

# Historical Details on Freud and the Moral Order Foundations of Societies

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## Abstract

Freud considered that, in the beginning, the idea of society resulted from the moral order imposed by a totemic ideal generated by feelings of guilt and remorse motivated by the parricide of the founder of the community. Since the substance of the process has persisted in reinventions of social identities throughout history, from this assumption the article interprets the foundations of the moral order in postcolonial African societies, whose origins date back to pre-colonial African heritage, European colonial legacies and reactive historical phenomena of independence. While Freud's ideal type focuses on the sense of collective guilt, the authors' empirical approach highlights the historical relevance of the ideal of victimization in the twentieth century.

## Keywords

Africa, Colonization, Independence, Freud, National Identity, Victimization

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## 1. Introduction

As the first edition of Sigmund Freud's book *Totem and Taboo* (1912/1913) is celebrating a century since its publication, the aim of this article is to test his speculative approach to capture the foundations of the moral order in postcolonial African societies, particularly the significance of European colonization, which ended between the late 1950s and early 1990s<sup>1</sup>. According to Freud, the two institutions that founded primordial societies' moral order, reversed in concepts, totem and taboo, have both derived from original representations of the Oe-

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<sup>1</sup>The cycle of African independences began in 1957 in the Gold Coast, the first country on the continent to gain independence, which took the name Ghana, and ended with the collapse of apartheid and democratization of South Africa in the early nineties. The perspective considered here includes social representations based on common sense speeches (Moscovici, 2000). Hence the regimes dominated by white minorities of Southern Africa (South Africa/Namibia and Rhodesia) are considered extensions of European-type colonial domination (Ribeiro 2013).

dipus complex or its equivalent<sup>2</sup>. They are the result of a collective sense of guilt and remorse for the death of the founding father, which generates the totemic ideal. This corresponds to the original sense of belonging to a given community based on interdictions: Not killing the totemic animal from which the supreme power of the ancestral father emanates and not committing incest<sup>3</sup>, in other words respect the ideal of exogamy that ensures the community's cohesion and survival. Relationships established outside the clan have generated kinship ties based on rights and duties in increasingly wider territorial spaces, ever beyond the totem or clan of origin. Associated to it the economic and social reproduction systems created ensured better survival of ancient communities in the face of adverse ecological conditions (Feliciano, 1998; Granjo, 2005; see Freud, 2012: p. 193)<sup>4</sup>.

Freud's speculative approach is based on another central theory: communities' symbolic relationship with their ancestral father is always ambivalent, just as a society's relationship with his tutelary powers is always ambivalent by extension. The author considers that, in origin, parricide committed by the sons allowed them to free themselves of a powerful, violent, hegemonic guardianship<sup>5</sup>. But this necessarily implies strengthening the potential for conflict between equals, a persistent latent threat of destruction of the community. Thus, the prohibition of incest also served to manage the new configuration taking into account that earlier women were all reserved for the founding father<sup>6</sup>. The original solution for managing the sharing of power between equals lay in the totem worship (represented by an animal, the plant world, a force of nature or an inanimate or artificial object) that symbolized the return of the progenitor. Paradoxically it is the representation of the father who was murdered, a constant threat to the existence of the others while alive, that instituted the community spirit. Therefore, this spirit will always be marked by a large degree of ambivalence<sup>7</sup>.

The substance of these processes inherited from a very ancient ancestry persists in the collective unconscious after the memories of the founding father's death have been lost with the passage of generations (Freud, 2012; see Freud, 2002). Freud wrote: "*This creative sense of guilt has not become extinct with us*" (Freud, 2012: p. 143).

Due to this timeless and necessarily speculative approach, Freud felt compelled to protect himself from this criticism (Freud, 2012: 99 *et seq.*)<sup>8</sup>. A century later, however, it is precisely these characteristics that allow Freud's analytic proposal to help us capture the foundations of the moral order of societies and their consequences<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>"the moral and customary prohibitions which we ourselves obey may have some essential relation to this primitive taboo the explanation of which may in the end throw light upon the dark origin of our 'categorical imperative.' (...) The taboo then gradually became an autonomous power which has detached itself from demonism. It becomes the compulsion of custom and tradition and finally of the law" (Freud, 2012 pp. 21, 23).

<sup>3</sup>In the origin of the idea of society, social relationships have taken on characteristics of physical relations which, for this reason, have forced individuals to marry outside their original totem and the violation of the incest taboo means social death, if not the offender's physical demise. Freud's idea is that the horror of incest was far more relevant to primitive communities than contemporary societies, since it would have had a religious-magical charge (Freud, 2012).

<sup>4</sup>The survival of primitive-type communities was particularly threatened by scarcity. For long periods, these communities were heavily dependent on scarce resources due to poor soils, lack of rain, inclement weather and cyclical epidemics or because they were unproductive hunter-gatherer economies. Their social and economic reproduction systems were always dependent on feelings of shared identities. In general, they involved the circulation of women and cattle (or other material goods underlying marital exchanges) in opposite directions imposed by the totemic ideal, which ensured communities' better resistance to ecological constraints (Feliciano, 1998; Granjo, 2005).

