

Back home. Post-war cleansing rituals in Mozambique

Paulo Granjo

Mozambique ended in 1994 a long civil war, which often involved acts of brutality that largely surpassed local criteria and tolerance towards warfare and social behaviour. It was nevertheless striking, only some years later, the high degree of veterans' reintegration – if not in their opportunities to earn a living, in their acceptance by fellow citizens and by the communities to which they once belonged.

After so traumatic a war, this rapid integration of veterans as “people like the others” is hardly separable from the social effectiveness of cleansing rituals, and from their deep accordance with the prevailing local visions about misfortune causality.

Rites involving the whole village deserved already some descriptions, and will not be the object of this chapter. We should however keep in mind that they follow the *rites de passage* structure and, unlike psychotherapy, they stress the “fresh start” achieved by the veteran and his consequent collective welcome, instead of promoting a verbalisation of traumatic events that is considered dangerous both for the person and for the community.¹

I must, though, emphasize that communitarian rituals wouldn't make much sense in this cultural framework if they wouldn't go along with less public ones, performed by healers of recognised expertise. It's also usually left unsaid that those cleaning/healing treatments aren't exclusive of post-war situations, and are more connected to spiritual dangers present in specific environments than to the actual act of killing, or even of being forced to engage in cannibalism.

The purpose of this chapter is, thus, to describe the cleansing rituals performed by the main category of south Mozambique healers, the *vanyamussoro*,² and to analyse those rites in their historical, social and conceptual context.

Preliminary actions and misfortune domestication

Local healers use to say that present cleansing rituals derive directly from those performed in XIX century, during the Nguni invasions which gave birth to the Gaza Empire and endured, in southern Mozambique folk imaginary, as the archetype for war and for modern healing practices.³

¹ For some of those descriptions and characterisation, see Green & Honwana (1999) and Honwana (1999). Literature usually presents this avoidance as resulting from the fear that the angry spirits of people killed during the event may be attracted by its verbalisation, and cause distress. This explanation seems a bit too simple and contradictory with several main points of the local experts' exegesis about spirits' spatial mobility. Nevertheless, the communal cataloguing of people who keeps speaking about their war traumatic experiences as «crazy» (Castanheira, 1999) may suggest both a folk simplification of experts' speech which approaches the literary explanation, and/or - considering the local dominant notions of health - the idea that verbalization “madness” derive from ineffective spirits cleansing.

² Singular *nyamussoro*. They are putatively possessed by spirits of different “ethnic” origins, who give them powers of divination, spirits' exorcism and botanic cure (see Honwana, 2002). I wish to acknowledge all those who accepted my presence and questions on this subject, especially Job Massingue. The long conversations with them, together with an interview with a “purified” veteran and the observation of a (very similar) post-prison cleansing ritual, were the empiric base for this article. Several post-war cleansing rituals weren't performed by *vanyamussoro*, but by *mazione* priests (i.e., clergymen from a southern African Christian church which re-appropriates the local spirits-based beliefs and healing practices through an idiom of Holy Ghost and demons), but I couldn't access to their observation or reliable description.

³ About this African state and different aspects of its rise and fall, see Clarence-Smith (1990 [1985]), Neves (1987 [1878]), Pélissier (1994) and Vilhena (1996). As it is still very clear in healers' and common people's speech, Nguni warship, healing and divination practices were assimilated as “superior” ones by former inhabitants. It's also eloquent that, in order to perform all his possible specialized tasks, a healer must be possessed by spirits from the three “ethnic” groups with more conspicuous roles during the invasion (Nguni, Ndau or Changana/Ronga), who “work” under the supervision of a Nguni spirit in the most crucial rituals.

According to them, old war rituals included, before battle, the consumption of a drink containing processed remains from people sacrificed for that purpose and, after warriors' return, something similar to nowadays proceedings. However, the oral descriptions are usually vague, very variable and starting with the phrase «*it is said that...*».

