

## INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS' (IKSs) POTENTIAL FOR ESTABLISHING A MORAL, VIRTUOUS SOCIETY: LESSONS FROM SELECTED IKSs IN ZIMBABWE AND MOZAMBIQUE

Munyaradzi Mawere

Department of Philosophy, Universidade Pedagogica, Mozambique

### ABSTRACT

In Africa, like elsewhere, indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) were used to administer peace, harmony, and order amongst the people and their physical environment. However, with the advent of colonialism in Africa, IKSs were not only marginalized, but demonized leaving their potentials for establishing and maintaining a moral, virtuous society, unexploited. It is in this light that this paper argues for a correction to the vestiges of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and the western gaze that demonized African IKSs and posed fatal challenges to their [IKSs] potentials in improving African societies socially, economically, and morally. The paper adopts Zimbabwe and Mozambique as case studies in showing the beauty of the undiluted African indigenous knowledge systems and their potential for establishing a moral, virtuous society. To this end, the paper argues that Africa, today, is in the grips of high crime rates, serious moral decadence, and other calamities because of the marginalization, false, and pejorative label attached to the African IKSs. This takes the paper to another level where it criticizes, dismantles, and challenges the inherited colonial legacies, which have morally and socially injured many African societies.

**Keywords:** African Traditions; Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs); Morality; Virtuous; Society; Zimbabwe; Mozambique

### INTRODUCTION

The socio-political and cultural dimensions of the Western hegemonic tendencies in the world's global affairs have posed serious challenges, especially to its former African colonies. The west considered Africa as a 'dark continent', and hence despised its traditions, customs, belief systems, and indigenous knowledge systems as diabolic, barbaric, and backward. This had a negative impact to Africa's own socio-economic and political development. Africa's valued traditions and knowledge systems had to change to fit in with the western scientism and modernity.

A selected number of African indigenous knowledge systems will be analyzed with a view to provide a more rounded and objective view of the African continent. In doing this, the paper adopts Zimbabwe and Mozambique as case studies. It clearly reiterates that "Europe's intervention in Africa [was] the beginning of the most nefarious images. An African invention, for European purposes, could no longer serve the interests of its own people" (Asante in Mengara, 2001), as Europeans despised all African traditions, customs, and knowledge systems. In view of this, the paper seeks to rekindle and explicates the African

philosophy debate as an African response to demonization inherent in the western discourses on Africa. It is a rationality debate, a deconstructionist effort reminiscent of the many aspects of the African people's struggles to control their own identity, society, and destination.

How African indigenous knowledge systems, particularly some selected IKSs from the people of Mozambique and Zimbabwe, are critical in the establishment and propagation of a moral, virtuous society will be examined. In the cultures of these two countries are distinguished IKSs that in the past were used as the precepts and codes of conduct that harmonized the people of one society with that of the other. The cultures of these two countries share a lot in common in terms of traditions, customs, beliefs, and knowledge systems due to their common origin as Bantu and also through intermarriages.

More importantly, despite the cultural onslaught on African thought, particularly their knowledge and belief systems through the spread of the western scientific worldview and the Christian religious tradition, the Mozambicans and Zimbabweans never completely lost touch with their traditional thought and values. The traditional belief system has continued to inform much of the life and activities of the people of these two societies. Their common beliefs in traditions of avenging spirits (Ngozi); fencing a wife/husband using a charm (runyoka); fencing property using a charm (rukwa); and taboos (zvierwa) are still critical in maintaining a moral, virtuous society, especially in the country sides where traditions are still seriously observed. In this light, the paper calls for a return of Africa to its traditions and knowledge systems. This is what Masolo (1995) calls:

The call for a 'return to the native land'- one of the many revolutionary expressions of the then rising black militancy, nationalism, and Africanism...to counter Westernism's arrogant and aggressive Eurocentric culture.

In the light of the above a return for Africans to their indigenous knowledge systems, such as rukwa, ngozi, runyoka and zvierwa, could be a better survival strategy for the cultures of the two societies (Mozambique and Zimbabwe) and Africa, in general, if 'real peace' and a moral virtuous society are to be successfully established. From this survival strategy, Christine Obbo's (2006) observation is apt:

As ever, power is key to ownership of the knowledge production process. Contemporary problems of development, health, and indigenous knowledge demand that we define the theoretical agendas and practical issues that are of concern to us.