<sup>5</sup>An attitude object without attributes as hegemony, power and violence does not assume the characteristics of symbolic founder of a given community (see Chaiken & Eagly, 1993).

<sup>6</sup>The founding father's supreme strength allowed him to expel males who had reached the age of procreation from of the small horde (a term that Freud attributed to Darwin) (Freud, 2012: p. 129).

<sup>7</sup>According to Freud (2012) the ambivalence became so structural in the collective sense of belonging that the more the community pulled away from the totemic ideal, the more it tended to be replaced by religious ideals similar to those we know. This transformation means that, after having gone through nonhuman totemic forms, because of religion the symbolic representation of the founding father resumed human-like forms, equivalent to his more remote characteristics preserved in the collective unconscious. In certain situations, the replacement of the totemic by religious worship was imposed by a god who, by destroying the totemic symbol, merely killed himself to be reborn in a new form.

<sup>8</sup>According to the spirit dating back to the second half of the nineteenth century, Freud (2012/1912-1913) developed a line of reasoning about the symbolic dimension of the human condition that plays with the long continuity of historical time of humanity, between the origins and current. Comte, Darwin or Marx, in different fields, were authors who preceded Freud in such interpretative approaches in which time and space variables were dealt with comprehensively, one of the attributes of the reinvention of knowledge at that time. While the assumptions of the approaches in question subsequently became unacceptable given their reliance on teleological prospects in which the Europeans and their societies at the time were self-represented as a point of arrival of the civilizational stage of humanity, this does not erase the relevance of these authors.

## 2. Freud and Postcolonial Africa

More precisely, what is under discussion here is not the moral order of societies itself. The analysis will be limited to the foundations of the moral order of societies that operate in a continuum between the extreme of the self-blame principle (Freud's theory) and the extreme of the victimization principle (discussed below). Both principles guide social thinking and attitudes that establish and explain the functioning of social identities. From the primordial idea of society (Freud, 2012) our approach assumes that, ranging in time, space and particularities, European domination in Africa also triggered enlargement of the reference territories of pre-colonial social identities, which was progressively generating substantive reinventions in their characteristics. The most significant result of the subsequent African independences was the institution of new national territorial identities. This analysis therefore only addresses social identities dependent on the idea of a centralized national territorial state<sup>10</sup>. Freud's speculative approach will be used as an ideal type in the Weberian sense. It allows us to streamline the real without preventing observation of the idiosyncrasies of each social or historical phenomenon empirically verifiable as we get closer to its particularities (Weber, 1997). Given the heterogeneities of African national territorial identities, the article will merely systematize their general trends.

It is also important to clarify that the effectiveness of our approach depends on articulation between Freud's ideal type and empirical evidence. This evidence is the result of a long series of field work and publications on social thinking and social representations conducted by the authors for about 15 years in Mozambique (1997 to 2013)<sup>11</sup>. This case study typifies an African national territorial identity established by pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial inheritances and also allows quite consistent inferences (Bussotti, 2008; Ribeiro, 2000, 2002, 2008, 2012, 2013; see Almond & Verba, 1989; Bar-Tal, 2000; Berger & Luckmann, 1999; Bourdieu, 1994; Elias, 2006, 2008; Moscovici, 2000; Vala & Castro 2013).

Even so, our analytical perspective moves away from the thesis strongly implied in Freud's ideal type of fixing the existential sense of societies in their past. Our presupposition is that post-traditional societies turn towards a better future by reinventing their past and as a consequence these societies do not intend to return to the *status quo ante*. In addition, in the dynamics of contemporary national territorial identities in Africa or elsewhere, the idea of the founder can refer to the recent past, not necessarily being focused on the ancestral or sacred, and can also articulate different significant historical moments for each community, not depending on just one founding father as is typified by Freud for primordial communities.

We then make further remarks on Freud's theoretical assumptions. While he raises the question of victimization (parricide is a reactive act against the violent power of the founder), he does not consider the principle of victimization as a founding referent of a moral or social order genuinely new, even though always resulting from reworking what existed before. Freud's analytical logics work as if societies were incapable of substantive reinventions in their characteristics, by reinventing the sense of social identities that constitutes them. However, one hundred years later we are much more confident that historical times produce new social identities and permanently reinvent the meanings of those that resist over time (Amâncio, 2006; Capozza & Brown, 2000; Chaiken & Eagly, 1993; Lima & Correia, 2013; Tajfel, 1981; Worchel et al., 1998).

The analytical perspective in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913) is due to the historic and cultural context in which the theory was formed. It was before the revolutionary cycle triggered by the Russian Revolution (1917), and Freud (1856-1939) did not live to see the closure of the European colonial cycle, both of which had pro-

<sup>9</sup>Freud's thought, expressed in his vast work, evolved from a vision focused on repressed primary instincts and the discharging of these instincts, as in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913). It then focused on the self-preservation of the human species centered on the drive towards death. Later the centrality of the human condition was regarded as the tragedy of dependence on others and the transfer of this dependence outside the subject for certain purposes. While repression was no longer central to Freud's analysis on a set of psychological phenomena (neurosis, psychosis, paranoia, inhibition, anxiety, phobia, obsession, hysteria, fear), it still remained central to the specific issue of personal and social identities (see Dias & Magalhães, 2000).

