

Metaphysics in Zimbabwe's War of Liberation (Second Chimurenga): Echoes from Participants

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Abstract

This paper recorded mysterious and miraculous events of the liberation war as expressed by those who were combatants on either side of the conflict during Zimbabwe's liberation war. The paper comes as a realization that many such ex-fighters and those who worked with them still feel that they were greatly assisted by the spirit world. Listening to their narration of myths, beliefs and taboos indicated that the war was largely fought on the spiritual front. One area discussed in this paper is the north-east because this is where the medium of Nehanda lived before she was taken to Chifombo by ZANLA guerrillas. A lot of spirit mediums from the same area also joined guerrillas in Mozambique, in order to entrench the importance of their metaphysical powers to guerrillas and refugees. In addition, the special collaboration between ZANLA commanders and spirit mediums in the early 1970s makes it imperative to find out if the taboos of the liberation struggle had any bearing to events which guerrillas encountered in the war of liberation. As such, information for this paper initially came from ZANLA in Mount Darwin and Bindura and also from ZPRA veterans as well as former auxiliaries in Mashonaland West Province and to a lesser extent Bulawayo. Information for this paper was further collected through studies of secondary sources and oral interviews with wartime civilians. The paper is divided into 4 main sections. The first section deals the ways in which the spirit world communicates with the living as understood by the Shona. Second, it reviews knowledge on the development of relationships between ZANU-PF and spirit mediums and what elements of the spirit world were emphasized during training. When guerrillas went to the front, they were 'guided' by the same spirit which enabled them to witness many 'miracles'. Even civilians also talk of miracles of their own. Thus the third section deals with ways in which the metaphysical world manifested itself and how it regulated the behaviour of combatants from any of the forces involved in the war. Last, the paper looks at the legacy of such beliefs to those who experienced the war. It is the intention of this paper to touch on these issues in as far as they are healing to the souls of many who still strongly believe in traditional religion and for the sole purpose of recording these important so far little studied episodes of the liberation war.

Key words: Metaphysics, Spirit Mediums, Guerrillas, Mass Mobilisation, War Veterans and Ceremonies

Introduction

Metaphysics is a philosophical outlook which tries to reach a more embracing total view of reality without neglecting the unique place of individual things in the holism of reality (F Etim: 2013, 12). Put the other way, it refers to the spiritual dimension of human nature which cannot be authenticated through scientific investigation but all the same, shape the way humans perceive life. Viriri and Mungwini (2009: 180) forward that metaphysics means after physics or that which transcends the physical. It involves a synthesis of all experiences in order to achieve a coherent whole which gives a complete picture of reality. Such a picture in the end provides a system of morality that establishes right from wrong, good and appropriate from bad and inappropriate behaviour (T Kazembe: 2009, 55). The metaphysical view is an anti-science approach but nonetheless progressive and workable for those who are committed to it. Within it, use is made of localized deities such as trees, rivers, hills, animals and so on. These can be manipulated by men to cause good and bad things to happen.

The way in which the civilians and combatants interacted with the metaphysical world during Zimbabwe's war of liberation was logical to circumstances facing them

then. Acceptance of traditional religious beliefs was perceived in terms of the workability of the whole idea in the war of liberation. Despite going for rigorous military training, the paper argues that African combatants who fought in the Northern districts of Zimbabwe became religious warriors continuing a struggle which had been started by their ancestors in 1896 or seeking any form of protection of the supernatural world minus Christian beliefs. Their day to day activities were generally begun with some traditional rituals at group level, followed by individual prayers and similarly ended. Massive attention was given to the behaviour of wild animals and fellow colleagues because all that was religiously symbolic. There were activities that were taboo to certain rivers and mountains if guerrillas were to be safe. Furthermore, guerrillas and other African combatants' behaviour were regulated through taboos and other pieces of education given by spirit mediums and elders in areas they were fighting. The paper begins with the centrality of traditional religion in the launching of the war, the crossing over of the medium of Mbuya Nehanda to Mozambique and the role of various other mediums in Zimbabwe's war of liberation. From there, the paper dwells on how guerrillas daily made use of these systems alongside the utility of the

rituals to the practitioners. Last, the paper looks at the present dispensation of reburials and various other ceremonies currently taking place in Zimbabwe as an attempt to reincarnate a religion formerly abandoned but nonetheless crucial to those who experienced the war. The operations of the metaphysical world can be best understood by the long quotation below:

