

# The Homecomer

## Postwar Cleansing Rituals in Mozambique

Paulo Granjo

*Lisbon University*

Unlike in most wars involving Western countries, when veterans from Mozambican civil war began to return home, the first concern of communities was to make them confront their traumatic experiences and guilt. This was done through cleansing rituals, which were and are based on the local exegesis about misfortune. They allow, simultaneously, the confinement of past war actions as an exceptional situation and expurgate the individual veteran from being in danger and being considered a danger to the community. It allows him to be proclaimed a new man, entitled to a fresh start inside the community. In addition to its importance for the individual reintegration of veterans, the generalized performance of such rituals also played and plays an important role in allowing the community members to accept previous enemies/veterans as “people like the others.”

*Keywords:* veterans; civil war; rituals

When the long and very violent civil war in Mozambique ended back in 1992, veterans began to be reunited with their families. The brutality of that war largely surpassed any local or regional definitions for violence and horrific social behavior. Yet, only some years later, while economic opportunities were and are yet a difficult matter, there is no doubt that these Homecomers have been accepted and reunited with home.<sup>1</sup> In a rather marked contrast with the return home of American soldiers, particularly after Vietnam, who even if accepted were and are virtually always seen as different, the soldiers of Mozambique’s civil war have been accepted and acknowledged as “people as the others” again.

The explanation for this is tied tightly to the phenomenon of cleansing rituals. It is through these rituals that those who have suffered specific kinds of misfortune, and veterans of the brutal war in particular, have been able to be “changed back” to be reintegrated. These rites are both private and public. There are private rites for the veteran to purge him of traumas and of the danger he might represent and a public version to satisfy the villagers, after which the veteran is accepted. It must be noted that in contrast to Western psychotherapy, there is no verbalization about the issues of trauma (that could be dangerous for both the individual and the community), but rather, a *rites de passage* structure, which results in a “fresh start.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, the reintegration process has its two parts, private and public, the first one performed by “healers” of recognized

expertise and the latter overseen by an elder kin or the village head. Again, these cleansing/healing treatments are not exclusive to postwar situations. They are very connected to spiritual dangers generally perceived by all to be present in specific types of environments or situations, as much or even more than being related to the actual act of killing or even forced cannibalism.

The purpose of this article is to describe a generic version of the cleansing ritual(s) performed by the southern Mozambique healers, called the *vanyamussoro*,<sup>3</sup> and to analyze those rites in their historical, social, and conceptual context as to how they work to promote healing and reconciliation between the soldier and his village, between the Homecomer and home.

### A Brief History of “Cleansing”

The oral tradition of local healers indicates that the present-day cleansing rituals derived directly from those performed in the nineteenth century during the Nguni invasions that gave birth to the Gaza Empire and endured in southern Mozambique folk imagery as the archetype for war and for modern healing practices.<sup>4</sup> These accounts are usually vague, vary considerably, but almost always start with the phrase, “*it is said that ...*”. These rituals took place before and after battle, and a reliable written source is available.

According to Henry Junod,<sup>5</sup> although the exact format of nineteenth-century pre-war rituals varied from group to group, these rites were intended to expel the fear and “good conscience” of the warrior, to increase aggression and hate, and to protect the soldier against enemy weapons. Some of these rites involved the sprinkling of liquids on the troops; others involved drinks or meat with medicines for the troops to consume. In Junod’s account, there is only one reference to symbolic cannibalism. This is, as yet, a potent folk image in southern Mozambique.

Junod also mentions some cleansing rituals with a resemblance to the present-day “plants *kufemba*,” but evidently, they only involved the warriors who killed others and not everybody who was present on or in a battlefield, as is the case today.

Although there are many noticeable differences between the rituals of the past and the rites practiced at the end of the civil war, they seem to have a similar logic that is directly connected to virtually ancient folk traditions concerning notions of health, danger, and misfortune. This correspondence is very conspicuous, beginning with the opening act of the cleansing process. For the purpose at hand, this process is presented below as an account of a fairly typical situation of a veteran’s seeking the assistance of the *nyamussoro* to be readmitted (come home) to his village.