In written form, Henry Junod also reproduced several descriptions of XIX century pre-war rituals (1996 [1912]: 410-413). He was told the rites were all intended to expel the fear and «*good conscience*», to increase the hate and to protect against enemy weapons, although their form varied from group to group. Some involved drinks, others the besprinkle of the troops or the consumption of meat with medicines, but there's only a reference to symbolic cannibalism - which is, yet, a strong reference in folk imaginary. Junod also mentions some cleansing rituals (idem: 420-424), with a resemblance to nowadays "plants *kufemba*", but they only involved, by then, the warriors who killed others, and not everybody who was present in war scenarios, as it happens today.

Although there are many noticeable differences between past and present rituals, they seem to assume similar logics, which are directly integrated into notions of health, danger and misfortune that also appear to be fairly ancient.

This accordance is conspicuous since the opening act of the cleansing process.

Soon after declaring the aim of the visit to *nyamussoro*, the patient is submitted to a diagnosis of his/her⁴ actual situation and what dangers threaten that person. That's done through **divination**, using a set of astragalus, cowries, turtle carapaces, seed shells, stones and coins called "*tinholo*".⁵ The action has a double purpose: first, to establish if the patient became incidentally possessed by some spirit, and if he carries any health disorders that need complementary treatments; secondly, to determine which actions must be undertaken in order to clean, protect and, if necessary, treat him.

The subsequent proceedings will depend on the outcome of this initial process of divination – which, as a matter of fact, hardly differs, in its purpose and dynamics, from any other *nyamussoro*'s divination session, whether it be to resolve a health problem or a social one. The reason for this is that, according to locally dominant notions, mind and body, health and social relations, the livings and the spirits of the dead, do not function independently from each other, being part of a globally integrated process.

Since no reality status is recognised to randomness, any misfortune (as well as good fortune) requires another explanation besides the immediate material causes which led to the undesired event; those causes only explain how did the event happened, but it's still necessary to understand why did this external threat harm that specific person.⁶ In short, it is assumed that we are surrounded by many material hazards, but they only can harm us due to three possible reasons: (i) our negligence or inability to recognise and avoid them; (ii) someone's sorcery; (iii) an absence of ancestors' protection, in order to reprimand us or to call for our attention.

⁴ Cleansing patients (and even the veterans) can be women, as it also happens with *vanyamussoro*. However, in order to avoid the systematic duplication of gender references, I will use just the masculine form from now on.

⁵ The letters "nh" stay for an aspired "x", vocalised with the tongue arched up in the mouth. This set, said to have Nguni origin, is often complemented by two others, previously existent. One is composed of six crocodile back scales, and the other of six nut shells from *nulu* tree (lat. *carissa arduina*).

⁶ The principles which rule the local domestication of aleatory are, thus, very similar to Evans-Pritchard's interpretation of Azande witchcraft (1978 [1937]); the main difference is the central importance that ancestors' and other deceased's spirits assume in Mozambican prevailing logic. By "domestication of aleatory", I mean the attribution of a sense and causality to aleatory and uncertainty that make them be seen as cognoscible, regulated, explainable or even dominated by human beings (see Granjo, 2004).

Indeed, and as it happens with elder kins, ancestors have both the duty to protect and to guide/correct their descendants. However, since they are just the remaining and incomplete part of a former human being, they aren't able to directly communicate with them. So, in order to admonish their descendants, or just to show they wish to tell them something (through expert divination or trance), they can only suspend their protection or to propitiate undesired events.

As one should expect, also the reasons for illness closely follow this etiological principles, based on one's social inadequacy or discordance. In fact, health is considered the person's natural state, but it requires harmony between the living and their social/ecological environment, including their ancestors. So, besides the direct projection of the three above mentioned causes (one's carelessness, ancestors' displeasure and sorcery), health can only be jeopardised by two other indirect projections of them: our possession by spirits who demand us to work as healers, or our contact with spaces which house wandering and displeased spirits.