Thus, rather than being passive assimilators of European modernity, Africans should take an active role in the selection and, at times, fusion of what they got from Europe and what they already had as a people. This surviving strategy is failing in many African societies due to the impact of the western scientism and modernity-forces that despise African traditions and knowledge systems as diabolic, backward, and superstitious.

It is argued for the fusion of the already existing Euro-specific modernity-tradition ideology in Africa with African modernity. Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1981) sees the fruition of this possibility, only if the liberation of natural and human resources and the entire production forces of the nation, would be the beginning of Africa's real progress and development.

### **INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM DEFINED**

Since time immemorial indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) were used by societies in Africa and the rest of the world for various purposes depending on the needs of the society in question. IKSs, thus, have survived for a very long time. But, what are IKSs? The <http://www.sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu> website defines IKS as "local knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society". They are knowledge forms that have failed to die despite the racial and colonial onslaughts that they have suffered at the hands of Western imperialism and arrogance. These "forms of knowledge, referred to as IKSs, have originated locally and naturally" (Altieri, 1995). Considering the sense of these two definitions, I identify with Mapara (2009) who defines IKSs as "a body of knowledge, or bodies of knowledge, of the indigenous people of particular geographical areas that they have survived on for a very long time". These bodies are developed through the processes of acculturation and through kinship relationships that societal groups form, and are handed down to the posterity through oral tradition and cultural practices such as rituals and rites. As such, IKSs are the adhesives that bind society as they constitute communicative processes through which knowledge is transmitted, preserved, and acquired by humans in their different societies.

It is worth noting that because Ngozi, runyoka, rukwa, and zvierwa are transmitted through cultural rites (for example, rituals) through socialization processes and can be appropriated through kinship ties, they qualify to be coined an indigenous knowledge system. The aforementioned IKSs are a commonplace in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, especially among the Shona ethnic groups. According to Ermine (cited in Hammersmith 2007), "it can be elaborated that IKSs are linked to the communities that produce them". He further observed that, "Those natural communities are characterized by complex kinship systems of relationships among people, animals, the earth, and the cosmos from which knowing emanates" (cited in Hammersmith 2007). These knowledge forms are known by other names, and among them are "indigenous ways of knowing, traditional knowledge, indigenous technical knowledge, and rural knowledge as well as ethno-science" (Altieri, 1995) or people's science. Indigenous knowledge systems manifest themselves through different dimensions. Among these are agriculture, medicine, security, botany, zoology, craft skills and linguistics. In matters relating to security, especially of properties like homes, field crops and livestock, the indigenous people developed some mechanisms that are still used in some rural areas to safeguard their properties from thieves and invaders. They have also developed traditional ways of weather forecasting that helped them to plan their activities for at least two to three days in advance. This knowledge was very useful, especially in summer and immediately after harvesting when crops, like finger millet, would be in need of thrashing and winnowing. Indigenous ways of knowing have also brought forth useful knowledge on medicine and health. The use of, for example, proverbs and idioms is another case of ethno-knowledge that has been used in both judicial and governance matters.

It is curious to note that IKSs as those forms of knowledge that the people of the formerly colonized countries survived on before the advent of colonialism were swept aside and denigrated by the colonialists and their sciences as backward and

superstitious. This was chiefly because the colonialists sought to give themselves some form of justification on why they had to colonize other people's lands. As they occupied these countries, they did not only subject the indigenes to inhuman treatment, but they also took away their lands and renamed them using names from the metropolis, and added insult to injury by claiming that the indigenes were in the dark and were backward. This is exemplified through the works of "scholars such as David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Hegel who surprisingly denied reason, the most essential quality of humanity, to other groups of people" (Winch, 1970) like Africans.

