

**THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN THE TRADITIONAL  
MARRIAGE CEREMONIES OF THE BEMBA - SPEAKING  
PEOPLE OF NORTHERN ZAMBIA**

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of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Music.

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## DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## ABSTRACT

Bemba traditional society views marriage as the union of a man and woman forever. In addition, marriage also signifies the bringing together and amalgamation of the bride and groom's immediate and extended families, thereby extending the sense of communalism in Bemba society. Because of the Bemba people's strong sense of oral tradition, marriages are contracted by word of mouth and not by a certificate. This strong sense of oral agreement has endured and is revered and respected, despite the rapid increase in literacy and the impact of inter-racial relations and modernization.

From the time a man finds a woman to marry to the time they actually marry, there are different ceremonies that have to be performed. These ceremonies include: *Ukusonga* (proposal), *Ukukobekela* (engagement), *Ubwinga* (wedding), *Amatebeto* (honoring) and *Ukwingisha* (lit. putting something into a container or enclosure, but denotes the highest level of honor). *Ukusonga* marks the beginning of the marriage process. It involves the delivery of a marriage proposal by a man to a woman through an intermediary (go-between or spokesman) known as *Shibukombe*. *Ukukobekela* follows immediately after that, and involves the presentation of a betrothal or engagement present called *insalamo*, to the family of the woman.

Once all marriage negotiations are concluded the two families begin to make necessary preparations for the wedding ceremony *Ubwinga*, which is celebrated at the home of the bride. With time, a married man who proves to be a good husband, a good father and indeed a good member of the community, will be honored by his in-laws who will initiate the *Ukwingisha* ceremony on his behalf. Since the notion of having honor and being honored is highly valued in Bemba society, this ceremony is particularly important to a married man as it establishes a strong sense of pride and belonging both for him and his family. As such, this ceremony can be regarded as a public display of worthiness, which suggests that certain codes of conduct have successfully been negotiated, on the part of both the man and the woman.

Using this as a basis, the writer aimed at investigating the specific role of music, particularly within the traditional marriage rites of the Bemba-speaking people. Special attention will be given to the type and meaning of music used, the way it is used, and the reasons why it is used in this particular way. The writer hoped to show

that the utilization of music in this context is to perpetuate cultural and religious values, so as to ensure the continuation and survival of such cultural traditions.

It was also hoped to show by way of study, that music plays an integral role within oral traditions, enabling the passing on of cultural values and morals from one generation to the next. Of concern here, is the way in which music is used to announce, initiate and to demarcate the different components of the marriage ceremonies over a period of time. As such music acts to signify, validate and incorporate the marriage ceremonies as an important part of the Bemba philosophy.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
LIST OF SONGS	ix
LIST OF PLATES	xii
PREFACE	xiv
CHAPTER 1 AN INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2 <i>UKUSONGA AND UKUKOBEKELA</i>	64
CHAPTER 3 <i>UKULASA IMBUSA AND AMATEBETO</i>	76
3.1. <i>Chisungu</i>	76
3.2. <i>Ukulasa Imbusa</i>	79
3.3. <i>Amatebeto</i>	97
CHAPTER 4 <i>UBWINGA</i>	103
4.1. <i>Ukutwa ubwinga</i>	103
4.2. <i>Ubwalwa bwa bwinga</i>	107
4.3. <i>Ukupota ubwalwa</i>	107
4.4. <i>Ukuchilika musambi</i>	109
4.5. <i>Ukutiya ubwinga</i>	111
4.6. <i>Ukuluula and Ukushikula</i>	114
4.7. <i>Ukowa uluchelo</i>	117
4.8. <i>Ukusulula ifitete</i>	118
CHAPTER 5 <i>UKWINGISHA</i>	120
5.1. <i>Ukufyalwa kwa mwana</i>	120
5.2. <i>Ukwingisha</i>	123

CHAPTER 6	THE DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF	
	THE TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE MUSIC	
	OF THE BEMBA	129
6.1.	SONG TRANSCRIPTIONS	129
6.2.	BEMBA MUSICAL CONCEPTS	131
6.3.	THE FORMAL STRUCTURAL AND	
	STYLISTIC TRAITS OF BEMBA MUSIC	135
6.4.	FORM AND STRUCTURE OF THE SONGS	139
6.5.	THE SONG TEXTS, THEIR CONTENT,	
	STRUCTURE AND MEANING	146
6.6.	DRUMS AND DRUMMING IN BEMBA	
	MARRIAGE SONGS	148
6.7.	DRUMS	152
6.8.	TECHNIQUES OF PLAYING THE	
	DIFFERENT DRUMS	155
6.9.	DANCE STRUCTURES AND MOVEMENT	
	ORGANIZATION IN BEMBA MARRIAGE	
	SONGS	161
CHAPTER 7	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	180
REFERENCES		194
APPENDIXES	1. Glossary	200
	2. Zambia	207
	3. Transcriptions of video recordings	212
	4. Plates	223

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### FIGURE

1. Floor plan and arrangement of participants in a marriage ceremony	171
2. Song Transcription – <i>KALE LEYA WANSOMBO</i>	172
3. Song Transcription – <i>MULANGILE AMONE</i>	173
4. Song Transcription – <i>YANSA AKASENGELE</i>	174
5. Song Transcription – <i>NASEKELA SEKE</i>	175
6. Song Transcription – <i>NKOKO YANDI CHITETELA</i>	176
7. Song Transcription – <i>FULWE PAFYAKWE</i>	177
8. Song Transcription – <i>NALOMBA</i>	178
9. Song Transcription – <i>NALOLI NG'OMBE</i>	178
10. Song Transcription – <i>UYU MWANA MUNANGANI</i>	179
11. Tribal and linguistic map of Zambia	210
12. Pre-colonial kingdoms and migration map of Zambia	211

## LIST OF SONGS

### SONG

1. <i>Mwansa Chiyepe</i>	82
2. <i>Kalombo we musha</i>	83
3. <i>Bwato</i> (Boat)	83
4. <i>Mundu</i> (Lion)	84
5. <i>Ngwena</i> (Crocodile)	85
6. <i>Chiboni musuba</i> (The Euphorbia tree)	86
7. <i>Ikosa</i> (Bracelet)	86
8. <i>Chembe</i> (Fish Eagle)	87
9. <i>Iyongolo</i> (The snake)	87
10. <i>Intanda</i> (Stars)	88
11. <i>Tomfwa mafunde</i> (lit. He/she does not follow the rules)	88
12. <i>Lukombo</i> (Cup)	89
13. <i>Ichipuna</i> (Stool)	89
14. <i>Chinungi</i> (Porcupine)	90
15. <i>Ng'ombe naimita</i> (Ng'ombe is pregnant)	91
16. <i>Inganda</i> (House)	91
17. <i>Uyu mwana</i> (This child)	91
18. <i>Umukowa</i> (The clan)	92
19. <i>Nalomba</i> (I beg)	92
20. <i>Fulwe</i> (Tortoise)	93
21. <i>Kamulongwe</i> (The small water pot)	93
22. <i>Kasengele</i> (The small reed mat)	94
23. <i>Inkuni</i> (Firewood)	94

24. <i>Imputa</i> (The mounds)	95
25. <i>Akalonde</i> (The little hoe)	95
26. <i>Inkoba</i> (The Egret)	96
27. <i>Chabala fumbe ngala</i> ( <i>Chabala</i> cover up the head-dress)	96
28. <i>Nse, nse, tubatwalile</i>	99
29. <i>Twingile shani ee?</i>	100
30. <i>Mayo ntule ntundu</i>	100
31. <i>Kasambe umulume wecinangwa</i>	101
32. <i>Mulangile amone</i>	101
33. <i>Nasha nalaya umusololo</i>	101
34. <i>Mukubi mwee!</i>	104
35. <i>Namwali</i>	106
36. <i>Seya ee!</i>	108
37. <i>Tuchitwale uko bachibashile</i>	108
38. <i>Mwana musambi nalwala ee</i>	109
39. <i>Chili, chili</i>	110
40. <i>Pemba, pemba</i>	110
41. <i>Chembe wemutwa</i>	111
42. <i>Ala aka kumulomo sotole Chembe</i>	112
43. <i>Kwenda naenda mutukonko ee</i>	113
44. <i>Kalombo wemusha</i>	115
45. <i>Bamayo njisemoomo?</i>	116
46. <i>Akebo banjeba</i>	116
47. <i>Wakula mayo wansanga ee</i>	116
48. <i>Munjili mwana wandi</i>	117

49. <i>Umwana alelila ibeele</i>	122
50. <i>Nemwine nshilya fya mako</i>	122
51. <i>Mwaingilamo</i>	124
52. <i>Sorwe</i>	124
53. <i>Komo, komo</i>	125
54. <i>Mayo njelela</i>	125
55. <i>Itumba lilelila</i>	126
56. <i>Uyu tata aba nemitumfya</i>	126
57. <i>Wemuko ee!</i>	127
58. <i>Nshimba konkola</i>	128

