The Role of Religion in National Healing and Democracy in Zimbabwe in the Context of the Global Political Agreement

Tabona Shoko
University of Zimbabwe

Abstract

The phenomenon of national healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe was necessitated by the disputed plebiscite by three political parties in Zimbabwe, namely ZANU-PF, MDC-T, and MDC-M. This arrangement resulted in the establishment of the Government of National Unity (GNU) whose mandate was to draft a new constitution, prepare for a fresh electoral process and setting up of new government. An Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration was appointed to spearhead the national healing programmes. The mandate of the National Healing Committee was to draft a code of conduct to hold political parties perpetrating violence to account for their actions. The Church and Civil Society Forum (CCSF) were commissioned to engage with stakeholders that sought ways to stop violence and partner with government in attaining national healing. Despite efforts by the churches, some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civic organisations to stem the tide of violence, they achieved very little success. The potential role and contribution made by traditional religion and culture in the quest for peace has gone unnoticed, as if to suggest that the religion is ‘dead’ or ‘static.’

This paper therefore explores the role of the religion particularly the church and traditional religion and culture in the national healing process and democracy in Zimbabwe. Such a concern to tap into the wealth of religion in order to attain peace and reconciliation can be located in the studies by Villa-Vicencio who observed that African traditional practices have certain common threads that promote peace and reconciliation. These include non-verbal healing and relationship building-entailing culture and ritual, the living dead, sacred space, reconciliation practices, community involvement and adaptations (Villa-Vicencio 2009: 134). And for Baum and Wells, “Reconciliation and peace-making are part of the Christian calling, both for churches and Christian organizations and for Christian individuals.”(1997: vii).

Based on empirical data obtained from political parties, perpetrators and survivors of violence, churches, traditionalists and other stakeholders, the paper argues that religion can be a powerful resource for attaining national healing and reconciliation, peace and harmony and democracy in Zimbabwe. And it concludes that religion is a vital instrument in contributing to peace, reconciliation, national healing and democracy.

Introduction
The political crisis and call for reconciliation at national level is not a new thing in Zimbabwe. There have long been strong feelings between the majority Shona people of Zimbabwe and the Ndebele people in the south of the country. It stems back to the early 1800s when the Ndebele were pushed from their traditional lands in what is now South Africa by the Zulu and Boer. But the most memorable event was the Gukurahundi incident that occurred in post independent Zimbabwe. This refers to the attempted genocide of the Ndebele by Robert Mugabe’s 5th Brigade which culminated in the Call for unity and signing of 1987 Unity Accord between Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and Joshua Nkomo’s Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU).

On 15 September 2008, the Global Political Agreement (GPA) signed by the three main political parties in Zimbabwe (ZANU-PF, MDC-T and MDC) that gave birth to the inclusive government (popularly known as the government of national unity, (GNU) has attracted diverse interpretations. On one hand there are strong supporters of the inclusive government who argue that the inclusive government enabled inflation-weary Zimbabweans an opportunity to breathe after a decade of serious economic decline. They also contend that the inclusive government saw a lowering of political temperatures and the attendant decrease in political violence. On the other hand, critics of the inclusive government charge that it prevented Zimbabwe from experiencing a totally fresh rebirth. They maintain that the inclusive government has failed, among other failures, to address issues relating to transitional justice, healing and reconciliation (Chiwara, Shoko, Chitando 2013: 36).

This paper discusses the debate on the GPA and the inclusive government from the perspective of the role of religion in addressing the issues of transitional justice,
healing and reconciliation. In particular, it provides an overview of religion’s engagement with the issues under discussion prior to the formation of the inclusive government. It proceeds to assess patterns of continuity and change in religion’s engagement with issues of national healing and reconciliation under the inclusive government. Critically, the paper draws attention to the shocking neglect of traditional religion in the quest for transitional justice, healing and reconciliation under the inclusive government. The paper highlights the potential of religion to contribute towards transitional justice, healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. It challenges the inclusive government and its successor/s to take religion seriously in all national peace initiatives.

