

Civil Religious Dynamics in José Craveirinha's Aesthetised Nationalism

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Abstract

This paper is about the way in which Craveirinha's aesthetic representation in *Karingana-Ua-Karingana*, *Xigubo* and *Cela I*, helped gather a shared repertoire near the will (longings, desires, wishes) of many Mozambicans – the organic civil religion, into a coherent political project – the instrumental civil religion. That is, how an eschatological symbolism in Craveirinha's poems created an aesthetic platform for the emergence of a Mozambican civil religion, known as Moçambicanidade. Jose Craveirinha is known to be the godfather of poets and short story writers in Mozambique, a towering figure in the literary world who, in life, dreamed of and projected an image of a just and modern southeast African nation at the end of twentieth century. In key poems of *Karingana-Ua-Karingana*, *Xigubo* and *Cela I* he evoked old Nguni warriors and larger-than-life figures, such as Maguiguana and Mahazul; and Bantu deities and spirits, such as Jambul, and Ngungunhane the Nguni emperor. He summoned the powers of mother Africa, brother Zambezi; he also painted images of young men melting in the sounds of Xipalapala and bare chested young Negroes raising their arms to the light of sister moon and dancing the war dance of ancient tribes of the river. There are plenty of drumbeats, war songs dances in circles around the fire. He uses thus, teleological and eschatological imagery and symbolism to construct an ideal group (communal in the Anderson's meaning of the word, tribal or national) identity to which, he wants to be part of, and names it Moçambique.

Keywords: Religion, Aesthetic, Nationalism, Civil Religion

Introduction

This paper is about the way in which Craveirinha's aesthetic representation in *Karingana-Ua-Karingana*, *Xigubo* and *Cela 1*, helped gather a shared repertoire near the will (longings, desires, wishes) of many Mozambicans—the organic civil religion, into a coherent political project—the instrumental civil religion. That is, how an eschatological symbolism in Craveirinha's poems created an aesthetic platform for the emergence of a Mozambican civil religion, known as Moçambicanidade. Jose Craveirinha is known to be the godfather of poets and short story writers in Mozambique, a towering figure in the literary world who, in life, dreamed of and projected an image of a just and modern southeast African nation at the end of twentieth century. In key poems of *Karingana-Ua-Karingana*, *Xigubo* and *Cela 1* he evoked old Nguni warriors and larger-than-life figures, such as Maguiguana and Mahazul; and Bantu deities and spirits, such as Jambul, and Ngungunhane the Nguni emperor. He summoned the powers of mother Africa, brother Zambezi; he also painted images of young men melting in the sounds of Xipalapala and bare chested young Negroes raising their arms to the light of sister moon and dancing the war dance of ancient tribes of the river. There are plenty of drumbeats, war songs dances in circles around the fire. He uses thus, teleological and eschatological imagery and symbolism to construct an ideal group (communal in the Anderson's meaning of the word, tribal or national) identity to which, he wants to be part of, and names it Moçambique.

Theoretical Background

Civil religion is a concept that has been of interest throughout the history of societies. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his political and social reflections entitled *The Social Contract* (1993), first published in 1762 was the first to use the term. There it referred to 'a civic faith to be created and imposed by the sovereign as a way of promoting civil virtues and political unity' (1993:277). It was Rousseau's belief that with this civic faith no exclusive national religion was to exist. Tolerance was to be granted to all religions that tolerate others, so long as their dogmas had nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship.

His objective was to design a religion that would elicit feelings of civic membership and enforce the duties of citizenship in national

communities no longer bound by what he called 'traditional' religious ties. According to Rousseau, civil religion was essential to the fostering of social discipline in a modern liberal polity, and to the binding of all individuals to the state. Indeed, his overall concern in *The Social Contract* and other political writings was to provide practical political principles by which to evaluate a legitimate social order. More specifically, Rousseau's main concern was to justify the authority to set jurisdictional boundaries and invoke transcendental sanctions (Bellah & Hammond 1980: 43). He wrote, for instance that 'the power of the state derives not from force but from the moral grounds that legitimate it, and that no state had ever been founded without a religious basis' (1993:272). It was his thinking that the problem of 'legitimation' of the group identity in the modern world could be properly addressed by the creation of a national civil religion, capable of binding all individuals to a collectivity, i.e., the state, the tribe or the imagined community.

