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Why Did the Soldiers Not Go Home? Demobilized Combatants, Family Life, and Witchcraft in Postwar Mozambique

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on the role of witchcraft in relationships between ex-RENAMO combatants and their relatives in central Mozambique, this article suggests a different understanding of reintegration processes of ex-combatants, not merely shaped by their role as perpetrators of violence, but situated in the complexities of social life. It is argued that the reintegration of former combatants in Mozambique was shaped by certain changes within family relations, which were contingent to the war (but not necessarily to war violence), creating an enabling environment for witchcraft dynamics, which influenced former combatants' settlement decisions. [Keywords: Reintegration of former combatants, Mozambique, witchcraft, kinship, postwar]

Introduction

Fernando, a former combatant of the *Resistência Nacional de Moçambique* (Mozambican National Resistance, RENAMO), worked as a tailor on the small veranda of his mud hut in the village of Maringue, Sofala province, central Mozambique. He was originally from Dondo (also Sofala province),

but ended up living in Maringue because of the war. After the General Peace Accords were signed in 1992, Fernando and thousands of other soldiers were stationed in the Assembly Area of Nhacala, Maringue, where they awaited official demobilization by the UN mission for Mozambique (ONUMOZ). During this phase, he and many other soldiers started looking for their families after years of separation. In 1993, Fernando traveled to Dondo and visited his relatives, who thought he had died during the war.

It was then that my father told me how I could live [to maintain contact with them]. [...] It was sad for me because when I returned I found out that my mother had died. My father said to me: “you are a good person, you already have a wife, you already have children. I have to tell you, because you were a long time outside the family, arrange yourself a place you like and live there. We will be in touch and visit each other.” *Eh pa*, life is like that, isn’t it? If we would have stayed in the same place, there might have been a person of bad faith [*pessoa de má-fé*] who would say: “that one was in the war!” It stays in the family, hate.

At this point in the conversation I was confused. Jordão, my research assistant, tried to explain: “he is talking about hate within the family [*ódio familiar*].” Fernando continued:

When we were captured or recruited for war we were not alone, no, we were with many from the district. This does not mean that everyone also returned. Some lost their lives, others did not return to their families. Because of this my father arranged another place for me to live.

“Outside Dondo?” I asked. “Yes, outside Dondo. I went to Gorongosa in 1994 until 1999, and then I came here [Maringue],” Fernando answered.

In order to be safe from “hate within the family,” Fernando’s father asked his son to settle outside Dondo. In similar vague descriptions, other ex-combatants said they could not live again in their home village, as this would mean a “certain death.” It took me some time to understand that the ex-combatants referred to what people call *ufiti* in Chisena, the language spoken in most parts of northern Sofala (*feitiço* in Portuguese). *Ufiti* refers to occult forces used to harm someone, often within the proximity of the family. It is translated here as witchcraft.¹ Fernando could not live

in Dondo because his father feared that a *nfiti*, a person using *ufiti*, would assault him, his son, or other relatives.

The data for this article was gathered during 14 months of fieldwork in Maringue, Mozambique, divided over different periods in 2008, 2009, and 2010. This fieldwork is part of an ongoing research project on the social integration of ex-combatants. Maringue was chosen because of its central role during the war as a RENAMO military base and because of the presence of relatively many ex-combatants. Ethnographic fieldwork methods were used involving participant observation, life histories, and open interviews with ex-combatants, their family members, traditional healers, and religious and political leaders. Most of the former combatants I encountered in Maringue were originally not from Maringue, but similar to Fernando had been stationed in the area during the war and settled in the district after demobilization. The question of why these former combatants did not return home became a guiding line throughout my fieldwork, encouraging me to investigate and reconstruct the family lives of these former soldiers.

The observation that Mozambican demobilized combatants did not automatically return home is not new. Coelho and Vines (1994:59) found that many demobilized soldiers did not return to their (often) rural villages of origin, as they were drawn to the economic opportunities in urban areas. Schafer (2007:98-99) noted, however, that the majority of ex-RENAMO combatants she interviewed in central Mozambique settled in rural areas after demobilization. They perceived the cities and larger towns as hostile, as the government—which RENAMO fought during the war—dominated the urban areas. They did not necessarily go to their rural villages of origin. Maringue was particularly attractive for RENAMO veterans because it was familiar territory, as during the war many RENAMO combatants got to know the movement's main base that was located in the district. From the end of the war until 1997, the district was governed by an administration that had apparent links with RENAMO and today a RENAMO military base is located in the area (Jelínek 2004:502-506).² This created a rather favorable political climate for ex-RENAMO combatants in terms of security and access to land. The decision to settle in Maringue was, however, also shaped by other factors such as marriage with a local woman (or women) and continuing obligations towards parents-in-law.

Other reasons for ex-combatants to settle away from their kin were rooted in changes within family relationships. As Coelho (2002) and Schafer

(2007:108, 114) noted, upon their return home many ex-combatants found themselves in intergenerational struggles, which can be situated in existing patterns of younger men seeking more autonomy from seniors (Lubkemann 2008:90). These struggles were possibly heightened by a newfound sense of independence after having spent years away from home during the war (Granjo 2008).³ In this article, I probe into these and other family struggles that partially shaped the process of ex-combatants' reintegration, but from a different angle. I argue that witchcraft played a role in framing and shaping social tensions within the (extended) family, influencing the decision-making processes of Fernando and many other demobilized combatants in central Mozambique, especially in relation to their place of settlement.

I choose to focus on witchcraft, as it is seen as a central feature of social life in Mozambique (West 2005, Lubkemann 2008, Bertelsen 2009, Raimundo 2009, Nielsen 2010) and elsewhere in Africa (Geschiere 1997, Ashforth 2005), but neglected in studies on the reintegration of former combatants.⁴ Scholars and practitioners of these reintegration processes often focus on dealing with war-violence and possible traumas. This article takes a different approach, by showing how certain contingencies of the war, but not necessarily war violence, influenced the social lives of former combatants in their home villages. The time they spent away from home, the demobilization allowance they received, and the fact that some survived and others did not, changed the position of former combatants in their kin (and community) networks, creating tensions and sparking fears and suspicions of witchcraft. By illuminating these aspects of the lives of men and women who fought in the war, this article probes into complexities of notions like "home" and what is generally dubbed the "recipient community," and tackles an often-made assumption that former combatants "naturally" want to return to their villages of origin.