**Church and National Healing in Zimbabwe**

The church in Zimbabwe plays an important role in facilitating peace and national healing. In Zimbabwe there are plethora of churches that range from Mainline, Pentecostal and African Independent churches (AICs. Some Theologians such as Chitando and Manyonganise (2011) argue that although the country is home to many faith traditions, it is Christianity that has by far the largest share of the market. This section focuses on how Christian bodies and individuals have responded to the socio-economic and political challenges that engulfed the nation in a bid to ensure national healing during the GPA. It argues that given the levels of violence and political polarisation experienced in Zimbabwe, the Church can also be a useful platform for national healing and peace (Chiwara, Shoko, Chitando 2013: 45).
Christian Healing Mission, Reconciliation and Peace

The church has always been associated with healing mission as part of its broad program to evangelise, medical care and education. In general the church is has resources inherent within it that have promoted of non-violence and tolerance. Christians contend that the gospel of Christ calls them to a ministry of reconciliation and peace-making. The Biblical Good News is centred on healing and deliverance. Peace-making springs from the biblical teaching about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, his cross, resurrection and salvific acts. This is succinctly stated by Ngala,

To speak for peace, to pray for peace, to teach peace, to work for peace, to do whatever one can, whether great or small, to make peace is the church’s calling (Ngala, 2005: 160).

The bible carries passages of justice, love and peace that have to do with slaves being set free from bondage, with care of widows and orphans, with kindness to strangers and sojourners, with compassion for the sick and disabled, but also with fair wages to workers, economic security, the inclusion of the marginalized, liberation from oppression, ecological justice and the end of war (Ngala 2005: 160).

Baum and Wells observe that, “Reconciliation and peace-making are part of the Christian calling, both for churches and Christian organizations and for Christian individuals.”(1997: vii). Given this background, it is important to unpack how the Church has been instrumental in facilitating national healing in Zimbabwe, especially after the formation of the inclusive government.
Church and Humanitarian Crisis

The Church has played a pivotal role in dealing with the socio-economic crisis that has engulfed Zimbabwe from the 1990s to the contemporary period. The 1990s sparked profound disgruntlement amongst most Zimbabweans due to difficult macro-economic hardships sparked by ESAP and subsequent retrenchments and unemployment and as the autocratic tendencies of the ruling party became self-evident. Later in the decade, the government joined the wars first against Renamo bandits in Mozambique and second in the Democratic Republic of Congo, committing state resources to wars that drained the state’s revenue without reciprocal returns to the state while ordinary Zimbabweans suffered (Saki 2010: 5).

In response to the crisis, the Church employed various strategies in an effort to contribute towards sustainable resolution of the crisis. The crisis facilitated the emergence of “Deliverance Ministries” championed by Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa’s United Family International (UFI). The purpose of such ministries is to assist their clients or members to cope with the massive challenges of unemployment, hyper-inflation and the attendant loss of hope. In particular gospel musicians composed songs which strengthened the faithful. Artists from various denominations promised the nation that God would restore the country’s social and economic fortunes. For example, in an interview, Roshne said her *music* is meant to give *hope* to the hopeless. A group of *Zimbabwean* youth took to dancing to shake off the frustration brought by lack of opportunities, in the face of a deteriorating economy. Others examples include Donna’s promised, *Dhora redu richasimba* (our
dollar shall regain its strength) (Chitando and Manyonganise 2011: 81). Moreover, the Church assisted through the provision of schools, hospitals, humanitarian programmes and the care of orphans, widows and the disadvantaged. Most of these have persisted under the inclusive government.

Building on its history of engagement, the Church has sought to promote national healing and reconciliation during the GPA. Although GPA parties have tended to spear-head the national healing and reconciliation process, the Church has mounted its own programmes. For example, Churches in Manicaland, an ecumenical initiative, has been running healing and reconciliation workshops with members of civil society. These workshops have sought to conscientise Christians about their role as peacemakers and peacekeepers in a heavily polarised society (Chiwara, Shoko, Chitando 2013: 45).

**Church and Political Violence**

Some critics have observed that there has been a continuity of autocratic governance from the Rhodesian Front to ZANU-PF which became evident in the increasingly repressive nature of ZANU-PF after independence, whether it was dealing with the official opposition, striking workers and students or civil society (Muzondidya 2011: 8). The government also relied heavily on the coercive tactics developed during the liberation struggle to elicit civilian compliance. As Masipula Sithole poignantly argues, the government continued to rely on the commandist nature of mobilization and politicization developed during the liberation struggle
which emphasized the politics of intimidation and fear. Opponents were viewed in warlike terms as enemies and therefore illegitimate (Sithole, 1988: 245).