Almost a century later, Durkheim used the notion of civil religion in his study of religion and society, although he never mentioned the term itself. In *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (2001) he indicates that the purpose of his work is to study, analyze, and explain 'the most primitive and simple religion which is actually known' (Ibid.). His main argument is that the origin, function and meaning of religion can be understood and explained only by reference to social forces. It is in such argument that he articulated a concept of religion as being 'a unified system of beliefs and practices, relating to sacred things, which integrate into one single moral community (Ibid.). It was his perception that every relatively healthy society is based upon a set of shared beliefs, rituals, and symbols that produce and express its most basic values. These values, Durkheim argued, acquire a transcendental meaning, as members of the group consider them sacred. 'They serve to bring the group together' (Bellah & Hammond 1980: 128), thus providing the order, stability and integration of the society as a whole. In this context, civil religion acts as a spontaneous integrating factor upon the hegemonic community, by providing a common morality and loyalty to the group.

There is a distinction between Rousseau's and Durkheim's definition of civil religion: in Rousseau, civil religion is a state produced system with the objective of integrating and legitimizing its citizens, whereas in Durkheim, civil religion is a spontaneous phenomenon of society with a more consensual character. This distinction became the focus of study by the

following generations of civil religion's scholars, as they came with their own contextual questions. Robert Bellah published an essay entitled 'Civil Religion in America', in the winter 1967 issue of *Daedalus*. This essay was an analysis of John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson's inaugural addresses, where Bellah argued that these speeches, and those of the founding fathers, provided a clue to understanding the relationship between religion and politics in the United States.

The speeches, which often mentioned God, revealed a profound religious spirit in American society, Bellah notes that what the United States has 'is a collection of beliefs, symbols and rituals with respect to sacred things institutionalized in a collectivity' (1967:8). In his understanding, civil religion in America was independent of religious and political institutions and, at the same time not in competition with either church or state, 'neither sectarian nor in any specific sense Christian' (Ibid.). An important aspect of American political tradition is the belief that Americans, individually or collectively, have an obligation to carry out God's will on earth. In this view, civil religion served and still serves as a genuine vehicle of national religious self-understanding (Ibid. 4). Accordingly, civil religion provided a transcendent goal for the political process, and contributed to the unity and collective identity of Americans as a national community (Ibid. 5). The principal effect of a United States' civil religion had been to generate powerful symbols of national solidarity and to encourage Americans to achieve national aspirations and goals.

Bellah's introduction of Rousseau's concept of civil religion into the American landscape with new interpretation was widely received. Many in the scholarly community were inspired by Bellah's essay to take up civil religion as an important theme in national self-understanding. This galvanization resulted in scores of subsequent articles about his thesis and, primarily in the United States, initiating debate about civil religion. Others before him had advanced similar ideas, and had spoken of the 'Religion of the Republic,' 'The Religion of the American Way of Life', even of 'American Shinto', but they failed to provoke substantial discussions of analysis (Bellah 1974: 255).

Our study of Craveirinha's work follows Rousseau's notion of civil religion aided by Bellah's notion of civil religion as being an independent element from commonly established religions and focused self-understanding of a nation. Accordingly, and summing up the long debate above, civil

religion is defined as the study of a belief system that produces self-identity of a collective body of people forming a state, that is, a collectivity. It has to do with a specific kind of discourse that relates state histories to extra-historical forces—gods, spirits of the dead, ancestors, saints, and to a lesser extent, larger-than-life figures—to the degree that they (the state narratives) are ascribed transcendent statuses.