We'll soon clarify the importance that this later danger assumes to the matter in hand. I must meanwhile stress that, as corollary of those notions of health and misfortune, a physical manifestation of illness presupposes a lack of spiritual balance, which again presupposes social causes. Therefore, it's not enough to treat the illness; it's also necessary to restore the social balance (including the harmony with the ancestors), or the problems will keep reappearing.

The dilemma of a *nyamussoro* who directs a cleansing ritual is very much the same. He knows from the start that he must purify veteran's body, «*clean his head*» and protect him against further problems. But he must discover if the patient is also afflicted by physical or mental illnesses (which need complementary treatment), and if those problems might be caused by possession, by the disturbance of spirits who followed him, or by ancestors' action – each one of them demanding different ritual proceedings.

Whatever the veteran's diagnosis might be, the next step is always the same. It is called *kuguiya* in changana,⁷ meaning “to simulate a fight”. The patient must imitate, with a pestle pole instead of a weapon, the fights and killings he performed during the war – or those he had seen, because, in addition to combatants, people who only witnessed the fightings must also submit to cleansing rituals.

By doing so, the veteran is assuming his past acts and begins a cathartic process; but this is done in a ritualised and non-verbalised manner which has more to do with dramatic representation than with revival of the situation and emergence of guilt.

In one hand, since in local ritual and symbolic frameworks the pestle pole stands as a sign for the family and the house, its use - instead of some other object more similar to a weapon - stresses the rupture between the representational context and the represented act, placing the later in an exogenous time and space.

Besides, the implicit objective of the performance is not at all to focus on the guilt, but to bypass it by naturalising exceptional acts in the context of exceptional conditions. As a *nyamussoro* put it to me, «*In war, people kill and horrific things happen. But war is like that; things are upside down, you're upside down. You're supposed to kill, is not really your fault, you're a different person, there*».

⁷ The most common language in southern Mozambique.

That's why this act of alternative psychotherapy must always be observed by the healer with a neutral demeanour, independently of how cruel the events enacted in front of him may be.

When the veteran “carries spirits”

After this performance, the ritual follow-up depends on the diagnosis that has been made.⁸ If the divination didn't showed evidence of possession by spirits killed or offended by actions undertaken during the war actions, the regular “cleaning treatments” can start. Otherwise, an exorcism must be performed.

This treatment has the general designation of *kufemba*, and it can include three different forms: the patient's fumigation with specific incenses; a kind of sauna with boiling plants and other medicines; and the so called *kufemba* with *xizingo*, where healer's spirits directly search and catch the ones who are afflicting the patient.

When they deal with post-war cleansings, *vanyamussoro* usually prefer to “play safely”, and combine all of them. The veteran is thus seated next to a burning piece of incense and covered with *capulanas*,⁹ staying there until it burns out.

As soon as that moment arrives, the healer, wearing the *capulana* of the spirit he will be working with, grabs his *tchova* (a gnu tail with, inside the handle, some hair from hyena's tail – the *xizingo*) and starts sniffing the patient with it. When he finds the afflicting spirit, he decides if is just a matter of sending him away, or if it is necessary to let him speak. In the later case, the healer falls into deep trance and voices the spirit's complains and demands, which must be fulfilled in order to appease him and to restore patient's well being.

If it is recognised that the afflicting spirit belonged to someone the patient killed, the performance of formal exequies will usually be demanded, and in exceptional cases this must to be carried out at his home region, in addition to compensation for deceased's family. If the spirit was wandering in war zone and just walked along with the patient, the most usual demand will be a place to live – which can be just a “hut” made with a covered pot and hidden in the bush, that will be ritually offered to him.