To develop this argument, I first examine scholarly debates on the reintegration of ex-combatants and several reasons why witchcraft is rarely discussed in relation to this phenomenon. Then I give a short impression of the war experience and the return of the demobilized RENAMO combatants to their villages of origin. After a characterization of witchcraft dynamics in central Mozambique, I explore how (the fear of) witchcraft entered into the kin relationships of ex-combatants, through jealousy, unmet expectations, and transformations within the family. Finally, I elaborate on mobility as a strategy to mitigate the threat of witchcraft for ex-combatants and others.

The Reintegration of Former Combatants

The reintegration of former combatants has received broad scholarly attention, as the return of large numbers of soldiers into civilian life is seen as a crucial part of peace processes after (civil) war (Kingma 2000, Knight and Ozerdem 2004, Humphreys and Weinstein 2007, UN 2006). Reintegration is generally understood as “the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level” (UN 2006:2). Recently, a shift occurred from more technical studies of reintegration (on “kits” and “skill-training”) to the current buzzword: community-based reintegration (Stovel 2008, Theidon 2007, UN 2006). Community-based reintegration is commonly seen as a relatively problem-free solution for effective reintegration; yet in technical reintegration literature, it is often defined in vague phrases such as “a dual process of individual adaptation and community acceptance and support [...] through integration into community rhythms” (Wessells 2006:199). I want to highlight three issues in relation to the way community-based reintegration is generally understood and studied.

Firstly, studies about reintegration focus predominantly on the ex-combatants and less on the communities they return to, as if these are less problematic (theoretical) entities than the former fighters. While anthropologists and other scholars have long noted the slipperiness of the concept of “community” and its tendency to be used as a “container notion” (Bauman 1996:14, Cohen 1985:165, Amit and Rapport 2002:7, 13) when concerning the social integration of ex-combatants, the complexities of social life are simply lumped together under “community rhythms” or in the notion of “recipient community.” As de Vries and I have argued elsewhere, this depicts a rather idealized and static image of community life (de Vries and Wiegink 2011). The analysis of witchcraft dynamics in the family relationships of demobilized soldiers is an attempt to empirically problematize the “recipient community” and to show how war (but not only war violence) has changed both former combatants and the communities they came from.

Secondly, writings on reintegration often seem to fit in what Hammond (1999) called “the discourse of repatriation,” as they contain the underlying assumption that ex-combatants (and in Hammond’s case, refugees) wish to return home (e.g., UN 2006, Knight and Ozerdem 2004:502). The voluminous *Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration*

Standards of the UN (2006:32) reads: “most ex-combatants, like refugees and IDPs, wish to return to the places they have left or were forced to flee. Returning home, where this is possible, is often a key step in reintegration programmes.” This disregards a more problematic understanding of home, as a complex and changeable phenomenon for scholars and the people they study (Malkki 1995, Hannerz 2002:218, Hammond 2004:10-11), and presumes that returning home is natural and desirable. Through the example of family tensions and witchcraft, I show that returning or settling at “home” was neither a straightforward nor an unproblematic option for ex-combatants.

Thirdly, in relation to (especially) African armed conflicts, the focus on community-based reintegration has resulted in (ethnographic) studies about rituals and “local” notions of reconciliation that facilitate the incorporation of ex-soldiers (Lundin 1998; Honwana 2002, 2006; Veal and Starvou 2003; Williamson 2006; Baines 2007; Granjo 2007a:126-127). Stovel (2008:306) observed that this trend started with practices and studies done in Mozambique, drawing attention to “traditional” practices of reintegrating ex-combatants (e.g., Lundin 1998, Nordstrom 1997:145-146, Gibbs 1994, Honwana 2006, Granjo 2007a:126-127). Many former combatants I interviewed in Maringue had indeed participated in welcoming rituals “to let the ancestors know that an element of the family returned” and healing and cleansing rituals to “shake off bad spirits.” These ritual moments, though differently shaped and not univocally performed throughout Mozambique, are regarded as a *rite de passage* from military to civil life. Furthermore, it has been argued that they enhance the healing of trauma and restore an imbalance between humans and spirits (Honwana 2006:114). These rituals are performed to free the ex-combatant from the spirits of people wrongfully killed in war (or simply “picked-up” during the war) that may not only harm the combatant, but also his or her relatives and community members (see also Granjo 2007a).⁵

Notwithstanding the value of these healing and purification rituals for the reintegration of ex-combatants and the restoration of social imbalance in their communities, a mere focus on these ritual moments offers a rather narrow understanding of the relationships between former combatants and their family members (see also Schafer 2007:167-168). Such a focus encompasses a limited time frame, namely the moment of return, but even more it obscures other complexities within family relationships, some of which I try to analyze in this article. The focus on cleansing rituals

and traditional notions and mechanisms of reconciliation seems to derive from, as Lubkemann (2008:10) has put it, the “totalizing effect of violent things.” Analyses of social life during and, I would argue, in the aftermath of war, seem to suggest that social life evolves *solely* around dealing with atrocities, obscuring other aspects.

People who are simultaneously brothers, workers, neighbors, and elders all of a sudden are recast in singularly reductionist molds: either as “refugees,” whose only recognizable role is to flee violence, or as “combatants,” whose only analyzed role is to perpetrate violence, or as “victims,” whose only role of relevance is to suffer violence. (Lubkemann 2008:12)

Several anthropologists (Englund 2002, 2005; Richards 2005; Lubkemann 2008) and political scientists (Wood 2008) have recently stated the seemingly obvious: war is not only about violence. The framing of social life in wartime merely through the hegemonic deterrent of violence results in a limited understanding of “warscape social life.” Lubkemann (2008) has suggested an understanding of war as a “social condition.” Applied to the postwar context of central Mozambique, this concept allows me to reflect on “how factors and forces *other than violence* may also play important—and potentially even leading—roles in shaping warscape social process” (Lubkemann 2008:15). Such a perspective permits me to consider the social relationships between former combatants and their family and community members, and in particular on the role of witchcraft in such relationships.

