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Transatlantic Pentecostal Demons in Maputo

Linda van de Kamp

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Introduction

Regularly, Pentecostals summoned me to pray when we were on the street in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique.¹ They stressed that we needed to be aware of and protect ourselves against negative spiritual influences that were hiding everywhere. We had to keep our distance from what was happening around us as we first had to judge the intentions of people who approached us. Pentecostals could often tell me the exact moment when someone had approached them on the street or in a building and how afterwards they had lost their job or their partner had disappeared because the person they had met had evil intentions. They tried to anticipate possible harm as far as possible. Brazilian Pentecostal pastors warned women for the men who turned up with an impressive car and nice presents and advised to investigate the men's intentions first. At the same time, Pentecostals needed to be conscious of any prospective chances. Meeting people, be they potential partners or employers, could be the start of a successful project or life path. Thus praying and 'walking in the Holy Spirit' was vital when considering these situations and challenging blockades.

A particular relationship has emerged between transnational Brazilian Pentecostalism and Maputo. In an edited volume by Glick Schiller & Çağlar (2010), the authors demonstrate the variation in how transnational activities restructure, (re)shape and (re-)imagine urban life. The role and influence of transnational connections depend on the mutual constitution of the national, local and global, and have a different impact in different cities within one country. Through Brazilian Pentecostalism, Mozambican Pentecostals are developing a new vision of Maputo's history and particularly the role of 'evil' in it, in contrast to or re-elaborating the views and positions of their grand/parents in this city in the past (see below). The new ways in which they

perceive and experience the urban space follows from their engagement in the ‘Afro-Brazilian’ Pentecostal battle against evil.

A central entry point into to the activities of Brazilian Pentecostals in Africa is the relevance of Afro-Brazilian spiritual images and concepts, such as *macumba* (Van de Kamp 2013). *Macumba*, which is a foreign word in Mozambique,² is a pejorative term in Brazilian Pentecostal jargon and used to denounce Afro-Brazilian religions in Brazil as witchcraft or black magic.³ In Africa, the Brazilian Pentecostal pastors label the work of traditional healers and people’s connections with ancestor spirits as *macumba* too. Despite the differences with Afro-Brazilian religions and the variety of religious practices in Africa, the Brazilian pastors claim that in all these cases they are dealing with the same demonic powers. The Brazilian Pentecostals bridge the distance between both sides of the Atlantic by linking their histories within a particular spiritual framework as it evolved in the Lusophone transatlantic history (see also Sarró & Blanes 2009). In their perspective, Africa is the original home of ‘evil spirits’ that still exist there, and came to Brazil via the transatlantic slave trade. In the Pentecostal framework Afro-Brazilian and African spirits are understood to be demons operating under the auspices of the Christian devil (cf. Meyer 1999). In this chapter I aim to examine how this Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal view of evil and accompanying practices appeal to followers of Brazilian Pentecostalism in the context of Maputo, by focusing on one particular transatlantic Afro-Brazilian spirit, the so-called spirit of *pombagira* or ‘spirit spouse’.

Transatlantic Pentecostalism in Maputo

Brazilian Pentecostal churches have been established in Mozambique since the beginning of the 1990s, when Christianity started to boom immensely in this former Portuguese colony in

¹ I did ethnographic research about the growth of Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique between August 2005 and August 2007, and I returned to the field in July/August 2008 and 2011. My main fieldwork location was Maputo where most of the Brazilian Pentecostal churches are based.

² Although a similar word in the Tsonga languages in southern Mozambique refers to the spirits (thanks to Elísio Macamo for this information), Pentecostals considered it as a Brazilian Pentecostal term and appropriated it in that way.

³ There is no agreement in the literature on the linguistic origins of the term *macumba* and what it exactly denotes. Hayes (2007: 287) explained that: “Some scholars linked ‘macumba’ to a Bantu language and a certain type of percussive musical instrument. Given the centrality of percussion in African and African-derived religions, this may account for the use of the term in reference to the ritual practices of Bantu-speaking slaves and their descendents, who were especially prominent in Rio de Janeiro from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. Others associated the term with communities of runaway slaves” (2007: 286). According to the Brazilian Houaiss dictionary, *macumba* is a designation by laymen of Afro-Brazilian cults in general.