The patient is diagnosed by the *nyamussoro*.<sup>6</sup> This is accomplished through “divination,” using a set of astragalus, cowries, turtle carapaces, seed shells, stones, and coins called *tinhlolo*.<sup>7</sup> The purpose is twofold—first, to establish if the patient became incidentally possessed by some spirit and/or determine if he has any health

disorders that need complementary treatments, and second, to determine which actions must be undertaken to clean, protect, and if necessary, treat him.

All subsequent proceedings will depend on the outcome of this initial and typical process of divination—typical in that it is similar to any divination to resolve a health or even social problem. The local dominant mores hold that the health of mind and body and even social relations for the living are intimately tied to the spirits of the dead.

Furthermore, the belief systems of these communities reject random occurrence. Events require an explanation beyond their material causes. For instance, if you are aware of HIV-spreading mechanisms and know you should use a condom, but get AIDS after you did not use it, you know very well *how* you became infected, but you still need to find the reason *why* you did not use the condom that day. So, material causes explain how the event happened but not why it was the experience of a particular individual.<sup>8</sup> In short, the belief systems in southern Mozambique assumed that every person is surrounded by many hazards. However, one can only become a victim as a result of three possibilities: (1) our negligence or inability to recognize and avoid these hazards; (2) someone's sorcery; (3) an absence of ancestors' protection to reprimand us or to call for our attention.

In this society, role expectations for ancestors are very similar to those of living elders. Ancestors have the duty to both protect and to guide and correct their descendants. Unable to communicate directly, they can only suspend their protection or initiate an undesired event so that their descendants not only sense that something is awry but also seek an expert's divination to unravel the problem.

Although health is considered the person's natural state, it requires a harmony between the living and their social/ecological environment—and this includes relations with their ancestors. In addition to the three primary causes mentioned above (carelessness, sorcery, or the displeasure of ancestors), an individual's health can only be jeopardized by two other indirect means: one becomes possessed by spirits who demand us to work as healers, or one has contact with wandering and/or displeased spirits from a "haunted" location such as a battlefield—the spirits attached themselves to the living soldier/veteran to get away.

Even more important and as a corollary to these notions of health and misfortune, in the social setting of southern Mozambique, a physical manifestation of illness presupposes a lack of spiritual balance, which again presupposes social causes. Therefore, it is not enough to treat the illness; it is also necessary to restore the social balance (including the harmony with the ancestors), or the problems will keep reappearing.

With this belief system in mind, it is understandable that the nyamussoro who directs a cleansing ritual knows he must purify the veteran's body, "clean his head," and protect him against further problems. In addition, he must determine if the patient is also afflicted by physical or mental illnesses requiring a complementary treatment and if those problems in turn might be caused by possession from somebody he killed, by the disturbance of spirits who followed him from the battlefield, or by the action of ancestors. Each of these would demand different ritual proceedings.

Whatever the veteran's diagnosis might be, the next step is always the same. It is called *kuguiya* in changana,<sup>9</sup> meaning "to simulate a fight." The veteran 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 fighting must also submit to cleansing rituals. By doing so, the veteran is assuming responsibility for his past acts and begins a cathartic process; but this is done in a ritualized and nonverbalized manner that has more to do with dramatic representation than with a verbalization of the situation that might stimulate guilt.<sup>10</sup> 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 latter in an exogenous time and space.

Furthermore, the objective of the performance is not to focus on guilt, but rather, to bypass it through the performance of the exceptional acts in the context of exceptional conditions, thus making the action normal for their abnormal context—war. The veteran was a soldier in war, taking a role he had to fulfill—it was and is all part of the phenomenology of his social world. 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, [it] is not really your fault, you're a different person, there." And in similar fashion to a Western psychotherapist, this alternative form requires the healer to portray a nonjudgmental demeanor, regardless of how cruel the events enacted in front of him may be.