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## LIST OF PLATES

### PLATE

1. <i>Amabakuli</i> (Marriage plates)	223
2. <i>Indupe</i> (Marriage plates)	224
3. <i>Ulukasu</i> and <i>ubulungu</i> (Hoe and beads)	225
4. <i>Ibende</i> and <i>Umwinsi</i> (Mortar and pestle)	226
5. <i>Ukuluula</i> and <i>Ukushikula</i>	227
6. <i>Nsonge</i> (Prayer)	228
7. <i>Mwansa Chiyepe</i> (Name of a person)	229
8. <i>Kalombo we musha</i> ( <i>Kalombo</i> you slave)	230
9. <i>Bwato</i> (Boat)	231
10. <i>Mundu</i> (Lion)	232
11. <i>Ngwena</i> (Crocodile)	233
12. <i>Chiboni</i> (The Euphorbia tree)	234
13. <i>Ikosa</i> (Bracelet)	235
14. <i>Chembe</i> (Fish Eagle)	236
15. <i>Iyongolo</i> (The snake)	237
16. <i>Intanda</i> (Stars)	238
17. <i>Tomfwa mafunde</i> (lit. He/she does not follow the rules)	239
18. <i>Lukombo</i> (Cup)	240
19. <i>Ichipuna</i> (Stool)	241
20. <i>Chinungi</i> (Porcupine)	242
21. <i>Ng'ombe naimita</i> ( <i>Ng'ombe</i> is pregnant)	243
22. <i>Inganda</i> (House)	244
23. <i>Uyu mwana</i> (This child)	245

24. <i>Umukowa</i> (The clan)	246
25. <i>Nalomba</i> (I beg)	247
26. <i>Fulwe</i> (Tortoise)	248
27. <i>Kamulongwe</i> (The small water pot)	249
28. <i>Kasengele</i> (The small reed mat)	250
29. <i>Inkuni</i> (Firewood)	251
30. <i>Imputa</i> (The mounds)	252
31. <i>Akalonde</i> (The little hoe)	252
32. <i>Inkoba</i> (The Egret)	253
33. <i>Chabala fumbe ngala</i> (Chabala cover up the head-dress)	254
34. <i>Ukufunda umukashana</i> ceremony (presentation of the initiate)	255
35. <i>Ukufunda umukashana</i> ceremony (separating seeds)	255
36. <i>Ukufunda umukashana</i> ceremony (serving food)	256
37. <i>Ukufunda umukashana</i> ceremony (miming a scene)	257
38. <i>Itumba</i> drum (the low-pitched-conical shaped drum)	258
39. <i>Itumba</i> drums (a medium pitched and a high pitched drum)	258
40. <i>Itumba</i> drums (single-headed drums)	259
41. <i>Nachimbusa</i> demonstrating how to play <i>itumba</i> drum	259
42. <i>Vingwengwe</i> (idiophone – Mambwe musical instrument)	260
43. <i>Inongo</i> (clay pot)	261
44. <i>Umutondo</i> (clay pot for storing water)	262
45. <i>Ulunweno</i> (clay bowl)	263
46. <i>Insupa</i> (calabash)	264

## PREFACE

Anthropologists and Historians from Europe have written books about African cultures, including our very own Zambian cultures. Most of these books were focused on proving that Western culture was superior to African cultures. Our traditions and customs have been referred to as primitive, barbaric uncivilized. It is for this reason that we, the indigenous people, must do everything possible to correct this notion and put the record straight (Kapwepwe, 1994)<sup>1</sup>. It should be noted that it is imperative that we (the Bemba) venture into documenting our Bemba traditions and customs while those who know them and maintain them very well are still alive. Nowadays, those who are well-versed in Bemba traditions are few in number and research of this nature (i.e. regarding the life and music) of the Bemba has not been attempted before in any serious, academic and extensive manner. As such there is great need for us to document and conserve these traditions and customs for the younger generations. This view is very important because information on Bemba traditions and customs is never given to people outside the ethnic group, simply because it is regarded as classified information. Bearing in mind the classified nature of the marriage traditions, and the fact that my academic study would be at the disposal of anyone interested in it, a compromise has been reached whereby I have been permitted to record various aspects of the marriage ceremonies without placing the sacredness and spirituality of the Bemba and their cultural traditions at risk.

Makashi (1970:1)<sup>2</sup>, an educationist and author of the book *INYIMBO SHACHIBEMBA*, drew our attention to the impact of Christianity on Bemba traditions, stressing the inclination of Christians to regard Bemba traditions as

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe (1994) *Icuupo no Buyantanshi*, Lusaka: Zambia educational Publishing House.

<sup>2</sup> J. N. Makashi (1970) *Inyimbo Shacibemba*, Lusaka: National Educational Company of Zambia.

primitive and sinful. The effect of these Christian views on Bemba society can be seen today in the increased tendency to neglect certain marriage practices. That is why my research is significant, because it will not only serve as a means to preserve Bemba traditions and customs, but also to give a clear and valid picture of the relevance and importance of these traditions and customs to the Bemba people. Our society is dynamic and at the same time people from all over the world are being integrated into Bemba society. Their new cultural influences interact with, and influence our very own cultural patterns. The rate of interethnic marriages is increasing and if the Bemba people neglect the need to educate young parents, the future generations will be denied access to important cultural traditions, beliefs and values which are necessary for them to grow up into responsible members of society (Kapwepwe, *ibid*)<sup>3</sup>. In terms of music education, my research will greatly contribute to the much-needed literature for teaching, as reference material, and furthermore, some traditional methods of teaching can be utilized in classroom situations.

My interest to investigate the cultural practices of the Bemba-speaking people developed close to fifteen years ago. Initially, I wanted to find out what was taking place at *insaka* (the meeting place for men) and at *ifibwanse* (the meeting place for women), because the impression I got was that men met to make different tools, baskets and different utility objects, while the women met to prepare food for their husbands and children. However, this speculation was nowhere near to the truth. It was very unfortunate for me because by the time I was born, in the early sixties, *insaka* and *ifibwanse* no longer existed, so people born that time never had a chance to experience what took place at these meetings. We only heard them from stories told to

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<sup>3</sup> Kapwepwe, *ibid*

us by our parents. The common expression that the elders (*abakalamba*) used, to show how privileged they were to have had a chance to spend time at the *insaka* was: “*Kale twalikwete insaka ishali ni mpakwilo sha mano ne mebele isuma*” (A long time ago we had *insaka* (the term denotes both singular and plural) which were a source of knowledge, wisdom and good morals). Whenever I heard this expression I felt very inadequate, but at the same time it gave me the motivation to enquire from those who had attended *insaka*.

As I was searching for information, on the Bemba people, I found myself in a situation where I had to accompany my friend E. Mwango’s *shibukombe* (go-between) to present a marriage proposal to his in-laws. During the proceedings I changed the focus of my interest in Bemba traditions and culture, and made up my mind that I was going to study the traditional marriage ceremonies of the Bemba-speaking people. I also made a point to attend as many marriage ceremonies as I could, and during these times I paid much attention to what was happening, and in some cases I even made a few notes. Hence my participation was not so much inclined to entertainment but instead, to learning. Realising that there was much singing and dancing at the ceremonies I attended, and given my involvement in music studies, I decided to focus on the music within these ceremonies. Through extended consultations with my supervisor it was agreed that I investigate the role that the music plays in the different Bemba marriage ceremonies, hence the selected topic was: THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN THE TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE CEREMONIES OF THE BEMBA-SPEAKING PEOPLE OF NORTHERN ZAMBIA. An investigation on how music is incorporated and utilized in Bemba traditional marriage ceremonies is the niche that this study is trying to address. In order to realise this aim,

it was essential for me to relate all the marriage music to the contexts in which it was employed, and to examine it as a part of the events which occurred during the marriage ceremonies I attended.

Limited studies concerning Bemba marriage music have been conducted by anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, and these studies have mainly focused on specific aspects such as the initiation for girls (*chisungu*), marriage in general, and indigenous religious hymns. The contextual recording, transcription, exploration, description and analysis of the marriage music, and the identification of its formal, structural and stylistic traits has not been explored previously, a situation which makes this study a pioneer project. Despite this being the case, it would be too ambitious for me to claim that this research has exhausted all that is there to be studied about Bemba culture, customs, beliefs and values. Therefore, I feel that this project will serve as an introductory survey which could sum up the present knowledge of marriage ceremonial music in Bemba culture, and serve as a guide to further research. Furthermore, it is hoped that the resulting dissertation will be useful not only to those intending to do more research on Bemba traditional marriage music, but also to those with a general interest in exploring other genres of Bemba music.