Ancient Greeks in 100BC consulted oracles, the Romans used soothsayers and Europe's queens and kings consulted stargazers. In the late 1800, spirit mediumship became recognised as a psychic ability. In 1818, the Fox sisters of New York in America are said to have communicated with a murdered toddler buried in the cellar of their house. In 1900, spirit mediums such as Edythe Meander, Jack Kelly, Florence Becker and Mae Graves Ward began to be recognized. In Britain, one of the first mediums was a Mrs Hyden who operated in London. In 1882, a group of Cambridge scholars founded the Society of Psychical Research and it was then that the subject of mediumship was recognized. In 2010 the world got to know about an octopus named Paul who predicted

correctly the results of all German's matches. In Zimbabwe, a good number of war veterans attribute their participation in the war to the spirit of Mbuya Nehanda who before being hanged made a prophecy that her bones would rise again (Financial Gazette, 13 August 2010).

Spirit mediums and mass nationalism

The role of spirit mediums dates back to the 1896-7 uprisings in Matabeleland and Mashonaland respectively. Thus, the perceived legacy of the spirit mediums, who had participated effectively in the First Chimurenga was still alive in the 1970s which explained why the new generation of mediums was equally opposed to the whites and their colonial oppressive system (Bhebe and Ranger.1995:9). Therefore the participation of spirit mediums in the liberation struggle has a long history. The spirit of Nehanda continued to play a significant role in mass mobilization in the Dande area of Mt Darwin. Mhanda (2011:102) further alludes that some spirit mediums accompanied the spirit of Nehanda to Mboroma and Chifombo in Zambia with a number of guerrilla recruits. In view of Nehanda's reputation in the 1896-7 war, it is not surprising that

when guerrillas in Dande found her actively supporting the war in their operational zone, they took her away to prevent Rhodesians from including her as one of theirs. According to Josiah Tungamirai (1985, 148), 'once the children, the boys and the girls in the area knew that Nehanda had joined the war, they came in large numbers.' With Nehanda safely under ZANLA and the party ZANU, she was ballooned into a spirit of the whole nation thus turning the country into a single spirit province under her. That position she continues to controversially occupy to the present day. Support was further increased when the spirit medium of Chiwawa and Chiwodzamamera joined the war. All these were representatives of traditional religion with metaphysical powers whether imagined or real to rally people behind the war effort. By supporting the war of liberation, these mediums had endorsed the cause as morally upright. The coming of the war made mediums important arbiters of power.

In essence, the main duties of spirit mediums evolved around the recruitment exercise, mobilization of support for the freedom fighters as well as giving spiritual guidance (Mhanda 2011:67 and Lan: 1985, 147). In political terms, this would entail protection against the enemy, prescription of war strategies and the preservation of traditional norms. Fay Chung (2006:195)

is of the same view that simple adherence to ethical rules such as respect for life, sexual purity, care of the environment were paramount in the smooth execution of the war of liberation in Zimbabwe. It was believed that those who bent the rules in their favour would be punished by the spirits. Therefore spirit mediums were involved in the recruitment exercise and safe movement of guerrillas from one point to another. Thus, the guerrillas and African traditional religions were inseparable despite the absence of guidance by spirit mediums in the military training of guerrillas. Though guerrillas received advanced military training, they relapsed back to their metaphysical view of the world once in the operational field. The spirits and by extension, the god they believed in would provide total armour against enemy firepower both from the ground and above. When the war was eventually won, the spirit of Nehanda was assumed to have triumphed over the enemy. According to Mr Mauye (Mahondo Village, 19 March 2014) who was a medium in the Nyazura area during the war, there were no contradictions in doing so because in Mozambique, they were supposed to listen to their commanders and at the front, to the advice of mediums. When a man is at the risk of death, he can do his level best to serve his life. Further, many of these guerrillas were from

rural areas where belief in traditional religion was very strong.

Chung (2006:195) posits that one of the key tenets of traditional religion in Zimbabwe was the belief that the ancestral spirits protected their offspring and would guarantee their welfare, provided that the living kept to the rules of their ancestors as mentioned earlier. It should also be noted that some of the freedom fighters were both guerrillas and spirit mediums, hence were in a better position to guide the struggle and this was usually complimented with the support of the peasants. Kriger (1992: 116) views peasants as being central to the success of the liberation struggle.