<sup>10</sup>In this context, the term *nation* is not an analytic advantage. It produces interpretations by analogy, i.e. transposition of interpretative approaches from one context to another, since the idea of a nation is heavily dependent on European historical background. Thus, we have used more accurate terms such as *national territorial identities* or *national territorial formations*.

<sup>11</sup>The authors conducted fieldwork in Mozambique between 1997 and 2013. In this large, multiethnic country, data were collected in urban and rural areas in the southern (Maputo, Gaza), central (Sofala and Tete) and northern (Nampula and Niassa) provinces. The fieldwork mainly involved common people and members of the political, economic, academic or cultural elites. The empirical material is mainly based on common sense discourse. This material collected over the years represents over 500 open individual and collective interviews lasting from 30 minutes to three hours. In addition, the authors conducted ongoing studies of the Mozambican press and surveys expressed in the authors' publications (Bussotti, 2008; Ribeiro, 2000, 2002, 2008, 2012, 2013). The bibliographical study and the authors' experience in the field of African Studies, including conducting conferences and seminars and participating in scientific congresses are worth nothing.

found impacts. It may even be assumed that the twentieth century was a century of profound reinvention of social identities founded on the principle of victimization. Hence, in addition to not taking account of the possibility of rapid transformation of traditional identities (some quickly have lost the label of *savage*, *semi-savage*, *primitive* or *ancestral*), in its assumptions, Freud's ideal type does not articulate a guilt complex with a corresponding victimization complex. He does not develop consistent theoretical support for victimization as a collective phenomenon. Thus, victimization cannot really be regarded as a *victimization complex* concept, but as an *ideal of victimization*, a heuristic designation. For this reason we will limit ourselves to the common use of the idea of victimization.

Nevertheless, our approach complements the Freudian ideal type. As referents of the foundations of the moral order of societies, the *self-blame principle* and the *victimization principle* are mutually exclusive. If they can coexist, the social relevance of one of them implies the devaluation of the other. The twentieth century has shown that this relationship is dynamic over time and within each social fabric. The tendency for social systems' stability or instability depends of the interactions between them (regulated or convulsive), precisely because they do not have the same social value and functions (see Almond & Verba, 1989). While the collective sense of guilt is more durable over time and is also more suitable to ensure the sedimentation of social cohesion with regard to the relationship between the present and past of societies and within heterogeneous social fabric (regulated tendency). For its part, the collective sense of victimization is more cyclical and favorable to social change (convulsive tendency).

So, our remarks do not affect the essence of Freud's theory but rather introduce complementary contributions, given that the ideal of victimization is a no less important human creation deeply related to social identities of revolutionary and postcolonial societies<sup>12</sup>. However, as the case of postcolonial Africa shows, after decades of centrality for the ideals of victimization, social dynamics are increasingly manifesting symptoms of change in the foundations of the moral order of African national territorial identities. From observations on postcolonial phenomena (such as civil wars, crime or corruption) the common people's discourse tends to reveal the reworking of a sense of endogenous collective guilt, which also has effects on the reworking of social representations focused on the colonial past. The social evaluations of the latter were much more similar between common people and their tutelary elites (political, economic, academic or intellectual) at the time of their independence than today. Despite some ambiguities, people in the street tend to consider daily life more stable and predictable in the colonial past than today, either resulting from the tutelary order imposed by the European colonizer or the persisting regulatory power of the African traditional order. Thus, the growing trend towards the idea of collective guilt with the advance of the postcolonial period cannot be dissociated from African ancestral totemic matrix traditions, as typified by Freud (2012). These ancient traditions manifestly or latently affect people's daily lives, as even the most remote memories in the collective unconscious never fade (see Freud, 1997).

While the relationship with the past is inevitable for the existence of national territorial identities, the empirical evidence we have of Africa works in Freud's ambivalent sense: The greater the certainty of the physical impossibility of the founding father's return more relevant its symbolic meanings become to the present. In Africa it has to do not only with the passage of time, but also with the rapid turnover of generations given the current demographic growth. From this presupposition the *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913) ideal type infers that social identities are conditioned by pressure for the return to origins, an interpretation that Freud would confirm later in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). The point is that the overall trend in historical processes of the twentieth century makes us balance Freud's perspective (focused on primordial societies) with a different presupposition adjusted to post-traditional or contemporary societies: the more societies are affiliated to the past, the more autonomous they are from it. Available evidence shows that there are no symptoms that postcolonial African societies wish to return to a (pre-colonial or colonial) past, and their affiliation to the independence tends not to be questioned. By including elites and common people, this attitude crosses the social fabrics, which ensures the long-term viability of African national territorial identities despite the challenges they are facing. Therefore, what is at issue is the search by the people themselves of a logical relationship with their own historical destiny given that the meanings of their present and future depend on the meanings attributed to their past (see Mosco-

<sup>12</sup>The persistent validity of Freud's ideal type also has to do with 1) his attempt to rationalize the differences between peoples and cultures, taking account of the specificities of time and space of each; 2) the idea that the meanings that people attach to the world around them have undergone different transformations throughout history, after being united in an ancient origin; and 3) his ability to make a strictly comprehensive comparative analysis, without ever depreciating the deep cultural or civilizational differences between peoples and cultures. Also, the major taboos of the human condition (murder, incest, profanation of identity) that Freud brought to the scientific field through psychoanalysis remain relevant in studies of individual and social identity processes (Freud, 2012; see Freud, 2002: 108 *et seq.*; Weber, 2005c).

vici, 2000; Vala & Castro 2013).