This report is accompanied by an audio compact disc (CD), containing examples of some of the Bemba marriage songs, which I recorded during my fieldwork. Video recordings of three marriage ceremonies have been provided in the accompanying video tape. The length of the video recordings is two and a half hours because, firstly, I found it necessary to provide the readers with a more elaborate insight into what happens in some of the Bemba marriage ceremonies, and secondly, bearing in mind

that for some readers this culture may be totally new to them, I found it imperative to provide a full footage of the ceremonies as opposed to the edited versions, which would be very difficult to follow and interpret the meanings of the events. Furthermore, transcriptions of some selected marriage songs from the audio recordings on CD have been provided. An explanation of the system of transcription that I have used has been provided in chapter 6. In addition to the explanations and meanings of Bemba terms and phrases used in this study, a glossary of words has been provided. However, there are certain Bemba names and words for which I have not been able to find translations in English. In some cases I have provided botanical terms (for trees) while in others I have not provided any translations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed the “triangulation” approach in the dominant-less-dominant model which implied that the research was a qualitative nature, which applied when determining the reasons why music is used in the Bemba marriage ceremonies. In order to determine the numbers of responses from various informants, the quantitative paradigm was employed. Creswell (1998, in De Vos et al, 1998)<sup>4</sup>, supports this design when he states that this design for conducting a research is important when a researcher presents the study with a single, dominant paradigm, but includes a small component of the entire study with an alternative paradigm. Creswell further points out that “There is an advantage in using the triangulation approach, in that, this method will present a consistent paradigm in the study and at the same time it will

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<sup>4</sup> A.S. De Vos, ed., H. Strydom, C. B. Fouche, M. Poggenpoel, E. & W. Schurink (1998) *Research at Grass Roots: A Primer for Caring Professions*, Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

still gather limited information to probe in detail one aspect of the research” (1998: 3)<sup>5</sup>.

In order to collect data for this study, the data-gathering strategy which was employed is the structured interviews and document analyses. The documents that were required are mainly records from the White Fathers of the Roman Catholic Church of Zambia, who have certain documents that pertain to Bemba traditions and customs that have been kept in their archives. Other documents used include books and articles from journals by various anthropologists and ethnomusicologists.

The structured interviews were conducted with the use of a research schedule, which contained questions and themes that are important to the research and served as a guideline on how the interviews would be conducted. As De Vos et al, point out that “The main advantage of structured interviews with a schedule is that they provide for a relatively systematic collection of data and at the same time ensure that important data are not forgotten” (1998: 300)<sup>6</sup>.

De Vos et al, add that using unstructured interviewing with an interview guide for a group context is of particular value. It should be noted that in order for this research to be conducted most effectively, I also had to approach it from an emic (insider) standpoint and also in certain instances from an etic standpoint. This approach enabled me to work from a vantage point as I used the Bemba language, in most cases, which made it easier for my informants to express themselves with confidence. On the other hand working emically also made it easier for my informants to develop trust and confidence in me, hence I was given, I believe, authentic information.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

## **FIELD RECORDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

Data was recorded on audio mini discs and video tapes as the interviews and ceremonies were conducted. The use of both audio and video equipment was selected because each piece of the recording equipment served as a backup copy in case of a malfunction of one of them. For the songs that were recorded out of their social context, a master copy CD was made at the Muvi Studios, because I had no computer software to carry out this task.

When analysing data, De Vos et al suggest that, “A researcher can have a protocol where major categories are identified and defined to guide data analysis of the videotape recordings” (1998: 330)<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, I employed the deductive, structured analysis of data where data was transcribed from the tapes and the responses recorded in categories according to the interview schedule. As this study employed the triangulation approach, the number of times similar responses recurred was recorded and (numbered) comparisons were drawn.

## **DETAILS OF INVESTIGATION**

Studies of this magnitude take considerable time, and require considerable patience in order for one to make a comprehensive and representative report. Due to financial constraints this study was limited in its scope and also the area covered in northern Zambia, hence the restriction of fieldwork to Kasama, Lusaka and Copperbelt areas, and the period of study covering six months divided into two phases of three months each.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

## PHASE ONE (November 2001 to January 2002)

In November 2001, I made arrangements with my aunt Mrs Denise Mulenga, of Kasama, to go and conduct my research in Kasama. She was very keen after I explained the whole project to her, and as a result, she made arrangements for me to interview some of the renowned *bana chimbusa* (midwives) and elders from the Bemba royal family. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, I set out from Lusaka to Kasama in a Toyota Corolla, accompanied by my research assistant and very close childhood friend Elias Ndhlovu. It took us exactly 12 hours to get to Kasama. Upon arrival in Kasama, we had to meet my aunt who briefed us on whom we would meet and what was required of us in order for us to conduct our research. The following day we set out for Chief Munkonge's village, to meet one of the most experienced *nachimbusa* Mrs Fulanshi (commonly known as bana Fulanshi). We took the Luwingu road and for three hours the gravel road was very bumpy and treacherous. Because the rain had poured heavily the previous night, it was very difficult to negotiate the huge mud pools that covered parts of the road, and in certain places the whole road. When we got to the junction between Luwingu and Mporokoso roads, near Chishimba falls, the mud was too much for the car to move, and as a result we got stuck. Elias and I tried to pull the car out of the mud, but our efforts proved futile. So I asked my friend to remain and keep guard of the car while I went to seek help from people at a nearby village. I walked for a good two and half hours before reaching the nearest village at Chilubula. At the village I first had to introduce myself to the headman. To my surprise, the headman knew my late father, who had worked in that area when he was Manager of Schools. This development made things easier for me as the headman quickly mobilised ten strong young men to assist me. As I waited for the young men to come, I started chatting with the headman's wife. I asked her if she could tell me

anything about Bemba marriage ceremonies. Her response was that such matters were never discussed with strangers, and that if I wanted to know anything about this subject I was supposed to get permission from the headman. However, she pointed out that if I followed the right channels and made necessary arrangements, she would recommend that I meet *bana* Fulanshi of Munkonge's village. Upon hearing this recommendation I was very excited knowing that we were heading for Munkonge's village to meet the same person. The ten men and I got to the Mporokoso road junction where Elias was waiting, and we tried to remove the car from the mud. It took us about three hours before we could do so. We left the Luwingu road and joined the Mporokoso road, and travelled for one hour before we got stuck again. This time we could not get any help as there were no villages in this area, and so we spent the night there. During that night, I developed a terrible headache and a fever. This was not a simple problem, as I knew from experience that these were symptoms of malaria. I took a full dose of chloroquine right away and slept.

The next day we attempted to remove the car from the mud by placing tree branches on the road, but this did not help in any way. After a long wait, in desperation, a Sugar Company truck heading for Kasama, where we were coming from, came to our rescue at midday. Because of my fever, and the information on the poor state of the road ahead, we decided to make a U-turn and return to Kasama. This time we had to travel in convoy with the Sugar Company truck, as we needed some assistance at some points where the road was very muddy. The journey back to Kasama was not bad, but because of my poor health condition it was a nightmare. However, we arrived at my aunt's place around 18:00hours. I just took a bath and went to Kasama General Hospital to see a doctor. After taking a malaria test, I was diagnosed positive and

given a stronger drug called Halfan (full dose). I was supposed to be admitted to hospital, but I opted to stay at my aunt's home as the state of the hospital was terrible, and also was afraid I would contract other contagious diseases. I spent three days in Kasama until I felt better, and then headed back to Lusaka.