The churches apart from their role in service provision have played a key role in speaking out against violence, abuses of human rights, social injustice and poverty. The Catholic Church became the voice of the voiceless. On Easter Day in 1983 the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference (ZCBC) wrote a statement entitled *Reconciliation is Still Possible*, making it categorically clear that the ZCBC continued to condemn dissident atrocities and recognized the government’s need to maintain law and order in Zimbabwe. In their report entitled, *Peace, Unity and Freedom*, they emphasized that people should unite and not be divided. Members of the CCJP continued negotiating with both PF ZAPU and ZANU-PF. In addition, the heads of the Christian denominations visited then President Banana who was a Methodist Pastor, asking him to mediate. On 22 December 1987 Zimbabwe’s political landscape changed dramatically with the signing of the Unity Accord agreement between ZANU-PF and PF ZAPU. The agreement was aimed at eliminating political violence in Matabeleland and the Midlands province (Muzondidya, 2011: 32). The role of the Church in ensuring reconciliation and peace becomes evident in this achievement. The same spirit has been retained during the era of the inclusive government.

Churches have played a major role in facilitating dialogue between Robert Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and their respective parties. They provided the platform for later interactions (Tsvangirai 2011: 395). In line with its mandate to ensure that elections remain peaceful, the Church has invested heavily in discouraging violence during
elections. The churches preached the message of peace thereby preventing the country from degenerating into a bloody confrontation. This was a possibility as the government had demonstrated its willingness to use force to subdue a restless country. Hence churches have contributed to the resilience and tenacity that the Zimbabwean populace has demonstrated in enduring the crisis (Chitando and Manyonganise 2011: 82).

Under the inclusive government, churches have continued to encourage political parties to discourage their members from resorting to violence. Churches have been holding prayer meetings where they challenge Christians to be agents of healing in their communities. They have invited the GPA principals to preach healing and forgiveness, not violence. Churches have also held peace rallies in the different provinces, calling upon their members to be actively involved in the struggle for peace in the country. However, the engagement of the Church in the quest for healing and integration in Zimbabwe under the inclusive government is replete with challenges. We turn to these below.

**Church’s Challenges**

The church has met with formidable challenges in their quest for national healing, peace and reconciliation. One of the challenges that emerged during the inclusive government was that it was constrained by its other face of being a conflict instigator. The Christian religion has sources inherent in it that have been promoting conflicts, either by default or design. While Christians contend that the gospel of Christ calls them to a ministry of reconciliation and peace-making, the same tradition is laden
with heroic acts of violence and destruction. There are texts in the Bible that can easily be used to inspire violence and inhibit the church's efforts as a peace-maker (Chiwara, Shoko and Chitando 2013: 50).

When the Bible is not interpreted cautiously, both the Old and the New Testaments can appear to condone violence as a way of life or to justify violence in various circumstances. There are such narratives as the conquest and annihilation of enemies (Joshua and Judges), contempt for people and their religions (Deuteronomy 7), exclusion of the disabled (Leviticus 21), the institution of slavery and the subordination of women (Ephesians 5) and passivity towards the state (Romans 13). For Christians the Bible is the indispensable and incomparable source of the gospel. It is sacralised and functions as the Holy Scripture in the church. Therein lies its power. But it can be misused and co-opted for hateful and destructive purposes. (Ngala 2005: 161).

Moreover, the potential role of the Church as an agent for national healing remains challenged by the evidence of the same polarization and politicization shown in Zimbabwean churches as in other sectors of society. The disunity within the Church has given the political parties in the GPA an opportunity to exploit their differences; embracing the conciliatory church leaders and their churches whilst dismissing the critical ones as "enemies of the state" siding with the opposition (Muzondidya 2011: 32). The political parties' plan was to divide the Church and benefit from the "divide and rule" policy. They have wanted to play off one group of churches against the other. In the words of Muchena, for the state in particular to achieve this it had to rely
on a select group of church leaders who “see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil” (Muchena, 2006: 267).

For instance, Church leaders such as Nolbert Kunonga and Obadiah Msindo appeared on state television, in the press and at state functions as representing the voice of the Church. Musindo of the Destiny for Africa Ministries were singing a litany of praises for the government and it was at the time that he acclaimed President Mugabe as divinely appointed and as the new Moses. Kunonga, the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Harare, has supported Mugabe. He compromised with the state and demonized leaders who held divergent views as sell-outs and stooges of the West (Muchena 2006: 267).