The role of the spirit mediums continued into Mozambique giving guidance to the war effort as they had done in Rhodesia. They had suddenly become unofficial military commanders in charge of indoctrination. Chung (2006:194) posits that the role of the traditional religious leaders during the armed struggle was to provide spiritual and ideological leadership. It should be noted that in both refugee and military camps, the spirit mediums had their own separate encampment where they practiced their religion. This idea is confirmed by Mhanda (2011:67) who cites an incident at Chifombo camp in Zambia where the

guerrillas were food-poisoned and the leadership consulted the spirit of Sekuru Chidyamauyu who in a trance assured no loss of life. He further remarked that this was an attempt by the Rhodesian agent to wipe out the ZANLA guerrillas. Furthermore it stands to reason that spirit mediums were independent from the political leadership and hence were free to support or to criticize the political incumbents Chung (2006:195). As a result they had a profound effect on the day to day business of the liberation struggle. However, in some cases this made them unpopular with leaders who were found on the wrong end of ethical rules particularly on sexual purity.

Voices of Practitioners: Metaphysical Aspects of the War

This section of the paper relies from information collected from Paradzai Mabhunu who fought in Mutoko, Chikomba who was in Mt Darwin, George Rutanhire one of the most senior guerrillas, Cde Mauye who was a medium in Nyazura and Msango who was a guerrilla. Their experiences are complimented by those of ZPRA guerrillas who fought in Mashonaland West as well as Security Force Auxiliaries who fought in the same areas. While ZPRA and ZANLA guerrillas could seek guidance to the

spirits which had led the first Chimurenga, Rhodesian African forces had only their family spirits to appeal to. Whether one was fighting for Zimbabwe or against it, the metaphysical world with its capacity to hide combatants from enemies was deemed helpful by respondents who were involved in the war of liberation.

There is need to note that during their training especially outside Tanzania and Mozambique, no effort was made by the trainers to educate combatants on how they were supposed to relate with the spiritual world. That art was something inert and evoked by battlefield experiences where the need to survive and triumph over the enemy was important. However, those who fought for Rhodesia, especially militias also appealed to their ancestors for protection as guerrillas sought help against Rhodesian firepower both below and above from more or less the same source. One former ZANLA combatant by the name Paradzai Mabhunu revealed that when young men made the decision to go out and fight, none of them sought spiritual guidance. According to him, 'we were just driven by the admiration of guerrillas. We however knew that when parents learnt of our departure they would do something about our protection.' From Paradzai Mabhunu and thereafter another former ZANLA

guerrilla, Chikomba, there was no indication of any type of teaching in traditional religion during the training of guerrillas. After all, in Tanzania as well as many other African and Eastern countries fighting the struggle, there was no place for traditional religion which after all, the trainers did not know about. Guerrilla warfare and mass mobilisation were emphasised.

When they had finished military training, ZANLA guerrillas often went for further training in ideological indoctrination largely in Mozambique. This was intended to make them loyal to ZANU and ZANLA as opposed to ZAPU and ZPRA as well as other militants in the war. They were made to know the party structures, the beauty of the war they were getting involved in and the good behaviour expected of them as they fought. Still, there was no teaching concerning African traditional religion and how to communicate with the African god when confronted with a military situation. The goal was to win the war. Military commanders like Tungamirai were to learn more of the traditional religion and tactics for winning hearts and minds from guerrillas who were coming from the front. Seeking guidance from spirit mediums and traditional leaders was not just a matter of political

expediency but was induced by the strong belief in the utility of doing so. According to David Lan (1985) those who fought in Dande committed themselves to mediums of Nehanda, Kupara, Chiodzamamera, Chiwawa and Chidyamauyu. They avoided Madzomba because he was being used by whites suggesting that the spirit had long left him.

Specific events with a metaphysical mark have made a permanent imprint in to the lives of former combatants who fought the war of liberation. Such events which could have left whole groups of guerrillas dead were allegedly avoided through daily rituals for protection by the departed. According to Paradzai Mabhunu, each day (which to guerrillas was night as they were preparing to patrol) was begun by traditional prayers. Often, a chosen member of the group led the prayers. Each morning when guerrillas had returned from villages to their mountain hideouts, the chosen guerrilla would then prune leaves from a *munhondo* tree and say prayers to heroes of the liberation starting from Nehanda and Kagubi followed by Chaminuka and other heroes of the first Chimurenga. Throughout, he will be throwing some snuff obtained from spirit mediums of the area or in their absence, respected traditionalists. The last among the spirits was Nehoreka

deemed to be the leading spirit of the Korekore. The leader would then distribute the snuff among his colleagues who in turn sniffed it and threw some on the ground where they slept for total security during the night (which in practice was daylight). Each individual guerrilla was supposed to say prayers to his own ancestor in order to buttress those said by the group. The same procedure was repeated in the evening when guerrillas were preparing to go into the surrounding villages. Each one of them also carried with him some snuff to use when need arose for example in battle.