Southern Africa after the end of a civil war and of a socialist era, and the start of the liberalization of the economic, political and religious domains (Cruz e Silva 2003; Freston 2005).⁴ The Brazilian churches can be placed in what has been referred to as a global ‘third wave’ of Pentecostalism or neo-Pentecostalism that started in the 1970s and, despite encompassing a large variety of Pentecostals, can be identified by a strong focus on the spiritual battle (Anderson 2004: 144-165; Freston 1995). The neo-Pentecostal view of the world is one of a spiritual battlefield between demonic and heavenly forces meaning that religious traditions in Africa are despised as belonging to the dominion of the powers of darkness (Meyer 1999).

Today, Brazilian Pentecostal churches are integrated and prominent in the (peri) urban landscapes of Mozambique, particularly in Maputo, despite the critique they have been receiving on their aggressive approach towards ‘African culture’, and on the centrality of tithes and large financial offerings.⁵ The most significant Brazilian Pentecostal church in Mozambique is the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, known as Universal Church). Currently, the *Igreja Mundial do Poder de Deus* (the World Church of the Power of God), which is led by a former bishop of the Universal Church, is expanding rapidly. Another prominent, albeit smaller, Brazilian neo-Pentecostal church in Mozambique is the *Igreja Pentecostal Deus é Amor* (The Pentecostal Church God is Love, known as God is Love) that was at the start of the neo-Pentecostal era in Brazil (Chesnut 1997). Several Pentecostal churches set up by Mozambicans maintain close ties with Brazil, such as the fast-growing *Evangelho em Acção* (Gospel in Action). These churches share the demonic discourse about ‘African traditions’ and the use of concepts like *macumba*.

Non-Brazilian transnational Pentecostal churches mostly originate from South Africa or Zimbabwe and sometimes also from Malawi or Tanzania. Other churches come from outside the Southern African region, such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God that has its roots in Nigeria and the Ghanaian Lighthouse Chapel. Many of these non-Brazilian churches attracted expats but few Mozambicans as English used to be the prevailing language. More importantly,

⁴ In the last census of 2007, for the first time, Evangelicals and Pentecostals were counted together as one separate category, showing their growing importance. According to this census, 11% of the total population is Pentecostal (INE 2010) and 21% of the population in Maputo city (INE 2009).

⁵ Over the years, critical articles have been published in Mozambican journals: ‘*Multinacional, Comerciante da Fé, Parasite de Deus ou Profeta de Espírito?*’ (*Savana*, 7 October 1994); ‘*Acção da IURD em Moçambique*’ (*Notícias*, 8 April 1997); ‘*Desactivada Rede Criminosa na Igreja Universal*’ (*Magazine*, 9 May 2007); and see also ‘*Igreja Brasileira Multada por Violação da Lei Laboral*’ (*Diário de Notícias*, 6 June 2011).

these non-Brazilian Pentecostal churches lack the cultural and spiritual imagery that has developed in the transnational setting of the Brazilian churches. During my first fieldwork period of 2005-2007 in Mozambique, the Brazilian Pentecostal churches were almost all led by Brazilians and the assistant pastors were mostly Mozambican and a few Angolan.⁶ The Portuguese language and the countries' shared history as a result of Portuguese colonialism have facilitated the connection between Brazilians, Angolans and Mozambicans. Consequently, the international network these churches in Mozambique enjoy is primarily Lusophone, with a key role being played by Brazil.

The circulation of cultural and spiritual imagery between Brazilian pastors and Mozambican converts is grounded in the Lusophone Atlantic. This is a particular space of historical, cultural and religious production between Portugal, Brazil and Africa that has been shaped by diverse colonial encounters (Naro *et al.* 2007).⁷ Whereas in the past Christian missionaries embarked in Portuguese ports and crossed the Oceans to evangelize the peoples in Africa and America, today missionaries from these former mission areas share the Gospel in Portugal and other places in the world. The Brazilian Pentecostal activities in Mozambique are an example of a new chapter in the history of the Lusophone Atlantic space of interaction and exchange (see also. Sarró & Blanes 2009).

A clear example of the Pentecostal Lusophone atlantic exchange is the understanding of *feitçaria*, a synonym for *macumba* or witchcraft for Pentecostals. The Portuguese used the word *feitço* to refer to amulets and all kinds of devotional objects. When Portuguese explorers arrived in West Africa, they called the amulets Africans used *feitços* (Pollak-Eltz 1970: 37-38). Other explorers, such as the Dutch, English and French, misinterpreted the origins of the word *feitço* and saw it as an African thing, applying the word to everything related to African religions. For them, *fetissos* were not only magic charms but also African gods and their priests were the *fetisseros* (Sansi-Roca 2007: 27). The Portuguese *feitço* became synonymous with African religion which increasingly became framed as devilish and evil in the colonial encounter (see e.g. Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988). In Brazil, at the end of the 19th century, the word *feitçaria* started to

⁶ This seems to be changing, amongst others under the pressure of the Mozambican government who wants foreign churches to employ local pastors.