Our analysis also highlights interactions between the elites and common people, taking into account that these interactions constitute the kernel of national territorial identities and typify the relations of power within each social fabric (see Amâncio, 2006; Capozza & Brown, 2000; Tajfel, 1981; Worchel et al., 1998). As time passes, though interpretations of the European colonial legacy by Africans themselves has never ceased to be significant, it has been taking on paradoxical meanings in relation to its original postcolonial sense (Weber, 2005a). At the beginning they were more homogeneously anti-colonial but then show dissonances within the national territorial identities. Firstly, between elites (mainly oriented by the victimization principle) and common people (which had been reinforcing the self-blame principle) and, secondly, between the discourses (the unfavorable extreme) and practices (the favorable extreme) when it comes to the European influence. This dissonance is very striking among the post-traditional elites that dominate African societies. It is precisely the elites, the minority by nature, who seek to preserve the original meaning of European colonization against the sense of change driven by the common people, the majority by nature. So, the social changes underway in Africa have a pretty consistent teluric background making their impacts predictable in the elites sooner or later.

Given that the sustainability and cohesion of national territorial identities depend on the foundations of their moral order and that these, for their part, depend on consensual interpretations of collective history, the evidence allows us to anticipate the need for a symbolic return to the past by African societies themselves, in order to overcome dissonances in their collective identities.

### 3. Victimization and Its Meanings

The meanings of the referents underlying the foundations of the moral order of societies change according to ongoing social transformations. In the case of African national territorial identities, their genesis refers to 1) pre-colonial African ancestral inheritances, 2) the legacies of European colonial domination and 3) the heritage from reactive phenomena that claimed and achieved independence. These three relevant historical phenomena are organized in a complex configuration which makes them substantially different from each other but deeply interrelated. The European colonial heritage was transition point between before (pre-colonial) and after (independence), although in the first postcolonial times more for political reasons than social, historical or cultural reasons, the transition point focused on the independence processes themselves. But the situation is changing, due to permanent political, social, cultural or economic recomposition in the postcolonial period, as will be explained later. Furthermore, social representations on the state are still constrained by the fact that African countries are part of the latest generation of independences, which contributes to the symbolic relevance of the colonial heritage<sup>13</sup>.

Accordingly, any structural dissonances within the African national territorial identities are related to the radical affiliations or rejections of any of the three founder referents mentioned above, i.e. attitudes of denial of their innate ambivalences. Highly selective social evaluations that overvalue the positive or negative regarding any of the historical referents in question end up generating repressed feelings that foster symptoms<sup>14</sup> of collective anxiety. This can sometimes culminate in cyclic impulsive discharges that, in ordinary language, we tend to refer to as *social and political instability in Africa* (see Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Cusson, 2011; Inglehart, 2003; Sen, 2007)<sup>15</sup>.

What stands out here is the overwhelmingly dominant principles that guided African independences and are still salient in the attitudes of elites that govern Africa's societies. These principles are organized around the rejection of self-blame feelings in relation to their countries' history (Ribeiro, 2002). For this reason, the founda-

<sup>13</sup>Colonized-settler relations in Africa were substantially different to other colonized areas, especially in the Americas. In the latter case, the essence of postcolonial America was based on continuity of the social, economic and cultural domination that existed during colonization. In Africa, rejection of the colonial system that marked the independence processes were much more substantive, much beyond the political sphere, as the civilizational impact of European domination on native populations had been quite significant and remained overwhelmingly dominant during colonization in terms of demographic proportionality. African history shows once again that it is independence that is sustainable in the long term, not time-limited, finite colonial domination, wherever it takes place.

<sup>14</sup>A symptom is the *substitute for the repressed idea* (Freud, 2008: p. 26).

<sup>15</sup>It is also worth considering that the recomposition in postcolonial African societies has been conditioned by phenomena such as violence, crime and other symptoms that are threatening social stability and cohesion. In general in these societies, changes in the structural institutions, particularly in traditional family systems, have not generated compensatory systems to regulate social life efficiently enough, for example, religious, associative or professional authorities and central government. The ongoing postcolonial transformations are no less associated with imbalances in income distribution, population growth and rapid urbanization. The disruptive symptoms of these phenomena have been recognized by African populations themselves.

tions of the moral order in postcolonial African societies refer incisively to the ideal of victimization that remains strongly associated with interpretations of recent (colonization) or remote (slavery) historical phenomena (D'Souza, 1996). Thus, feelings of responsibility for what has been dysfunctional in postcolonial African societies are still heavily associated by tutelary powers to what is exogenous to African national territorial formations. When the focus is on the past or on the present, the feelings of guilt tend to materialize in exogenous objects: European colonization, the West, the Europeans, the rich countries. This means that the guilt principle has remained focused on the ancient colonial father. In general, for African elites, even after his death, he is still treated much more as a guilty father than as a founding father. The idea of collective guilt seems to have been expelled from the founder kernel of the African national territorial identities instituted by Africa's elites. This still predominant attitude among African elites has introduced a different logic in the core of Freud's own collective guilt theory.