### **NEXUS BETWEEN AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND THE COSMOLOGICAL WORLD**

Fundamentally, the African traditional customs and practices emphasize the close connections between the empirical world and the cosmos. Parallels can be drawn between the consequences of good and bad, given that the cosmological world (*vadzimu* and *musikavanhu*) (ancestors and God/ the creator, respectively) govern the empirical world, and in consequence, judges humanity according to the virtue of their deeds. Gonese (1999) observes that the cosmovision of the Shona people is based on three worlds: the human world, the spiritual world, and the natural world. He further suggests that spirit mediums act as intermediaries between mortal beings and the living dead or ancestral spirits. Transcending Gonese's view, I argue that indigenous knowledge systems are the adhesive vice grips that bind spirit mediums, rainmakers, and rural dwellers' social relations together by setting the ground rules, in terms of cultural practices and customs observance in their communities. These knowledge systems are used, for example, in the processions of rain making ceremonies, witch-naming ceremonies, and ceremonies for appeasing the dead. In light of the coordination or facilitation roles in spiritual activities that IKSs perform, the latter should be conceived as a spiritual commitment of the 'land dwellers' to the ancestors of the land through allegiance to the traditions, values, and customs known through the knowledge systems. Even new comers should be introduced to both the society's indigenous knowledge systems and the ancestors of the land that are believed to protect the inhabitants of that land. This is often affected through the process of *kusuma*,<sup>1</sup> which involves elders of the land pouring beer onto the ground and making meditations on connecting the new comer to the ancestors for spiritual protection and material growth.

It is curious to note that in the Shona traditional societies the IKSs were, for a long time, used to perpetuate a moral, virtuous society, among other reasons. The IKSs were multifunctional, depending on the demands and needs of the society; hence the same systems can still be employed for the same reasons/motivations, even today. This supports Meki Nzewi's (2007) position that:

Contemporary Africans must strive to rescue, resuscitate, and advance our original intellectual legacy or the onslaught of externally manipulated forces of mental and cultural dissociation now rampaging Africa will obliterate our original intellect and lore of life.

This is important because what is distinctively "African" in morality as in metaphysics in Africa today and by extrapolation among the Shona derives from African traditional thought and needs. Nzewi (2007) continues his argument through Touma by saying:

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<sup>1</sup> *Kusuma* means introduction to the higher authority like ancestral spirits.

If our ancestors had no sound intellectual mettle, how did they develop the scientific cultures of food, childbirth, and mental nurture, also the musical arts genres that were non-sanctionable mediators in the indigenous societal polity and social-cultural practices, including the policing of egalitarian law and order, medical arts delivery, etc?

To the Africans in general and in particular the Shona, the concept of IKSs is central not only to their metaphysics, but to their moral being. IKSs, however, has been despised and their credence suffered tremendously in the face of modernity, logical positivism, and/or scientization.

The providence of science in explaining phenomena, owes itself to its internal logic, perceived objectivity, and power of prediction that may not immediately apply to metaphysical beliefs of IKSs such as ngozi, rukwa, runyoka, and zvierwa. As Harding (1994) suggests, most of the greatest successes of science owe to its 'internal logic' be it as inductivism, crucial experiments, the hypothetico-deductive method, or a cycle of normal science-revolution-normal science. I infer from Harding that the authority of science rest upon its objective claims and its ability to render scientific proof that is perceivably immune to personal biases, preferences, and values. Given the complexity of establishing scientific proof about the moral value and even existence of IKSs, it is surprising how the subject of IKSs has not attracted the much needed curiosity amongst scientists, but rather left to anthropologists, sociologists, and philosophers.

A complementary view is that IKSs rest on internalism and, as such, cannot be subjected to scientific rigor. As Ikuenobe (2000) suggests, internalism suggests that rationality is a function of the properties of beliefs, such as coherence, to which one has internal access. The belief in IKS, such as ngozi, rukwa, runyoka, and zvierwa, is internalist in orientation-it invokes some internally coherent claims about an explanation of the functioning of the cosmology to which scientific investigation is less privileged to infer from or draw on. IKSs' functioning defies recourse to scientific explanation or prediction to sufficiently substantiate its existence and more importantly its moral relevance. Yet the challenge is that the authority of science and its hegemonic influence on epistemology and knowledge production has undermined possibilities for other epistemological alternatives for explicating social reality or nature in ways that fall outside the frameworks of science. Particularly how IKSs can illuminate our knowledge of cosmology and what new insights about indigenous knowledge systems could be gained from exploration of this reality.