⁷ Naro *et al.* (2007:8) criticize the idea of a 'Lusotropicalism' as proposed by Gilberto Freyre, as an idea of an 'all-encompassing, culturally specific and transhistorical Portuguese colonial project'. They propose the Lusophone Black Atlantic as a space of historical and cultural production to demonstrate how the historical continuities across

appear in relation to criminal acts. Policemen and judges persecuted people involved in magical and spiritual practices that were used for evil purposes and were called *feiticos*. Moreover, this use of *feitico* referred to the supposed evils in Brazilian culture, namely the presence of ‘inferior’ civilizations, essentially African cultures and Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé and Macumba (Sansi-Roca 2007: 30).⁸ Pentecostals still connect Afro-Brazilian cults to this ‘fetishism’. Pentecostal pastors in Brazil preach against *feiticeiros*, the priests of the Afro-Brazilian religious cults. Likewise, they preach against *feiticaria* in Mozambique, where they regard the traditional healers, the *curandeiros*, as *feiticeiros* and call their practices *macumba*. The use of *feiticaria* by Pentecostal pastors resonates with a particular history of ‘evil’ in Maputo, the subject to which I now turn.

A short history of perceptions of evil in Maputo

In the early 20th century, when the authorities of Portugal’s New State tried to restore their influence in the colonies, the system of *Indigenato* was implemented in Mozambique, introducing a distinction between citizen and subject (Mamdani 1996) with two classes of people: the ‘native’ (*indígena*) and the ‘non-native’ or ‘assimilated’ (*não-indígena* or *assimilado*). The ‘native’ was positioned under customary law and had to do forced labour (*chibalo*). The ‘non-native’ (Portuguese, Afro-Portuguese, Asians and those of mixed race) had Portuguese citizenship rights, lived under civil law and was not subjected to forced labour. A group of ‘natives’ could obtain the status of *assimilado*, depending on their position and behavior, by applying for a certificate of assimilation but were accused of being ‘pocket whites’, dark-skinned people who carried a document in their pocket that said they were white (Penvenne 1995: 9). The *Indigenato* created a bifurcated world where Africans were inferior to whites (Harris 1966) but at the same time these marked oppositions were conditional and were experienced differently by rural and urban residents, by men and women depending on which group and class they belonged to (O’Laughlin 2000; Penvenne 1995) and the degree of Portuguese influence in their region.

this historical space are composed of a myriad of local and specific discontinuities, local cultures and ‘perspectival refractions’ (Ibid.) that extend their influence well beyond the Lusophone context.

⁸ For more on the current ambiguous presence of Afro-Brazilian religion in Brazil and issues of multicultural heritage see e.g. van de Port (2007).

The Portuguese founded their first settlements in northern Mozambique. But, when gold was discovered in South Africa, it led to fast-developing trade through the port of Lourenço Marques in the south. Lourenço Marques, which Maputo was called until independence in 1975, became the country's capital from 1896. The colonial authorities transformed the place into a city of whites and '*assimilados*', a city for the 'civilized' (Jenkins 2006; Lachartre 2000) and were subsequently unprepared for the growth of the city's population, especially from the 1950s onwards when growing economic relations with South Africa and foreign industrial investment resulted in the city expanding rapidly. Increasing numbers of indigenous people came to the city to engage in wage labour but they were ignored by the Portuguese settlers who denied them the right to reside there. From the start, Lourenço Marques was made up of two distinct parts: the Portuguese *cidade de cimento* (cement city) and the indigenous *cidade de caniço* (reed city) that surrounded the southern European-styled inner city.

Many Pentecostals belonged to or were connected to former *assimilado* families in Lourenço Marques. In order to get a recognized position in the colonial economy and society, the *assimilados* had to break with or had to do as if they had broken with *feitiçaria*, with 'uncivilized' or 'evil' practices like customary marriage and rituals dedicated to the ancestors (see e.g. Honwana 2002, especially chapter 2). In many cases, the great-grandparents or grandparents of these Pentecostals became also part of the Catholic and Protestant mission churches or started their own church (see also Cruz e Silva 2001; Helgesson 1994). For example, Dona Lucia,⁹ aged 63, and a member of the God is Love church, narrated how her grandfather worked in the mines in South Africa and when he returned he started a church that he had got to know there.¹⁰ Her grandfather agreed with her grandmother about raising their children as they wanted. 'The customs my grandmother had lived with, she would do away with them', Dona Lucia said, 'but, my father had several wives who brought along their traditions'.¹¹ When I asked her about her grandparents wanting to break with local customs she only said: 'There is a lot of *macumba*. There is so much *macumba*, and God saved me from it.' While it could be dangerous to speak about 'evil' and there could exist a reluctance to speak about it with a European like me,

⁹ *Dona* is Portuguese for madam. The names I use are fictive.