From Recruitment to Reunification

The armed conflict that devastated Mozambique between 1976 and 1992 is often characterized as one of the most brutal wars of Africa. In this struggle between the government of the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Mozambican Liberation Front, FRELIMO) and the rebel movement RENAMO, it is estimated that 600,000 to 1 million people died, and over 5 million people were displaced, either internally or to bordering countries (Hanlon 1996).⁶

In contemporary Maringue there is little consensus about the root causes of the war. People speak of “the war between brothers” or “between us” to

underline the internal aspect of the war and to differentiate it from the liberation war “against the Portuguese.”⁷ Others talk about the war as “coming from outside” or as an attempt “to destabilize our country,” referring to the external involvement in RENAMO of white minority governments in the neighboring countries of Southern Rhodesia (currently Zimbabwe) and South Africa. These different understandings of the war are reflected in and are influenced by discourse and debate in Mozambican politics, the international community, and academics about the root causes, dynamics, and interpretations of the war starting in the 1980s (Gersony 1988, Roesch 1992), continuing in the 1990s (Geffray 1990, Nordstrom 1997), and up until recently (Hultman 2009, Lubkemann 2005). For a general overview of the debates on the nature of the war in Mozambique, I refer to Bertelsen (2002:40-53) and Lubkemann (2005:500, 504-505). Here, I briefly sketch the dynamics of war in relation to the former RENAMO combatants I met in Maringue.

The stories of ex-combatants often start with their recruitment, but many had already heard of RENAMO through the radio, *Voz África Livre* (Africa’s Free Voice). Before recruitment most ex-combatants were aware that a war was waging, but few had a concrete idea of what it entailed and who was fighting who. Antonio was a former RENAMO combatant from Caia (Sofala province); after the war he settled in Maringue where I met him in 2008. He was “taken” by RENAMO in 1982 at the age of 14.

I was a boy. Not married and I did not have children. They [RENAMO] came to our school. We just went with them, they had weapons. We did not know what that thing they called “war” was. We got instructions [training] and a weapon in our hands and then into war. Shooting.

This is representative of RENAMO’s recruitment of many other young men and women in rural areas. Minter (1989:8) assessed, using the work of Gersony (1988) and his own, that at least 90 percent of the rank and file combatants fighting for RENAMO were forcibly recruited. While I met some ex-soldiers who said they joined RENAMO voluntarily—predominantly because they held grudges against the FRELIMO government policies—most said “there was no saying no.”⁸ Yet, the stories of former combatants also reveal a certain curiosity of and attraction to war’s opportunities, such as looting, as well as access to women and power through the gun (see also Finnegan 1992:69-70, Young 1997:132). But after the training, the

young men and women soon found that war was a *sufrimento*, suffering. "We had to walk a lot, carrying weapons all the way to Gaza [a province in southern Mozambique]," said an ex-female combatant. The stories of most men and women recruited by RENAMO are not of fighting, violence, or fear, but of long walks, sleeping in the rain, lack of food, and the frustration that they could not establish families or go to school.

Intensive recruitment by both RENAMO and the government forces started in 1982 and lasted until 1988, with a peak in 1984. The soldiers stayed away from home for an extended period of time. Few soldiers left the ranks before the end of the war in 1992, implying that the majority of the soldiers (two-thirds) stayed in the "bush" for about eight to nine years (Pardoel 1994:27, Coelho and Vines 1994:40-41). Many recruits were underage; the youngest ex-RENAMO soldier I met said he was recruited at the age of 11.⁹ When the war ended, the combatants were often married to other combatants or locals, as the RENAMO leadership loosened their prohibition of relationships between male combatants and women combatants and locals in the later years. The combatants entered the war as children or young adults and left the ranks of RENAMO with families.¹⁰

When peace was officially brokered through the signing of the General Peace Agreement in 1992, there were 92,881 combatants to be demobilized (Alden 2002). To facilitate this process the soldiers were gathered in 43 assembly areas set-up by ONUMOZ, one of which was located in Maringue. After official demobilization in 1994, ONUMOZ provided free transportation for the ex-combatants and their dependents (wives and children) to a destination of their choice. At that stage, many ex-combatants, like Fernando, went looking for their family members.¹¹

Upon arrival in their village of origin, some former combatants found that their family had fled to Malawi and had not (yet) returned. Others did encounter family members and were, as they said almost without exception, welcomed with great joy: "they slaughtered a goat," "they called all the neighbors to show that who had been away has returned," and "I sat on everyone's lap that day." Many ex-combatants in Maringue experienced similar rituals to those described by Honwana (2006), Granjo (2007a), and others. The ex-combatants described funeral ceremonies for relatives who had died during their absence, thanking ceremonies for the ancestral spirits, and purification rituals to remove possible spirits picked up in the war due to wrongful killing or simply by "stepping" on them.¹² It must be mentioned that not all ex-combatants participated in

such ceremonies. Especially those with Christian backgrounds did often not approve of such “traditional” rituals. These ex-combatants said that a collective prayer was organized to celebrate their return. Again others said nothing in particular happened. The unification was generally described as a joyous moment, but it was not automatically linked to a decision to settle in the proximity of kin, as resituating themselves in a family network was often not without problems.