### When the Veteran "Carries Spirits"

After this performance, the ritual depends on the diagnosis that has been made.<sup>11</sup> If the divination reveals no evidence of possession by spirits killed or offended by actions undertaken during the war, the typical cleansing treatments can begin. If not, an exorcism must be performed.

This exorcism is generally referred to as *kufemba*, and it can include three different forms: (1) the veteran's or patient's fumigation with specific incenses, (2) a kind of sauna with boiling plants and other medicines, and (3) the so-called *kufemba* with *xizingo*, in which the healer's spirits directly search and catch the spirits afflicting the patient. When they deal with postwar cleansings in general and with soldiers and veterans in particular, the vanyamussoro usually prefer to "play safe" and combine all the forms. The veteran is thus seated next to a burning piece of incense and covered with *capulanas*,<sup>12</sup> staying there until it burns out. As soon as the incense dies out, the healer, wearing the capulana of the spirit he will be working with, grabs his *tchova* (a gnu tail that has some hair from a hyena's tail—the *xizingo*—inside the handle) and starts sniffing the patient with it. When he finds the afflicting spirit, he decides whether he can simply send him away, or if it is necessary, lets him speak.

In the latter case, the healer falls into a deep trance and voices the spirit's complaints and demands, which must be fulfilled to appease him and to restore the patient's well-being. If it is recognized that the spirit belonged to someone the veteran killed, a performance of formal exequies will usually be demanded, and in exceptional cases, this must be carried out at the home region of the spirit; in addition, compensation for the deceased's family may be required. If the spirit was wandering in the war zone and "attached" himself to the patient, the most common demand will be a place to live. Usually, a "hut" is provided to the spirit in the form of a covered pot that is placed in the bush and offered in a ritual.

One way or the other, this kind of *kufemba* is supposed to end with the spirit's expulsion from the veteran patient. Other forms of exorcism mentioned above are subsequently used to reinforce the efficacy and the irreversibility of the process, because some spirits may be "smart" enough to avoid expulsion.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the veteran/patient immediately returns to incense fumigation while the healer prepares the medicines for the "plants *kufemba*."

First, those medicines—a blend of plants, egg, and animal parts—are spread over the patient's body. Second, 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 is now seated next to a large pot in which the same blend of medicines is boiling, and he will stay there, covered and sweating, for about forty-five minutes.<sup>14</sup> At the start, the healer passes his *tchova* over the *capulanas* that cover the patient while he prays in a cadenced form for his helping spirits to completely banish any remaining spirits who might be afflicting the veteran. The patient hears and feels those actions for about three minutes, in the dark, without knowing what will happen next or when this "sauna" will come to an end. Some veterans faint before the "sauna" is completed or do so the moment they are uncovered.

At the end of this process, they are considered to be free of spirits—and temporarily protected from the spirits' return through deceit—by means of the inclusion of an egg into 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 does not speak, it is believed to create a barrier against cheating intrusions. This is also used in general treatments intended to protect a house, one's property, and so on.

After this "plants *kufemba*," the patient is ready to resume the general cleansing process. However, it is very important that those attempting to understand this process in its context remember that the local experts/healers may consider the exorcized spirit to have been (1) somebody killed by the veteran, (2) somebody killed by some other soldier, or (3) a spirit whose environment was disturbed by war. In the latter two cases, the spirit might not possess the person but just "walk along with him" and create problems to be noticed and heard.

That is why everybody who was involved in war or even passed through an area in which a battle occurred must submit to cleansing rituals. The main danger is not—as

Junod points to in the nineteenth century—the possible vengeance of those you killed but your contact with places where many people suffered, and thus, many spirits wander around, any one of whom is able to “escort you.” Indeed, to reproduce a metaphor presented to me by a healer, homeless spirits are believed to be “like newborn ducks, following the first thing that moves, so it takes care of them.” However, once the spirits accompany someone, they necessarily have to provoke problems to the individual veteran and those around him to gain attention.