¹⁰ Since the second half of the 19th century, labor migration to South Africa became an attractive option for young men in southern Mozambique (Harries 1994).

¹¹ Conversation, 21 November 2006. The conversations and interviews used in this contribution were carried out in Portuguese and the translations are mine.

more generally, secrecy and silence surrounded issues related to ‘the tradition’ [*a tradição*].¹² Lundin (2007: 168-173), who writes about how people have negotiated transformations in Maputo, speaks about ‘social schizophrenia’ because in one person there could be a denial and openness towards ‘tradition’, especially with regard to spiritual livelihoods. This gained particular features after independence.

Dona Lucia’s children or the following generation were raised and educated during the socialist Frelimo government that came into power after independence in 1975. As part of Frelimo’s modernizing project, ‘traditional’ practices had to be discontinued. Polygamous relations, initiation rites, religious rituals and the like were forbidden. Even if certain practices would still take place and people did not suddenly stop their cultural practices, they worked in the Frelimo administration, engaged in the socialist modernizing ideals and assumed new identities (Sumich 2010; Macamo 2005). For example, I met Pentecostals who could not speak a local language because their parents had not allowed their children to speak it when growing up, in line with the socialist project, and wanted them to learn the official language well. Now these children cannot or poorly communicate with the elders who are not used to speak Portuguese and who always played a crucial role in educating younger generations about cultural traditions.¹³

The 1989 Frelimo Party Congress officially decided to break with the party’s Marxist-Leninist ideology and implement multi-party democracy. This happened after several years of a centrally planned economy and civil war that resulted in Mozambique’s economy becoming bankrupt. From 1987 onwards and under the auspices of the World Bank and the IMF, the government implemented various Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and privatized government-financed industries and its social services. With the end of its socialist policies, Frelimo also abandoned the rules against local culture and started a strategy of re-habilitating pre-socialist cultural elements. Today, government officials communicate that Mozambicans have to value their culture as a force for developing a prosperous nation. *Curandeiros* (traditional healers) receive more support, government officials use authentic Mozambican clothes and traditional rituals take place at official state ceremonies. There is a revival of Mozambican identity and discussions about what it actually is.

¹² People often use the word *tradição* when referring to local customs, including beliefs and rituals related to (ancestral) spirits.

¹³ For more on this complex history of cultural identity see amongst others Bertelsen (2003), Honwana (2002), Meneses (2006), O’Laughlin (2000), Sousa Santos and Trindade, (2003), and West (2005).

There seems to be a 'seemingly arbitrary circulation of the unknown' for many in African cities (Simone 2001: 17) in relation to traditional culture. During the colonial era, Mozambican *assimilados* had to break with *feiticaria* and under the subsequent Marxist-Leninist Frelimo regime, '*feiticeiros*' or traditional healers were persecuted. Today, these healers have become part of the nation-state project but the current revitalization of *curandeiros*' power over good and evil spirits keeps the imagery of *feiticaria* alive. Although members of the upper and middle classes rarely speak openly about their visits to *curandeiros*, they warn each other of the disastrous influences of *feiticeiros* everywhere, fearing that their material well-being will be the subject of *feiticaria* practices. Numerous stories circulate of suspicious medicines put under people's chairs at work, in newly purchased cars or at the doors of luxury houses. Women share their anxieties about the *feiticos* used by other women to win over the hearts of their husbands.

In this myriad of meanings of fetish, the city becomes the central arena. De Boeck & Plissart (2004) have shown how there is a visible and an invisible city in Kinshasa where, in addition to the physical and visible urban reality, there is an invisible immaterial architecture and infrastructure that contains people's desires, imaginations, actions and spiritual realities. A city like Kinshasa is thus difficult to domesticate and impossible to capture in one master narrative. De Boeck & Plissart (2004: 19) compare it with fetishes because it is a 'constant border-crossing phenomenon, resisting fixture, refusing capture'. The same is true for Maputo. People's imagery does not consist of a corpus of fixed representations, and a variety of imageries is continuously being mediated by television, Pentecostal pastors, traditional healers and state officials. The extent to which one of these bodies is able to capture the city is central in the cultural contestation about what should be considered *feiticaria* or evil, with the nation's capital being the crucial place for the development of a specific cultural identity. In the case of Pentecostals, their efforts to build the most prestigious buildings at central locations in Maputo, have media attention and produce loud decibels during church services that can be heard across a vast area are all part of their attempt to incorporate the urban space (see also Van Dijk 2001; De Witte 2008). Meanwhile, new influences are constantly entering the urban space via migrants, television, the Internet and tourists. As a result, no one specific body, such as the state or the church, controls the whole urban space and a web of plural meanings and social imagery is boosted.