From experiences by Paradzai Mabhunu, such prayers resulted metaphysical protection by the spirits of the land. He gave 3 incidences to illustrate that clearly. The first one happened at Makochera Village in Mutoko. Close to the village was a mountain range where the medium of the land had instructed guerrillas not to start shooting at the enemy in the event of them accidentally meeting. The enemy was supposed to fire first. Other than that, no shooting was allowed because the range was called *gwara renzou* in vernacular meaning the elephants' path. On that fateful day in 1978, his group of 10 was coming from its hideout along the river when they spotted a group of Rhodesian forces numbering about 20 already in

a battle formation. All guerrillas took cover but thought that they had already been spotted. Rhodesian forces were just 50 meters away and directly facing guerrillas who had just taken positions. Mabhunu's group did not fire because the medium had taught them against doing so. Suddenly the Rhodesian forces changed their battle formation into an extended line and began walking along the mountain to the road where they were ferried by waiting vehicles. For Mabhunu therefore, it was metaphysics which blinded Rhodesians from seeing them and the same prevented guerrillas from initiating the battle.

The second took place at Chindenga base. It was around midday when fish eagles (*zvapungu*) started hovering above guerrillas' encampment. As these two birds did so, they were fighting and stretching their legs as Rhodesian choppers did when dropping bombs. Around the same time, a troop of baboons came directly into the camp fighting dangerously and making a lot of noise as they passed. To Mabhunu who was the commander, this was an indication that a fierce battle was imminent. Immediately, he told his colleagues to put on their shoes and leave in the direction the baboons had gone. When they had run for about 3km the

whole area was bombed from above and small arms were heard backing airpower. Again where defeat was imminent, the spiritual world had intervened.

The demands of the war also taught guerrillas to manipulate their situation to please the spirits of the land. Where one of them transgressed by getting in to sexual relationships with a woman, he was first of all thoroughly beaten by his colleagues in the presence of villagers. Then the guerrilla commander had to take him to the local spirit medium and apologise. To cleanse the whole group of misfortune or untold suffering, a battle had to be quickly organised. In one such incident, the offender was instructed to initiate the battle by throwing a stone at a passing military vehicle along Nyamapanda road. He was to do so standing so that if the spirits had completely disowned him, he would be shot dead by the enemy. Fortunately he was not and his group followed by a rocket launcher and other small arms. That way, the group had cleansed itself. The failure of Rhodesians to shoot him dead again illustrates the strength of his own ancestors in saving him.

The peasant guerrillas in the North-East thus often visited the mediums in the Chokoto area of Dande once they entered Zimbabwe. According

to George Rutanhire (Mt Darwin, 20 March 2014) who was in charge of the ZANLA commissariat department in the war, guerrillas were informed by Nehanda that one medium called Gusvamupara or Parangeti had actually sold out the country to whites. He had been paid by whites to ensure that the war would not spill into Rhodesia. He tied a black bull at Nhenhenhe so that through its death by starvation, Rhodesia would remain under perpetual rule of whites. The guerrillas walked to Nhenhenhe found the bull, did as instructed and cut the rope and the bull ran towards Zimbabwe as indication that the war was to spill over.

The research undertaken by McLaughlin (1996) point a ceremony to launch the war but does not stress that the start of the war with the attack of Altena farm was directed by mediums. Rutanhire claimed that once guerrillas had returned from Nhenhenhe, they were then told by Nehanda to start the war by attacking Altena farm. While there are no such official accounts, the problem with traditional region is that at times it is practised privately and clandestinely. As such, decorated commanders would often find it hard to admit that they went to mediums, but for guerrillas who faced the threat of death, going to mediums and

sangomas was nothing unusual. Claims by Rutanhire seem to overlook the fact that Zambia was yet another front, so if the war could not be allowed to spread beyond Mozambique, it would still have come into the country through Zambia. To him, the Zambian component just comes in as an appendage.