In Lusaka, I spent two weeks recuperating from the bout of malaria, and then I decided to look for *abakalamba* (elders) who could assist me in identifying genuine *bana chimbusa* with whom I could spend time discussing the different marriage ceremonies. As I was still grappling with the problem, my older brother, Mwila, suggested that I meet Mr and Mrs Chinyanta. Mr Nathan Chinyanta is the son of the late Mwata Kazemba Chinyanta (Paramount chief of the Lunda people of Luapula Province), and is a retired clerk of the Supreme Court of Zambia. The first meeting with the Chinyantas was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December at their home in Kabulonga (a suburb in Lusaka). Upon presentation of reasons for my visit, Mr Chinyanta advised me to give them time to look into the matter. Their request for time was mainly because they wanted to get well acclaimed *bana chimbusa* and elders who would give me authentic information. A week later, I had a phone call from Mrs Chinyanta, who informed me that the date for the first interview with Mrs Phoebe Ilunga, commonly known as mama Ilunga (a very experienced *nachimbusa* and presenter of 'Bana chimbusa radio programme' on the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation Radio 2), was set.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, at 14:00 hours, I went to Mrs Chinyanta's home in Kabulonga where she directed me to mama Ilunga's home in Kalingalinga (a township in Lusaka). At that meeting we spent the time familiarising ourselves and

planning for the commencement of the interviews. Mama Ilunga also required a little time to consult with friends (other *bana chimbusa*) on how to approach the subject. We settled on two days for her to conduct her consultations, which meant that our next meeting was scheduled for the 24<sup>th</sup> of December. It should be noted that, though this was the Christmas festive period, we decided to proceed with the interviews and meetings. Indeed, on the scheduled date I went to Kalingalinga very early in the morning. Unfortunately I found mama Ilunga cleaning the house, so she requested me to wait for her to finish her chores and get ready. I had to wait until midday, when she was ready to give me an interview. Although I had prepared questions for her, mama Ilunga decided to give me a full account of the marriage process from the proposal stage up to *ukwingisha* (highest honour). After that I would then ask her questions on what was not clear to me, or any other issues that I wanted to raise. She pointed out that, with experience, if a researcher decided to ask prepared questions, she would be inclined to give brief responses and also restrict herself to the questions without including other relevant information. Furthermore, she mentioned that, given a chance to explain the whole marriage process would give her a chance to express herself freely, and even extrapolate, as opposed to being restricted to a certain format. I spent a good four hours listening and taking notes as mama Ilunga was talking. As a backup, I also used an audio mini cassette recorder to record our conversation so that I could go and replay it whenever I wanted to compare notes. At 17:00 hours, mama Ilunga advised me to take a break as she was feeling tired and had developed a headache, so we agreed to reconvene the next day at noon. We spent four hours a day for six days. On the final day of my interviews with mama Ilunga, she surprised me by inviting two other friends, mama Mulenga, and mama Kasonde, who gave their accounts and filled in wherever mama Ilunga had missed out significant points. To conclude the exercise,

I was treated to a feast of the Bemba traditional dish *ubwali* (maize porridge) with chicken (*ubwali bwa nkoko*), which was a gesture from mama Ilunga, demonstrating that I was welcome and that she was in full support of my project. The next day I went to the Chinyanta's residence at midday, and spent two hours interviewing Mr Chinyanta and his uncle, Mr Kunda. At this stage I had to conduct a group interview and the two men proceeded with one leading the explanations while the other also contributed. I had to interject here and there whenever I needed clarity on points raised, or just to compare them with what I knew. This exercise lasted for three days before we concluded the interviews.

As I was working with mama Ilunga and the Chinyantas, my older brother, Mwila, had also organised an interview with Mulenga Kapwepwe (daughter of the late Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe, former Vice President of Zambia and author of several books on Bemba culture). Mulenga is currently the Chairperson for the Zambia National Arts Council and is also author of several books on Bemba culture. Both her parents come from the Bemba royal family (*ubufumu bwa lubemba*), and as such she has access to privileged information. To begin with, the first interview I had with her focused on the history of the Bemba people, outlining their migration from *Kola* (Angola) through the Luba-Lunda Empire to northern Zambia their present habitat. Being a researcher on Bemba culture herself, Mulenga also provided me with written documents by the White Fathers, who interacted with the Bemba in the early 1900s. These documents have been very helpful to me and have contributed substantially to the success of this research. In addition, Mulenga provided me with audio recordings of Bemba music, on reel-to-reel tapes which I transferred on to audio cassettes, at the ZNBC transcription centre. These recordings enabled me to familiarise myself with

*imfunkutu* music performed in the 1930s. Besides the materials from the White Fathers, Mulenga also gave me six books which she has written. This was a blessing in disguise because all her books fit into the scope of my research very well. During the time I spent with Mulenga, we also discussed her involvement in other ethnic cultural activities, such as the *Mutomboko* of the Lunda of Luapula and *Newala* of the Ngoni of Eastern province. After meeting Mulenga, I travelled to the Copperbelt province and went to Mufulira where I met Mr Innocent Malama (former General Manager of the Zambia State Insurance Corporation) and the late Mrs Dorothy Mukolongo (commonly known as Dolo, an experienced *na chimbusa*). We spent four hours discussing marriage ceremonies, especially the music used at various ceremonies. This was the case because Mr Malama was a singer in 1950s while Dolo was a very good dancer and drummer. I spent a week with the two informants, and then travelled back to Lusaka. At the end of January I flew back to Cape Town where I started transcribing and reviewing my interview recordings.

#### PHASE TWO (November 2003 to January 2004)

In August 2003, I asked my older brother, Chabala (my immediate older brother, but younger than Mwila), to contact our aunt Mrs Mulenga in Kasama, and make arrangements on my behalf for me to go and conduct my research, which had been aborted in November 2001. Chabala executed his task and reported to me that he had contacted our aunt and that she had begun making the necessary arrangements for my research scheduled for November. Since I was in Cape Town at that time, I used the telephone to make all these contacts. Fortunately enough for me, bana Fulanshi, the person I was supposed to meet at Munkonge's village, had moved to Mulenga Hill, a township within Kasama. This meant that I was not required to travel out of Kasama

as had been the case earlier on in 2001. This time I had acquired more sophisticated recording equipment, and this included: a Sony video camcorder (which was given to me by my supervisor Dr Hansen, for which I am very grateful), a Sony audio mini disc recorder (which was lent to me by the Mellon Foundation of UCT) and a Canon digital still camera.

On November 20<sup>th</sup> I left Lusaka by road for Kapiri Mposhi to catch a train to Kasama. I started off from Lusaka at 09:00 hours and arrived at 12:00 hours. This time, Mwila had asked his driver, Charles Kaluwa, to drive me up to Kapiri Mposhi. This journey took three hours. At Kapiri Mposhi I had to wait for two hours before we could board the train and make for Kasama. It should be noted that the train I took is operated by the Tanzania Zambia Railways Company (TAZARA), and the trains run between Kapiri Mposhi, in Zambia, up to Dar e salaam, in Tanzania. The journey took almost fifteen hours as the train had to stop at every station along the way. It was not tiresome as I had bought a first class ticket, and in this section there are beds, so one could easily lie down and rest. Due to my last experience of malaria, I had taken with me anti-malaria tablets and Halfan in case of emergency. During this journey I also spent time going through some of the data I had already collected from the previous fieldwork so that I could refresh my memory and get hands-on with my work. Finally, at 05:30 hours the next day we reached Kasama. My cousin Mr Mwape Mulenga was there to meet me. He took me to his home where I was to stay throughout my fieldwork in Kasama. I did not waste any time, but went straight into making arrangements for my interviews. To my surprise, my aunt had made arrangements in such a way that I would also attend *ukufunda umukashana* ceremonies, which were supposed to be held a week before I arrived, but for my sake they were delayed until I

got to Kasama. I was very happy and grateful for the considerations made for me. The following day my aunt took me to Mulenga Hill to meet *bana* Fulanshi, who welcomed me and later introduced me to her closest friend *bana* Mutale. It should be noted that I discovered that Mr Fulashi, the husband of *bana* Fulanshi, knew my late father very well as he had worked with him in the Ministry of Education). This development made it easier for me to work with *bana* Fulanshi as she had confidence and trust in me, which she expressed as: “*Uli mwana wesu eicho twatemwa pantu kuti twakuchetekela*” (you are our child therefore we are happy because we can trust you). We spent time planning and making necessary arrangements for the interviews and *ukufunda umukashana* ceremonies. This alone took one week as I was charged with the responsibility of sponsoring the ceremonies, therefore I had to mobilize funds and also purchase the foodstuffs and other items that were required. My expenditure for these events may be summarised as follows:

Food during and at the end of *ukufunda umukashana* (Note 1 South African Rand – R1 is equivalent to K600 – Zambian Kwacha)

- 15 Chickens (*inkoko*) K240 000
- 20 kg Beef (*inama*) K150 000
- 50 kg maize flour (*ubunga*) K100 000
- 25 litres *Chibuku* beer (*ubwalwa*) K50 000
- 5 cases *Mosi* lager (*ubwalwa*) K250 000
- 5 cases soft drinks (*ifyakunwa*) K150 000
- Assorted vegetables (*umusalu*) K30 000
- 10 litres cooking oil (*saladi*) K50 000

Other requirements for ritual customary celebrations

- 2 live chickens (*inkoko ishilole*) K30 000
- *Impemba* (white clay) K 2 000
- *Ilanda* (lentils) K 3 000
- *Imbalala* (ground nuts) K 2 000
- *Chilemba* (beans) K15 000
- *Ubulungu* (beads) K 5 000

Payments for the drummers and *bana chimbusa*

- 6 drummers (K30 000 each) K180 000
- 3 *bana chimbusa* (K100 000 each) K300 000

Transport

- For food and other items K120 000
- For all the participants K500 000

The total expenditure came to K2 147 000 plus an excess of about K100 000 for tokens and other miscellaneous requirements.