Converts are a part of these processes. Like Dona Lucia, many Pentecostals grew up in an environment where *feitiçaria* was something one was not supposed to talk about because it was only ‘the uncivilized other’ who dealt with such matters. However, since different forms and interpretations of *feitiçaria* are less silenced and more present in the public sphere, *feitiçaria* has come to play a new role in people’s lives. I met converts who were confused about family members who started by saying that something that happened long ago had consequences for their lives. For the first time, they were hearing that certain incidents with spirits in the family may have been behind their failure to marry. To find out about the influence of the past in the present, they had to participate with their kin in sessions with a local healer. But, often these healing sessions had not helped them and they misunderstood what happened during a ritual they had to carry out. A young Pentecostal woman, Patricia (29 years) explained how the *curandeiro* started to put something on her feet and that when she asked what it was all about, her family told her she should not ask questions (see further below). *Curandeiros* explained that sometimes they are incapable of helping their urban clients because they are too detached from the worldview and practices of the healers, which complicated their participation in the healing process.¹⁴ In addition, modern, urban people find the rituals of local healers disgusting because the blood of animals is used and they find the circumstances unhygienic, preferring the clean white spaces of Pentecostal churches. In contrast to their families and local healers, Pentecostal pastors explained openly to Patricia and others what the practices in their family mean according to the Pentecostal view in a way that connects with their aspirations.

The Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal battle against the spirit of *pombagira*

At the services I attended in the God is Love Church in Maputo, there was no permanent pastor and Brazilian pastors who were travelling around Africa came for a few days or weeks. At one Friday afternoon service,¹⁵ a Brazilian pastor, who had just arrived from Nigeria, preached about Revelations 12, focusing on how God kicked the Devil out of heaven and conquered all demons. He gave examples of how as a consequence various types of demons were wreaking havoc in the lives of persons in Brazil. He particularly elaborated the spirit of *pombagira* who ‘destroys

¹⁴ Interviews with *curandeiros* on 15 November 2006, 8 and 28 February 2007.

¹⁵ 2 March 2007.

marriages'. He told the audience about how, just after his arrival in Maputo the previous day, he and his wife had received several women in the church office:

When I said Paz do Senhor [Peace of the Lord], they fell down on the doorstep and some vomited all sorts of things, it's all *macumba*. The spirits themselves say who they are, so I immediately knew what kind of spirit I was dealing with. This spirit [of *pombagira*, LvdK] blocks women's possibilities for marrying or they don't conceive or the husband leaves after a few years of marriage. Because this spirit is jealous and doesn't want you to have another man.

The term *pombagira* was principally used in the God is Love Church. In the Universal Church and the other churches, the term *marido da noite* (husband of the night) or *marido espiritual* (spiritual husband) was mainly used but the pastors there normally talked about cases related to Afro-Brazilian religions. In Afro-Brazilian imagery, *pombagira* is a spirit that personifies the ambiguities of femininity and female sexuality (Hayes 2008) and is known as the Mistress of the Night or the Lady of the Cemetery. The spirit is attractive and dangerous and can also be the spirit of a prostitute. Even though experiences of Mozambican Pentecostal women are not usually linked to prostitution, various women said that a related problem is that they are not able to control their own bodies or marry because they are involved with 'evil' spiritual forces.

Rumors were circulating in Maputo about women who are being 'eaten' by spirits. When I talked about marriage, people often asked: 'Why is it that so many girls in one family who are beautiful and well-educated are not marrying?' To them, it was clear that spiritual issues were involved. Lowering their voices, as this was a dangerous and serious matter, they said that (grand)parents were selling their (grand)children to evil spirits through a *feiticeiro* to become rich. Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal women told me how their sexual and marital relations were frustrated by so-called spirit spouses. According to these women or their kin they were related to a spirit - with whom they could experience sexual intercourse - who would not allow the women to engage in another relationship. I encountered various explanations for this phenomenon.