### The “Social Policy” of Cleansing

Given this 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 a patient’s head” is always a central issue. It does not matter if abusive spirits are present or not. Indeed, the “traditional” healers of my acquaintance did not fit neatly into the current stereotypes of people musing on a magic world or of swindlers exploiting others’ candor. The healers are very 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, the healers are not restricted to the idiom of “spirits” but—on the contrary—equate the physical, psychological, and social elements involved in each case and often question the effectiveness of some “traditional” proceedings, mentioning them as “theater.” Finally, several of the interpretations of illness provided by healers are isomorphic to the biomedicine ones, and as the studies of Edward Green or Harry West highlight,<sup>15</sup> those attitudes are too widespread to result from some regional particularism or from our intersubjective relation.

Thus, healers have a genuine concern with the mental effects of traumatic experiences resulting from war, and their answer consists of both (1) the administration of specific medicines and (2) the psychological impact of the *hlhambo*, or “bath.” This next step of the veterans’ cleansing ritual must be performed in a riverbank, because vanyamussoro attach the ability to “carry away” undesired things to the river water.<sup>16</sup>

The patient is seated near the riverbank,<sup>17</sup> dressed only with a capulana around his waist. Then, a young goat is killed over the veteran’s head, and the veteran is then covered with the animal’s blood as well as the food it had inside the stomach. This blood bath does not have any direct connection with war scenarios or deaths. Although I could not collect a convincing exegesis about this practice (which seems to be reproduced just “because it’s like that”), it is not 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 afflictions.<sup>18</sup> 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. This has the immediate meaning of getting rid of impurity, almost as getting rid of an undesired skin. But the very act of untying something that was tied up (as was the capulana) also proclaims a symbolic break with the past and signals a change in one's situation and status, in the local symbolic and ritual frameworks common to southern Mozambique.

Second, immediately after this action, the patient is washed with a blend of medicines dissolved in seawater (see Note 16). For the most part, the components of this blend are plants, and every healer uses a similar botanic base to his blend of medicines. 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, though it also has other medicinal uses. The specific composition of these blends varies from healer to healer and from region to region. For example, in Maputo surroundings, it is accepted that the healers from Inhambane province have superior knowledge about plants related to death rituals, because of the "huge importance the people from that area give to matters of death." With this plant-based ablution, the external cleansing is completed.

Third, there remains the need to take care of the patient's "internal washing." This is done through the administration of two different medicines. One of them is a drink intended to induce mild diarrhea—which is, indeed, often mentioned as an "internal cleaning" in the current framework. The other is intended to "clean the brain," taking the "bad ideas" out from it. It assumes the form of drips that are introduced into patient's nostrils.

At this moment, the patient has done everything that was necessary for his reintegration into the community. He is clean but considered vulnerable to further spiritual attacks and needing to be subjected to complementary treatments. These are, in fact, similar to those performed in every other case that requires protection and good fortune.

This involves another "washing," now with a blend of medicines considered protective and propitiatory. Included with the several plants, minerals, and animal greases, the egg is again used—this time together with "antiskidding" plants that compensate its slipping surface, and by doing so, will help prevent the veteran from "slipping into mistakes and wrong behaviors."

At the conclusion of the process, there is an administration of "vaccine," intended to "close" the veteran's body to spirits and sorcery. It consists of an application of a paste inside several incisions made in the skin—at present times, with a razor blade provided by the client, because of the danger of HIV transmission. The incisions are not aleatoric but are made in the locations believed to be the main entrances of spirits and spells into the body: the forehead, the chest, the loin, and the articulations from the arms and legs.<sup>19</sup> The product always includes a bit of the preparation kept inside the "*gona*," the healer's calabash that is believed to hold a material concentration of his spiritual power.