The dominance of science and perceptions about its opaqueness to the public have "led to a focus on 'back-end' consequences such as risk, in effect protecting the broader trajectory of scientific and technological development from accountability " (Davies, McCallie, Simonsson, Lehr & Duensing; 2009). This raises critical questions about whether different forms of knowledge cannot be developed outside the terms and parameters defined by science. What is lost in the process of moving from conventional scientific inquiry towards the unorthodox processes of searching for other forms of knowing? These questions cannot be adequately addressed without challenging the monopoly of science as the predominant way of accessing, communicating, and transmitting knowledge. The rise in 'citizen science', participatory processes of public understanding and even challenging of science research is the direct consequence of public frustration with the limitations of

science. My work cannot, necessarily, be conceived as citizen science, but rather seeks to contribute to the IKSs debate by arguing that IKSs, such as ngozi, rukwa, runyoka and zvierwa, constitute indigenous knowledge systems that could contribute to easing the tapestry of African's human development. That is to say, these IKSs embody a hidden genre of 'moral epistemology' or different form of knowledge that could contribute, in multiple ways, to resolving Africa's development dilemmas, if it cast in the open for debate, and integrated into mainstream expert science. I argue that the exploration of IKSs is a potentially productive indigenous knowledge system that, for a long time, has been conceived as diabolic by Western civilization and whose developmental essence remains shrouded in mystery.

### **ZIMBABWEAN AND MOZAMBIKAN CASE STUDIES OF IKSS**

While IKSs are a common feature in Mozambican and Zimbabwean traditional societies and, by extension, Africa and beyond, this paper makes reference to the Shona people of Mozambique and Zimbabwe. This selection has been made possible by the fact that the researcher is conversant with the Shona culture in both countries, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The term, "Shona" refers to various linguistic dialect groups who occupy the greater part of Zimbabwe and central western part of Mozambique" (Mawere, 2010). In Zimbabwe, the Shona constitute one of the largest communal-cultural groups. This group is an aggregate of small ethnic groups who are all classified as Shona because they each speak a dialect of what the linguists call the Shona language (Gelfand, 1973). The distinction in the dialects was made more prominent and pronounced by the early missionaries and settlers working in different parts of the country, which is the reason why Ranger (1985) argues that these language differences are actually a colonial invention. Although in different geographical locations there is so much horizontal similarity across the spectrum of the small ethnic groups that are classified as the Shona in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe as they share a common language. In Mozambique, a number of dialect groups are generally referred to as Shona, but under the armpit of the dialect Ndau. These include the Dondo in the districts of Dondo and Beira in Sofala province; the Danda in the districts of Chibabava (Sofala) and Machaze in the Manica province; the Vauteve in the district of Chimoo in the Manica providence; and the Manyika, who occupy the largest part of Manica province (Mawere, 2010).

It is worth noting that there is so much horizontal similarity across the spectrum of the small ethnic groups (in both Mozambique and Zimbabwe) that are classified as the Shona as they share a common culture, language, and philosophy of life. As pointed out by Ranger (1985), prior to the development of written Shona dialects, there was a situation in which this whole group spoke a single, common language. Although now found in different geographical locations, there is ample evidence that the Shona of Mozambique and Zimbabwe still "share most of their cultural beliefs, language, and philosophies of life" (Mawere, 2010: 272). The belief in indigenous knowledge systems such as avenging spirit (Ngozi), fencing a wife (runyoka), fencing property (rukwa), and taboos (zvierwa) is still commonplace across the whole spectrum of the Shona culture.

Though suffering criticism from empirical scientists, it remains a truism for the Shona traditionalists that IKSs can be used to institute and foster a virtuous, moral society. In the Shona society and by extension Africa in general, this is possible because the violation of systems such as ngozi, rukwa, runyoka and zvierwa results in 'natural justice', taking its own course against

the perpetrator. In fact, the offender (sometimes together with his/her family) faces fatal consequences. This thus paper shows how indigenous knowledge systems such as ngozi, rukwa, runyoka and zvierwa were used as ‘theories of justice’ to institute and promote a virtuous, moral society. The study further proposes that these indigenous knowledge systems can still be used as ‘theories of justice’ for the same purpose in modern-day Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Africa and beyond, if we are to establish a morally virtuous society.