In December 2008, after eight months of fieldwork in Maringue, I met several leaders of the nationwide associations of demobilized soldiers in Maputo. I tried to reflect with them on the experiences of ex-combatants like Fernando and to assess if these were more widely shared. Evaristo, the president of the Association of Disabled Military and Paramilitary Veterans of Mozambique (*Associação dos Deficientes Militares e Paramilitares de Moçambique*, ADEMIMO), described the process that many former combatants from RENAMO and the government forces went through when they returned home:

It is true that Mozambican families are receiving [welcoming]. But when a son returns to the family they also have expectations, he should bring something. They will call the eldest uncle, do the rituals and ceremonies that one does in Africa and *pronto* they stay [together]. But as time passed, the family does not feel reciprocated [*retornado*]. They don't feel that the person is contributing economically. A family stays poor because they have to divide the bread with him as well. The son has problems, he feels guilty. He starts to think it is better to have a change of scenery [*vista*]. He does not find the way to have a normal life. He stayed a long time in the military, 12, 13, 14 years. It is true that the foundation is the family, but they were not counting on him anymore. And when he returned there were no benefits. The others are beginning to look at him, for him to contribute. So for him it is better to be in a place where he was during his life in the military.

Evaristo's account shows that the return of former combatants was initially marked by the joy of return, but after a while was overtaken by the daily reality of hardship in which most Mozambican families live. Becoming a productive family member is often seen as an important phase in the process of social integration of ex-combatants (Nordstrom 1997:146, Sendabo 2004:66, Igreja 2007); however it is not unproblematic, as the words of

Evaristo show. He speaks of relatives' expectations that could not be met by the ex-combatant and of veterans becoming a burden to their family, resulting in a tense situation. Such situations created an enabling environment for suspicions and fears of witchcraft.

Witchcraft: Dangerous Rhythms of Family Life

Evaristo describes how, at a certain point, the ex-combatants should find another place to live as "the others are beginning to look at him." This is similarly vague to what Fernando called "hate within the family," or as a female RENAMO veteran said in relation to her father's wives upon her homecoming: "they did not want to see me well." What is lying underneath these expressions is the fear of falling prey to witchcraft. In central Mozambique, people rarely refer to witchcraft in straightforward terms. Talk of witchcraft happens predominantly through gossip and rumors; it is surrounded with secrecy and suspicion and mostly referred to in veiled terms (see also Ashforth 2005, Stewart and Strathern 2004, Ellis 1993). A sudden or premature death may spark off speculations on who was "behind" the deceased. Similar gossip and suspicions may start when people suffer from diseases that have no clear medical solution (such as AIDS)¹³ and in cases of marked misfortune, such as a bad harvest or losing a job. Then one will ask: "*who* is causing me this misfortune?" This may be attributed to a discontent ancestor, a malevolent spirit, and/or, as is my focus here, a *nfiti* (see also Granjo 2007b, Igreja 2003).¹⁴

Wilson, a *nyanga* (traditional healer-diviner) and local leader of the national association of traditional healers in Maringue, described the main characteristics of a *nfiti* as follows: "the *nfiti* wants to kill people. The *nfiti* walks in the night. He or she transforms into a hyena and as a hyena he or she eats people. At night it is full with hyenas here, you can see them walk." In Chisena, *nfiti* literally means hyena, an animal that eats cadavers, resembling the *nfiti* who eats the flesh of dead human bodies.¹⁵ *Nfiti* are people who cause misfortune, disease, and death by sending spirits or by using certain substances (referred to in Portuguese as *drogas*). The knowledge and power of the *nfiti* is learned from other *nfiti* or from (ancestral) spirits. Generally, speculations about this remain rather vague and are often quickly followed by "I don't really know anything about this" or "you should ask a *curandeiro*" (Portuguese for *nyanga*). Knowledge about witchcraft is dangerous, as one who knows too much can be suspected of being a witch.

“Strange looks,” “hate within the family,” and suggestions that “they don’t want to see me well” refer to the intimacy of witchcraft. Since witchcraft is fueled by jealousy and envy, a *nfiti* is generally thought to be someone close to the individual, who often “sees” your riches and fortune or “knows” your secrets (see, e.g., Geschiere 1997, Ashforth 2005, West 2005, Lubkemann 2008:70). Therefore, people downplay behavior or assets that may cause others to be jealous.¹⁶ In the words of Francisco, a religious leader in Maringue: “People here could have bread everyday, but they won’t because they are afraid.” Bread is a luxury product in Maringue, only eaten by government officials and the rich. Francisco’s words imply that inhabitants of Maringue, even if they had the money to buy bread, would not, because this could trigger the jealousy of neighbors, which is potentially dangerous.

Rosa, a former RENAMO combatant, fled from the possible dangers of jealousy within her family-in-law. She was originally from Beira, where I met her in 2009. Her husband, who she met during the war, was from Nampula. After the war, they went to live with his family:

We went there [Nampula] for three months. The first month we were all right, but after that nothing. His brothers started talking that they did not like a woman from another zone. I could not understand them because I did not speak their language. They thought I was arrogant. And his mother told him [the husband] that I should not change my clothes everyday. “She will be killed” [his mother said]. I also had to take off my watch. My husband did not want to tell me, but later his mother did in her own ways. I could not live like that.

Eventually, Rosa’s husband was offered a job in Beira. Rosa was supposed to stay with her in-laws, but she refused and followed her husband. She was afraid to stay, because “when those kinds of contradictions come in, a person does not live long.” Rosa (and unusually her mother-in-law as well) suspected her husband’s relatives of jealousy and malice. This fragment shows the significance of proximity in *ufiti* dynamics and the feelings of jealousy that may thrive especially in close relationships. Following Rosa’s interpretation of the situation, her position became highly insecure. She felt that her brothers-in-law were regarding her as “different,” because she was from another province and spoke another language. This she felt, was aggravated by the fact that she was not able to redistribute

her “wealth,” creating a tense and enabling environment for witchcraft. Rosa left the household in Nampula to get away from dangerous “contradictions.” Nfiti may be powerful, but in most cases these powers are not believed to transcend great distances.