Civil religion can be found in one of its two forms: the 'organic' and the 'instrumental' (Johnson 2005). Accordingly, in the organic form civil religion can be identified within the shared repertoire of practices near the will (longings, desires, wishes) of the collective. Whereas, in the instrumental form, it is to be found in the institutions of the state, such as texts: official reports, documents, speeches; and generally enacted through liturgical performances, often following an established calendar in set-aside spaces (Ibid.). *Moçambicanidade* is that self-identity of a group, a collective of tribes, people who share common values and interests, hence constituting one nation or a united nations under one banner. Religion and the construction of collective identities are inseparable. The study of the ways the images, symbols and language are used, expropriated, manipulated and sometimes created, is part of the work when dealing with civil religion. Craveirinha's poems under study indicate a great deal of expropriation and manipulation of already existing symbols, images and language.

Craveirinha

Of mixed parentage, Craveirinha was born to a Portuguese white father and black MaRonga mother of the Mafalala barrio in 1936 and died in 2004. This essay does not, however, claim Craveirinha's work to be the sole contributor into making *Moçambicanidade*. The choice of Craveirinha from amongst many other nationalist artists has to do with fact that firstly, his work spans from the early forties through the mid-2000s, therefore covering skillfully in a comprehensively the last two decade of the Portuguese colonial occupation and the first three decades of Mozambique's free nation. Secondly, his three anthological works employs (deploys) eschatological discourse and symbols with some consistence.

Craveirinha understood poetry as art; he performed it for the sake of art. The reality he described is real in the artistic sense first, before it became

real in other fields of understanding. His poetry is revolutionary in a meaningful sense only with reference to itself. This is in contrast to politicians who claim to be artists of 'revolution'. In this sense, one finds Craveirinha's poems more revolutionary than those of declared political artists like Sergio Vieira or Armando Guebuza, for if the political propaganda element is taken from their work, little or nothing of art is left; whereas in Craveirinha's poems, the political potential lies within the aesthetic dimension. Craveirinha's poems are captivating, regardless of their political significance; i.e. they transcend the immediate political situation of the time and move on to the aesthetic dimension, to be inspiring and liberating as art for art's sake.

Themes

Among the most significant themes, the realist, the negritude, the cultural, the prison poetry, the social and the political are to be found in his work. Clearly, in a short paper like the current one it is impossible to cover all these themes with any justice, we'll highlight those most expressive, in order to give a sense of how they contributed to, and reflected the evolution of Moçambicanidade. In a vivid eschatological symbolism Craveirinha's poems represent and reflect the genealogies of Moçambicanidade as collective identity formation, this in turn meant the emergence civil religion.

In *Karingana Ua Karingana's* 'Fabulario' (2008a: 9) Craveirinha wrote in a typically neorealist fashion about everyday life in colonial Mozambique. The deliberate decision to write in the simplest possible language about the most mundane aspects of the life of ordinary people has been Craveirinha's essential elements in the creation of a 'national' consciousness, for it asserts powerfully that such reality is a legitimate, worthy and relevant source of inspiration not only for literary creation but also for people's attention over the common issues. Wherever there is a platform to discuss issues of a group, it is more likely that the same space can be for common cultural values interaction, and if common cultural values are discussed an imagined community can also be forged. This is how Craveirinha's artistic representation played a mediating role by bringing common cultural values and problems to peoples' consciousness. For this purpose he deployed eschatological discourse in which, gods, spirits of the dead, ancestors, saints, and larger than life figures, such that the emerging

nation under FRELIMO leadership acquired transcendental status.

The poem entitled 'Fabula' is one of the several polished examples of Craveirinha's talent in this respect:

Menino/gordo comprou um balão/ e assoprou/ assoprou com força o balão amarelo./ Menino gordo soprou/ assoprou/ assoprou/ o balão inchou/ inchou/ inchou/ e rebentou!/ Meninos magros apanharam os restos/ e fizeram balõesinhos. [Fat boy bought a balloon/ and blew it/ blew it with vigor the yellow balloon. Fat boy blew/ blew/ blew/ the balloon grew/ grew/ grew and exploded!/ Thin boys collected the bits/ and made little balloons] (Craveirinha 2008a:18).