It took me a week before I could complete purchasing all the requirements, hence the ceremonies began at 06:00 hours on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November. This time my cousin Mwape was my research assistant, and he accompanied me to *bana* Fulanshi's house, as it was agreed that all the proceedings would take place there since she was in charge. When we got there we found that the *bana chimbusa* were not ready, so we had to wait for four hours before everyone expected had turned up. This did not bother me at all as it gave me a chance to prepare and test my recording equipment

without interfering with the proceedings. As soon the *nabwinga* (the bride) was brought in by her aunt and grandmother, all the *bana chimbusa* (fifteen in number) gathered inside the house, in the living room, while the initiate was taken straight to a bedroom where she was prepared for the events. It should be noted that I will not mention any names or even explain the proceedings, in full detail, as I was advised by the people involved not to do so. Furthermore, according to Bemba custom and tradition, these ceremonies are never attended by men, but an exception was made this time specifically to ensure that I completed my study/research. It is for this reason that all my recordings will not be shown to anyone, but will be stored safely for my own use in future projects. Before the commencement of the events, Mr Fulanshi, came inside the house and blessed the occasion and asked all people present to treat it seriously. After his departure, the *nabwinga* (the bride) was brought into the living room, crawling, on hands and knees, and covered in *chitenge* cloth (Zambian cloth), carrying a winnowing basket containing different seeds on her back. She was followed by her *na chimbusa*, *bana* Fulanshi. For five hours *nabwinga* was taught through singing and dancing, and other actions that depicted their ideal behaviour expected of a woman in her married life. *Bana* Fulanshi called for a 'break' during which food and drink were served. I did not have a 'break' as I had to consult with different participants whose discussions (and my own experiences as a part of several marriage ceremonies) were invaluable to me in the construction of this work. It was interesting to note that, during the ceremonies, the participants totally ignored the recording machines, and the spontaneity of the production and genuine flavour of the relationship between *nabwinga* and *bana chimbusa* were all captured on tape. It should be noted that during the ceremonies, it was not necessary for me to delay the proceedings in order to change tapes, batteries or write down a text, as I feared to rob

the production its immediacy and rhythmic flow, and much of its detail. I managed to get round these problems by make good use of my research assistant Mwape, who proved to be an asset in terms of efficiency.

After an hour, the ceremony recommenced, and this time preparations for the party to leave for the nearby bush were almost completed, where other ceremonies were to be performed. At this stage, I was feeling very hungry but I did not have a chance to eat so I had to continue with my perseverance. *Bana Mutale* (one of the *bana chimbusa*) came up to me and instructed me to switch off all my cameras and recording devices, as their use would not be permitted at the ceremonies to which we were going. I did not argue or even hesitate; immediately I packed up my equipment and gave it to Mwape for safe keeping, since he was not permitted to attend the bush ceremonies. However, I carried my food and water, and asked if I could take notes on paper, which I was allowed to do. Finally, the party left for the selected bush. It took us an hour to reach the place that was prepared for the ceremonies. As we walked along a narrow path through the thick bushes there was singing and dancing, such that we had to stop twice as the women became so carried away with the dancing. Arriving at our destination, I was very surprised to find that a thatched hut had been prepared, and some props had already been brought there. Since I was not recording or taking pictures I became fully involved in the singing and playing of drums, although I could not take part in the dancing or other actions. We spent the whole night going through the different ceremonies until 04:00 hours, when we concluded the events and headed back to *bana* Fulanshi's house. The procession back did not take as much time as it had on the way to the bush, because of our fear of being seen when the sun rose. The participants are not to be seen by the public. Upon our return, we were asked to rest

and have our breakfast. During the time of the break, I asked *bana* Mutale if I could be given time to go to Mwape's house and freshen up, and also fetch my recording equipment. My request was granted and I was given two hours to do this.

I returned to *bana* Fulanshi's house on time and quickly set up for the next ceremonies. It was amazing that despite staying up the whole night, all the *bana chimbusa* were still strong, active and enthusiastic. This time the *nabwinga* was shown many different emblems, and the lessons focused on her obligations in relation to the community. The lessons were so intense that repetitions had to be made from time to time to enable *nabwinga* to follow and understand what was being taught. This session lasted for six hours, and then we were all asked to take a break. This break was longer than the others as *bana chimbusa* took time to eat and drink, and relax. *Bana* Mutale described this break time with the expression: "*Ino ninshita yakulya insunka lwendo*" (this is the time for refuelling before the journey). She also requested me to buy two bottles of brandy so that the women could get 'high' in order to get rid of shyness. I quickly gave K40 000 to two young boys, from the neighbourhood, who went and bought the brandy from a nearby bottle store. I could see that the women were very delighted to be given brandy, and this was expressed in the phrase "*Wabomba mwaiche we wafuma ku bulaya, lesa akupale*" (Well-done Young boy who came from Europe, may God bless you). As the women were resting, and also realising that I also needed some rest, I left and went to my aunt's house so that I could update her on how things were going, and also to catch some rest. We reconvened at 20:00 hours, at the same venue. Before the start of the ceremonies I was asked to give *nabwinga* some money customarily as I was the sponsor of the whole function. After performing this custom, singing and dancing ensued, and this

time the tempo was faster than before. When I inquired about the change in tempo of the songs I was told that the fuel (beer and euphoria) were working. The lessons took the whole night, with two half-hour breaks. The ceremonies were then concluded with a feast. At this stage I was asked to leave as what followed was strictly women's business. As a gesture of appreciation, I offered each *nachimbusa* and *nabwinga* a four metre *chitenge* cloth, and then I left for Mwape's house.

Due to fatigue after spending two days and two nights without proper rest and nutrition, I decided to give my informants and myself some time to recuperate, so I stayed for a week visiting relatives and friends. The following week I contacted *bana* Fulanshi to reconfirm our schedule for interviews, which she did, and the first interview was held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December at 14:00 hours. I spent time with *bana* Fulanshi and *bana* Mutale, and this time we began by reviewing the ceremonies that I attended, and then I asked them questions on marriage instructions from the proposal stage only. We spent three hours on this, and then decided to meet the following day. The next day we met at more or less the same time, but this time it was only for two hours as the informants were preparing to go to the fields for planting their seeds. Due to this development I had to change my schedule and take a break for two weeks. I completed my interview with *bana* Fulanshi and *bana* Mutale on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December. Since the festive period had already started, I took the break and continued with my fieldwork on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January. This time my aunt had made arrangements for me to meet Mr R. M. Kambole, with whom she had worked at Kasama Teachers' Training College, and studied at Edinburgh in the United Kingdom. (Mr Kambole is a retired academic who has researched extensively and written books on Bemba culture with a focus on the language. He is currently assisting with the establishment of the Northern College, a private teacher training college in Kasama). I spent a week with

Mr Kambole, firstly reviewing one of his books *UKUFUNDA UMWANA KUFIKAPO* (When teaching a child you have to give all the details) which has a vast amount of information on Bemba marriage ceremonies, and also analysing the use and performance of songs in the marriage ceremonies. It should be noted that Mr Kambole was very happy to share with me the immense knowledge that he has on Bemba culture. He pointed out that for many years he had been looking for someone to continue where he had left off in his research, and my project and the fact that I was the one conducting it gave him the pleasure, confidence and hope that his work will be developed. Mr Kambole also knew my late father and worked with him on curriculum development matters, educational reform and language and literacy projects. This connection with my aunt and late father worked to my advantage and made it easy for me to discuss any issue and also the responses were genuine and honest, to an extent that even things that I did not think or ask about were revealed to me voluntarily. As a token of appreciation for the time and information given to me, I gave Mr Kambole K50 000, who reluctantly accepted it. Furthermore, I bought ten chickens for my aunt and ten chickens for Mwape also, to show my appreciation for all the assistance they rendered to me during my stay in Kasama. To conclude my fieldwork my aunt organized dinner for me at her home, the night before I left for Lusaka. I am deeply indebted to all of them for all their support and encouragement – ‘*Ndi panshi nde kunkula*’ (I lie down on the ground to thank you).

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of January, at 20:00 hours, Mwape drove me to the railway station to catch the train to Kapiri Mposhi. The train was scheduled to arrive at Kasama station at 22:00 hours, but unfortunately I spent the night at the station as the train did not arrive from Dar e salaam. Finally, at 12:00 hours the next day, the train arrived and

we left Kasama at 12:30 hours. We travelled quickly the first few hours after boarding, and after passing the first station we went into the wrong railway track, but luckily this mistake was identified very quickly enabling the train to be stopped, because there was another train coming from the opposite direction! If we had continued 'on track' we would have been involved in a collision, which I guess would have been very fatal. We spent six hours at this place known as Chilonga before a decision was made for our train to return to the nearest station, which in this case was Mpika. At Mpika we spent another two hours before we could continue with our journey. When we started off, we travelled very slowly, and though this was the case it did not matter to me as I had time to review my interviews and other research findings I had collected. The next day, just as we entered Kapiri Mposhi town, the train broke down. This place was in the middle of the bush, but of course there were some villages nearby. Some people from these villages came over and I made friends with one fellow who apparently came from Kasama and was a *mfunkutu* (genre of Bemba music) drummer, and so we engaged in a conversation in which he gave me a few tips on drumming. We had to wait at this point for twelve hours before another engine was brought and then we continued with our journey. We arrived at Kapiri Mposhi station at 20:30 hours. Since I had no transport to take me to Lusaka, I spent the night at Kapiri Glass Factory guest house. Mr Alex Moonga was the one who accommodated me at the guest house. The following day my brother Mwila and his son Mwenya came to pick me up from Kapiri Mposhi. On our way back to Lusaka, I had to drive since my brother was not feeling well.