Furthermore, witchcraft seems to thrive especially in family relationships because these are bound by reciprocity and dependency. The family is (among other things) a solidarity network that offers protection in times of need. At the same time, family relationships are accompanied by obligations and hence expectations, such as the sharing of riches and reciprocity, not only in central Mozambique (Schafer 2007:107-109, Bertelsen 2009:132), but in many other African contexts as well (Chabal 2009, Ashforth 2005:62, de Boeck 2005, Geschiere 1997:11).¹⁷ When certain obligations or expectations are not met, tension and feelings of resentment surface in which witchcraft may be embedded. Several scholars noted that social conflicts within kin networks and strains on the systems of reciprocity go hand in hand with a rise of suspicions and speculations of witchcraft (Ashforth 2005:67, De Boeck 2005:191, Lubkemann 2008:92).¹⁸ Lubkemann (2008), for instance, observed in Machaze (district of Manica province, bordering Sofala) a relation between changing patterns in labor migration and a rise in *uloi* (witchcraft) activities. Due to higher wages, economic differences increased within households and young men gained more leverage in social relationships especially vis-à-vis elder kinsmen. Lubkemann (2008:92-93) concludes that these social conflicts had an inevitable by-product: *uloi*.

It is beyond the data used for this article to make statements on the increase (or decrease) of witchcraft after the war in Mozambique. Yet, it is not difficult to imagine the profound ruptures that took place within families, as during the war many were separated and distorted because of flight, migration, abduction, death, disease, or other factors. Furthermore, the war was followed by a collapse of Mozambique’s economy and the majority of households faced deep economic hardship (Hanlon 1996, Nordstrom 1997, Lubkemann 2008). Thus when former combatants returned to their villages of origin, the situation and structure of their families was altered in many ways. Additionally, the demobilized combatants themselves had also changed. They were taken as young men and women and—if they ever returned—were absent from their families for years. Some left as children and returned as adults, with a spouse and children of their own. While the reunion of ex-combatants with their families was often a joyous moment, the return of the ex-combatant also triggered

certain expectations and inequalities that caused unrest in relationships between former combatants and their family members. This created an enabling environment for witchcraft.

“They Did Not Want to See Me Well”: Tensions in the Family

Recall the story of Fernando from the introduction. During his time with RENAMO, he married and had children. He did what was expected of an adult man and, indeed, his father acknowledged that he was a “good man.” However, at the same time, his father said that Fernando could no longer live in Dondo because of the “hate within the family.” In this section, I explore the possible roots of this “family hate” or, in other words, tensions within the families of ex-combatants that created an enabling environment for *ufiti*. I have distinguished four crucial factors: jealousy, unmet expectations, changed attitudes of the former combatants, and changes within family relations.

First, the return of ex-combatants created new inequalities and motives for jealousy within their families that often lived in rural and poor circumstances. Pedro, a former RENAMO commander from Mutarara (Tete province), was lucky enough to find one of the rare paid jobs within the RENAMO party structure after the war ended. This work led him away from Mutarara where his father and other relatives lived. Pedro said he would never return to live there, as this would be “dangerous.”

Look, *mana* [sister], our race has these particularities. If someone is rich, or has a more beautiful jacket than you, or comes from Maputo... Then you have people, *fala-fala* [talk-talk], *feiticos* [witchcrafts]. Brrr [he pretends to shiver]. That is why I will not live in Tete. A guy does not even have to have stuff, the people only need to think.

Former soldiers were thought to have gained something from their time away from home. In reality, the opposite held true for most RENAMO combatants, as they were deprived of education and, despite receiving the demobilization allowance from ONUMOZ for 18 months, they were, and still are, among the poorest segments of society. Yet, in the wake of war, the demobilization allowance was often regarded as a significant sum of money, especially in rural areas where the flow of cash was limited. This influx of money created social and economic differentiation in a poor rural

environment, which had the potential to trigger jealousy, a potentially dangerous emotion (see also Schafer 2007:108).

Second, the alleged material wealth raised expectations among relatives and a fear to disappoint among ex-combatants. As Schafer (2007:107) noted, families and former combatants often associated the return from war with the return of labor migrants from South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. Labor migration had been a common strategy of young Mozambican men to escape the forced labor and pressing tax system of the Portuguese authorities and to seek fortune as miners in South Africa or as cooks and cleaners in Southern Rhodesia (Allina-Pisano 2003:60, Lubkemann 2008:47-48). These labor migrants were expected to save a portion of their wages as gifts for family members (Schafer 2007:107-108, Lubkemann 2008:75-76). While the war was a different context, similar expectations were raised when sons, daughters, and brothers returned after years of absence. It was common knowledge that *desmobilizados* had received an allowance and a kit, including an axe, a hoe, seeds, some clothing, and a bucket. Many ex-combatants spent their allowances on their relatives, but they often felt it was not enough to meet their family members' expectations, as what the veterans brought home was significantly less in comparison to what the labor migrants had brought in (Schafer 2007:107-108). As Evaristo also noted above, this caused tensions: "when he returned there were no benefits. The others are beginning to look at him, for him to contribute. So for him it is better to be in a place where he was during his life in the military."

Third, some ex-combatants left the war feeling superior or with a newfound sense of independence. Rosa, who I introduced above, continued to explain the dynamics of witchcraft by referring to another demobilized soldier in her neighborhood in Beira:

There is a *desmobilizado* in my neighborhood who never went back to his home. He is drinking all the time. You know what he says: "Me? Going there [home]? I will die! I stayed here a long time, there I have nothing. I would be seen as somebody else. I will be seen as a more civilized person than they are. I will perish right away [*vou acabar logo*]. They will think they are nothing compared to me."

While this fear may have been genuine, it also reveals an arrogant attitude and a desire to maintain a special status in the postwar period

(see also Schafer 2007:107). When I asked two former RENAMO soldiers what the difference was between them and other women that had not gone to war, one of them said, “we walked a lot, all the areas that I have seen! That is a difference.” “Walking” was often used to characterize life with RENAMO, as the soldiers had to carry weapons, loot, and other things across great distances. While this was often expressed as a negative experience, the idea of “having traveled” was also something ex-combatants expressed with pride.

It has been noted that the war, apart from its hardship and horrors, also generated a sense of independence among combatants, as they were away from home and outside the control of senior family members (Coelho 2002). This may be situated in a general decline of the control of elders due to labor migration and the availability of wage labor (Lubkemann 2008, Schafer 2007). But the war may have hastened the eroding authority of elders, especially because the choice and negotiations revolving around marriage was the area in which elders often exercised strong control, yet most of the former combatants were already married when they demobilized. As noted above, it is within such shifts of authority in family relationships that social conflicts emerge and fears (and accusations) of *ufiti* seem to flourish.