## **NURTURING A MORAL, VIRTUOUS SOCIETY: IKSS’ ROLES AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE**

### **Zvierwa (Taboos)**

Although some indigenous knowledge systems still prevail in Africa, most of these systems have failed to stand the test of time. Others are gravitating towards extinction. This has been due to the Western scientism and modernity. Western hegemonic tendencies have demonized African indigenous knowledge systems and advanced the view that they were diabolic, barbaric, and backward. One of the indigenous knowledge systems that have suffered these unfortunate changes is taboos. Taboos (zvierwa), which are also known as “the inviolable” or “the sacred” (Pearsall, 1999), were a common tradition in Mozambique and Zimbabwe and remain a legitimate system of the everyday lives of traditionalists and custodians of the Shona culture in these countries today. Taboos include both “real taboos” and “false taboos” (Mawere & Kadenge, 2010: 31). False taboos are “those which are only meant to keep check on children” (Mawere and Kadenge, 2010: 33). These taboos are only particular to children and not universal, as adults know that they are not real. Usagara munzira unozoita mamota (do not sit in the path, you will suffer from boils) and usafuridza mubhodhoru amai vako vanozopindamo vakatadza kubuda (do not blow into a bottle, your mother will enter into it and will fail to come out) are typical examples of false taboos. These taboos are false because their violation does not result in the said consequences. On the other hand, “real taboos are those which, when violated by any person, young or old, the offender/violator and his/her family suffered serious consequences”(Mawere and Kadenge, 2010: 31). Real taboos, thus, are not meant to cast fear in children or anyone by using empty threats. However, real consequences can be observed, both to children and elders, who violate them. For example, taboos such as usarara nemusikana/mukadzi ari kutevera kana kuti arikumwedzi unorwara (do not have sex with a menstruating woman as this may result in the illness of the male partner) and usatuka, kurova kana kuuraya amai vako, unotanda botso (do not scold, beat, or kill your mother as this would result in you suffering from botso, an avenging spirit of your own mother/societal denial if the mother is still alive) are real taboos. It is unfortunate that the Shona elders and scholars could not explain the causal relationship between the real taboos and their consequences, which is largely metaphysical and not scientific in nature. This failure has led to the undermining of taboos and, consequently, to their phasing out, especially in the face of empirical science/scientism. Yet, it remains a truism that violation of any of the real taboos in the Shona culture will result in fatal ramifications to the perpetrator. Violation of the real taboo, usarara nemusikana/mukadzi ari kutevera kana kuti arikumwedzi unorwara, for instance, would result in the perpetrator(s) contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

In the light of this observation, I contend that taboos are ‘ethical codes of conduct/commandments’, just like the Biblical commandments and the Hippocratic Oath that guided Christians and physicians, respectively, since time immemorial. They (taboos) are commandments/codes of conduct used by the Shona, especially before the advent of the Bible with its commandments. From this understanding, I argue that taboos, especially the ‘real taboos’, should be reinstated as this can

help establishing a virtuous, moral society; a society characterized with peaceful, morally responsible, and caring members who can respect their environment and other community members. Taboos, of course together with the Bible, can indeed impact positively on people's behavior and in peace building among the Shona, Africa, and beyond. Taboos, thus, constitute as an African ethno-science /technology (body of ethno-scientific knowledge) that can be used to establish a morally virtuous society.

### **Runyoka (Fencing a woman/man using charm)**

The issue of runyoka, also known as 'fidelity charm', is marred with controversies to the extent that pinning down a precise definition of the concept is not any easy thing. According to the International Conference on ADIS (1993), about 30% of the traditional healers interviewed said runyoka and AIDS were similar, while 68% claimed they could provide treatment for runyoka. Most of the healers regarded runyoka as a weapon used to punish people who committed adultery, while some said it was a way of determining whether a wife or husband was faithful. According to the same report, a few said it was a method used by some people to punish enemies through their wives. Almost all the traditional healers interviewed claimed medical doctors could not cure runyoka because it involved witchcraft and required an herbalistic approach. Healers also felt that doctors should take traditional healers seriously and give them a chance to look at the AIDS patients.

Since violation of runyoka results in a mysterious disease, I define runyoka as a complex venereal disease caused by sleeping with a fenced (using herbs/charm) woman or man. The fencing can be done by either partner to ensure that the spouse would not be involved in prostitution or adulterous activities. In a report given in the Herald, (2010), Seremwa, a native of Gambura village in Chinhoyi district recently died in mysterious circumstances after complaining of severe stomach pains and later acting like a fish before spending two nights in a bathtub filled with water. She would intermittently gulp the water and then spew it out like a fish. Hospital medical superintendent, Dr. Collett Mawire, confirmed the strange incident. A woman who saw Seremwa when she was at the hospital said,

Seremwa was complaining of suffering from extreme heat and dehydration whenever she got out of the water and had confessed to being intimate with a man who had been 'fixed/fenced' by his wife. The practice is known as runyoka or 'fencing' in many circles. She would say the man's mother had warned her not to hang around the man indicating that he had been fixed with runyoka by his wife. She regretted not listening to the man's mother.