One of the most informative respondents was a medium known as Mauye. He was already a qualified teacher by 1972. When I met him on 19 March 2014, he had come from Makoni to attend the funeral of Jimmy Motsi who was a chief exhumer in the Fallen Heroes Trust. He claimed that he assisted guerrillas in several ways to the extent of threatening his own life. In doing so, he survived miraculously because the spirit in him was guiding his operations. From what he said, at one time, there was a heavy attack on guerrillas at a place called Ruombwe in Nyazura. Out of the 7 guerrillas, all except one badly injured survived. Mauye said that the spirit told him to go and pick the injured guerrilla at Ruombwe. He drove there in broad daylight, looked for the surviving guerrilla among the dead and took him to a cave near his home. None of the helicopters hovering above saw him. The former guerrilla called Joseph Manjeese is still surviving. In yet another

encounter, he went to Chivhu by his car. The sceptical and equally spiritual black Rhodesian forces followed him because his movement was interpreted to mean that the road was safe from landmines. The military vehicle however detonated a landmine in the same area he had passed through.

Eventually, Mauye was arrested on 22 July 1978 and spent the last part of the war in prison. His arrest means that Rhodesians were taking traditional religion seriously. They had intercepted a letter from one guerrilla group informing the other to get spiritual assistance from him. White soldiers who took him from his class of 45 pupils accused him of giving protection to guerrillas operating in Nyazura and of taking an injured guerrilla from Ruombwe using his spiritual powers and treating sick guerrillas using the same powers. In court however, Mauye was tried using the intercepted letter as proof that he was assisting guerrillas. Such experiences means that to survivors of the liberation war, what they were fighting was a spiritual war. Mauye has remained today as chief Makoni's medium and is also in charge of traditional ceremonies in his area especially those which involve war veterans. For a qualified teacher like him to decide on taking such risk of assisting guerrillas under a regime

which was ruthless to such people, something more than just generosity was in him. To drive in and out with ease from a battleground speak volumes of the metaphysical world at least from the way he saw the world.

At the Burmasyde in Bindura North, I encountered yet another guerrilla whose name is Masango (21 March 2014). I summarise his 2 stories here with a view of explaining how guerrillas saw the spirits operating in their midst. He fought in Mozambique as well as Mt Darwin and Manicaland. In 1978, guerrillas in Mt Darwin were increasingly being killed by a lone white soldier called Kruger. He always travelled with a black Malawian who was his n'anga. When Kruger was moved to Masango's sector there were fears among fellow guerrillas that their lives were in danger from Kruger. Each time they laid a landmine, his car would stop and then pass through the side of the landmine. Guerrillas eventually went to a spirit medium who instructed them to lay their landmines on the side of the road where it would be reached by the shadow of the car. According to this woman, the landmine was to be triggered by the shadow of the car. Guerrillas took her with them and by the time she had indicated, Kruger's car hit a landmine and he died on the spot together his African assistant. In a case of this nature, Masango does not

attribute the elimination of Kruger to guerrilla fighting ability because they had exhausted such means and the whole group was living in fear. Going to the medium was the last resort and it did work. The other dimension of the story is that whites also believed in metaphysical powers of some Africans to fight the war. This explains why Kruger had his own assistant.

The belief in spirits was such that when guerrillas beat the enemy in purely military encounter, they did believe that success was caused by spiritual interventions just as devout Christians attribute every success to God. In one such encounter, Masango and his men were on the border between Zimbabwe and Mozambique. He is not sure on which side they were but he knows that they had gone for 4 days without food when they stumbled upon a home and asked for food. The women refused and pointed to nine armed whites who had just left. Guerrillas followed these soldiers for about 2km until they reached a small dam. Eight soldiers took off their clothes and began swimming while one of them with a radio was playing sentry. All the nine soldiers were killed by 6 guerrillas. Masango attributed the success to powers of the god which they believed in. He ruled out that militarily, guerrillas were at an advantage because they saw the enemy first and that by the

time they fired the first shot which killed the one playing sentry, the rest simply could not get out of the water.