This relates to the final point: changes within the family or community that happened during the war may have caused other shifts in the position of the demobilized combatant in relation to certain relatives. After having spent seven years with RENAMO, Dominga returned to her district of origin in Alto Molocue, the northern part of the Zambezia province. She soon found out that her mother had died during the war. Her father married two other women, who did not treat Dominga well. “They said ‘this woman came out of war!’ I could not stay in that house. Those women did not want to see me well [*não me queriam ver bem*]. I returned here [Maringue] and I never went back.”

Upon returning to their families, Dominga and many other women found themselves in a particularly difficult position. Women who were “taken” by RENAMO were often sexually abused (Igreja et al. 2008:358) and used as what others have called “bush-wives” (Coulter 2009, Van Gog 2008). While many of the former female combatants I met in Maringue were said to have been involved in relationships with male combatants during the war, they persistently referred to themselves as “*ex-combatentes*.” Nevertheless when women like Dominga returned home, their family members and others

often regarded them as “damaged goods.”¹⁹ They were at a marriageable age, which normally would entail possibilities for lobolo (bride price), often of considerable revenue for the woman’s family. However, some women already married during the war and for others the lobolo would be substantially less, as female RENAMO veterans were thought to have “had many men.” Dominga returned in such a context and, on top of that, her mother had died in her absence. Her mother would have “spoken for her,” but the new wives of her father regarded Dominga merely as another mouth to feed and felt no obligation towards her. I asked Dominga what she meant by saying “they did not want to see me well.” She said “*inveja*,” envy, an often-used reference to witchcraft. The situation in the household became tense and Dominga thought it was better to leave. She returned to Maringue where she re-united with her “husband,” another RENAMO combatant, with whom she was in a relationship during the war.

Other former combatants found themselves in a difficult position at homecoming, because their peers, who were also recruited by RENAMO, had not returned. Antonio explained why he did not settle in Caia after he was demobilized:

After war it is better to stay alone. It’s like this: I go to war with this guy [he puts his hand on the shoulder of his friend and ex-combatant Felix who was also present at the interview]. He is my friend. I die and he returns. He will not survive this. My family will ask for me: “what happened? Where did he die?” and will always hold a grudge that he returned and I died. He will get sick and he’ll die.

Fernando mentioned a similar line of reasoning at the beginning of this article: “when we were captured or recruited for war we were not alone, no, we were with many from the district. This does not mean that everyone returned. Some lost their lives, others did not return to their families. Because of this my father arranged another place for me to live.” Both RENAMO and the government army recruited young men and women en masse. When RENAMO, for example, took over a village in central Mozambique, the movement recruited all the boys and young men (and sometimes women) that did not flee or were not linked to the FRELIMO party. A new recruit went into the armed group with friends, relatives, and peers. Recruits from the same village were often not placed in the same battalion, to prevent them from teaming up and fleeing. Consequently,

many ex-combatants lost touch with their co-recruits. However, upon their return, the family members of their fellow combatants who did not return asked for information and explanations about the disappearance of their relatives. Often, the ex-combatants could not provide much information, but the fact that they were alive while their peers, relatives, and friends who went into the war with them died or disappeared, caused resentment and jealousy.²⁰ These ex-combatants feared that the family members of fallen recruits would kill them, not with physical violence, but through the use of *ufiti*. The direct family members of the ex-combatants also feared being harmed, as they were fortunate enough to see their son or daughter return. Taking into account that wearing different clothes, or more beautiful clothes than others, is seen as dangerous, one may start to understand the terror some ex-combatants felt standing before the relatives of their deceased comrades of war. To mitigate this fear, these former combatants chose to leave their home villages and settle elsewhere.

Mobility: Managing the Threat of Witchcraft

For people in central Mozambique, witchcraft is an explanatory model for misfortune, but making sense of misfortune is not an end in itself; it is only the first step into managing the dangers of witchcraft (see also Ashforth 2005:110). Besides discretion about wealth and other fortunes in life, people search for protection from witchcraft by calling on the powers of a *nyanga*. In the case of a sudden death, disease, or misfortune, a *nyanga* may conclude that the source of the trouble is a *nfiti* who is working behind the scenes, disquieting a certain person's life. A *nyanga* may then offer a treatment to bind the powers of the *nfiti* (see Bertelsen 2009). Joining a Pentecostal or Zionist Church and consulting a prophet may fulfill a similar function in the quest for protection from witchcraft and other occult forces (Meyer 1998, Ashforth 2005, de Boeck 2005, Pfeiffer 2005).

A more drastic measure when facing the threat of a *nfiti* or an accusation of witchcraft, is to leave the area of residence. In central Mozambique, it is not uncommon to hear that someone from one day to the next has decided to move to the city or to another district, leaving networks of family, friends, land, and, possibly, a job behind. Other anthropologists have also observed how the fear of witchcraft or the fear of being accused of witchcraft is a possible trigger for mobility in Mozambique. Lubkemann (2008:328) analyzed how widowed and divorced women from the rural

district of Machaza moved to urban areas as an “exit strategy,” severing ties with their (husbands’) family to downplay accusations or fears of uloi (witchcraft) and to maintain authority over the children. Raimundo (2009) observed similar reasons for migration in Northern Mozambique, noting that it was not the poorest people who left their village because of fears related to witchcraft, rather it was the slightly better off, who had more reason to think people would envy them. This suggests that the decision of ex-combatants to settle away from kin is not a novel strategy, but rather a culturally and socially accepted one. Notwithstanding the genuine feelings of terror *ufiti* can cause, the “talk” of *ufiti* may also be an “exit strategy.” It may be a polite way to deny the presence of a former combatant, or a strategy for ex-combatants to escape the authority of senior relatives. But, generally, I adhere to what Lubkemann (2008:92-93) noted: *ufiti* is not only a discourse, but the inevitable by-product of social conflict and a strong motive for schism within families.²¹