One way or the other, this kind of *kufemba* is supposed to end with the afflicting spirit's expulsion from the patient. However, in order to reinforce the efficacy and the irreversibility of the process, the other forms of exorcism are subsequently used. The reason for this is the belief that some spirits may be «smart» enough to understand what's coming and to wait outside of the healer's premises for patient's return, while others can be resilient enough to re-possess him when he's unprotected, in the interim between the *xizingo kufemba* and the regular cleansing rituals.

So, the patient goes immediately back to incense fumigation, while the healer prepares the medicines for the «plants *kufemba*».

⁸ In cases considered very serious (due to a diagnosis of possession by spirits of high status or power while alive), the exorcism can even precede the *kuguiya*. On the contrary, if an interference of ancestors' spirits is detected, they are supposed to present their complaints and demands already through divination.

⁹ Local textiles which are usually rolled around the waist, as a skirt, or used to carry babies at the loin. Besides those regular ones, *vanyamussoro* use *capulanas* with a special design to each “ethnic” origin of the spirits who possess them, and usually own a different one to each one of their spirits.

First, those medicines - a blend of plants, egg and animal parts – are spread over the patient's body. Then, the patient is washed with regular water and «*put into the pot*». This emphatic local expression designates what I believe to be the most frightening part of the ritual, from the patient's point of view. He's now seated next to a large pot where the same blend of medicines is boiling, and will stay there, covered and sweating, for about 45 minutes.¹⁰ At start, the healer passes his *tchova* over the *capulanas* which cover the patient, while he cadenced prays for his helping spirits to completely banish any remaining spirit who might afflict him. The patient hears and feels those actions for about three minutes, in the dark, without knowing what will happen next or when this "sauna" (which surely seems very long to him) will come to an end. Some fade away before it's finished, or in the moment they are uncovered.

At the end of this process, though, they are supposed to be both free of spirits and temporarily protected from their return through deceit, by means of the inclusion of an egg into in the medicine blend. Healers indeed consider that «*you cannot trick what doesn't speak*», even if metaphorically. Since the egg is connected to life but doesn't speak, it is believed to create a barrier against cheating intrusions, which is also useful in treatments intended to protect a house, or ones' property.

So, after "plants *kufemba*" the patient is ready to resume the general cleansing process. But we should remember that, according to local experts, the spirit who's exorcised trough this actions can be somebody killed by the veteran, by some other person, or even some spirit whose environment was disturbed by war. Furthermore, in the last two cases the spirit might not possess the person, but just walk along with her and create problems around, in order to be noticed and heard.

That's why everybody who were involved in war actions, or even passed through an area where a battle occurred, must submit to cleansing rituals. According to a logic that makes them also necessary in other circumstances, the main danger is not – as Junod (*op.cit.*) points to XIX century – the possible vengeance of those you killed, but your contact with places where many people suffered and many spirits wander around, being able to escort you. Indeed, homeless spirits are believed to be «*like newborn ducks, following the first thing that moves, so it takes care of them*»; but once they do it, their necessity to show their presence will provoke problems to that person and to everyone who interacts with her.

General cleansing follow-up

If this is their underlined explanation for the necessity of cleansing rituals, the healers are simultaneously aware that a traumatic experience is enough to provoke mental disorders by itself, and that to «*clean up patient's head*» is always a central issue, it doesn't matter if abusive spirits are supposed to be present, or not.

Indeed, the "traditional" healers of my acquaintance don't fit at all into the current stereotypes of people musing upon a magic world, or of watchful swindlers exploiting others' candour – and if there is probably a considerable number of the last category, I doubt the previous even exist.

They are certain of the holistic health principles they share, and of the existence and role the spirits play in health and life, but they also seek others' explanations for specific scenarios and often try to integrate them into their notions and practices. In fact, they are not restricted to spirits' idiom but - on the

¹⁰ Before he enters "into the pot", some powder medicines are placed in patient's nostrils. If he sneezes in the next minutes, that's considered a sign that the treatment will be effective; otherwise, some other healer must perform it.

contrary - equate the physical, psychological and social elements involved in each case, and often question the effectiveness of some “traditional” proceedings, mentioning them as «*theatre*». Finally, several of their interpretations of illness are isomorphous to the bio-medicine ones and - as the studies of Edward Green (1999) and Harry West (2004) highlight - those attitudes are too widespread to result from some regional particularism or from our inter-subjective relation.