I took a week off to rest and also to make arrangements for recording the marriage songs out of their social context. I was lucky to locate my former lecturers from the

Evelyn Hone College of Applied Arts and Science in Lusaka, who agreed to record the songs for me. They are Mr Obino Mwela and Mr Leonard Mpundu, who are employees of the Zambia National Dance Troupe of the Cultural Services of Zambia. Before recording, we agreed that each musician would be paid K50 000 per day. Audio recordings of the songs were made at the cultural services offices, where the national dance troupe conducts its practices. For these recordings I used a mini disc recorder and a digital video camcorder. It took us three days to record twenty-eight songs. Of course Mr Mwela and Mr Mpundu were not the only performers of the songs; they were joined by Mrs Dorothy Kambo and Mr Rogers Mokola. After completing the recordings I used Muvi Studios to produce the master copy of the songs and transfer them on to audio compact disc. It should be noted that the process of mastering the music was not properly done as I experienced problems when I tried to duplicate the recordings on other CDs. This problem gave me a nightmare before I sorted it out.

For recording the songs out of their social context, I would like to point out that I was prompted to do so because firstly, I wanted to get good recording quality; secondly, it was easy for me to select specific songs to be used as examples and thirdly, there was no interference from participants talking, moving about and dancing. This approach is necessary especially for transcriptions and for distinguishing what is musically significant and what is not, an approach which is supported by Blacking and other ethnomusicologists of African music.

## PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH MATERIAL

The research material in this dissertation is presented as follows: There is an abstract, which gives an insight into the study and its projections of the findings. In Chapter 1, an introduction, I give a fairly detailed account of the study, its purpose and significance, the historical background of the Bemba-speaking people, their beliefs and customs, their geographical location in relation to other language groups in Zambia, and the motivation for carrying out this research. Chapter 2 provides an account of the first phase of the Bemba traditional marriage process, which includes *ukusonga* and *ukukobekela* ceremonies. Here we see that *ukusonga* is achieved by the delivery of a marriage proposal by a young man to a young woman through an intermediary (go-between or spokes-man) known as *shibukombe*. *Ukukobekela* follows immediately after that, and it involves the presentation of a betrothal or engagement present called *insalamo* to the family of the young woman. Chapter 3 focuses on *ukulasa imbusa* and *amatebeto* ceremonies which happen once all marriage negotiations have been concluded successfully. *Chisungu* (girls' puberty ceremonies) have been briefly described here as their celebration, and instructions serve as a preparatory phase for marriage, and they are associated with physical maturity and serve to mark the transition of the initiate from childhood to social adulthood. Chapter 4 discusses *ubwinga* (wedding ceremonies) which are performed in three ways: *Ukutolanafye* (lit. picking each other), *ichombela ng'anda* (lit. praising (with claps) the house) and *ubwinga bwakapundu* (wedding with ululation). The focus in this study will be on *ubwinga bwakapundu*, which is celebrated in eight ceremonies:

1. *Ukutwa ubwinga* (pounding the wedding)
2. *Ubwalwa bwa bwinga* (beer for the wedding)

3. *Ukupota ubwalwa* (brewing the beer)
4. *Ukuchilika musambi* (waiting for the beer to ferment)
5. *Ukutiya ubwina* (beginning of the wedding)
6. *Ukuluula and ukushikula* (undoing the taboos)
7. *Ukowa ulucelo* (bathing in the morning)
8. *Ukusulula ifitete* (lit. pouring the leftover beer i.e. concluding the wedding)

Chapter 5 is concerned with the *ukwingisha* ceremony which is not performed for every married man, but only for those who prove themselves to be worthwhile husbands and fathers and members of the community. *Ukwingisha* is performed in two parts, one being *amatebeto* and the other being 'konkola'. *Ukufyalwa kwamwana* (the birth of the first child) has been included as it has rituals and ceremonies related to *ukwingisha*. Chapter 6 deals with the description and analysis of the traditional marriage music of the Bemba, covering its formal structural and stylistic traits, song texts, drums and drumming techniques, and dance structures and movement organization. The study ends with a summary of my findings, which constitute Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 1

### AN INTRODUCTION

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE BEMBA PEOPLE

Oral tradition speaks of the origin of the Bemba in the country presently called Angola, and which the Bemba call 'Kola', and we hear of references such as '*Kale twali ku kola*', meaning ('A very long time ago we were in *Kola*'). Several historians from Europe, in their books, indicate that in the year 1485 the Portuguese arrived in Congo and travelled southwest wards until they reached a place which was called *Bashi* and settled there. *Nshinga*, the chief of the people there, welcomed them and allowed them to practice Christianity, and he himself was baptised by the name *Joani* (1491). In 1507, *Nshinga* died and he was succeeded by his son *Mubemba* (Baptism name *Aluphosho*). In the course of time, the people rose up against Christianity and chased away the Portuguese from this area. *Mubemba* was really loved by his people, and they praised him for the way in which he settled disputes and solved peoples' problems, and encouraged his people to work hard and build brick houses. He ruled for thirty-nine years and died in 1546. After his death the kingdom disintegrated because his son who succeeded him was not as kind and hardworking as he had been. Most of the people went northwards and crossed *Kasai* River and settled in the area between *Kasai* River, in the south and *Lulua* River in the north. This area was known as *Buluba* (*Luba* land). The *Luba* country was contiguous with the *Lunda* Kingdom, which was under Chief *Mwatiyamvo*. Because of the nearness of these two kingdoms, most historians have been inclined to refer to them as the Luba-Lunda Kingdom (F. Tanguy 1996: 2)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Tanguy, *IMILANDU YA BABEMBA*, Lusaka: Zambia Education Publishing House, 1996

From *Kola country*, *Mubemba's* people took with them four ornaments, which they called '*nsalamu*'. Of these four, three of them represent males, and one represents a female holding a child in the hands. These *nsalamu* can still be found today at *Chitimukulu* village. The *nsalamu* that represent the males are named: *Chitumuluba*, *Kanabesa* and *Kabemba*, while the one that represents the females does not have a special name. In *Luba* land *Mubemba's* people mixed and interacted with the people they found there, and eventually became part of the *Luba* group and began to speak their *Luba* language. The *Luba* were led by *Kapopo*, a very bad tempered person, who was praised as:

*Kapopo-lapwa,*

*umukali wapwa abantu*

*Kapopo*

the ferocious one, who has finished  
people.

One of *Kapopo's* sons, *Mukulumpe*, was against his father's cruel and tyrannical leadership, so he decided to leave *Luba* land and headed northwards with some followers along the Congo River, which was known as *Lualaba* River, and established his own kingdom. *Mukulumpe* and his people lived in this new place, and one day when his men were out on a hunting expedition, they found a woman, *Mumbi Lyulu Mukasa*, whom they took and presented to the chief. When the chief inquired where she came from, she said that she had dropped from the sky, and had no relatives. She also said that her clan name and totem (*umukowa*) was *Ng'andu* (*Ngwena*, the crocodile). *Mumbi* was very beautiful and had big ears, and the people often rendered praises which referred to these attributes:

*Mumbi Mukasa uwa ponene kumulu.*

*Uwa pakalala amatwi nge nsofu.*

*Mumbi Mukasa* who fell  
from the sky.

Who has large and floppy

ears like an Elephant.

*Mukulumpe* then decided to marry her and she bore three sons, *Katongo*, *Nkole* and *Chiti*, and one daughter *Chilufya- mulenga*. When the sons grew up they were each given a section of the kingdom to rule over.