More churches also poured showers of praises for the Executive such as Zion Christian Church led by Bishop Nehemiah Mutendi who described Mugabe as greater than the Bible. A ZAOGA church elder said she was praising the Lord for what Mugabe did. And Prophet Makandiwa of United Family International (UFI Pentecostal church urged congregants to pray for Mugabe. However most clergy courted trouble with their fellow clergymen and civil society for ‘going to bed with the President’.

In his evaluation of the churches’ contribution to peace-building in the era of the inclusive government, Chitando has maintained that there are clear patterns of continuity. He maintains that churches remain marginalised by the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration, partly due to their own internal weaknesses.
He also contends that churches have not invested heavily in ensuring that they are recognised as critical players on the country’s political scene (Chitando 2011: 47).

**African Traditional Religion and Justice, Peace and Reconciliation**

Although the political parties and the Church have contributed to interventions on violence, this has not embraced all sectors. Traditional religion and culture have not been incorporated in understanding and managing violence. The inclusive government has followed the trend of neglecting traditional religion. This section discusses the positive contribution that traditional religion and mechanisms can make in the prevention of violence during the transitional phase in Zimbabwe. It argues that traditional religion is powerful instrument for peace and healing for transitional justice in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, it argues that traditional religion offers a possible meeting point between international law and traditional mechanism for justice and reconciliation (Villa-Vicencio 2009).

As Villa-Vicencio observes, African traditional practices have certain common threads that promote peace and reconciliation. These include non-verbal healing and relationship building-entailing culture and ritual, the living dead, sacred space, reconciliation practices, community involvement and adaptations (Villa-Vicencio 2009: 134). If the inclusive government were to utilise these traditional beliefs and practices, communities would emerge stronger.
Material derived from empirical data from interviews of key informants such as chiefs, spirit mediums, *n’anga* (diviner-healers) and midwives in Zimbabwe, the study’s findings demonstrate, that Shona traditional religion and in particular health and medical care systems, are not isolated but are integrated into a network of beliefs and values that promote health, dignity and peace. If governments appropriate these traditional beliefs, they stand a better chance to promote cohesion, healing and reconciliation. Unfortunately, the political parties and the inclusive government have not taken traditional religion seriously when mobilising communities in the quest for peace and development (Chiwara, Shoko and Chitando 2013: 38).

**Shona Tradition and Culture**

The Shona traditional forms of justice and reconciliation manifest in the belief in spirits, crime and justice through *ngozi* (avenging spirits), the chief’s role in resolving disputes, family reconciliation through marriage; the concept of *Ubuntu* and human rights that promote co-existence and attitudes towards the environment. In order to fully appreciate the role of traditional religion in transitional justice in Zimbabwe, it is critical to summarise the key features of traditional religion.

**Spiritual Forces**

Traditional Shona beliefs religions have a self-preserving power to provide a unified system of beliefs and practices that can be used as template for peace and stability in Zimbabwe. Several features of Shona traditional religion include *Mwari*, the Supreme being who is associated with rain and fertility (Moyo 1987: 5). He is
concerned with issues at national level and not individuals (Shoko 2007: 38). The basis of the Shona religion is the ancestor cult. They believe their lives are controlled by *vadzimu* (ancestor spirits). These are spirits of people who died but exist in a spiritual form. They serve as guardians of the living, but also mediate between the living and God. They are guardian spirits who are influential in the people’s lives (Bourdillon 1976: 263). The importance of ancestors ensures peace and stability amongst the descendants. Failure to perform necessary rituals and violation of traditional rules like ill treatment of a spouse or parents provokes spirits and invites spiritual wrath. But the Shona are convinced that ancestors are essentially positive and benevolent. So managing relations with spirit world guarantees peace, health and welfare (Shoko 2007: 89). *Shavi* are spirits of relatives, neighbours, white people, animals and objects. They possess people and provide skills in hunting, healing dancing and divination (Bourdillon 1976: 283).

Some spirits are malignant and include *Ngozi*, spirits of people who died in anger such as victims of murder and seek revenge. The family consults a *n’anga* who mediates between the angry spirit and the family. *Ngozi* is settled through compensation by a girl child or cattle by the murderer (Shoko 2007: 42). This phenomenon of *ngozi* and payment provides a template for reconciliation and healing in Zimbabwe. The spirits of victims of political violence will only rest if the perpetrators are willing to pay compensation as indigenous wisdom says that this is the only viable route (“*mushonga wengozi kuiripa*”). The inclusive government should therefore be spearheading traditional ceremonies to placate the spirits of victims of political violence. Instead, groups of perpetrators of violence have been undertaking
secret trips to sacred sites in the hope of silencing the spirits of the deceased. This is a futile exercise that must be challenged by the inclusive government.