In another incident, according to the Doktorsnake website, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa>, the Mount Darwin secretary for the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers' Association, Benson Kaseke said the following of runyoka:

Although runyoka is not approved by traditional healers, it is widespread in the Mukumbura area of Mount Darwin, on the border of Mozambique. Runyoka is typically used by people who suspect their spouses of playing away from home as no one wants to live with an unfaithful partner, hence the need for runyoka.

Kaseke further explains that in some cases, daughters are given runyoka by their parents so that they cannot engage in premarital sex.



As can be seen, runyoka is a 'safety lock' applied on both men and women to enforce fidelity. However, because the practice is linked to witchcraft, it may result to death of the perpetrator(s). It is, nowadays, despised in the Shona and other African societies. It can, however, be argued that distortions and misconceptions about runyoka arise from the 'pollution' of traditional African culture by colonialism. Thus, it remains a fact that runyoka enforces fidelity between spouses and can be used to establish a virtuous, moral society which might also be free from sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS pandemic. The reason that the Zimbabweans and Mozambicans, as a result of Western influences, are shunning the use of runyoka contributes to the ever-increasing number of people committing adultery and others contracting HIV/AIDS. It is the contentions of this work that if IKs, such as runyoka, are continually used in the Shona societies, Africa and beyond, this would help to establish a morally virtuous society; a society free of immorally sexual beings and HIV/AIDS.

### **Rukwa (Fencing property using charm)**

Though a common practice among the Shona people, especially in the countryside, there is a scarce recorded literature on rukwa. Among the Shona themselves, the Ndau people (an ethnic group under the umbrella Shona) of both Zimbabwe and Mozambique are well known for the use of rukwa in safeguarding or protecting their property from thieves and 'invaders'. In this light, I define rukwa as medicine or a charm used to safeguard property: it is fencing (using a charm) property from thieves and invaders.

In an interview the researcher held in Manica Province, Mozambique (2010), the traditional healer, Sekuru Gogoyo, revealed that:

Rukwa is used to safeguard one's property by mysteriously catching the thief and preventing him/her from escaping until the owner arrives. One of the most common methods of administering rukwa is the use of a small bottle. One would secretly put some traditional herbs (given by a traditional healer) in the small bottle, close the bottle, and dump it at the doorstep of his/her bedroom, shop, or field (where he or she wants to protect the property). The magic charm would catch any thief that dares coming in to steal away the property.

The rukwa charm, thus, is supposed to safeguard and prevent the property in the house, shop, field, or any other place where the property is kept. Any thief or invader that dares coming in to steal away the property risks the humiliation of being caught in the act by the owner, as s/he would be unable to leave the premise because of the power of the magic charm. "The thief can only be freed when the owner comes, summons the community to witness the event, and then strikes the thief two to three times using a whip" added Sekuru Gogoyo (2010).

Although some people, due to Western influence, links rukwa to witchcraft, I argue that to understand the logic of rukwa fully, one has to seek its meaning and moral relevance in the culture where it is a function. As such, rukwa, as with runyoka, is a 'safety lock' applied by the Shonas on thieves to cultivate in them good behavior or respect of other people's property. Rukwa tames thieves into fully responsible citizens by deterring them from tampering with or stealing other people's

property. In the light of this understanding, I contend that IKSs such as rukwa, should continue to be used in the Shona societies, Africa, and beyond if a morally virtuous 'society' is to be established. Rukwa continues to be a good 'moral teacher' for the thieves and potential thieves.

### **Ngozi (Avenging Spirit)**

Technically, ngozi is the spirit of a person who has been murdered and then comes back to seek revenge in the family of the murderer by causing unfathomable sorrow through illnesses, misfortunes, or a series of deaths until the perpetrator pays reparations to the offended family (Mawere, 2005). Ngozi is premised on the idea of 'teat for tat'.