There is, in the theme of the fable, a description of a reality that everyone in the barrios around the cities easily related to in the colonial era. But, at the same time there is a clear reference to one of the archetypes of African oral literature—hence, the deep impact of Craveirinha's poems in the context of an emerging Moçambicanidade and Mozambican literature. At the very beginning of the book Craveirinha describes the poet thus:

Este jeito/ de contar as nossas coisas/ a maneira simples das profecias/—Karingana ua Karingana—/ é que faz o poeta sentir-se gente./ E nem/ de outra forma se inventa/ o que é propriedade dos poetas/ nem em plena vida se transformava/ a visao do que parece impossivel/ em sonho do que vai ser./ Karingana! [this way/ of telling our things/ in the simple way of prophecies/--Karingana ua Karingana--/ [is what makes the poet feel/ human' and there is no/ other way of inventing/ what it is that poets do/ in real life to change/ the vision of what appears impossible/ in the dream of what is going to be./ Karingana!] (2008a: 11).

The negritude phase is, of course, universal in the evolution of African literature, even if it has taken various forms and has been called by entirely different names. Briefly, what is meant by 'negritude', in this essay is the attempt to recover, redeem, and proclaim African indigenous culture as the basis for African literature. In Craveirinha's poems one finds the recovery of African indigenous cultural values done with colors and shades; that is, glossed in discourse about war, death, judgment, and final destiny, what

we've referred as eschatological symbolism. Such kind of negritude is thus the most overt and explicit phase of cultural nationalism to be found in modern African literature. Craveirinha's work contains two types of poems that speak directly to the negritude experience. The first and largest group of poems, many of which are found in *Xigubo*, is on African culture and history. Through this style Craveirinha writes in order to inspire his fellow people motivating them to feel just about themselves. The second, chiefly from the late 1940s and 1950s, are made of poems that refer to the experience, sometimes the achievements, of Blacks across the world. Poems like 'Joe Louis nosso campeão', 'Grito Negro' and 'Manifesto' come under this rubric. Of these 'Grito Negro' and 'Africa' (Ibid. 20) are especially powerful and original. The first is a brilliant display of irony on the theme of the colonial exploitation of African labor, irony with a jagged edge in the pounding repetition of the grating Portuguese sound 'ão':

Eu sou carvão./ E tu arrancas-me brutalmente do chão./ E fazes-me a tua mina./ Patrão! Eu so carvão./ Tenho que arder./ E queimar tudo com o fogo da minha combustão./ Sim!/ Eu serei o teu carvão/ Patrão. [I am coal/ And you tear me brutally from the soil/ And make me your mine/ Boss!.../ I am coal!/ I will be coal/ Boss!] (Craveirinha 2008b: 19).

'Africa' stands the values of the European colonizer on their head as a way of redeeming that, which is Africa. The poem opens thus:

Em meus lábios grossos fermenta/ a farinha do sarcasmo que coloniza minha mãe África/... (Ibid. 15). [In my thick lips, there ferments/ the flour of the sarcasm that colonizes my Mother Africa] (2008b: 20).

Similarly 'Manifesto' begins:

Oh!/ Meus belos e curtos cabelos crespos/ e meus olhos negros como insurrectas/ grandes luas de pasmo na noite mais bela/ das mais belas noites inesquecíveis das terras do Zambeze./... [Oh!/ My beautiful short curly hair/ and my negro eyes like the revolted/ large moons of

wonderment in the most beautiful night/ of the most unforgettably beautiful nights of the land of the Zambezi] (Ibid. 38).

Cultural affirmation is very closely linked to negritude but, in this essay, refers much more specifically to the cultural values of Mozambique—as opposed to those of blacks generally but more importantly the underlying presence of an eschatological theme. *Xigubo*, ‘Hino a minha terra’ (Hymn to my homeland) and ‘Sangue da minha mãe’ (My mother’s blood) are some examples of the many poems in which Craveirinha expressed the virtue of Mozambican culture and attempted to transform the apparent cultural inferiority of a defeated, colonized and subjugated people into a redeemed culture of creativity, strength and hope. *Xigubo* (the name of a dance) is a fine example of how negritude works. By writing about some of the strongest African traditions, the poet asserts the value of that very culture.