The strong belief in these kinds of interventions put mediums at an unenviable position as illustrated below. According to a former ZPRA better known as Cuba, in Nyamhunga area of Hurungwe, it was the chief's duty to take guerrillas coming into the area for some rituals to protect them from the enemy. These would culminate in issuing of snuff which would protect guerrillas wherever they were. One version leading to the death of Chief Nyamhunga is that SFAs of Muzorewa either forced or persuaded him to show them the secret behind ZPRA success. The chief then misrepresented SFAs to mediums as guerrillas who then got the same snuff given to guerrillas. When they began to stand against the ZPRA war machine and sometimes winning battles, guerrillas were astounded. Upon investigations, the chief was pinpointed as the main culprit behind double standards and he was butchered to death in broad daylight at his shop. Thus despite the good training of ZPRA guerrillas, they continued to take a strong belief in traditionalism because they took the war itself as a spiritual war which could only be justified through support of local mediums.

Just like guerrillas, Muzorewa's auxiliaries also claim that they were protected by the spirits of the land which explains why they survived the war. They also claimed that they followed a strict code of conduct which prevented them from being involved in sexual relations with local girls. According to one informant by the name Zinhatha, it was taboo for auxiliaries to be involved in illicit affairs with local girls. However, this was something they had not learnt from military training but from demands of the war where going out to fight side by side with such a member was disastrous. Of course, there are contradictions because many auxiliaries were allowed to marry during the war and take their wives to camp where they would sleep with them. Generally, abstinence was the official guerrilla standard practice which in several ways was flouted. The practice of abstinence was deep seated in Zinhatha's group because it was regularly clashing with highly trained ZPRA guerrillas making the threat to life a daily reality and also because the majority of members in the group were almost illiterate. Zinhatha was often sent to the local spirit medium for snuff which was believed to have metaphysical protective powers in case of clashes with guerrillas. He had to leave behind his gun but his colleagues provided escort to the medium. Before entering the hut, he removed his shoes, entered the hut while clapping, sat on the reed mat and asked the old woman to replenish the snuff. The woman would then roar for some time, sprinkle Zinhatha with snuff over the head and on his clothes. Then she would give him a container (*kasha*) full of snuff (*bute or mbanda*) to share with his fellows. He was then told that *Sienda muchinda ndekutarisa paunenga usifamba* meaning that 'go young man and I will look after you throughout your journey'. Before parade each morning, SFAs in his group for purposes of protection, washed themselves in snuff laden waters put in a big clay pot. Thereafter, he distributed the snuff to his colleagues which they then sniffed. That ceremony is what they called *culture*. This gave them the much needed psychological security or armour. Whenever any one of them got confused in terms of what decision to take during patrol or in battle, he would take out the small *kasha* and sniff the *mbanda* to get back in the right frame of mind. The same spirit medium who took SFAs as sons of the soil and protected them also did the same procedures for guerrillas. In Zinhatha's analysis, the medium could be a sellout but not the spirit which possessed him. As such, the spirit medium could flirt with both sides of the quarrel.

The only differences noted in the prayers were that SFAs did not pray to the spirits of Nehanda, Kagubi and Chaminuka because of the nature of the war they were fighting. However, from Mt Darwin, Guruve right into Hurungwe, they did appeal to Nehoreka, the medium of all the Korekore people. In any case, he was not involved in the Chimurenga War. They told him and the family ancestors that they were fighting because the whites were compelling them to do so. All they wanted was protection because this was war. Their enemies were similarly protected by Nehoreka. Investigations in Chundu were the only one in which the spirit of Chimombe refused to give protective snuff to Rhodesian soldiers throughout the war. As such ZPRA triumphed over its enemies because it was insulated by traditional snuff.

Destruction of the spiritual Realm in Independent Zimbabwe

Immediately after the liberation war, former combatants were concerned with cleansing themselves of the very act of having participated in the war. Information from interviewees reflect that government pronouncements were only important if it had monetary benefits. Comrade Mambowa from Karoi said that as soon as he returned from the war, traditional beer was brewed and family friends and

relatives were invited. In the morning before friends and distant relatives had arrived, a traditional healer (*n'anga*) was invited to find out if ancestors had been offended or if the returnee had brought any *ngozi* (avenging spirits) into the family. In addition, a concoction of traditional medicine was administered on to the veteran for the mere reason that he had seen the spilling of blood which is something disapproved by the spirits. Mambowa was made to sit at the centre in a thatched hut as medicine was being administered. He was only wearing short trousers. Traditional beer was also poured on his head by gathered close relatives. Thereafter, feasting went on and Mambowa had become fully integrated. Surprisingly, most of the oral informants did not openly admit to have killed someone during the war. The trend was for them to claim that other guerillas or *mujibhas* (male informers to freedom fighters) had killed civilians. If the trend is that no guerrilla killed a civilian, then one would wonders who actually killed whom.