However, to settle outside the village of origin does not equate to the severance of ties between relatives. First of all, the settlement decisions were not always taken alone. As became clear from the case of Fernando, he and his father discussed settlement options and, eventually, his father suggested that Fernando seek a place of residence elsewhere, close enough that he could “visit” Dondo. Moreover, many of the ex-combatants remained, in various ways, tied to their families (as do others who migrate). Recall Pedro, who was afraid to return to Mutarara (Tete), where his father and other relatives were still living, because he feared he would be seen as “rich.” Yet this did not impede him from visiting the district frequently. Pedro once told me about his plans to buy some cattle and keep them in Mutarara, to leave something tangible to his children. On one occasion when I ran into him in the market in Maringue, he was in a hurry to get to Mutarara because an uncle had died. He and his brothers made several trips to the district to complete a series of funeral ceremonies. Pedro felt responsible but also obliged: “now they cannot say that those folks from the city did not fulfill their duties.”

Pedro also said he wanted to be buried in Mutarara, provided that he would have the necessary capital to cover the cost of transporting his dead body. When I asked why, he said, “it has to do with the spirits. A family wants a spirit in the house. They can call the spirit to come home.” Notwithstanding his decision to settle outside Mutarara because of the possible social conflicts and fears of witchcraft, Pedro regarded himself

as a full member of the family, investing, helping out, and fulfilling his duties. Pedro's wish to be buried in Mutarara is telling, as he thinks his spirit should go "home." Home is here thus framed as the place where he will be an ancestral spirit one day and that is the place where his family resides. Pedro's fears of witchcraft influenced to some extent his settlement decisions, at least the decision to settle away from kin, but these fears did change his understanding of home and what it means to be part of a family.

Conclusion

In this article, I argued that the reintegration of former combatants in Mozambique was to a great extent influenced by certain changes in family relations, contingent to the war (but not necessarily to war violence), creating an enabling environment for witchcraft dynamics. The argument presented here is a contribution to long-term research on veterans going beyond the celebrated community-based reintegration mechanisms (such as cleansing and welcoming rituals) and an attempt to describe some of the complexities of what is often framed as the "recipient community." In contrast to the assumptions of reintegration programs, former combatants do not "naturally" return home, nor is "home" necessarily an unproblematic and welcoming place. However, the former RENAMO combatants in central Mozambique were not alienated from their relatives. On the contrary, this article underlines the profound, though sometimes problematic, impact of kinship relations in shaping social life.

It has not been my aim to give a general overview of the complexities of the reintegration process, but by focusing on witchcraft dynamics in family relationships, I have tried to shed light on some issues that are usually ignored in the analysis of reintegration processes. While this argument could benefit from further research among the family members of ex-combatants, I hope to have shown that certain contingencies of the war, such as being away from home for years, the demobilization allowance, the stigmatization of female combatants, and the fact that some survived and others did not, changed the position of former RENAMO combatants in their kin (and community) networks in central Mozambique. The troubles former combatants faced in relation to their relatives were embedded in cultural understandings of reciprocity and obligation, and the individual's position within the family.

This underlines a more general claim that processes of reintegration of demobilized soldiers do not merely involve dealing with (perpetrated) war violence and trauma. All too often, (post) war situations are analyzed through the window of violence or dealing with violence, resulting in a rather narrow understanding of social processes in war and peacetime (Lubkemann 2008:9-15). By focusing on witchcraft dynamics in family relationships in central Mozambique, I hope to show how ethnographic studies can contribute to debates concerning the social integration of former combatants, by not merely focusing on their roles as perpetrators of violence or on what dealing with a violent past means, but rather by situating the ex-combatants and their families in the complexities of social life. ■

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Endnotes:

¹Witchcraft and sorcery are often synonymous (Geschiere 1997, Ashforth 2005), also in the context of Mozambique (Israel 2009:1) or at least not explained in definition. As Israel (2009:1) and Steward and Strathern (2004) have pointed out, it may not be empirically relevant to make such a differentiation, as it does not reflect the local idiom. The famous differentiation of Evans-Pritchard (1937) holding that witchcraft is inherited and psychically enacted, while sorcery is learned and requires intentional manipulation of medical substances, does not apply to what people in Maringue seem to understand by *ufiti*. These are malign powers used to afflict harm, which may be inherited or learned from other *nfiti*. Following Steward and Strathern's (2004:1-2) distinctions, I decided to translate *ufiti* here as witchcraft.

²During the peace negotiations, it was agreed that RENAMO could maintain a certain number of men-in-arms, at least until the first democratic elections. These men (there were, as far as I know, no women among this group) were never demobilized and RENAMO still has an unknown number of guards in the country, many of which are stationed in Maringue. While I met some of these men during fieldwork, their stories are not presented in this article. All the former combatants in this article were demobilized by ONUMOZ in 1994.

³For similar observations outside the context of Mozambique, see Kalyvas (2006:57) and Banegas and Marshall-Fratani (2007).

⁴A quote from a demobilized RENAMO combatant in Schafer (2007:109) briefly refers to the role of witchcraft in relation to former combatants (in Maringue) and their choices not to return home, because of their fears of the family members of combatants who did not survive the war. This is, however, neither further analyzed nor contextualized.

⁵Granjo (2007a:125, 142) and Honwana (2006) noted that in southern Mozambique similar purification rituals surrounded the return from prison and the mines in South Africa. Prisons and mines are seen as "bad" and "polluted" places or situations, similar to war. In central Mozambique many of the rituals performed when ex-combatants returned to their families were also performed when people spent a long time away from home. Other rituals were more focused on "taking out" certain spirits, "ideas," or the "heat" of war. This has certain consequences for notions of guilt and responsibility that go beyond the scope of this article, see Granjo (2007b) and Igreja (2003) for elaborate discussion of these issues.

