and spiritual consultation). Personal capital such as hard work, administrative skills, ability to consult state officials and NGOs, a generous personality and popularity amongst the residents of the area were also important. This suggests that legitimacy may be understood not as a fixed quality, but as 'a conflict-ridden and open process' in which different local power holders and their judges or 'audiences' intervene (Lentz, 1998: 47).

In Sussundenga, broad-based community legitimization included identifying persons from within an already state-registered lineage. Authorization

by a designated group of elders and confirmation/disconfirmation of the register influenced the final recognition. How tradition was successfully defined defied any generalized Weberian dichotomy between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern/state’ types of authority and forms of legitimization. This is not surprising when we understand the shifting historical-political contexts in which traditional chiefs have operated, and how these inform contemporary images of authority, power and adequate performance (West and Kloeck-Jenson, 1999: 455). Struba’s merger of the ‘book’ and ‘the spirits’ is a case in point. The ahistorical portrait of the ‘truly traditional’ that forms the basis of the Decree was only momentarily enacted in legitimacy claims. In this, we share Moore’s (1986) view of the traditional as internally contested and its manifestation in any given historical moment as the outcome of processes of invention, redefinition and reproduction.

Following Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) work on forms of capital produced and reproduced within different social fields, it is clear that kin-based legitimacy can be (and often is) articulated alongside other forms of capital, not least when kin-based institutions are expected to operate (and have historically operated) within different fields of action. To assume that these fields of action, structured by different sources and types of capital, are easy to distinguish in practice would be foolish. Equally, it would be unwise to assume any simple conversion between what counts as legitimate forms of capital in traditional and state-administrative fields. Lentz (1998) and Oomen’s (2002) studies in Ghana and South Africa suggest a distinction between the *basis of legitimacy* — a common denominator here being some version of *the tradition* — and *pragmatic strategies* of achieving and enlarging the scope of authority within different fields of action. Not only the Decree, but also state and non-state actors in Sussundenga District draw an ideal and often morally grounded separation between ‘state/party/government’ and ‘traditional’ types of office. However, this should not make us overlook the fact that, on a pragmatic level, there are (and have been) multiple links between party politics, government policies/actions and traditional office. Perhaps the most powerful image of this was the common reliance on *O Livro* to legitimate authority. *O Livro* itself was derived from colonial and post-colonial administrative work. This concrete ‘reality’ when merged with the fragmented ‘reality’ of multiple personal memories, each with a political agenda, impacted on the previously created concrete ‘reality’. As the Gudza case illustrates, the ‘book’ could be corrected to reflect the outcome desired by the more powerful party.

The domains of state and tradition are not isolated entities in everyday practice, but part of a particular local political context where different imaginings and practices of power and authority mingle (see Le Meur, this issue). This was reflected in the ways in which state officials translated the Decree. The exclusive encouragement of the recognition of *régulos* in Sussundenga’s rural areas seems partly due to the legal basis on which legitimization rested — ‘the traditional rules of the respective community’. State officials were cautious to impose candidates who could not fulfil such requirements. Even

though subversion was attempted — as for example in the Mathica case — the recognition of leaders remained within the wider traditional system. The regional differences suggest cautiousness on the part of state officials operating in Renamo strongholds. In this context, the appeal of *the* traditional has, as we have illustrated in different ways, clear government objectives. Some kind of articulation is needed between rural constituencies and the state. Beyond the urban or semi-urban areas of Sussundenga District, Renamo control and war insurgency were intense. Where the guardian of tradition contradicted the performative capacity and/or the *de facto* authority presumed in the Decree, compromise was reached — as in the case of Concessão and Zixixi. In the Gudza *regulado* the main objective was to stabilize leadership in order to end destructive internal conflicts which, it is alleged, had led to two murders within the *régulo* family. In the Zixixi case, tradition was what state officials had to rely on in order to keep the peace even when it made little administrative sense.

Despite the fault lines, state officials' strong conviction that traditional leaders have 'a lot of power' was significant for the implementation of the Decree. The role of chiefs as effective performers of state-administrative tasks during colonial rule was frequently reiterated, if not envied. Likewise, former alliances with Renamo were interpreted as causing hostility towards state institutions after the war, extremely low tax-payment and distancing from donor/government-launched development projects. Overall, the chiefs' sway over the population was seen as contributing toward these difficulties. Seeing the impetus for recognizing *régulos* as a pragmatic means to ease administrative tasks and government programmes should not lead us to underestimate state officials' own ideas about the spiritual power of chiefs and their ability to use witchcraft against oppositional forces. In this regard, it is important to note that the blurring of the ideal boundaries between 'traditional' and 'modern' domains of power and authority is not limited to the sphere of chieftaincy, but also permeates the state.

In rural as well as urban areas, it is common to explain the power of state officials, just like that of chiefs, as deriving from supernatural means and/or materials acquired from *curandeiros*.<sup>20</sup> National leaders and high-ranking civil servants are often believed to have specific spiritual power. Some are even regarded as being *feiticeiros* (people capable of witchcraft). Beliefs and imaginings about power succession are also important. In speeches by state officials at public events such as national days, the Frelimo leadership since the liberation war would often be presented as a 'lineage'. The message was: just as the *régulo* of a certain lineage always ruled in his area, members of the Frelimo family have ruled and will always rule in Mozambique. The *regulado* thereby became a metonymical expression for a general understanding of the succession of power holding (Kyed and Buur, 2006 forthcoming).

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20. Sanders (2001) makes a similar point for Tanzania, as do Geschiere (1997) and Mbembe (2001) for Cameroon.

As state agents and representatives of local communities, traditional leaders merge the ideally separate domains of the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern-state’, adding further shades to the ‘twilight’ character of current state formation processes in post-war Mozambique. The potential contradictions that emerge with regard to the objectives of Decree 15/2000 will depend on how it continues to be mediated and interpreted locally. If we begin with the agreement by all informants — state and non-state — that entrenchment and maintenance of authority will depend on the community leaders’ ability to ‘show results’, the question still remains: what results and for whom? The Decree itself provides no ready-made answers.

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