Religious Leaders

The nánga (traditional medical practitioner) plays an important role in divination and healing. S/He is referred to as diviner-healer. As diviner the nánga provides advice to complex questions or problems which affect the people. As healer s/he is responsible for healing. As herbalist s/he deals in medicine and offers prescriptions. A n’nga performs other functions like kupinga musha (protecting a home) and rukwa (boosting agriculture). S/He also supplies medicine for love, luck and employment (Shoko 2007: 124). Healing involves both the individual and society. S/He is both a counsellor, adviser, policeman and social worker. These traditional healers have a major role to play in national healing and reconciliation.

The chief (ishe/mambo) is the embodiment of tradition and culture in the Shona society. He administers a grouping of wards in the community. Traditional leaders are represented by the chief are the owners of the land and all life comes from the land (Nkomo 1998: 14). Nkomo concludes that chiefs are a synthesis of executive, ritual and judicial who always enjoy support from the grassroots. In addition, Nkomo observes that their role would remain key in stabilizing and galvanizing societies for development.

The chief performs several functions in society. His major role is to mediate between the people and the spirit guardians in the chiefdom. He organises appropriate rituals
such as *mukwerere* to ensure rain and fertility on the land. The chief is a 'religious and political ruler' (Bourdillon 1976: 137). The chief also presides over the traditional court (*dare*). He exercises full jurisdiction over all land and people in the ward. He acts as the last court of appeal for referral cases from the village headmen. In executing his duties, the chief is assisted by his personal advisors (*machinda*) who give advice to the chief and help to maintain unity in the chiefdom. The chief’s court deals with many cases that involve divorce, quarrels, compensation, and breaking taboos, and thefts of cattle. Despite their limitations on gender inclusion, traditional courts offer high level of participation by their emphasis on community in decision making. The chief who has jurisdiction over the land ensures that any violation is rectified according to the norms and traditions. The Shona emphasise the link between the chief and the spiritual powers (Shoko 2007: 10). Given the centrality of these traditional leaders to indigenous communities, it is vital to give them a leading role in the quest for healing and reconciliation. Unfortunately, some political parties only seek to utilise the services of traditional leaders to perpetuate their grip on power.

*Traditional Customs*

There are several types of traditional customs practiced by the Shona. Marriage is one such type that invokes negation and settlement (Shoko 2007: 25). In addition, marriage provides a valuable entry point in promoting healing in communities. Marriages between families that wronged each other in the past can lead to peace and harmony (Chiwara, Shoko and Chitando 2013: 42).
Shona traditional religion contains proverbs, myths and legends which are an important source of social and customary practices. Proverbs have great influence in that they address issues of peace and reconciliation. J. S. Mbiti (1975: 27) is of the view that proverbs, myths and legends also contain religious ideas. Wise sayings about the world are generated by proverbs eg *Natsa kwawabva kwaunoenda usiku* (encourages moral values all the time). They make a compassionate call for compassion and solidarity.

Music and dance also proffer peace in Shona tradition. This aspect reflects during festivals, harvesting parties and rain making ceremonies. Music attracts unity amongst the Shona people. It gives an outlet to emotional life and thus builds togetherness.

*Traditional Cultural Values*

The Shona have rich social cultural values that include ethics and morals through the concept of *Ubuntu/Hunhuism* which demonstrates good personality and peaceful co-existence. They believe in corporate relationships rather than individual activities. The issue of identity in relation to human rights is critical. According to Chidester, a human being is human because of other human beings (Chidester 1992: 82). In African cultural perspective, personhood is expressed through the practice of giving, realised through ancestral rituals, kinship, and inclusive acts of hospitality (Chidester 1992: 82). The Shona’s expression, *munhu munhu navanhu* – a person is a person through other persons, is important. Among the Shona unhu (personhood) derives from vanhu (people or the community) who define what it is to be munhu (a person).
One is entitled to the right to life, security and liberty in relation to one’s communal set of social, economic and political ethics, all secured by belonging to the community of the living and the living dead.