As time went on, these sons became arrogant and rude to their father, who out of anger plucked out *Nkole's* eyes and banished his other sons from his kingdom. Since *Nkole* was blind he was allowed to stay, but in the outskirts of the village, known as *mpongolo*. There he often played music on *Ichinkumbi* and *Umondo* (slit gongs) to pass time. *Mukulumpe* was very upset with his sons to the extent that he wanted to kill them. So he sent a message to them in order to trick them so that he could kill them. He dug trenches (*amachinga*) at the entrance of the village, and put poisoned spears inside and covered them with earth so that if they stepped into this trap they would fall inside it and be pierced by the spears. *Nkole* was aware of this plan and so he warned his brothers through a song he sang with *umondo* accompaniment:

*Nkole wamapembwe,*

*umfwa umulandu.*

*Chiti, Chiti camutunga mulinso.*

*Chamulengele umoona ukupompa.*

*Kwenda kushintukila amenso mumbali.*

*Panshi apa pali mikuba yatata umwanda.*

*Nkole* with trenches,

listen to this case.

*Chiti, Chiti* something

has pierced his eye.

It made his nose to pump.

As you walk cast your

eyes on the sides.

Underneath there are twenty

of father's minerals.

## INTERPRETATION

In this song, *Katongo* is warning his brothers *Nkole* and *Chiti* that they should be careful when walking back to the village as their father had set traps in the form of camouflaged trenches along the path so that he could kill them. It should be noted that when I was in primary school I was taught this song, which we sang to the same tune as the song '*Murena buluka*'. I have not yet found out whether it is the original tune that *Katongo* sang to warn his brothers.

*Mukulumpe* was embarrassed that his trick did not work out as planned, so he forgave his sons. Other differences between *Mukulumpe* and his sons surfaced and forced him to divorce their mother, *Mumbi*, and expel her from the kingdom. Due to this action, *Nkole* and *Chiti* decided to leave and go and look for a place of their own in which to settle. Many people from their sections went along with them. Before leaving, their father invited them to his palace and blessed them so that they could travel safely and be protected from enemies and other dangers (This in Bemba is known as *ukupala amate*). *Nkole*, *Chiti* and their people went eastwards. Amongst them were:

Their brothers from *Mukulumpe*'s siblings- *Kalubila*, *Mutalemukulu*, *Chilehemukulu*, *Chimboola*, *Mashete*, *Kalulu wa mawanga*, *Mfungo*, *Nkweto wa cilinda*, *Nkweto wa cisungu*, *Mumena*, *Mumbimfumu* and many more, too numerous to be mentioned. All these names are from the *ng'andu* clan and are still used by their descendants today. From *Luba* land, those who followed included; *Chintu wa mikumbi* with his brother *Mwenga* and their mother *Chanda* and uncle *Papwa Mungombe*. The others were *Kopa Mungulube*, *Chibesakunda*, *Kabinga* and *Kabanda*. Together with them was one white man from Portugal, whom they called *Luchele Ng'anga* (Great Doctor). He was a priest and medical doctor. He was really loved by the people because of the medical work he did in their kingdom, so they sang praises about him such as:

*'Luchele ng'anga uwashile ulukasa pebwe, nakabwa-lesa kamukonkapo'.*

Meaning 'Great doctor who left his foot on a stone, and his dog followed behind him'

### INTERPRETATION

These praises were said because the people were so fascinated to see the Doctor's shoes left on the rocks whenever he went to have a bathe at the river.

*Nkole* and *Chiti's* group continued travelling eastwards until they came to *Luapula* River and crossed at a place called *Kashengeneka*. *Chiti* was the first to cross the river, and after crossing he shot his spear into a *Mpundu* (perinarium mobola olive) tree, praising himself (*ailumba*) as he did so:

*Nine mutanshi wasabwike bemba.*

I am the first one to cross the lake.

*Nine Ntalasha Matanda.*

I am *Ntalasha Matanda*.

*Nine Mukulumpe wamwene ubwikalo.*

I am *Mukulumpe* who found livelihood.

### INTERPRETATION

These *amalumbo* (self praises) were said to announce to the people that *Chiti* had declared himself leader of this new country, because he was the first one to enter it.

From this time, though younger than *Nkole*, *Chiti* took over leadership and established a big village which they called *Isandulula-fyalo* (meaning that at this place they can expand their population). This happened about the year 1700. During their stay at *Isandulula*, *Chiti* sent four men, *Kapasa*, *Mwangata*, *Sompe* and *Mumbi-ng'ombe* back to *Luba* land (*Mukulumpe's* Kingdom) to collect his sister *Chilufya Mulenga*. The reason why he did so was because he wanted his sister's son to succeed him as chief, when he died. Before this idea came up, the *Luba* and *Lunda* followed a patrilineal system whereby children and grandchildren succeeded their fathers. From

this time, *Chiti* adopted the matrilineal system whereby his sisters' sons, who were his nephews, could inherit his position. This is the system which is followed by the Bemba to this day. Indeed, *Chilufya Mulenga* was brought to *Isandulula*, expecting *Kapasa's* child. The child she bore was named *Chilufya* (Tanguy, *ibid*)<sup>2</sup>.

As time went by, *Chiti* decided to leave *Isandulula*, and he led his people southeastwards. During their long journey, they passed through the *Lala* Kingdom, where one of them, *Kankomba*, was made chief of the *Lala* people, and they called him *Kankomba we Lala*. From this area, they moved northeastwards until they arrived in Chief *Mwase's* Kingdom of the *Nsenga* people, who welcomed them due to fear of being attacked. During their stay with the *Nsenga*, *Chiti* differed with *Mwase*, over *Chilimbulu*, *Mwase's* wife, whom *Chiti* wanted to take as his own wife. The two leaders fought until *Chiti* was killed. Soon after *Chiti's* death, *Mwase* and his people fled. *Nkole* took over leadership and decided to leave *Nsenga* land, and he moved northwestwards. *Chiti's* body was embalmed with *Ilanda* (beans) and covered in leaves, and was taken to be buried in another place. *Nkole* and party arrived at *Kaunga* River and settled there for some time. This area was called *Impunga* (*Impunga* referring to the grief of losing a leader). *Nkole* mobilized an army and sent it to *Mwase's* Kingdom to avenge his brother's death. *Mwase* and his wife *Chilimbulu* together with many other *Nsenga* people were killed and others were taken as slaves. *Mwase's* body was cut into small pieces and stored in *imitondo* (sing. *Umutondo*- clay pot for storing drinking water). From *Chilimbulu's* body, the skin from her part of the belly which was tattooed, was removed and stored in a container. This skin was later used as part of a potion that would enable crops to grow well and healthy. During

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<sup>2</sup> Tanguy, *ibid*

times of wars, at the end of the war, warriors drank some medicine that contained a piece of the same skin. This was done because the Bemba believed that it was a potion that would give them strength and courage. The medicine was drunk customarily by taking a number of sips according to the number of enemies a warrior killed.

Soon after the avengement and conquest of the *Nsenga*, *Nkole* led his people further north to a place called *Mwalule*, on the banks of *Katonga* River, and built a village there, which they called *Mulambalala* (meaning- the end of grief). At this time they had problems with burying their chief *Chiti's* body, because according to *Luba* traditions and customs, a chief was supposed to be buried in a cow-skin. So *Nkole* sent his army north to *Pilula's* Kingdom, chief of the *Fipa* people (this area is on the border between Zambia and Tanzania), where they conquered the people and confiscated their cattle from which would come the burial shroud. *Nkole* decided that before his brother's body was buried, *Mwase's* body should be burnt. During the burning of *Mwase's* body, the smoke from the fire almost suffocated *Nkole*, but instead it left him weak and sickly. *Chiti's* body was buried at *Mwalule*, which is in the present day Chinsali District of Zambia. It should be noted that, during these times, it was customary for the chief to be buried with a living person. This practice was maintained until the 1900s. In this particular case, *Chitimwape* was buried together with the body of *Chiti*.

It did not take long before *Nkole* died and his nephew *Chilufya* succeeded him. *Nkole* was also buried at *Mwalule* next to his brother's grave. From this time up to the present, *Mwalule* is the place where all the *Bemba* chiefs are buried. A senior member

of the *Bemba* ethnic group is assigned as caretaker of the cemetery. Since *Chilufya* was too young to rule the people, *Chimba* was assigned as caretaker while they waited for *Chilufya* to grow up. Under *Chimba* the *Bemba* left *Mwalule* and went and settled at the confluence of *Milando* River and *Kalungwishi* River. Here two of the chief's guards (known as *Kapaso* sing. *Bakapaso* pl.), *Kabwa* and *Kayai*, discovered the corpse of a dead crocodile at the river bank. Upon hearing this news, all the people were very pleased as they believed that it was a good omen of a prosperous future for them, because the crocodile is a very dignified animal, and a metaphor for their chiefs who are *beni Ng'andu* (the crocodile people). It should be noted that this is the place where the Paramount Chief *Chitimukulu* of the *Bemba* resides today. In this area, the *Bemba* found other people who also came from *Kola*, and who were led by *Kalelelya*, who was chased out of this area together with the other people like the *Mambwe* and the *Musukwa*, who went further north and settled near Lake Tanganyika.