## Passage and Return to the Community

After this long process, the veteran is finally purified from his violent past, propitiated, and protected for the future—protected not only from outside factors but even from himself through the “antiskidding” medicines. He’s free of spiritual threats, and he is no longer a source of danger to others. Now, he can be reintegrated with his family and into his community through yet another set of public rituals that involve the entire village. These public rituals are also necessary—as a public drama, they represent a rite de passage inside a rite de passage.<sup>20</sup>

The dramatic representation of the *kuguiya* revealed the veteran’s condition and how dangerous he was when he first entered the process. The entire cleansing ritual is a repeated affirmation of the danger, of the impurity he carries. It is also an affirmation of the necessity and effectiveness of being cleansed of impurities. The rituals are, after all, a repeated affirmation both of the veteran’s liminal transformation state and of the reasons for it. When he finally unties his *capulana* and lets it drift on the river current, he becomes a restored person, free from those dangers, from impurity, and from the burden of the past actions that he wanted to get rid of. He does not become the person he was before (and that would be impossible, since he most often left home as a child or a youngster, and he is now a man), but he became a “person like the others.”

However, this does not result in social reintegration if the people of his community do not acknowledge the change or do not demonstrate that they accept it and want this person back. Therefore, the rituals thus far described and those additional rituals performed by the community are both required. No social reintegration is possible without removing the impurities from the veteran. Yet, because the specialized cleansing rituals, although not totally private, tend to be restricted to closest of kin, reintegration will not follow unless there is a general ratification of the process.

This ratification is 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 keeping him eating and sleeping apart until after the specialized cleansing. He is then received in a collective and festive way.

At one conceptual level, the ostracization of the veteran is a reflection of the danger he represents to the whole community, not because, as some texts reproduce, he is believed to have “a demon inside” nor because of his war experience but because he would not be the only victim from the spirits he might have carried with him. As mentioned above, the spirits are believed to be limited to getting the attention of the living through the disruption of routine and by afflicting those with whom they want to communicate. The victim’s affliction is not the only consequence. Other family members, kin, friends, and possibly the entire village are affected. It is the general belief that the spirits will continue to provoke undesired events and even cause the death of others until they are listened to so that their demands become fulfilled.

However, there are two logics or idioms operating in the community. One is, of course, the prevailing spirits-based logic; the other is the comparatively more pedestrian but extremely important idiom of the actions of the veteran as a soldier. He directly participated in censurable or even unacceptable things, and he can only be received when he renounces them and submits to the rituals that will allow him to leave those actions behind and to refrain from repeating them. This problem is not confined to the act of killing, which would be accepted by the community in the context of “ordinary” warfare; the civil war in Mozambique had particularly shameful characteristics that involved both individuals and communities.

In this war, the opposing forces seldom engaged in direct confrontation, except in moments and places in which one side accumulated an overwhelming numeric superiority—leading not to a combat but to the retreat of the opposing force.<sup>21</sup> The opposing forces used raids and other forms of intimidation to keep various village populations under their control. Thus, it was the civilian populations that endured the real brutality of the war. Various testimonies of civilian survivors have made it abundantly clear that throughout the entire conflict, the strategies and tactics of both the Renamo and Frelimo factions became increasingly similar. The modus operandi of the Renamo troops simply received far more attention, partly because of Frelimo’s control over the state and the media. The ambushes directed against civilian vehicles, assaults against unguarded villages, indiscriminate shootings, pillage, selective murders, and kidnappings (all of them done by armed troops against civilians) are well known. Yet, the Renamo actions, officially referred to as “kidnappings,” were as well one of the state army’s primary missions disguised under the name of population recuperation.

Even recruitment for both forces became remarkably similar. The army literally chased youngsters along town streets and villages to make them conscripts; Renamo troops simply captured them from villages they assaulted. There was one important difference: while the army used standard techniques of drilling and discipline to incorporate troops and prevent desertion, Renamo often forced “inductees” to perform socially repulsive acts that would inhibit them from deserting and returning home. In short, youngsters and children were often forced to kill close relatives, to use skulls as goblets, or to literally eat parts of murdered neighbors and kin.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, regardless of the side they fought for, the soldiers/veterans were virtually “untouchable.” Their communities had to forgive for behaviors far more repulsive than the commonly accepted “soldiers’ duty.” Thus, if the veterans required rituals of exorcism, the villages required their own rituals to heal deep-seated wounds. The rituals served as the closing point for the veterans and the forgiveness of the communities. Reconciliation required these processes of ritual to be performed.