Minha Mae Africa/ meu irmao Zambeze/ Culucumba! Culucumba!/
Xigubo estremece terra do mato/ e negros fundem-se ao sopro da
xipalapala/ e negrinos de peito nus na sua cadencia/ levantamm os
braços para o lume da irma lua/ e dançam as danças do tempo da
Guerra das velhas tribos da margem do rio/... (Ibid 9) [My mother
Africa/ my brother Zambezi/ Culucumba! Culucumba!/
Xigubo shakes the soil of the plain/ and negroes melt in the sound of the
xipalapala/ and bare-chested young negroes rhythmically/raise their
arms to the light of the sister moon/ and dance the war dances of the
ancient tribes of the river] (2008b: 9).

The other classic method by which negritude seeks to redeem African culture is by asserting its very identity in the most fundamental way that is by enunciating its component parts. There can be few finer lyrical examples of such poetic enunciation than ‘Hino a minha terra’:

Amanhece/ sobre as cidades do futuro./ e uma saudade cresce no
nome das coisas/ e digo Metengobalame e Macomia/ e é
Metengobalame Mutamba, Massangulo!!!/ E torno a gritar
Inhamussua, Mutamba, Massangulo!!!/ e outros nomes da minha
terra/ afluem doces e altivos na memoria filial/ e na exacta
pronuncia desnudo-lhes a beleza./...’ (2008b: 13). [The day breaks/

on the cities of the future./ and the longing grows on the name of things/ and I say Metengobalame and Macomia/ and Metengobalame, Mutamba, Massangulo/ And I cry Inhamussua, Mutamba, Massangulo!!!/ And I cry again Inhamussua, Mutamba, Massangulo!!!/ And other names from my land flow softly and proudly into my filial memory/ and in their exact pronunciation I unveil their beauty] (2008b: 13).

With all these names of his land Craveirinha meant at least, to do two things: first to remind the locals of their once upon a time beautiful territory where a mighty nation stood, now in need of restoration. And secondly, to indicate that Southeast of Africans must unite to form a strong alliance that must overthrow the illegitimate colonial oppressive state. The outcome of Craveirinha's aesthetic representation is Moçambicanidade, a belief system that produces the self-identity of a collectivity, or simply a civil religion.

Craveirinha's prison poetry, a sub-genre of the literature of suffering and oppression, appears in *Cela 1*. Craveirinha went to jail in 1964 for being a FRELIMO supporter. While there he shared the experience of many other nationalists. Although prison is an intensely personal experience, as is evident in the poetry published in *Cela 1*, there is in Craveirinha's writing a meditation the relationship between the meaning of his experience and the construction of Mozambique as a nation. Poems like 'Calabouço', 'O meu preço' and 'Inclandestinidade' exemplify the cultural implications of oppression and incarceration. Craveirinha's talent is always apparent but it is particularly striking in the simplicity of poems like 'Aforismo':

Havia uma formiga/ compartilhando comigo o isolamento/ e comendo juntos./ estávamos iguais/ com duas diferenças: não era interrogada e por descuido podiam a pisa-la. Mas aos dois intencionalmente podiam por-nos de rastos mas não podiam ajoelhanos. [There was an ant/ sharing my isolation/ and we ate together./ We were equal/ with two differences:/ it was not interrogated/ and it might by accident be crushed./ but though they could decide/ to make the two of us crawl/ they could not/ make us kneel) (1980: 16).

Craveirinha's social concerns, or rather his concerns about the social aspects of ordinary life, are everywhere apparent. Much of his poetry is a

commentary on a mostly urban life from the 1940s to the present. He has been the ever-watchful witness to the interaction between the world of the white 'cement' city and that of the black suburbia. As suggested earlier, one of the great strengths of Craveirinha's poetry has always been the degree to which it responds to the simple human aspects of life around him. As a result, his poetry provides a great depth of insight into the lives of Africans in colonial times. From the earliest poems, published in *Karingana* *Ua Karingana's* 'Fabulario', to those like 'Os dois meninos maus estudantes' (1980: 39) and up to his recent 'As tanjarinas de Inhambane', Craveirinha has shown that his poetry resonates vibrantly to the very texture of society around him. He has shown too that the most effective 'social' literature is that which is expressed most poetically. Hear for example, his poem 'Ninguem':