For our part, we lean toward the hypothesis that a given moral order can be founded by the ideal of victimization, without the centrality of guilt. However, even considering the importance of victimization for a given purpose, like Freud we assume that the foundations of societies' moral order implies a progressive return of the relevance of sharing a sense of collective self-blame and consequent sense of remorse with endogenous roots since, over time, the sustainability of societies' cohesion will depend on them. The guilt complex may once again be called into question when social pressure for change grows. Contrary to what it might seem, this is not the situation of today's African societies, but a demand for foundations of moral order different from those guided by the ideal of victimization that have continuously dominated those societies since independence (Bussotti, 2008; Ribeiro, 2000, 2002, 2008, 2012, 2013).

The increasing challenge that African societies therefore face is the transition from the central nucleus of the foundations of the moral order of their traditional social systems—in which the sense of guilt for the founding father's death was expiated by the institution of traditional magic-religious cults, that somehow still persist—to another central nucleus of the foundations of the moral order of these same societies corresponding to post-traditional social systems in which Africans focus increasingly implying a reinvented sense of collective self-blame, after a phase of relevance of the ideal of victimization. In this ongoing transition process, the European colonial heritage corresponds precisely to the most remote and significant referent that led to the national territorial identities as established in the postcolonial period, which became decisive. But this does not mean that the symbolic relevance of such a referent can be dissociated from the reactive processes that led to African independence. The question has to do with defining the role of what is essential and accessory at the present time, taking account of societies' representations of the meanings of their own existence.

In Almond and Verba's (1989) *political culture* concept the situation is typified as *civic culture*. This means peoples' ability, through their political systems, to establish balanced compromises between the tradition and modernity, in that the latter does not break away from the former. Civic culture implies that modernity incorporates legacies into new contexts. The demand for selective commitments depending on different historical legacies has been very salient for decades in the attitudes of the African elites. Here the endogenous African heritage is the favorable extreme and the European exogenous heritage the unfavorable extreme. However, these different historical heritages can hardly be separated in terms of valuation, because throughout history they have not replaced each other, but coexisted and reinvented each other in the extraordinary complexity of African societies (see Freud, 2002, 2003, 2008). If the rhetoric in question could be implemented, it would entail denial of structural attributes of the African national territorial identities largely based on legacies from European colonization. Some significant examples are the sharing of official national languages that originally belonged to the European settlers; sharing a sense of belonging to a national territory identified with the central power of the state established by European colonization; affiliation to a set of patterns of everyday life of colonial origin (religion, school, vocational training, economy, urbanization, etc.). This identity background that polarizes the affective-emotional charges from an endogenous cultural favorable to an exogenous unfavorable matrix, at an extreme would imply self-denial of post-traditional and postcolonial identities of the African peoples (see Chaiken & Eagly, 1993; Lima & Correia, 2013).

The incongruities between post-traditional African elites' discourses that have persisted since independence in the devaluation or rejection of contributions from European colonial cultural factors of which they consider themselves to be victims (the unfavorable *manifest* extreme), and their growing affiliation to them which mean strong affiliation to living standards introduced by colonization (the favorable *latent* extreme) reveal identity dissonances which expose the paradoxes in the sense of belonging to national African territorial formations (see

Freud, 1997). Much more than discourses, it is practices that confirm the power of social domination. The identity blockages therefore reside in the discourses not in the practices. This kind of dissonance constitutes a source of problems over time, as it weakens the legitimacy of social domination making it harder to regulate social systems (Hirschman, 1970).

The selective commitments of African elites to the history of Africa are also problematic because they generate far more disruptive—anti-colonial, anti-traditional, anti-modern or anti-Western—than compromise attitudes. However, it is precisely the compromise attitudes that sustain and reinforce the collective identities of the peoples and their social and political regulatory systems, both in Freud's sense (2012) and that of Almond and Verba (1989).

Although with a different historical background, the socially shared guilt complex with which European peoples organize their relationship with their colonial past in Africa has been quite salient. This attitude is substantively different from the ideal of victimization among African elites. We must add that guilt and victimization do not work, in social terms, as moral absolutes since they depend on cultural predispositions (D'Souza, 1996; Lourenço, 2002). Therefore, not only are the mere facts that determine the assigned meanings to the colonization by Europeans or Africans. Individuals and societies have always played an active role in the selection, interpretation and relevance associated with certain facts, while omitting or devaluing others. Whenever social thinking is concerned, facts only represent the raw material from which social representations are collectively formed during social interaction. It is social representations not the facts themselves that determine the sense of society and, therefore, the characteristics of social identities. Accurately what is at stake is not history itself, but social representations of the past (Moscovici, 2000; Vala & Castro, 2013).