## **Guilt and Acceptance**

In part, the issue of individual guilt is attenuated by everyone’s knowledge that the veteran’s participation was not voluntary; he was compelled to perform these

various horrific acts, often under the threat of death. Furthermore, as Alden suggests,<sup>23</sup> communities strongly desired to distance themselves from these collective memories. However, there has been so much to forgive that simpler measures cannot accomplish this.

During peacetime, the communities would have had a “traditional” way to solve the guilt issue. Indeed, although the accusations of witchcraft can easily become scapegoat chases, they are acceptable and effective collective explanations, particularly because they contain an underlying principle of reintegration based on the interpretation of possession phenomenology. Bad spirits can force an individual to perform acts that he might not even be aware of, because of a state of trance, and possession implies a symbiotic relationship in which the host and the spirit become one being with a new and common identity. Thus, the one who caused others harm was not really the same living person that existed before and after possession; the person is responsible for the bad events but is not, in a strict sense, guilty.

In this construction of social reality, it follows that if the veteran could be considered an involuntary “witch” who harmed many people but acknowledged his evil acts, and the healer was able to expurgate the afflicting spirit, then the community’s problem could be resolved. The evil actions were the result of possession; the kufemba process terminates this possession—restoring the veteran to the very same person he was before—eliminating the need for social ostracism. Yet, veterans were not supposed to be possessed by spirits during war; other living men compelled them. Thus, they cannot shed guilt so directly. All they can expect is to see their regret accepted by the living and by their ancestors, to stop being considered dangerous, and therefore, to be provided with a “fresh start.”

The performance rituals of the vanyamussoro have been able to respond to the needs of both the soldier/veteran as a Homecomer and the entire community of home as well. The vanyamussoro have been successful in diminishing guilt through their performances—performances that naturalize traumatic acts and banish them to the past, allowing both the veteran and the community to move on, and that provide the symbolic statements that present the veteran as a restored person. In the end of the vanyamussoro’s manipulation of the idiom of the spirit world, they declare unequivocally that the veteran is not dangerous anymore and may be reintegrated into the community.

### **The “Imported” Efficacy of Veterans’ Rituals**

While the rituals described have their unique aspect in the kuguiya representation, there are two major sources of precedent for this phenomenon, since all other parts of the ritual are exactly the same as when somebody returns from prison or was lost inside a mine.<sup>24</sup> Readers should note that the logic of belief is virtually the same. Mozambican prisons and the mine tunnels of South Africa are viewed as places

where death can be sudden and violent and as places from where it is difficult to leave. Here, as with the battlefield, the spirits of those who suffered “bad deaths” are considered trapped, though constantly searching for a way out. When someone survives and manages to escape, the captive spirits will tend to “take a lift” and adopt that individual as their care provider.

Clearly, there is a similarity between those cases and the veterans’ return. What is not certain, however, is from which of those cases (war, prison, or mines) the explanations and rituals were extrapolated. However, considering that postwar cleansing rituals were most probably not reintroduced before the 1960s in consequence of the war for liberation against Portuguese colonialism, the most plausible answer is that in their present form, they are more intense versions of ritual patterns previously used for those returning from prison and the mines.

However, this probable mimesis does not jeopardize the dignity or efficacy of veterans’ cleansing rituals. On the contrary, it seems to reinforce them in two different ways. First, the mimesis indicates that cleansing rituals were so strongly felt as a real need when war started again that it became consensual to reinvent them. Second, their credibility and consequent effectiveness, under their new form, is reinforced by their absolute accordance with the presently shared interpretations of misfortune and by their repetition of ritual proceedings that people were already familiar with (and trusted) from other extreme cases of traumatic rupture between individuals and their communities.

