Nzoamambu Oscar, Kongo nganga, begins a treatment for a woman’s “kink in lower back” Left, he heats a machette in a fire; right, he massages the sore spot with an ointment.
Nzoamambu applies the hot knife several times to sore spot; the woman then bends over, touching the spot, and declares that it feels better.
Ritualization of successful cure:  

*Sala duma*

Nzoamambu leads woman in a triple “dumuna” jump to celebrate the successful treatment of her kink; he then has her pass three times between his legs to symbolize the steadfastness of the cure.
Nganga doing dumuna, after "coming in contact with nkisi"
Kongo prophets use *dumuna* to “weigh the spirit” of their faithful
“Why Ritualization”

• Life crises & transitions made into rites *de passage* (Van Gennep)—rites of separation, passage (liminality), reintegration;

• In Kongo clan communities, sickness & healing become idiom for dealing with social health and leadership;
Ritual, ritualization defined

• Exaggerated and stylized behavior to attract attention in mating (Ethology)

• Repetitive activity helpful in language learning and communication (Linguistics)

• The addition of non-verbal dimensions (e.g., music, art, incense, dance, architecture, light, to verbal discourse (liturgy)

• Heightened use of signs and symbols in social setting or transaction, „ritualization nourishes faith & deep involvement, reproduces culture nature, or habitus“ (Rudie, anthropology)

• Why ritualization? Amplification and redundancy in „clogged“ or contradictory medium of expression and life (Bateson, Leach, anthropology)

• Ritualization as interplay of words, symbols, indexicality, iconicity—a continuum of signs, a seamless semiotics.
Representing “Flow & blockage”

In Nzoamambu’s anatomy of the person (see Quest for Therapy) he represents the body as a channel through which flows food and all liquids. Flow and exchange are life-giving, blockage in bodily and social functions is destructive and deadly.
Diseases & their Etiologies in Rwanda

Causes
- Physical
- Mystical
- Broken prohibitions
- Poisoning

Diseases
- Parasitic
- Microbial
- Systemic
- Accidents
- Obstetrical & gynecological
- Psychomental & behavioral

Pierre Claver Rwangabo, Ph.D. Pharmacology
Reading the Signs Anthropologically: Gaze, Listen, Touch, Relate
Anthropologist converses with Manianga prophets about their worldview and the colonial history of their movement
Reading the Signs: reading as Sufi Islamic medicine in East Africa
Ngombo yakusekula – reading the signs of society, nature, the universe in face of misfortune

This Chokwe tahiye Ngombo – shaker of the ngombo basket – works outside his shrine house in Southern Congo, near Kahemba. The Ngombo divination technique exists (or has existed) from the Atlantic coast to Malawi on the Southern Savanna.