To be clear, under no circumstances would it be analytically reasonable to make evaluative judgments about the characteristics of social identities, as we have adopted both the attitude of ethical amorality of Freud's work and Weber's axiological neutrality (Dias & Magalhães, 2000; Weber, 2005c). Even so, according to Freud's ideal type, it is reasonable to conclude that management of the colonial past as a founding referent of societies' moral order tends to prove, at least to date, much more fruitful for post-imperial European societies than for post-colonial African societies.

By highlighting the ideal of victimization, whose legitimacy is not disputed, when the African independence re-founded the societies this ensured the release of a powerful, violent father. This option has proved very effective for the purpose of liberation. However, it has more to do with the ending of a historical time (colonization) than with the constructive opening of the next historical time (independence). It is clear in the period that followed the father's murder that the potential for sibling conflict grew in the social order grudgingly bequeathed by the dead father, whose spirit, due to the circumstances of his demise, will torment those who have memories of his person and the circumstances of his physical disappearance (Freud, 2012)<sup>16</sup>. As it is not conceivable to assume that Africans are not emotionally attached to the European colonial legacy as an ambivalent founding moment of social identities that are meaningful to them today, the official interpretations of colonization by the African elites becomes problematic because it has meant the hyper-valuation of the disruptive or traumatic di-

<sup>16</sup>Associated with the idea of sibling conflicts there is another issue that was not sufficiently explored in Freud's psychoanalytic ideal type, albeit implicit, but significant for the analysis of the foundations of African postcolonial and post-traditional social identities: the consequences of the European founding father's bigamy (or polygamy) for the collective sharing of a sense of community. Although all the children (siblings and half-siblings) have joined forces at a given time to get rid of the progenitor, the different maternal identities have always been strongly present and are therefore relevant in the differences between feelings of guilt and remorse caused by the murder of the father. Paradoxically, it is also this heterogeneity resulting from maternal origins that activates the need of extended communities (or subgroups of the community) to return to the unifying symbolic power of the dead father. However, the collective identities that interacted during European colonization and then became autonomous from each other are extremely difficult to characterize. They are related to spaces much wider than the national territories and refer to peoples scattered around the world who share the same official languages (Portuguese, Spanish, English, French). We do not have minimum or systematized elements to analyze this subject. So, we will just make a few inferences following Freud's ideal type (2012). In the case of the colonial founder, it is particularly clear that some of the children still feel different from others, the children of European woman and of African woman. It means uniqueness around the father figure and duality around the mother figure, which on the one hand generates post-imperial European national territorial identities, and on the other postcolonial African national territorial identities. In the latter case, of which we can perform a substantive analysis, it is fair to also consider the existence of diverse mothers-Africa. It is the different maternal African origins (here symbolizing different ethnic ancestries) that explain the heterogeneity of postcolonial African national territorial identities. The inevitable need to manage these heterogeneities eventually imposes the symbolic return to the founders, both the African nationalist and the colonial father. Given its complexity, the identity equilibrium of postcolonial African societies raises questions about the validity of projective explanatory approaches based on the reinterpretation of the dramas of Oedipus, son of Laius and Jocasta, a monogamous couple, according to classical Greek mythology. Although Freud's ideal type is conditioned by the assumption of monogamy (a symptom of Judeo-Christian eurocentrism) it preserves the central role of feelings of guilt and collective remorse, even when his ideal type is used to interpret today's non-European social identities.

mension of European domination, an attitude that has worked as a strategy for legitimizing the postcolonial tutelary powers. It also means the rejection or omission of the dimension of that historical legacy that allowed a new socially significant order<sup>17</sup>. Cross-referencing trends in elites' evaluations with evaluations of the remaining social fabric, there are plenty of symptoms of an unsuccessful psychological repression. It is therefore reasonable to infer that there is an imposition by African elites of a functional depressive deviation of collective memory on the colonial past (Dias & Magalhães, 2000: 187 *et seq.*).

Given that the foundations of societies' moral order are ambivalent (between devotion and repulsion, conscious and unconscious) and, by extension, it is they who determine the interactions between the community and its tutelary powers, it is particularly evident in Africa that certain aspects of historical memory *look-out for an opportunity of being activated* (Freud, 2008: p. 26)<sup>18</sup>.

#### 4. Telluric Power

In times in peoples' history in which the fruitful idea of endogenous guilt is lethargic as it has been banned from the tutelary spheres and replaced by the ideal of victimization, the sense of guilt never fades away. It resists in common sense thinking and in the collective unconscious. It may also be verifiable through the survival of the traditional in the post-traditional, as is the case of Africa. What is termed *lethargy* is no more than the ante-chamber of the gradual return of collective self-blame to the core of the foundations of the moral order of societies, which means that the elites could be the last to be affected by this process, as the sense of guilt has a deep telluric nature that dates back to the most ancient traditions.