Andaimes/ ate ao decimo quinto andar/ do moderno edificio de betão armado./ O ritmo florestal dos ferros erguidos/ arquitectonicamente no ar/ e um transeute curioso/ que pergunta:/ Já caiu alguém dos andaimes?/ O pausado ronronar/ dos motores a óleos pesados/ e a tranquila resposta do senhor empreiteiro:/ Ninguem. Só dois pretos. [Scaffolding/ to the fifteenth floor of the modern building in reinforced concrete./ the forest like rhythm of the erect iron/ architecturally in the air/ and a curious passer-by/ asks: Did anyone ever fall from the scaffolding?/ The interrupted purring/ of the engine with heavy oil/ and the calm reply of the contractor:/ No one. Just two blacks] (2008b:27).

The following two poems illustrate the author's ability to deploy fully his literary gift in the cause of social commentary. What is striking is not only the distinctiveness involved in writing about everyday life but also the narrative quality of the most austere poetic language. 'História do magaiza Madevo' [History of the migrant worker Madevo] opens with the following limpid lines:

Madevo/ foi no comboio do meio-dia/ casa de caniço ficou la na terra/ mamana escondeu coração na xicatauana/ Água de chuva secou no ceu./... [Madevo/ left on the mid-day train/ the thatched hut remained back there/ mother hid her heart in the xicatauana/ rainwater dried in the sky](2008b: 58).

‘Afinal... a bala do Homem mau’ is a poem of simple language carried forward in a spiral by the momentum of a pulsating rhythm, which tears the darkness of the night.

Era noite/ o menino vadio tinha fome/ na papaeira a papaia estava madura/ e o menino vadio estendeu a mao./.../ Era noite!/ Era noite e o menino estendeu a mao/ e afinal nao era o menino que tinha fome/ e afinal a bala do homem mau no Chamanculo/ é que tinha mais fome no menino./.../ Afinal ara a bala que tinha fome/ da fome do menino do Chamanculo. [It was night the homeless boy was hungry the papaya was ripe on the papaya tree/ and the homeless boy extended his hand. /... It was night!/ It was night and boy was hungry/ and in the end it was the bullet from the evil man from Chamanculo/ which was hungrier for the boy./.../ In the end it was the bullet which was hungry/ for the hunger of the boy from Chamanculo](2008b:50).

The same literary quality can be found in Craveirinha’s ‘political’ poetry. ‘Manifesto’ is a menacing statement with eschatological overtones, a clear call to arms. In ‘Jambul’ (symbol of the African who resisted European colonization), the last few lines are also without ambiguity:

‘... Jambul o terceiro homem,/ Jambul o homem da esperança/
Jambul azagaia da Redenção. [Jambul the third man/ Jambul the man of hope/ Jambul spear to Redemption]’ (2008a: 40).

Different but equally powerful is ‘Em quantas partes’:

Em quantas partes se divide um grito/ em quantos corações se parte
uma terra/ em quantos olhos se come o sol/ e em quantos pães se
mata um sonho?/. [Into how many parts can you divide a cry/ into
how many hearts can you split a land/ into how many eyes can you
eat the sun/ into how many breads can you kill a dream/] (2008a:
158).

There is also strong eschatological tone, political resonance and much subterranean power in his well-known poem ‘Quero ser tambor’:

Tambor está velho de gritar/ o velho Deus dos homens/ deixa-me ser tambor/ so tambor gritando na noite quente dos trópicos/.../ Só tambor ecoando a canção da força e da vida/ só tambor noite e dia/ dia e noite só tambor/ até a consumação da grande festa do batuque! [Drum is old from shouting/ oh men's old God/ let me be drum/ only drum calling out in the hot tropical night/.../ Only drum echoing the song from strength and life/ only drum night and day/ day and night only drum/ until the consummation of the great dancing feast!] (Ibid. 124).