Furthermore, the contribution of veterans’ cleansing rituals to the global process of postwar social reintegration is larger than just an addition of individual cases. The public knowledge about their existence and about their coherence with commonly shared explanations compels people, after all, to inductively expand their acceptance of individual cases to a general principle of integration. When this happens, though, a major conceptual boundary is crossed to accept, on a daily basis, not only our relatives and the veterans who fought for “our” side but also the former enemies and their present political supporters.

## Notes

1. See Alfred Schutz, “The Homecomer,” *American Journal of Sociology* 50 (1945): 369–376. Schutz’ veteran, as a Homecomer, is forever different. Schutz uses the classic Greek tale of Ulysses, who is unrecognized by his own people. As a type, the Homecomer, for Schutz, is forever changed. Those at home have changed, and the Homecomer has changed; they cannot recognize each other. Reintegration may be possible, but neither home nor the Homecomer gets to become once again as they were. This is very much a contrast to the case study examined in this article—in which the entire effort of “reconciliation” is to become as before with a fresh start.

2. For some of those descriptions and characterizations, see E. C. Green and A. Honwana, “Indigenous Healing of War-affected Children in Africa,” *IK Notes* 10 (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 verbalization 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 keep speaking about their traumatic war experiences as “crazy”

(N. Castanheira *Ex-criança Soldado*: “*Não queremos voltar para o inferno*” [Maputo: Reconstruindo a Esperança]) may suggest both a folk simplification of experts’ speech that approaches the literary explanation and/or—considering the local dominant notions of health—the idea that “mad” verbalization derives from ineffective spiritual cleansing.

3. Singular, *nyamussoro*. They are putatively possessed by spirits of different “ethnic” origins who give them powers of divination, spirits’ exorcism, and the ability to use botanic cures. 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 interviews with two “purified” veterans and the observation of a (very similar) postprison cleansing ritual, were the empiric base for this article. Several postwar cleansing rituals were not performed by *vanyamussoro* but by *mazione* priests (i.e., clergymen from a southern African Christian church that reappropriates the local spirits-based beliefs and healing practices through an idiom of Holy Ghost and demons), but I was unable to directly observe this or even acquire a fully reliable description.

4. 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 is also eloquent that 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.

5. H. Junod, *Usos e Costumes dos Bantu* (Maputo: Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, [1912] 1996).

6. The *nyamussoro* and the veteran could both be women; however, to avoid the systematic duplication of gender references, I will use just the masculine form from now on.

7. The letters *nhl* stand for an aspirated *x*, vocalized with the tongue arched up in the mouth. Also, two other sets of artifacts often complement this set, which is considered to be of Nguni origin. One is composed of six crocodile-back scales and the other of six nut shells from a *nulu* tree (lat. *carissa arduina*). On its use and subjacent logics, see P. Granjo, “Determination and Chaos, According to Mozambican Divination,” *Etnográfica* XI, 1 (2007): 9–30.

8. The principles that rule the local domestication of aleatory are, thus, very similar to the interpretation of Azande witchcraft by E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Bruxaria, Oráculos e Magia entre os Azande* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, [1937] 1978); 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.

9. Changana is the most common language in southern Mozambique.

10. See Irving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook, 1973). Goffman uses a “dramaturgical approach” in his study, concerning himself with the mode of presentation used by the actor and its meaning in the broader social context. Yes, Goffman is talking about the individual’s presenting himself to the group in a completely different context. But how different is it, in actuality, from this dramatic ritual of deeds and misdeeds and the need for a “restored” presentation of the former self to the village group in Mozambique, thousands of kilometers and belief systems away? At an interactive level, there are more similarities that one would readily acknowledge.

11. In cases considered very serious (because of 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.

12. These are local textile products that are usually rolled around the waist, as a skirt, or used to carry babies at the loin. Besides those common products, *vanyamussoro* use *capulanas* with a special design to distinguish each “ethnic” origin of the spirits who possess them and usually own different ones that correspond to or match each one of their spirits.

13. The belief is that some spirits may understand what is coming and wait outside the healer’s premises for the patient’s return, while others are thought to be resilient enough to repossess the veteran when he is unprotected in the interim between the *xizingo kufemba* and the regular cleansing rituals.