Therefore, it is plausible to consider the existence of quite salient predispositions to throw the blame on others (the reverse of the psychoanalytical pathology of guilt) in a significant proportion of African elites, while in the remaining social fabrics symptoms which act as antidotes to this same predispositions are easily detected (Dias & Magalhães, 2000). From observations on postcolonial phenomena (e.g. civil wars, crime or corruption) the common people tend to reveal the reworking of a sense of collective self-blame that affects the re-working of social representations focused on old colonist-colonized relations. These historical relationships are increasingly considered from an ambivalence angle in a continuum that fluctuates between an unfavorable/negative extreme (symbolized, for example, by forced labor for Africans) and a favorable/positive extreme (symbolized by the recognition by common Africans of the transforming action of European domination that brought together colonizers and colonized in the European cultural or material civilization patterns).

At present, this ambivalence tends to decrease as we get closer of the discourses of tutelary powers. As mentioned above, African elites tend to identify particularly with the Manichean ideal by emphasizing the victimization of Africans during European colonization. If the African elites' attitudes are legitimate, the question is to what extent this strategy will be sustainable as a source that legitimizes their ruling power. In addition to the clear dissonance between discourses and practices among elites themselves, African national territorial identities are confronted with other growing dissonances reflected in the different trends of dominators and dominated in the interpretation of common history (Bussotti, 2008; Ribeiro, 2000, 2002, 2008, 2012, 2013).

Still on the subject of ambivalent feelings about the colonial past on the part of the common people, it is worth mentioning the attributes attached to former European colonizers dating back to Africans' first contact with them, and preserved since then in words in African national languages (see Freud, 2002). An example is *mulungo*, a Changana, Ronga and Tsua word (African languages in southern Mozambique), which means *white person* (Lindgaard, 2009)<sup>19</sup>. Although the underlying reasons are hard to determine accurately, the term *mulungo* originally had a favorable/positive charge (sacred power, wisdom, justice, good character, goodness) and unfavorable/negative charge (racial and ethnic discrimination against Africans). For these last reasons, the national

<sup>17</sup>At an analytical level, from the perspective of common African people, not taking account of the ambivalent meanings of European colonial domination is like suppressing history and is therefore impossible. It was the ongoing ambivalent feelings, which were highly congruent with the African traditional magical-religious logics, that allowed the affirmation of African national heroes between the final phase of colonization and the first postcolonial times. Their epic weight lay in their ability to defeat and replace the former European tutelary power. However, according to an analysis of common people's discourse, feelings of affection for this power have been progressively generated, as it has been losing its threatening force for decades. The same happened before with the ancient traditional African powers during effective colonial domination. Then and now these feelings have invariably been consonant with the totemic logics that established the ancestral idea of society (see Ribeiro, 2013).

<sup>18</sup>If the intention is not to exclude the common people's thinking or the everyday life from historiography, this involves a great epistemological challenge in the production of knowledge about societies where the writing tradition has been marginal (Ribeiro, 2013).

<sup>19</sup>In other national languages of Mozambique the word *mulungo* corresponds to *maguerre*, *mucunha*, *muzungo*, *xicaca* (Lindgaard, 2009).



struggle for independence against the *mulungo* power became legitimate. However, the dignity of independence (achieved in 1975 in Mozambique) did not erase from everyday life the ambivalence of the attitude object, precisely because it did not erase the word *mulungo* and its deep roots in African identities that use it. The term serves today to designate not only old white European settlers but also their successors or descendants, in a process that went on relativizing skin color attribute, as *mulungo* was also extended to individuals belonging to the black elite (see [Rex, 1987](#); [Ribeiro, 2012](#))<sup>20</sup>.

## 5. Apollo Prophecy outside Africa

Here we analyze the foundations of the affiliation of diaspora minorities to host societies. In this case, this has been heavily constrained by skin color. Nonetheless, racial relations and racism are not at issue since the article's analytical focus is the foundations of the moral order of social identities associated with the national territorial formation. Accordingly, the parricide of the primordial founder constitutes a key assumption in Freud's ideal type, which focuses on cultural dimension, i.e. he does not consider the racial question itself (see [Bonilla-Silva, 2010](#); [Cabecinhas, 2007](#); [D'Souza, 1996](#); [Fredrickson, 2002](#); [Memmi, 1993](#); [Rex, 1987, 2007](#); [Rex & Tomlinson, 1979](#); [Rex, 1986](#); [Ribeiro, 2012, 2013](#); [Vala, Brito, & Lopes 1999](#); [Wieviorka, 2002a, 2002b](#)).

Even though there are several reasons for social integration in the national territorial identities of host societies, including racial and ethnic attributes, the point in this analysis is that the Oedipal tradition never had significant expression among African identities from diaspora, which were regulated by a symbolic attachment to the African ancestral umbilical cord. There are no historical records of substantive disruptions at this level (see [D'Souza, 1996](#)). Hence, when feelings of devaluation of these African diaspora minorities are manifested in host societies (whosoever primary responsibility or irrespective of its salience), particularly in Europe and the Americas, the situation can be associated with the inability to symbolically kill their primordial father, despite and because of their black skin color<sup>21</sup>. From the perspective of identity theory of the Oedipus complex, this failed act makes it more difficult to overcome the victimization principle with the self-blame principle and therefore also makes it harder for the minorities in question and the dominant racial or ethnic segment to share senses of belonging to a national territorial identity. Here lies one but not the only source of dissonance in the social identities of predominantly white societies of old settlers or slave traders.