So, healers have a genuine concern with the mental effects of traumatic experiences resulting from war, and their answer to it is both the administration of specific medicines, and the psychological impact of the *hlhambo*, the “bath”.

Preferably, this next step of the cleansing ritual must be performed in a river bank, because *vanyamussoro*'s concepts attach to river water the ability to «*carry away*» undesired things, as it is intended in this case.¹¹

The healer carries there the medicine blends he will use and, arrived to the place, the patient is seated near the border, dressed only with a *capulana* around his waist. Then, a young goat is killed over his head, while the person is covered with the animal's blood and the food it had inside the main stomach.

Unlikely as it may seems, this blood bath doesn't have any direct connection with war scenarios or deaths. Although I couldn't ever collect a convincing exegesis about this practice (which seems to be reproduced just “because it's like that”), it isn't at all exclusive to this ritual. In fact, many other more frequent treatments use this as a central element, always with the meaning and purpose of purifying the person and carrying away her afflictions.¹²

However, this «*outside washing*» is not complete or effective without three more actions. First, the patient is washed from the goat remains inside the river, and his *capulana* goes away in the current, together with the filth. The importance of this last detail is double, since besides the immediate meaning of getting rid of impurity, almost as getting rid of an undesired skin, the very act of untie something which was tide-up (as was the *capulana*) assumes, in local symbolic and ritual frameworks, the value of break with the past and changing one's situation, often one's status.

Immediately after this action, the patient is washed with a blend of medicines dissolved in sea water (see note 11). Most of its components are plants, and every healer uses a similar botanic base to his blends. They usually include *muhlanhlovo* and *tita* (also used in “baths” for other purposes), together with the root and leaves of *ximafama*, which is specifically connected to mourning purifications, even if it has other medicinal uses. The blends complete composition is, though, variable from healer to healer and from region to region – for instance, in Maputo surroundings it's accepted that the healers from Inhambane province have superior knowledge about plants related to death rituals, due to the «*huge importance the people from there gives to death matters*».

With this plant based ablution, the external cleansing is completed, but the healer still needs to take care of the patient's «*internal washing*». This is done trough the administration of two different medicines. One of them is a drink intended to induce a mild diarrhoea – which is, indeed, often mentioned

¹¹ Water from different origins has, indeed, a big importance in those healers' preparations. Trough the same process of metaphor and metonymy applied to river water, lake water is used to steady a desired effect (because «*everything that falls into the lakes stays there*»), while sea water is used to expel undesired things, because «*everything you'll throw into the sea will come to shore, sooner or later*».

¹² There is a hierarchy of “washing animals”, according to the seriousness of the affliction, to the importance of intended aftermath, and to patient's status. One shouldn't, thus, be surprised to ear about the use of a chicken instead of a goat in blood washings (like in Herbert, 2004), even when they're integrated in cleansing rituals to the poorest people.

as an «*internal cleaning*» in local current speech. The other one intends to clean-up the brain, taking the «*bad ideas*» out from it, and assumes the form of drips which are introduced in patient's nostrils.

However, sometimes there isn't any river near by. When this happens, the whole process may be performed in healer's premises, but it will require some adaptations in order to substitute those symbolic statements which are only possible in a river. For instance, the patient will be seated inside a hole dig in the ground for that purpose, and the washing up from the goat bath will be done with a mixture of river and sea water. At the end of the ceremony the patient will get out naked, leaving the *capulana* inside to be burned over the goat's remains, and the hole is covered immediately after its consumption.

Near the river or at healer's place, we can say that, by this moment, the patient has done everything that was necessary for his reintegration into the community. He is clean but, yet, considered vulnerable to further spiritual attacks and needing to be subject to complementary treatments.