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

15. See E. C. Green, *Indigenous Theories of Contagious Disease* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira, 1999); H. West, “Working the Borders to Beneficial Effect: The Not-so-indigenous Knowledge of the Not-so-traditional Healers in Northern Mozambique” (paper to the Social Anthropology Seminar of the London University College, 2004).

16. Water from different origins has, indeed, a big importance in those healers’ preparations. Through 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 seawater is used to expel undesired things, because “everything you’ll throw into the sea will come out to shore, sooner or later.”

17. However, sometimes there is not a river nearby. When this happens, the whole process may be performed in the healer’s premises, but it will require some adaptations to substitute those symbolic statements that are only possible in a river. For instance, the patient will be seated inside a hole dug in the ground for that purpose, and the washing up from the goat bath will be done with a mixture of river and seawater. At the end of the ceremony, the patient will get out naked, leaving the capulana inside to be burned over the goat’s remains. Finally, the hole is covered immediately after its consumption.

18. There is a hierarchy of “washing animals,” according to the seriousness of the affliction, the importance of the intended aftermath, and the patient’s status. One should not, thus, be surprised to hear about the use of a chicken instead of a goat in blood washings, even when integrated in cleansing rituals of the poorest people.

19. If this type of treatment is expected by people and is a recurrent practice, the paste components are normally kept secret from even outside researchers, because every healer uses some personal components that he considers an added value.

20. To go deeper into this anthropological category, which covers rituals of status change in which a liminal and mutating state is chronologically and symbolically contained between rites of social separation and reintegration, see A. van Gennep (who formalized it), *Os Ritos de Passagem* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1978); V. Turner (who developed it and stressed the crucial importance of its liminal phase and rituals), *The Forest of Symbols* (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967).

21. See C. Geffray, *A Causa das Armas em Moçambique: Antropologia da Guerra Contemporânea em Moçambique* (Porto: Afrontamento, 1991). In this very lucid work, the author consubstantiates that although the Renamo guerrilla was created by the Rhodesian regime to debilitate its newborn and socialist-oriented neighbor, and after it was maintained by South-African apartheid, both its long resilience against the army of the 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 capitalize on rural-based dissatisfaction toward touchy issues of Frelimo’s modernistic agenda and the authoritarian way they were imposed. It is 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” that—besides raising serious political, symbolical, and logistical problems—had a population density that could not be ecologically supported with the available technological means. On this later issue, see A. Yañez-Casal, *Antropologia e Desenvolvimento: As Aldeias Comuns de Moçambique* (Lisboa: IICT, 1996).

22. See Geffray, *A Causa das Armas em Moçambique*; N. Castanheira, *Ex-criança Soldado: “Não queremos voltar para o inferno”* (Maputo: Reconstruindo a Esperança, 1999).

23. C. Alden, “Making Old Soldiers Fade Away: Lessons from the Reintegration of Demobilized Soldiers in Mozambique,” *Security Dialogue* 33, 3 (2002): 341–56.

24. Even if it might seem so, this is not a marginal situation, because of the very old, enduring, and quantitatively huge temporary migrations to South African mines. On this subject, see P. Granjo, “A Mina Desceu à Cidade: Memória Histórica e a Mais Recente Indústria Moçambicana,” *Emográfica* VII, 2 (2003): 403–29, with an available English version at <http://www.ics.ul.pt/corpocientifico/paulogranjo/english>.

**Paulo Granjo**, PhD, is currently a social anthropology research fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences of Lisbon University and visiting professor from the University Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo, Mozambique. The main focus of his studies concerns the perception and management of hazards and uncertainty in industrial and healing contexts. He has served as a conscript lieutenant and as president of the Portuguese conscripts' association, CASMO. *Address for correspondence:* Paulo Granjo, Institute of Social Sciences of Lisbon University, Rua Prof. Anibal Bettencourt, 9, 1600-189 Lisboa, Portugal; e-mail: paulo.granjo@ics.ul.pt.