For emotional reasons, the historical course until the second half of the twentieth century was an element that stood in the way of the relevance of the Oedipal tradition among the African identities from diaspora. However, something substantive changed with the end of the European colonial cycle and South African apartheid system. Both phenomena are likely to make way for another type of characteristic in the foundations of the moral order of the identities in question ([Ribeiro, 2013](#)).

<sup>20</sup>In Africa the telluric origins of the self-guilt principle that establishes the moral order of societies could be complemented with non-traditional sources of collective guilt. Especially since the 1990s, this has been occurring via phenomena that are separate from those resulting from Africa's traditional matrix, but congruent with it. These recent phenomena even gradually penetrate the symbolic space of postcolonial African elites, dominated until now by hegemonic ideals of victimization, as mentioned in the article. In this case, on the one hand, there is the adoption, here and there throughout Africa, of the democratic ideal—organized around an ideal type of active political participation, contrary to the hegemonic role of ideals of victimization in a given political system ([Almond & Verba, 1989](#))—and there are reasons to consider this to be a genuine process of adoption of democracy by African populations, as in any other continent, albeit with peculiar characteristics ([Ribeiro, 2008](#)). On the other hand, rapid urbanization in Africa generates a growing membership of post-traditional religions, particularly Christian but also Islamic, both of whose moral order establishing the community of believers is founded on a guilt complex from the sacrifice of the prophet who redeemed the collective sins. These are phenomena whose actual impact on the foundations of the moral order in African societies is difficult to assess, but in any case they refer to essential dimensions in the regulation of everyday life: the rule of temporal tutelary power (political/democracy) and the rule of spiritual tutelary power (beliefs/religions) (see [Bussotti, 2008](#)). However, none of the phenomena in question conform to linear logic. In the first case, because of its intrinsically adaptive nature, the democratic ideal is not contradictory to the ideals of victimization. The current process will progressively open door to alternatives to the ideal of victimization in the heart of the African elites and, thus, in the heart of the states' tutelary power. In the second case, the expansion of monotheistic religions, especially Christianity (in its universal or syncretic versions), must be regarded as showing that African societies, like societies in general, also are living opposite trends towards secularization. Beyond the persistence of reinvented traditional magic-religious cults, even among the dominated social segments, the adherence to monotheistic ideals has had impacts significantly differentiated by gender. This is essentially a female phenomenon which makes it substantively distinct from the much more aggregative function of the ancient magic-traditional cults or monotheistic religions in the past. The latter were extended to societies' nuclear institutions as a whole, such as community or household, which was very different from the ongoing individualistic trends in African societies. So, permanent reworking of the foundations of the moral order of African societies is an extremely complex, dynamic process.

<sup>21</sup>In mythology, Oedipus only achieved epic dimension after murdering his own father, King Laius (who sealed his fate by not complying with Apollo's order to kill his own son), and marrying his mother, Queen Jocasta, in Thebes. This was the city-state where Oedipus lived and prospered, while he believed he had been born to a different family from the city-state of Corinth, a metaphor that transforms the idea of origin into a symbolic place in which the conscious and unconscious intersect. Oedipus's life was tragic, but worthy.

For historical reasons too the opposite trend has not been difficult to see since colonial times, and much more since independences. There has been clear and recurrent disaffiliation from Europeans and Europe by segments of the white and mestizo population who settled in diaspora. Their cutting of the umbilical cord was clearly manifested in a given historical cycle, precisely because they participated actively in independence processes. Although they were a small minority in African host societies, these minorities committed the symbolic parricide of the European founder in exchange for an unequivocal affiliation to the postcolonial national territorial identities of African societies. In the early stage of African independences, the European motherland became the central target of their criticisms. These white and mestizo segments more easily rejected the diaspora attribute and identified themselves only as Africans, without adjectives or ambiguous qualifications as African-European.

Despite the persisting ambiguities, the European diaspora minorities have shown symptoms of effective management of the Oedipus complex that distinguishes them from the communities of African origin who were forced to set up diaspora. Therefore, it is also clear that voluntary departure (colonization) or forced removal (slavery) ultimately constrains the characteristics of minority identities over the generations. Nevertheless, in practical terms and according to Freud's ideal type, after the cutting of the umbilical cord both the affiliation to the national territorial identities of the host societies and, at a later stage, the interactions between diaspora's identities and the original identities become more fruitful when compared to the low profile interactions resulting from persisting umbilical dependence.

## 6. Conclusion

The article is a sequence of systematic conclusions resulting from a long maturing of ideas. We end up with a challenge to all who are interested in learning more about societies and the human condition: Take the main theories, concepts, methodologies and analytical models widely tested in Northern Hemisphere societies and use them in systematic studies of empirical realities usually marginal to the academic mainstream, like today's African societies. This is a promising approach not only for a better understanding of social diversity in the world today, but also for a deep epistemological renewal of the social sciences and humanities.

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