They are, in fact, similar to those performed in every other case that requires **protection and good fortune**.

The first step is another "washing", now with a blend of medicines considered protective and propitiatory. Amongst several plants, minerals and animals' greases, the egg is again used - this time together with "anti-skidding" plants which compensate its slipping surface and, by doing so, will avoid the patient to «*slip into mistakes and wrong behaviours*».

The conclusion of the process will be the administration of the so called «*vaccine*», intended to «*close*» patient's body to spirits and sorcery. It consists in the inoculation of a paste inside several incisions done in the skin - nowadays with a razor blade provided by the client, due to the danger of HIV transmission.

The incisions aren't aleatory, but done in the places believed to be the main entrances of spirits and spells into the body: the chest, the loin, and the articulations from the arms and legs. If this is well known, expected by people and a recurrent practice, the inoculated paste is normally kept secret even from outside researchers, because every healer uses some personal components that he considers a plus value in his professional concurrence with the colleagues. It always includes, though, a bit of the preparation kept inside the «*gona*», the healer's calabash which is believed to hold a material concentration of his spiritual power.

Passage and danger

After this long process, the patient is finally purified from the past, propitiated and protected for the future – protected not only from outside factors, but even from himself, through the "anti-skidding" medicines. He's free of spiritual threats, and he is no longer a source of danger to the others. He can, now, be reintegrated with his family and into his community, through other rituals which will involve everybody.

These rituals are necessary because, as it often happens, this kind of cleansing ritual is a *rite de passage* inside a *rite de passage*.¹³

¹³ To go deeper into this anthropological category, which covers rituals of status change where a liminal and mutating state is chronologically and symbolically contained between rites of social separation and reintegration, see Van Gennep (1978), who formalised it, and Turner (1967), who developed it and stressed the crucial importance of its liminal phase and rituals.

Since the *kuguiya* dramatic representation, which showed veteran's status and how dangerous he was when he entered the process, the whole cleansing ritual is a repeated affirmation of the danger he faces and continues to represent, of the impurity he carries, but also of the necessity and effectiveness of being washed from them; it is, after all, a repeated affirmation both of his liminal transformation state and of the reasons for it. When he finally unties his *capulana* and let it drift on the river current (or lying there to be burned), he becomes a different person, free from those dangers, from impurity and from the burden of the past actions that he wanted to get rid of.

Nothing of this can, however, result in social reintegration if the others don't recognise the change, or do not demonstrate that they accept it and want this person back. So, the rituals I'd been describing and those performed by the community require each other. No social reintegration is possible without taking the threatening aspects out of the veteran; but because the specialised cleansing rituals, although not private, tend to be restricted to closest kins which only hold an attending status, the reintegration will not derive from those rites unless they are followed by their general reiteration.

Therefore, the whole cleansing process we have been facing happens to be, as well, the main event of the liminal phase from a larger and socially wider *rite de passage*, with its own symbolic and ritual statements - such as receiving the veteran outside the village or family's premises, and keep him eating and sleeping apart until the moment when, after the specialised cleansing, he's received in a collective and festive way.

At one conceptual level, the segregation is imposed to the veteran due to the danger he represents to the whole community. Not because, as some texts reproduce, he is believed to have «a demon inside» (Maslen, 1997),¹⁴ nor either because of his ability to kill and his recent experience on the subversion of basic social rules, but because he would not be the only victim from the spirits he might had carry with him.

Indeed, as I mentioned above, communication abilities of the spirits are limited to calling the livings' attention to them trough the disruption of routine and the affliction of those they want to communicate with. The victim's affliction isn't, though, provoked only directly; until the moment they manage to communicate and to get their demands fulfilled, the spirits will keep on provoking undesired events also to the people who's close to the victim – and if there's no sense in killing the person we want to communicate with, we can always kill some kin, to assure that we'll be listen.