⁶The vast majority of people died of causes related to the war such as hunger and diseases. Food shortage was, as far as I know, also the main reason for displacement. It is estimated that RENAMO killed between 50,000 and 200,000 people (Hanlon 1991, Hultman 2009); however, exact figures are absent as statistics about the war are rough and may be exaggerated (Nordstrom 1997:48, Igreja et al. 2008).

⁷This is a reference to the liberation war fought between FRELIMO and the Portuguese forces from 1964 to 1974, which was followed by the independence of Mozambique in 1975.

⁸I refer to Geffray (1990) and Lubkemann (2008) for elaborate discussions on people's discontent regarding policies implemented by the FRELIMO regime in rural Mozambique, such as the abolishment of religion and tradition, and the establishment of communal villages, lands, and shops.

⁹From the questionnaire that the Technical Unit of Demobilization conducted among the demobilized soldiers, it is estimated that 27 percent of the soldiers of RENAMO and the government forces were recruited when they were under the age of 18 (Pardoel 1994:28).

¹⁰51 percent of the combatants demobilized by ONUMOZ were married at the time of demobilization (Pardoel 1994:22). Most former combatants that participated in this study married their (first) wife during the war. A certain number of these marriages continued after demobilization and were regarded as official, as *lobolo* (bride price) was paid either during or after the war. Yet other marriages ended, often because the demobilized combatant returned to his area of origin, leaving a woman (or women) and children behind.

¹¹The data gathered by the technical unit ONUMOZ suggest that 75 percent of the former combatants settled in their province of origin (Pardoel 1994:14-21). However, the data only present trends on the provincial level and fails to reveal more detailed aspects of settling patterns of demobilized soldiers within the provinces. Furthermore, the data do not reveal changes over time.

¹²In the insecure context of military life, many combatants sought protection by turning to ancestral spirits or consulting a *nyanga* (traditional healer-diviner). In Maringue, people often referred to particular combatants (of both RENAMO and the government armed forces) with exceptional powers, who walked the battlefield while "bullets fell off their chest like water." Additionally, there were certain armed groups that were famous for using magical powers, such as the Parama (Nordstrom 1997:57-62). It has also been noted that RENAMO used the power of *nyangas* to protect their military bases (see also Schafer 2007). However, in relation to *ufiti*, RENAMO took firm actions. In Maringue there were several stories of RENAMO combatants punishing alleged *nfiti*, sometimes with death.

¹³Ashforth (2005:9) noted that in Soweto, symptoms associated with AIDS (persistent coughing, diarrhea, abdominal pains, and wasting) were indications of the malicious assaults of witches.

¹⁴While *ufiti* and the ancestral and malevolent spirits are very different phenomena, they all seem to play a role in the search for meaning of certain (often negative) experiences or life events. Additionally, *nfiti* (and *nyangas* as well) are known to "work with" certain spirits such as *mfukwa* and *gamba*, see Granjo (2007b) and Igreja (2003).

¹⁵"Eating" is a more common reference to the activities of witches. Geschiere (1997:33-34, 61) noted, for example, that in Cameroon the eating of kin is the "most compelling urge of witches."

¹⁶Witchcraft, or better said, the fear of witchcraft, is often interpreted as a leveling force, opposing new inequalities, relations of domination, and even development (Geschiere 1997:5, Ashforth 2005, West 2005:239-245, Raimundo 2009:25-27). Yet, it must be noted that witchcraft is not only a leveling or destructive force, but as Geschiere (1997:5) argued, it is an accumulative force as well. Objects of wealth may evoke "dangerous" jealousy, but are at the same time a source of great suspicion about the owner of these riches, as these may have been obtained through the use of occult forces, often with the help of a powerful *nyanga*. To obtain such great fortune it is believed that one needs to conduct the most outrageous activities, such as sleeping with one's mother or killing one's child.

¹⁷See Chabal (2009) for a more general account of the importance of obligations and family relations in Africa. According to Chabal (2009:48), obligations define people: "to have no obligations is not to belong; is not to be fully and socially human."

¹⁸Geschiere (1997) and others (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, Moore and Sanders 2001a) have discussed witchcraft as being part of modernity and conceptualized it as a dynamic phenomenon apt to incorporate (modern) changes. The idiom of witchcraft is a way (among others) to understand increasing inequalities in a globalizing context. I refer to Moore and Sanders (2001a) for an extensive overview of the conceptualizations of witchcraft.

¹⁹As Honwana (2006:79) also noted, the participation of young women and girls in RENAMO (but also the government forces) and their sexual abuse during the war is surrounded by secrecy, silence, and stigmatization. There are very few female ex-combatants who want to talk about these experiences. Often these

women are solely regarded as victims of sexual violence, but women and girls have various roles in war, often contributing substantially to the military organization. I refer to Honwana (2006) and Coulter (2009) for more elaborate discussions on the roles of women in war and their return to civil life.

²⁰Veale and Stavrou (2003:49) noted similar feelings of jealousy in relation to the return of abductees from the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda: "The final negative experience that returnees reported from the community is jealousy from those who are still missing family members and struggling openly with accepting those that have returned."

²¹See also Ashforth (2005:113-114) for a criticism on the witchcraft discourse as an idiom expressing conflict. According to Ashforth, such a notion of witchcraft leads to treating statements of witchcraft as figurative or metaphorical, while the statement is intended as factual.

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为何士兵们不回家？解甲归田的战士，家庭生活与巫术在战后的莫桑比克

[**关键词:** 军人回归社会，莫桑比克，巫术，亲属关系，战后]

Почему солдаты не вернулись домой? Демобилизированные солдаты, семейная жизнь и колдунство в послевоенном Мозамбике.

[**Ключевые слова:** возвращение ветеранов в общество, Мозамбик, колдунство, родство, послевоенный]

Porque os soldados não regresaram a casa? Desmobilizados, vida familiar e feitiçaria em Moçambique pós-guerra

[**Palavras chaves:** A reintegração dos ex-combatentes, Moçambique, feitiçaria, parentesco, pós-guerra]

لماذا الجنود لم يعودوا إلى موطنهم؟ المقاتلون المسرحون، حياة الأسرة، ممارسة السحر في موزمبيق في فترة ما بعد الحرب
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