Shona traditional religion exhibits some aspects of that promote human rights. These aspects promote human rights in the sense that they protect, sustain and perpetuate human life, dignity and integrity. The types of human rights which they promote are: the rights to: life, liberty and security as well as shelter, food, integrity, respect, dignity and health care, among others. The aspects of Shona traditional religion that emerge as promoting human rights can be seen in the aspects of marriage, chieftainship and ritual practice. Specific issues under these aspects include: mombe youmai (mother’s cow), chiredzwa (child caring appreciation), zunde ra mambo (chief’s storehouse as a food security programme), kusungira (taking an expecting mother to her parents to deliver the first baby), kugarwa nhaka (inheriting a deceased’s wife), sara pa vana (traditional inheritance of a deceased man’s family) and ubuntu (person-hood). The rituals of kupayira (naming of a child), kutsikisa mapota (stepping over protective porridges), makupo (distribution of the deceased’s property) and mhinza mumba (home bringing ceremony) (Mushishi 2009: 3). In all these aspects of Shona traditional religion, human rights are promoted. Therefore it is possible to construct an African understanding of human rights that supports peace and stability from cultural practices of the Shona. The onus is upon political parties to harness these values to promote national healing and cohesion.
Sacred Places

Some of the beliefs and practices underlying Shona traditional religion have to do with their attitudes to nature with regards to sacred places. The Shona attitudes are basically environmentally friendly. This is shown in the Shona attitudes to nature with respect to the land, animals, plant life and water bodies. The entities are safeguarded by sacred taboos that regulate errant behaviour and vandalism of nature. Taringa (2006) however, argues that the ecological attitude of traditional African religion is based more on fear or respect of ancestral spirits than on respect for nature itself (Taringa 2006: 12). But what is clear is that traditional religion offers some idea of environmental protection that safeguards species against extinction. And traditional beliefs emerge as a stronger environmental force in the global village. These indigenous attitudes to nature could be appropriated to address the pressing issue of environmental degradation and promote holistic healing in the era of the inclusive government. Unfortunately, these beliefs and attitudes have been overlooked under the guise of “progress and modernity.” (Chiwara, Shoko and Chitando 2013: 45)

Threats to Peace

There are instances of threat to peace that the Shona people condemn. Bad influence from others can be a possible threat to peace. Also ridiculed is intolerance, stress, lack of satisfaction, pain, jealous and other negative attitudes can be a threat to peace.
Conclusion

Religion, a valuable resource for peace-building, healing, reconciliation and integration, remains underutilised in Zimbabwe. Whereas the era of the GPA and the inclusive government has availed immense opportunities, religion has not been deployed to promote nation-building. The church and traditional religion remain at the disposal of the people of Zimbabwe to utilise on issues of national healing, peace and reconciliation.

Although the Church has faced some challenges, it has the potential to play a critical role in supporting peaceful forms of change through facilitating dialogue and negotiations among feuding politicians, through democratic resistance and through engaging in humanitarian activities, among other strategies. With better organization and strategies, the Church can play an important role in facilitating national healing in the country. This is because, as Kaulemu puts it, “Churches have institutional capacities and social resources that lend weight to their political voice” (Kaulemu, 2010: 51).

Similarly traditional religion and culture have not been appropriated to build cultures of peace and tolerance. Indigenous spiritual beliefs, sacred practitioners who are the embodiment of tradition and custodians of peace, beliefs in witchcraft and punishments that mete out justice, the role of the chief who guarantees peace and marriage that ensures family reconciliation have not been appropriated in a creative manner. Also important is the idea of ubuntu, and human rights that support mutual existence and peaceful attitudes towards the environment. All these constitute important aspects of traditional religion and values that can provide positive
contributions to the prevention of violence during the transitional period in Zimbabwe. Shona traditional religious views, despite their denigration, are alive and dynamic and can be utilised by the policy makers in Zimbabwe to contribute to national healing and reconciliation. Therefore traditional religion offers an opportunity for creative encounters between international law and local justice in conflict resolution in Zimbabwe.

Therefore it is the responsibility for strategic actors within the inclusive government (and its successors) and civil society to realise the central role of religion as an agent of transformation, peace-building, healing, reconciliation and national integration.

**Bibliography**


Mangena, F. 2012. *On Ubuntu and Retributive Punishment in Korekore-Nyombwe*