His biting poem 'As tanjarinas de Inhambane' is proof that Craveirinha has retained, in independence, the subversive streak, which marked his poetry of the colonial era. In his long poem, the poet asks why it is that the tasty 'tanjarines' of Inhambane fail to reach the capital, a mere sixty kilometers away. The answer is a sustained and acute (but always witty) indictment of the corruption and incompetence of the power-hungry crowd, which runs the government and its many ancillary bodies. The poem opens thus:

Serão palmas indúvidas todas as palmas que palmeiam os discursos dos chefes?/ Não são aleivosos certos panegíricos excessivos de vivas?/ auscultemos os gritos vociferados nos comícios./ E nas bichas são ou não são bizarros os sigilosos sussuros?/... [Is the applause always plausible that applauds the bosses' speeches?/ Are certain over-exuberant panegyrics to be trusted?/ Let us heed carefully the shouts bawled at the rallies./ Isn't there something odd in the secretive whispering in the queues? (Ibid. 129).

It continues:

.../ É preciso, nós vamos fazer estratégia de mestre Lenine/ e vamos avançar duas dialéticas cambalhotas atrás/ Moçambicanissimamente objectivas/ concretissimamente bem moçambicanas/...[it is necessary. We are going to use the strategy of maestro Lenine/ and go forward with two dialectical backward somersaults/ objectively in

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the most Mozambican of styles/ and Mozambican in the most concrete of senses] (Ibid.).

And it ends:

Agora casca uma tanjarina e prova um gomo mas outro gomo./ É doce ou não é doce Camarada Control?/ Pronto!/ Muito obrigado Camarada Control!/ E viva as saborosas tanjarinas d’Inhambane!!!/ VIVA!!!. [Now peel a tangerine and taste it bit by bit./ in’st it sweet Comrade Control?/ Right!/ And long live the tasty tangerines of Inhambane!!! VIVA!!!] (Ibid.).

A study of Craveirinha’s poems reveal not only a great aestheticist but also a civil religious theologian who lived, listened and ultimately gathered the ordinary everyday experiences of his people and turned them into a powerful conscience-awakening and thought provoking discourse. His masterly use of religious themes made it possible for *Psikwembu* forces (gods, spirits of the dead, ancestors, heroes and, to great extent, larger-than-life figures, like Maguiguana, Ngungunhane, Mahazule and Jambul), become active in common events, thus according them a transcendent status. Craveirinha’s writings, over forty years and cited above, reflected a shared repertoire of practices representing the collective Mozambican aspirations for freedom. More importantly, his work portrays an undercurrent of religious themes such as old gods, the ngomas, the collective rituals of feasting and preparing for war, and the simple prophecies that promised liberation by the spear of redemption. Craveirinha dreamed of an independent Mozambique, of a new citizenship, other than the *assimilado* or molattoe identity attributed to him by the colonial state. This dream of a new identity is quite vivid in the poem of the future citizen in which he identifies himself as someone who,

Is from anywhere, from a nation still to be born. I came and here I am!/ I was not born only me, nor you or any other...but brother./But I have got love in full hands to offer. Love of who I am and nothing else./ And I carry agonies not only mine, because I come from a nation still to come./ Citizen of a nation still in the making (2008b: 24).

The deliberate tendency to recycle the repertoire of ordinary life experience into extraordinary events justifies the assertion that an implicit civil religious undercurrent is present in Craveirinha's aesthetic representation of Moçambicanidade. A poet, for Craveirinha, is not just someone who tells stories that commoners can relate to, a poet is an envoy of the gods, a prophet who conveys the message of the gods using simple analogies and parables. What makes a poet feel a fully human, Craveirinha believed, is the realization that his work reveals, enlightens and projects a comprising future. It was in such a context that he wrote thus:

This way/ of telling our things, / in the simple way of prophecies—
Karingana ua Karingana—is what makes the poet feel/ human and
there is no/ other way of inventing/ what it is that poets do/ in real
life to change/ the vision of what appears impossible/ in the dream of
what is going to be. / Karingana! (2008a: 11).

On other occasions, Craveirinha felt that a prophet is a night watcher, sometimes ngoma itself. Poets not only awaken people to a particular situation but they are part of the spirit itself, moving people in a particular direction. His work reveals that as the ngoma, Craveirinha felt his role was to thunder a warning to the community (2008a: 11).