Reynolds claims that after the war, *n'angas* he interviewed said that there were more cases of madness than before. The major causes were that so many spirits of people who had not been given decent burials or whose deaths resulted from acts of wrong-

doing remained unsettled. On returning from the war, men and women who had fought on either side of the quarrel visited traditional healers to be cleansed. This was important to both individuals and communities. *N'angas* acted like priests who were supposed to listen to people's confessions without divulging any of that sensitive information to the public. Thus people were free to tell a *n'anga* if they had killed anyone in the war or wronged the spirits in any way. Cleansing would only become effective if the truth is revealed to the *n'anga* by the client. The traditional healer would then advise the client on what compensation was to be paid, how and to whom. Unless compensation is paid, trouble would persist. Like any other illness, recovery would follow once compensation is paid.

During the war of liberation, some among both the Rhodesian army and the guerrillas shed the blood of innocent people, maimed, sexually abused women and committed other serious crimes against humanity. The spiritual world was ostensibly against such practices right from the onset of the struggle. Thus, there was need for the returning war veterans to be traditionally cleansed as a way of reintegrating them into the society. It seems as if the elite nationalists'

minds were pre-occupied with the reconciliation of only the living combatants probably this was because of the influence of western education which denigrates African religions. Furthermore, it was probably that reconciliation technocrats were not directly involved in actual fighting where African religion took a centre stage. This was different from the guerrillas whose task was to fight and in doing so they were influenced by Maoism and the Rhodesian whites by the West since they were moulded in Europe. Taken in this context, it can be argued that differences in political consciousness continue up to this day. (Barry: 2004, 37). In fact the government was supposed to initiate reconciliation and integration at grassroots level through the involvement of the veterans, spiritual leaders and the entire peasant population in a national cleansing ceremony spearheaded by traditional leaders.

Paradzai Mabhunu who fought in the eastern districts especially in Mutoko argued that he managed to return alive due to the protection he received from the spiritual world. Along with his two brothers who were also ZANLA guerrillas, none of them perished in the war. According to him, if fighters followed the dos and don'ts of an area under which they were

fighting, normally they would triumph over the enemy. The rules involved the already mentioned sexual abstinence, correct interpretation of animal and birds behaviours. Beer was brewed on the basis that 'children' who had 'touched' blood could not automatically be admitted into the family without undergoing a cleansing ceremony. Therefore family members had an obligation to cleanse their children. According to him family initiatives were a result of the failure or unwillingness of guerrilla commanders and their political leaders to lead the process as they had become overjoyed with independence euphoria. He thinks that a congress of spirit mediums should have been called to cleanse the children sent to fight the war. The failure to do so partly explains various psychological problems which former fighters are experiencing.

The idea of calling for a congress of ancestral spirits is supported by the fact that in re-launching the war in July 1972, such a congress was called for in Chaminuka sector by a certain Mrs. Duwa. (McLaughlin: 1996, 240). Mediums from as far as Bindura attended and so were senior commanders who included, Joseph Chimurenga and Thomas Nhari. The same Mrs. Duwa was appointed by

the spirit of Karuwa to deal directly with ZANLA forces. This noble idea did not yield the desired results owing to lack of support from the nationalists. Since the war had been launched by spirit mediums it was also supposed to be rounded off by them with the either the concurrence or full support from the top political leadership. Paradzai Mabhunu explained that his war time colleagues are going through traumatic experiences because of this failure by their leadership. Community based reconciliation thus took a center-stage because of government failure to take up the initiative. Many war veterans think that a welcome home traditional ceremony at national level should be organized with the prime objective of reconciling former guerrillas with themselves, their families and the nation at large.

Without decent burial of those who died in war, the integration process is still incomplete. As such, Sadomba claims that from 2000, spirit possessions affected many children in Manicaland with demands for reburial. To that effect, war veterans in Rushinga established an organization to undertake the reburials. Otherwise both the ruling ZANU-PF party and government had not taken up the issue seriously. This means that true healing on the part of

family members comes when the dead are given a decent burial in a recognisable area.