However, together with this prevailing spirits-based logic, the people who surrounds the veteran also thinks and feels according to another idiom. In a much more prosaic way, the veteran did censurable or even unacceptable things, and he can only be received when he renounces to them and submits to the hard rituals that will allow him to leave those actions behind and to refrain from repeating them.

The problem doesn't arises only from the act of killing, which would be locally acceptable in a warfare context. But, in addition to this, it's also consensual that this civil war had particularly shameful characteristics to both involved parts.

¹⁴ One should, though, note that this author's affirmation could make sense, if he collected it from a *mazione*. Even so, it would imply that his informer would believe all veterans came back spirits-possessed (or, in his language, «*demon possessed*»), or that they performed their war acts under possession. However, as we'll soon see, both assumptions are marginal and incoherent to their conceptual context.

Seldom the two opposed forces sought the direct confrontation, except in moments and places where one side accumulated an overwhelming numeric superiority - leading, not to a combat, but to the retreat of the opposing force (Geffray, 1991).¹⁵ The war was, then, mainly conducted towards civilian populations, with raids and different essays to keep them under control.

If several testimonies point out that, as long as the war endured, the behaviour of both opponents became increasingly similar, the *modus operandi* of Renamo troops received far more attention, partially due to Frelimo domain over the state and the media. Thus, the ambushes directed against civilian vehicles and the assaults against unguarded villages, accompanied by indiscriminate shootings and followed by pillage, selective murders and kidnappings (all of them done by armed men against civilians) are well known. The Renamo actions that the official speech called «*kidnappings*» were, meanwhile, one of the state army's primary missions, although under the name of «*populations recuperation*».

Even the recruitment for both forces ended up being fairly resembling. While the army was chasing youngsters along the town streets and villages to make them conscripts *sine die*, Renamo troops took them away from the villages they assaulted. With the important difference that, instead of using the drill and the Army Disciplinary Code to achieve obedience and avoid (with moderate success) desertions, the non-voluntary incorporations into Renamo were often marked by forcing inductees to perform socially repulsive acts that would inhibit them from deserting and returning home (Geffray, 1991; Castanheira, 1999). So, youngsters and children could, for instance, be forced to kill close relatives, to use skulls as goblets, or to eat cooked parts of their murdered neighbours and kin.

Therefore, when they came back, what their communities had to forgive them for is much more than the commonly accepted "soldiers' duty". If for the veterans the two kinds of rituals we spoke about are, in fact, the closing point of their own and even larger *rite de passage* (of entering, took part end exiting from war),¹⁶ also their communities have wounds to heal and, in order to do it, need this process to happen.

Guilt and acceptance

Part of the guilt issue is attenuated by people's knowledge that the veteran wasn't there by his own free will, and that he was compelled to perform those acts, often under the threat of death. Another part is plausibly mitigated, as Alden (2002) suggests, by the evident desire of the population to turn their back to war times and to what happened then. But there's much to forgive, still, and the local mechanism which usually permits to surpass severe actions guilt is not available in this case.

In fact, if the accusations of sorcery and witchcraft become most often scapegoat processes, they also have an underlying reintegration principle, based on the interpretation of possession phenomenology. If a bad spirit possesses somebody, he may force that person to perform, under trance, unintentional acts

¹⁵ In this very lucid work, Geffray substantiates that, although Renamo guerrilla was created by Rhodesian regime in order to debilitate their new-born and socialist-oriented neighbour and, after it, was maintained by South-African *apartheid*, both its long resilience against the army of Frelimo state-party and its actual occupation of large parts of the territory were only possible because, at one point of its course, Renamo managed to capitalise on rural based dissatisfaction towards touchy issues of Frelimo's modernistic agenda and the authoritarian way they were imposed. It's the case of the repression of «*feudalism*» (hereditary chiefs) and «*obscurantism*» (spirits-based beliefs, rituals and healing practices), and of the forced resettlements in large «*communal villages*» which - besides raising serious political, symbolical and supplying problems - had a population density that couldn't be ecologically supported with the available technological means (Yañez-Casal, 1996).