One claimed that the spirit was a war spirit made up of the spirit of a murdered person who seeks revenge and attacks the murderer's family with illness and misfortune. To calm the spirit, compensation for his death and his reintegration into society is needed, which could happen through marriage to a girl in the murderer's family. In this way the spirit becomes the girl's spouse but the girl cannot later marry another man or special procedures have to be

followed. *Curandeiros* identified these spirits as belonging to persons who were murdered during wars in the colonial era.¹⁶ In addition to the ongoing impact of these historical spirits, worries about a new wave of spirits seeking vengeance as a result of the latest post-independence civil war (until 1992) have increased (cf. Igreja *et al.* 2008; Marlin 2001; Schuetze 2010: 126-152). The spirits of persons killed in the civil war are expected to seek revenge in the coming years. Now that soldiers who underwent cleansing rituals (Granjo 2007) are getting old and dying, spirits that were temporarily calmed by these rituals are expected to become active again because they are still seeking revenge. According to both *curandeiros* and Pentecostal pastors, there are active avenging spirits in every (extended) family.

Another account about the spirit spouse explains how, in the current neo-liberal economic order, (grand)parents are selling their children to spirits to become rich. The (grand)parents consult a *feiticeiro* (sorcerer) who, in return, is given a girl (because the spirit is male) to ‘feed’ the strong spiritual powers the sorcerer uses to produce luck and wealth. In the Southern African region, this spirit spouse that ‘eats’ human flesh refers to the spirit of persons who have been appropriated or killed for the benefit of another person. This generally involves accumulating wealth at the cost of others, which points to witchcraft (e.g. Bähre 2002; Fry 2000: 79, 80; Niehaus 1997; West 2005: 35-39).

The Brazilian pastor, who was not aware of all these specificities, but would have received some information about the circulating rumors through his Mozambican assistants, announced at the end of his sermon, during a special moment for revelations about the demons who were operating in the lives of the Mozambican persons in the audience: ‘There are several women who are not able to marry’. Some women raised their hands and the pastor pointed to a few women to come forward and asked them if the problem was the spirit of *pombagira*. They nodded. He turned to the audience again and said to everyone to direct their hands towards the women and scream ‘*queima, queima, queima*’ (‘burn, burn, burn’) to drive the demon away.

¹⁶ The *curandeiros* I spoke to in southern Mozambique date this as a practice from the 19th century when major social changes were taking place in Southern Africa as a result of the migration of Nguni groups (*Mfecane*). A special role was played by King Ngungunyane, who was from one of the Nguni groups that established the Gaza Empire in southern Mozambique. King Ngungunyane (1884-1895) was known for the violent wars he fought against Portuguese colonial oppression and his attempts to incorporate groups from other parts of the country, like the Ndaus of central Mozambique, into his kingdom (Liesegang 1986). Since the Ndaus were murdered and enslaved against their will and some of the dead Ndau bodies were not properly buried, they came to get revenge in Nguni and Tsonga families by *mupfuka*; the spirit of the dead person could resuscitate and seek rehabilitation and reintegration (see also Honwana 2003: 71-74; Langa 1992: 29-32, 43-46).

Appropriating a ‘foreign’ spirit

While men could also be related to a spirit spouse, most cases involved women. Elsewhere I dealt with the gendered dimensions of this spiritual relationship (Van de Kamp 2011) and here I principally focus on the attraction for these women of the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal framing of the spirit. The majority of the Mozambican women who frequented Brazilian Pentecostal churches could be defined as being upwardly mobile. They were advancing or busy to advance in economic and social standing as a consequence of the neo-liberal economic reforms that were implemented at the end of the 1980s. These women were seeking and accessing resources that put them in new socio-cultural domains. They were exploring new lifestyles and cultural positions. Many of them questioned traditions in their extended families, such as prevailing gender roles but also the links their kin could maintain with ancestor spirits and how these spirits were influencing their own lives. One group of women that attended Pentecostal church services knew or suspected that they were involved in a spiritual relationship. Others however, were hearing from Brazilian pastors that certain incidents with spirits in their family may have been behind their failure to stay with their partner or marry. These mostly younger women had grown up with no clear notion of possible relations with ancestral spirits and learned about spiritual influences in their lives for the first time through the Brazilian Pentecostal churches (Van de Kamp 2012). Often, these young women were the daughters of parents who had been part of *assimilado* families.