In the same context, on the 5th of May 2011 a group of 700 people converged at Great Zimbabwe National Monuments (Mawere *etal*: 2011, 23). The majority were war veterans from Harare Province who demanded permission to carry out ritual cleansing of the psychological problems they were facing as a result of their war experiences. Furthermore, they indicated that they wanted guidance from the ancestors on how they could go to Mozambique to get the remains of the fallen heroes for a proper burial. Entrance to the site was mainly through the use of force since nobody from the local managers was willing to grant them permission. The group was led by Nehoreka, a popular Korekore spirit medium who was known for performing rituals during the liberation struggle. Mawere *etal* (2011. 23)

Upon being asked why they had chosen this national site, some of the participants gave a number of reasons. Some asserted that the site was adopted as the residence of the country's ancestors thereby, confirming the same opinion given by Fontein (2006:47) who argues that Great Zimbabwe is highly regarded

as a religious site particularly by the local clans of Mugabe and Nemanwa. During the liberation struggle, it was used as a source for motivation and inspiration. Upon the attainment of independence the country was named after the site. Furthermore, the new state drew a lot from the site in terms of its national symbols, for example the dollar coin, the ruling party's (ZANUPF) logo and the national flag (Fontein: 2006,99). Most of the war veterans expressed the same view as many politicians and historians on the significance of Great Zimbabwe monuments as a core of African traditional religion. In this context the idea of going to the site was understood to be a national event. To the majority of the war veterans, this was actually obnoxious and rather a sign of irresponsibility particularly when they perceived that the government was casting a blind eye on their call for rituals.

Related to the above issue, the Sunday News of (26. 08. 2012), reported that a group of 560 people mainly war veterans, 25 chiefs and 5 spirit mediums, all from Mashonaland region visited the Matopos National Park and performed a cleansing ritual on the shrine. The group had collected soil and human bones from Old Mkushi in Zambia to 'bring back' the spirits

of deceased freedom fighters to Zimbabwe. Both the living and the spirits of the dead had to be cleansed. It was however noted that the ceremony attracted widespread condemnation from other traditional leaders and politicians from Matabeleland region who argued that by bringing human bones and soils onto the shrine was tantamount to disrespect for the areas' rites and beliefs. It was alleged that they exhibited high levels of arrogance and ancestors were therefore not happy hence the need to carry out another ritual ceremony to appease the ancestors. Although this move was characterized by sour relations, the incident sheds more light on the unfinished business of reconciliation. The cry for proper individual human burial as opposed to mass grave approach is central to the whole conflict.

Members of the police force and chiefs from Matabeleland South condemned the war veterans on the grounds that the shrines were only for rain-making ceremonies but not for cleansing rituals. Again it was alleged that the ritual was wrongly timed since the shrine was already closed for any ceremonies according to their traditional calendar. Furthermore, the custodians of the site argued that ceremonies associated with reburial

practices are usually conducted at heroes' acres. The province is administratively structured therefore they had to follow proper procedures and seek permission especially from the local chiefs and spirit mediums. Moreover, one chief from Masvingo province alleged that at one point the people in question bathed naked in the presence of a female shrine keeper, and this was a desecration of the national shrine. It should however be noted that although there was a lot of controversy, the fact remains that these are manifestations for the need for a national ritual cleansing initiated by the communities.

Conclusion

The paper has demonstrated that to the foot combatant, the metaphysical world was pivotal to what it meant to be in war. Generally, the liberation war was one of victimhood. Guerrillas were often on the receiving end of Rhodesian attacks. They therefore invoked the metaphysical world which enabled them to survive the rogues of the violent war. ZANLA guerrillas in particular relied on the assistance of metaphysics to fight the liberation war. ZPRAs guerrillas as well as Muzorewa's auxiliaries relied on the same help. Guerrillas were able to manipulate traditionalism in such

ways as to meet the requirements of local spirit mediums they may have offended through failing to keep to abstinence. Auxiliaries appealed to the intervention of the spirit of Nehoreka alongside family spirits for assistance but generally avoided mention of mediums which had led the first Chimurenga. Coupled with the spiritual launch of the liberation war in 1972, the war was fought on the military front as much as it was fought on the spiritual or metaphysical realm. Generally, combatants used localised traditional beliefs to motivate themselves in order to fight a successful war.

As such, problems that face combatants of the liberation war accordingly emanate from the failure of political leaders to undertake a traditional nationwide ceremony to appease the forces which made the war winnable. The way combatants look back in time comes from real experiences from the battlefield which to others sound like unsubstantiated claims which are far from being realistic. Thus the spiritual dimension is one important way of looking at the liberation war and ought to be appreciated from how former fighters looked around themselves when faced with real challenges. Apparently, Christianity was not major a source of inspiration especially to the guerrilla fighters.

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