His voice had to be strong, the voice of a strong hard leather that
when drummed, awakens life in the plantations. Its millenary calling
sound must not be confounded./ Its mad cry of the roots of the land.
Its enormous rhythms, very mystic batuque sounds./... and the jungle
awakens in lunar nightmares. (Ibid.)

This is because, according to Craveirinha, the old ngoma ferments the powerful spirits, like the great god Maguiguana at the heart of Africa. Ngoma, the poet or the prophet acts in accordance with the great spirits of *Psikwembu* like Maguiguana, Ngungunane, and Mahazule. Poets are part of the vision of justice, liberation and peace to the land. His visions of liberation were, however, to be preceded by war in an eschatological fashion. Craveirinha had terrible visions of war on the mother Africa. He thus wrote:

My mother Africa/ my brother Zambezi/ God! God! /Xigubo

(Xigubo is an orchestra of ngomas and other musical instruments when assembled together) shakes the soil of the plain/ and Negroes melt in the sound of the xipalapala/ and bare-chested young Negroes rhythmically/raise their arms to the light of the sister moon/ and dance the war dances of the ancient tribes of the river (2008a).

In the liberation war old myths of old glories are assembled to assure victory against the enemy. Craveirinha paints the Jambul character as the arch hero who, despite the defeat of Maguiguana by the Portuguese, never capitulated under the invading colonial enemy. Jambul preferred to sacrifice his own life rather than to face humiliation by the enemy, in the style of the legendary Nipponic Samurais who, upon realizing the inevitability of a defeat, end their own lives before being shamed by the enemy.

Jambul is [the third man/ Jambul the man of hope/ Jambul the spear of Redemption] (2008b: 42).

His view of the poet as a prophet and a visionary, gave him reason to claim to be the messenger of the gods, and the ngoma, the drum that thunders the message. For instance, he wrote thus:

Oh, old God of men, I want to be ngoma./ Not river, not flower, for now not an assegai, nor poem./ Only ngoma echoing the life's power force./ Only ngoma night and day. / Only ngoma until the consummation of the great banquet of the ngoma! / Oh, old God of men, let me be ngoma! (2008a: 118).

Craveirinha had a deep sense of confidence that the old gods, the *Psikwembu* of the old men will deliver the nation from tyranny, but he also knew that such redemption would not come easily. This is well reflected in his short but sharp poem of hope for change:

On the Canhoeiro three, a galagala hesitates his blue head./On a dark corner of a room the spider weaves her net./ And us? Ah, we wait on sweating, that salt of accumulated despise deflagrates (2008a: 31).

Craveirinha had a good sense that procrastination and waiting unde-

cided could be terrible for Moçambicanidade. There was urgency in going forward and making things happen. Despite the euphoria of political freedom, powerful neighbors surrounded Mozambique, like venomous spiders, waited for an opportunity to blow a killer sting at the new nation.

Conclusion

In a concluding note one can safely argue that Craveirinha's poems are nationalistic and contain dense eschatological imagery and symbolism. His poems remind the reader of his political condition. The earlier writings describe the deplorable social conditions under the colonial state and the longing for change; in the same vein, the latter writings maintain the critical gaze upon the newly established order, as it needed to do a better work of delivering the promises of a modern and just society. Throughout his most acclaimed works *Karingana-Ua-Karingana*, *Xigubo* and *Cela 1* there is a call for cultural values, evocation of old Nguni warriors and larger-than-life figures, such as Maguiguana and Mahazul; Bantu deities and spirits such as Jambul, and the Nguni emperor Ngungunhane. There is a clear summoning of the powers of mother Africa, brother Zambezi; he also painted images of young men melting in the sounds of Xipalapala and bare-chested young Negroes raising their arms to the light of sister moon and dancing the war dance of ancient tribes of the river. The uses eschatological imagery and symbolism to indicate that the end for the fascist Portuguese state is in view, the need for the locals to recover what was left of the old Nguni nation for inspiration and start to construct an ideal group (tribal or national) identity to which, he wants to be part of, and names it Moçambique. The outcome of such labor is a belief system that creates a self-identity of the group; in other words, civil religion. So, at the end one can argue with substance that Craveirinha's aesthetic representation is a tense organic civil religious travail.

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