One of them is Yvon (aged 23) who came forward during the service described above when the spirits of *pombagira* were expelled. Yvon was attending classes at a school for higher vocational education. She turned to the Universal Church when the father of her child had sent her back to her family’s home. As her participation in this church had had no effect, she had changed to the God is Love Church where the pastors informed her about her relation with a spirit of *pombagira*. Yvon told me about nightly visits from the spirit, which was an important reason why her partner had separated from her as he had witnessed his wife behaving as if she was having sexual intercourse with the spirit. Since Yvon had started participating in the God is Love Church, the spirit had calmed down but had not completely left her. She had to train her body into a new mode by learning to stay filled with the Holy Spirit for which she followed the advices given by the pastor’s assistants about praying and modes of behavior. She stressed that

she was not afraid anymore of *feitiçaria* like she was in the past. Now she knew how to fight against it. Yvon learned from the pastors that she had become related to her spirit spouse because her parents and grandparents had offered her to the Devil. When I was talking to Yvon about her spirit spouse, she asked me anxiously whether I thought that her grandmother or her father would have indeed done such a thing. I suggested talking to her father about these issues but she shook her head. This was not an option as her father was against spiritual practices and would be angry. While the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal spirit of *pombagira* offered Yvon a framework for understanding her difficult situation, a framework to talk about it and for working on changing her life, Patricia (see also above) is an example of a visitor of Pentecostal services who did not necessarily adopt the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal spiritual discourse but found it interesting to explore.

Patricia and her friends initially just attended the services of the Universal Church out of curiosity, having heard that the Brazilians were entertaining, exorcized spirits, cured diseases, presented solutions for problems and could make one rich. During the first years in Mozambique, the church hold services in empty cinemas and the pastors' performances rapidly gained popularity. Services used to be a good option for an evening out as hardly any film was screened at cinemas in the early 1990s. After the long period of civil war when everything, including entertainment, had been scarce, new activities and diversions were welcomed and embraced. When I met Patricia in early 2006, she took the work of the Brazilian pastors more seriously than before as strange things were happening to her. She dreamed strangely and was often sick. Patricia was afraid that she would have to follow up her grandmother's work who was a *curandeira*. Since her grandmother had died nobody had yet been appointed to live and work with her grandmother's spirits. As all Patricia's sisters and most of her cousins were married, she thought she probably had to follow up her grandmother's work. 'Does that mean that all my studying and working has been for nothing?' she asked me with fear.¹⁷ Patricia hoped that her prayers in church would protect her from becoming part of the spiritual history of her family.

Patricia's kin considered her unmarried status at the age of 29 as abnormal. To end suspicion about her and therefore her family, her kin organized sessions with a *curandeiro* to find out about the family spirits' wishes. But Patricia was not tuned into the views of her family. As said earlier, Patricia asked the *curandeiro* who started to put something on her feet what it

¹⁷ Conversation, 29 October 2006.

was all about, but her family told her she should not ask questions. The stories Patricia heard about women married to spirits and her own participation in a Pentecostal church put her kin's activities in a different light. Moreover, she wanted to stay in control of her own life. She studied, had a job and was constructing her own house. She could be independent of her kin. At the same time she did not want to disassociate from her relatives and was also worried about the fact that she wanted to find the appropriate life partner and have children. She questioned why she was not succeeding in doing so. Patricia did not immediately take a pro or contra position with regard to the spirit she could probably be related to. Her relatedness to as well as independence from her kin and her interest in the history of the spirits in her family next to the challenging views the pastors provided her with, offered a space from where she could reflect on her situation. Patricia continued to attend the sessions of her family with the *curandeiro* and the services in church.

Final Considerations: Becoming a Pentecostal 'stranger'

The Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal discourse of *macumba* effectuated both a closeness and distance towards realities in Maputo in the lives of Pentecostals that seems to be crucial in creating and promising an alternative life. *Macumba* and *pombagira* connect to local realities, but by using these foreign terms in Mozambique they also disconnect from that reality. The accounts of Yvon and Patricia offer insights into how this works in different ways in the lives of those who engage in Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism. By being diagnosed a relationship with *pombagira* the young woman Yvon in the God is Love church found a new framework to address her situation that related to her experiences with the spirit spouse and her partner. The analysis by the Brazilian pastor offered her the means to perceive her situation from a new perspective and by 'burning' the spirit through the power of the Holy Spirit she could foresee a new life to take shape. While she stressed that her eyes were opened to the spiritual bondages of her family that were influencing her life negatively, this also forced her to rethink her relationship with her kin, particularly with her father and grandmother who were accused of *feitiçaria* by the Brazilian pastors, which is considered a grave allegation. For Patricia these Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal claims went too far. She kept different explanations about her condition open and used the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal spiritual alternative to reflect on her life as she also participated in family sessions with a *curandeiro*.