¹⁶ That's true also to those who fought in the state army, because even regular forces manage conscripts' presence - internally and towards society - through separation rites, liminal periods and reintegration rites (Granjo & Porto, 1991).

that she might not even be aware of. At the same time, when a spirit possesses a living person they stop being two separate entities, and become one only symbiotic being, with a new and common identity. In this sense, the one who caused others harm wasn't really the same living person which existed before and after possession; the person, by herself, is responsible for the bad events she putatively provoked, but she's not, in a strict sense, guilty.

Consequently, you may be an involuntary witch who harmed many people and, at the same time, to be able to see your (and community's) problem solved as soon as you recognise your deeds and you are expurgated from the spirit that afflicts you. Since your bad behaviour arose from possession, *kufemba* will terminate the cause of the problems and will turn you into the very same person you were before – without any reason, therefore, to further ostracism.

However, as veterans weren't supposed to be possessed by spirits during war, but compelled by living men, they cannot shed themselves of guilt so directly. All they can is to see their regret accepted by the living and by their ancestors, and to be provided with a "fresh start", as far as they stop being a threat to the others.

As we could understand, the cleansing rituals performed by *vanyamussoro* are able to answer to all those needs. Indeed, they manage to diminish the guilt, through the performative naturalisation of traumatic acts and by banishing them to the past, as a closed and surpassed case. They also do this by providing the symbolic statements that present the patient as a renewed person which, in a way, is different from the one who was in the war and, therefore, is ready to be reintegrated. Finally, they declare unequivocally that the veteran isn't dangerous anymore, manipulating for that purpose the idiom of spirits and their escorting ability.

That's not at all an unique case, or even the most frequent use of this explanation and ritual morphology. Except for *kuguyia* representation, the very same cleansing rituals are performed when someone came out of prison, or got lost inside a mine¹⁷ or, if the person is strict about protection practices, after a trip outside her home region.

The underlying logic is the same, as well. The Mozambican prisons and the South-African mines are seen as places where many people died sudden and violently, and from where it's difficult to leave. The spirits from those deceased from «*bad deaths*» are, thus, believed to stay trapped there, but still trying to find a way out. When someone survives and manages to depart, the captive spirits will tend to «*take a lift*» with him and to adopt that person as care-provider.¹⁸

The believed dangers which arise from this situation are surely clear to the reader, by now. I guess it's also clear the similitude and metaphoric relation between those situations and the veterans' return. What is not certain, however, is from which of those cases (war, prison or mines) were extrapolated the explanations and rituals that nowadays allow to think and manage all the others.

Nevertheless, considering that post-war cleansing rituals were probably not reintroduced before the 1960s (together with the National Liberation War against Portuguese colonialism), the most plausible

¹⁷ Even if it might seem, this isn't a marginal situation, due to the very old, enduring and quantitatively huge temporary migrations to South-African mines (see Granjo, 2003).

¹⁸ The risk of travelling to unknown regions is very similar, because traveller's ignorance about the places where wandering spirits concentrate may allow him to cross them, with the possible consequence of a spirits' escort back home.

answer is that, under its present form, they were the newcomers which followed the conceptual and ritual pattern previously employed for the returns from prison and the mines.

Being so, the conspicuous contrast between the visibility of post-war cleansing rituals in reports and courses, in one hand, and the silence about the prison and mines ones, in the other hand, would mostly result from a research biasing due to political, academic and NGO's agendas.

A bias which projects the impression that post-war reintegration mechanisms (as we know them today in Mozambique) are unique and immemorial, and reduces, by doing so, our perception of how much are they coherent and subsidiary to the conceptual framework where they are performed.

Paulo Granjo
Instituto de Ciências Sociais
University of Lisbon

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