In the Shona culture, when the guilty family has failed, deliberately or otherwise, to pay restitution, ngozi strikes viciously and harshly by not only targeting the perpetrator of the crime, but his kinsmen as well. As Bourdillon (1976) remarks, "ngozi is fearsome and terrifying because it attacks suddenly and very harshly". Ngozi will only stop causing harm and death in the family of the murderer/perpetrator after it is appeased (Mawere, 2005). It is important to note that, among the Shona people, it is not always the case that the wrongdoer is the one who gets killed or cursed by ngozi, but any person who is a blood relative of the wrongdoer is subject to the anger of ngozi. The victim of the murder needs to be replaced by compensation in the form of a herd of cattle and a virgin girl, if the murdered person was a man, and a herd of cattle and a small boy, if the murdered person was a woman. The guilty family, thus, is given the option to either pay reparation or suffers the consequences through wreaking havoc, for example, causing a series of misfortunes, deaths, and illnesses. In a recent interview with *The Standard* (2010), Vimbai Chivaura, a Professor at the University of Zimbabwe, considers ngozi as a crime. He said:

Haven't you heard people say, *usatiparire ngozi? Ngozi imhosva inoda kuripwa* (Ngozi is a crime that demands restitution). Prime ngozi arise when innocent blood is shed. If you kill a person, you will have terminated all the plans for that person. Even if no one knows that you have done so, you have to acknowledge the crime and pay reparations. When human beings die, their souls would be separated from their body. That soul will torment those who committed the crimes.

As is revealed in his comment, and indeed so, restitution partly constitutes the Shona/African justice system. Usually, life lost is replenished with life. That is why a young girl or boy is usually given to the offended family in marriage in order to continue the life of the deceased through her or his off-springs. This way the cosmological balance disturbed by the outrageous act of murder is restored. This is so because the Shonas are essentially spiritual people in a general outlook. Their conception of justice is very different from the Westerners'. To them, ngozi is an integral part of their justice system. For the Shona, human life, thus, is one of the most valuable assets in the Shona society and ngozi is essentially an expression of disapproval when it comes to actions that result in taking away life. Hence, to the Shona people, ngozi (manslaughter understood in terms of the dire circumstances that follow failure to atone) has a regulatory function which is that of deterrence, rather than retribution.

Due to these atrocities caused by ngozi, the threat posed by the latter is feared by everyone in the Shona culture. It is this fear that, for a long time, has maintained harmony among the Shonas and has made them peace-loving people. In view of this observation, I contend that the Shona societies and Africa should continue employing ngozi to deter potential murderers in their societies. Resultantly, this would lead to the establishment of a virtuous, moral society; a society with people who respect others' lives.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has unraveled the concept of indigenous knowledge systems, particularly *zvierwa*, *rukwa*, *runyoka*, and *ngozi*, exposing the different dimensions that it has assumed as it was constructed and evolved over the years in rural Mozambique and Zimbabwe. I have emphasized the need for the reversal of the Eurocentric paradigms of Africa, where the perjured interpretations of African IKSs have remained grafted on the mental processes and human aspirations of modern Africans, thereby robbing them of their intellectual confidence, mental identity, and socio-economic development across the continent. Although colonialism has intimidated and made attempts to conquer the African mind, it is our fervent hope, in the words of Nzewi (2007), that:

After the bombardment of the invading tornados of fanciful knowledge, the indigenous lore of life will yet revive with innately refurbished shoots, and fulfill again the human mission of the musical arts in original Africa, and edify Africa's mental and human posterity.

The present study, thus, has tried to give critical insights in showing that the negative images of IKSs should not remain forever on the 'map'. The paper has shown that the time is now that African people's worldview should assume a place as a global power through African organized cultural systems. We are faced with new challenges that have literally taken the continent by storm, what Meki Nzewi (2007) has called "the supersonic wizardry", which is an imperial encirclement and mental enslavement "from which the images of the Africans are marked absent, except in negativity, a retreat into the culture and, thus, an Afrocentric worldview is mandatory" (Springer, 2003). It is this African spirituality that is inseparable from African philosophy, which continues to pervade, guide, illuminate, and empower Africans' existence into the unborn tomorrows with renewed vigor (Springer, 2003).

More importantly, I have argued that IKSs have a potential to boost moral probity among the Shonas and, by extension, Africans. They constitute a foundation for the establishment of a morally virtuous society. It should be recommended, however, that collaborative efforts by the governments of Mozambique and Zimbabwe, traditional institutions and civil society could cultivate civil education against the abuse of IKSs. As the study has demonstrated, violation of IKSs brings 'natural justice' against the perpetrator(s). In this light, the paper has suggested that reinstatement of IKSs and the reversal of the Eurocentric paradigms of Africa are critical in restoring the Africans' consciousness and establishing a morally virtuous society.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Munyaradzi Mawere is a senior lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at Universidade Pedagogica, Mozambique. Currently, he is a PhD candidate at University of Cape Town, South Africa.