The Pentecostal transnational connection between Africa and Brazil that includes a shared history of ‘African spirits’ is a medium for discovering and reflecting on the ‘dark powers’ at work in Mozambique. Particularly fascinating is the fact that no precise translation of the (Afro-) Brazilian cosmology to the Mozambican one seems to be necessary. The Brazilian pastors are unfamiliar with the history of spirits in Mozambique, such as of the spirit spouse, and Mozambicans are unfamiliar with the meaning and role of the spirit of *pombagira* in Brazil. The power of the Afro-Brazilian transnational translation is based on a superficial knowledge of the kind of spirits at work. To establish a connection between Brazilian pastors and Mozambican converts, it is important that pastors show that they know the tricks of the Devil who uses local beliefs and relations to do his work. At the same time, it is necessary to have a distant position to ‘evil’. The less one knows, the more ‘foreign’ one can be(come) and one can thus break more easily with devilish ties. While the above pastor in the God is Love church was not familiar with the histories and realities of the spirit spouse in Mozambique, he demonstrated that he is able to discern the real nature of these spirits anyway. Wherever he was, demons revealed themselves. He discovered the work of the Devil in Mozambique within a day of arriving and to further demonstrate his transnational power over demons, he used examples from Nigeria, where he had just been:

I was in Nigeria. I have never seen so many *macumba!*, more than in Mozambique. They perform rituals where mothers give their children away to a demon in return for money! But, after driving a big car for some months, they become *louca* [crazy].¹⁸

More generally, healers in Mozambican society stressed in their advertisements their experiences in other countries: using ‘foreign’ knowledge seemed to prove the efficacy of their healing techniques and medicines. Popular healers, pastors and prophets often appear to come from the other side of a border (Luedke and West 2006). Healers are frequently ambivalent beings at the cutting edge of societal structures. Healers can cross socially accepted boundaries as this gives them the power to heal. They possess spiritual powers that allow them to cross dangerous

¹⁸ Up to this point, he did not seem to realize that these practices were also happening in Mozambique.

boundaries, boundaries that are too perilous for others to cross but who they can guide to transform their lives.¹⁹

Brazilian pastors, coming from far away, are perceived as particular powerful healers by Pentecostal followers. Yet here the transformation the Brazilian Pentecostals effectuate primarily results in a person becoming a ‘stranger’ in the local environment rather than an ‘insider’ in a strange reality (Werbner 1989: 223; cf. Van Dijk 1997). The latter was the case for the regional cults that have emerged in a context of labor migration in Southern Africa. They have had an important function in reorganizing socio-cultural and spiritual lives and in providing a home for migrants who were strangers far away from home (see e.g. Van Binsbergen 1981). Instead, in the transnational movement of Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique, the call for a break with evil forces shows religion as a producer of an alternative place (Van de Kamp and Van Dijk 2010). The pastors continuously demonstrate that they operate from a distinctive Pentecostal space and it is from that alternative and also superior position that they are able to discover the work of the Devil everywhere: in Brazil, in Nigeria and in Mozambique within a day of arriving. Brazilian pastors claim that in all these cases and wherever they are, they deal with the same *macumba* powers.

Upwardly mobile women in particular appropriate the Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal discourse and practices in their attempts to reshape their relationships, albeit in different ways. Through their development of new socio-cultural lifestyles, including studying at university or schools of higher vocational education, they question the ‘secret’ role of spiritual relationships in a city where spiritual livelihoods used to be silenced and have been contested. Where some people welcome the new national focus on ‘tradition’, others continue to stress its evil features that they see as the root of all problems in Mozambican society. The clearest expression of this latter standpoint is heard in Pentecostal churches where members forcefully reject national cultural politics. Both the Mozambican government (and related civil-society organizations) and the Pentecostal churches are thus engaged in a process of restyling aspects of Mozambican culture, but in different and even opposing ways: the Mozambican government is ‘civilizing’ local healing, while Pentecostals stress its ‘uncivilized’, ‘evil’ features. People engaging in the

¹⁹ Various healing rituals, such as cleansing rituals after the civil war in Mozambique, are about crossing boundaries and moving from a polluted position to a pure one, see e.g. Granjo (2007). The insights on healing and crossing boundaries relate to the longer anthropological tradition of studying liminality (Turner 1967; van Gennep 1980 [1960]).

Afro-Brazilian Pentecostal discourses are searching and creating alternative spaces in the city that provide opportunities to explore new possibilities and cultural positions although they may generate new contestations, such as in the case of the relationship between Yvon and her kin. Through Afro-Brazilian Pentecostalism various citizens of Maputo are interacting with the current possibilities in the visible and invisible city, shaping new meanings of fetish.

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