When *Chilufya* took over, he gave some members of the royal family sections to rule over. Because of this, the *Bemba* people spread and covered three quarters of northern Zambia. With the coming of the colonialists and also after Zambia's independence, the whole country was divided into provinces, cities, towns and districts. Northern Zambia was divided into Northern and Luapula Provinces, while the Northern Province was further sub-divided into the following districts:

DISTRICT	PEOPLE	CHIEF
<i>Kasama</i>	<i>Bemba</i>	<i>Chitimukulu</i>
<i>Chinsali</i>	<i>Bemba</i>	<i>Nkula</i>
<i>Mporokoso</i>	<i>Bemba</i>	<i>Mwamba</i>

<i>Luwingu</i>	<i>Bemba</i>	<i>Tungati</i>
<i>Mpika</i>	<i>Bemba</i>	<i>Chikwanda</i>
<i>Mbala</i>	<i>Mambwe</i>	
<i>Mpulungu</i>	<i>Lungu</i>	
<i>Isoka</i>	<i>Namwanga</i>	<i>Kafwimbi</i>
<i>Nakonde</i>	<i>Namwanga</i>	<i>Nawaitwika</i>
<i>Kaputa</i>	<i>Tabwa</i>	
<i>Chilubi</i>	<i>Bisa</i>	<i>Chiwanagala</i>

At *Chitimukulu* palace there is a special hut which serves as an archives for special traditional assets that belong to the Bemba Royal Establishment. Here some documents and the four *nsalamu* that were brought from *Kola* can be found. These documents are written in a language that no Bemba has been able to read. This special hut is known as ‘*Muli babenye*’ and no one is allowed to enter it except the caretaker known as ‘*Shichingo*’ (Personal communication N. Chinyanta, January 24, 2002)<sup>3</sup>.

Every year the Bemba people throughout Zambia congregate at *Chitimukulu* village to celebrate ‘*Ukusefya pa ng’wena*’, an event commemorating their first entry into Bemba land, the victory in wars that they fought against other ethnic groups, and also celebrating the harvest of the first crops. Economically the Bemba are agriculturalists and they grow crops like maize, millet and different kinds of vegetables. In early times, their system of agriculture was ‘*chitemene*’, which involved cutting down trees and burning them in order to clear a stretch of land, and then ploughing the fields with hoes, to mix the ashes and the soil. The ash served as fertilizer for the soil. Nowadays

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<sup>3</sup> Nathan Chinyanta, son of Mwata Kazembe Paramount Chief of the Lunda people of Luapula Province of Zambia, and retired Clerk of the Court, personal interview, January 24, 2002, Lusaka.

this system has been done away with due to a ban imposed by the government, and the advancements made in technology and agricultural methods.

During marriage negotiations and training, men were expected to display their strength and skill in doing *chitemene* (Kapwepwe, 1994: 22)<sup>4</sup>.

### **BEMBA BELIEFS AND CUSTOMS**

Bemba beliefs and customs relate to certain principles from which they flow. Everything that happens here on earth has a cause, and this cause must be sought in the supra-sensible world. Therefore the Bemba conclude that: Everything that takes place in this world is subordinated to, and controlled by, forces emanating from the spirit world. Thus death, disease, drought etc. are caused by the intervention of the *imipashi* (disembodied souls), *ingulu* (superior spirits), *ishamfumu* (spirits of deceased chiefs) or the rightful representatives of those spirits, the *abaloshi* (sorcerers). The natural properties of a thing are communicable, provided certain conditions are fulfilled. Labrecque (1947)<sup>5</sup>, observes that, the Hyena is viewed as a strong animal as it roams about all night in search for food. The stamina that it possesses is one quality that is greatly admired. In order for a person to be strong and immune against fatigue so that he is able to work long hours, he should collect any matter from the Hyena and that would communicate the power of endurance. Usually the animal droppings would be collected since they come from the interior of the animal, and so they are believed to be more potent. The droppings would be introduced into the human body in powder form through incisions usually made on the arms and legs, and then let to flow into

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<sup>4</sup> Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe, ICUUPO NOBUYANTANSHI, Lusaka: Zambia Education Publishing House, 1994

<sup>5</sup> Labrecque E. (1947) Bemba Oral Traditions, Chinsali: The Language Centre.

the bloodstream. Once such a thing is done, that person is deemed tireless and strong. This practice is commonly known as *ukukoma ichishimba* (*Ichishimba* – charm).

The principle of communicability also applies to names of trees. We find that some trees received names because of their use as remedy for certain diseases. Evidently, a tree that is used as an emetic, is used because experience has shown that it produces that result. Anything out of the ordinary, for whatever reason, requires an explanation, and this principle applies to everything. For instance: a waterfall, rumbling, thundering and tumbling down is a spectacle of power and grandeur. This spectacle suggests one idea. There is, residing within it, a spirit endowed with power equal to, if not superior to, the natural object. This concept is further applied to things great and powerful in nature and indeed to anything out of the ordinary. It is believed that lions, beasts of kinds, snakes etc. all exert an action in this world, but limited by, and acting under the will of the supra-sensible beings or their representatives on earth. It is for this reason that precautions must be taken and in each and every case special rites must be observed. Ceremonies of purification (e.g. at the birth of a child, marriage, death etc.), practices of protection against what is considered unlucky and therefore dangerous for the individual or for the whole community (e.g. the destruction of *ichinkula* – in a child whose first teeth start from the bottom gum). “In all this the Bemba are logical in their beliefs such that they feel dominated by the supernatural world and so they try to take the necessary measures to conciliate the mysterious forces which they believe exist” (Kambole, 2003)<sup>6</sup>.

#### **UKWIMITA** (Becoming pregnant)

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<sup>6</sup> R. M. Kambole, 2003, December 22, personal communication with the academic, Kasama.

Cessation of *chisungu* (menstruation) is the infallible sign of pregnancy. If pregnancy does not follow, in one way or the other, there must have been an abortion (*ifumo lyapona*). The cause of this misfortune must be sought either by seeking help from *Inganga* (diviner) through the process of *ukubuka* (incantation) or by her mother (the girl's mother) going out to the bush to search for herbal medicines (*ukufwaila umuti mumpanga*). No special taboos are laid on food except for the taboos commonly observed by the family or clan. Nonetheless, there exist certain prohibitions due to beliefs similar to that of the 'evil eye', but relate only to pregnant women. Kapwepwe M. observes that:

"Firstly, a pregnant woman must not pick up the edible caterpillar known as *Kabambala* or *Matuku* (collectively known as *ifishimu* pl. *ichishimu* sing.). If one of these caterpillars happened to fall on her belly a miscarriage would inevitably result. Secondly, a pregnant woman must not accompany her companions on a fishing expedition unless she first goes alone (*ukwelela ifumo*) to see if her state would bring bad luck. Without this precaution being taken the fishing party would be a total failure. Thirdly, a pregnant woman must not enter a house where beer is being brewed as her state would cause the beer to turn sour" (2003, 5)<sup>7</sup>.

### **UKUPONYA IFUMO (Abortion)**

There was very little or no apparent reason to practice abortion. This remained very exceptional and exclusive.

### **UKUPAPA UMWANA (Child birth)**

It should be noted that child birth is literally known as *ukufyala umwana*. However, due to the respect given to the act of giving birth and the women who endure it, the

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<sup>7</sup> Mulenga M. Kapwepwe (2003) *A little Book of Omens: Some Superstitious Beliefs of the Bemba People*, Lusaka: Published by Mulenga Kapwepwe.

more applied term is *ukupapa* (which literally means to carry something on one's back). There are many rites and ceremonies connected with childbirth. When pregnancy has run its full course, the woman is seized with labour – pains (*a konwane fumo*). In most cases, birth took place in the village itself, in the family hut or in the hut of the wife's mother. However there were some exceptions such as:

- The first delivery, which always took place outside the village.
- When the child was expected to be *akapopo* (still born).
- When the village was the residence of a chief.

In the first two cases the reason was that avoidance of pollution was necessary. The people feared that the village might be seized with a mysterious ailment that bore the symptoms; sharp pains in the joints, a condition similar to arthritis or facial paralysis. Should *akapopo* be delivered in the village a number of purification ceremonies were conducted to prevent pollution of both the people and the village. In the third case, an abnormal birth would contaminate *babanye* (relics of great chiefs honoured in the residence of princes of royal blood). If this happened the ancestral spirits would be placed under pain of the most dreadful calamities.

To avoid such complications people were advised not to give birth in the village. The only people permitted to do so were the wives of chiefs and other members of the royal family. However, Etienne, claims that:

“In our times, due to the peaceful state of the country and the consequent needlessness of stockades round the villages, it is even simpler because the chiefs construct their quarters (palaces) outside the village. Therefore, whatever happened the ancestral spirits could not be polluted since the chief's house was technically outside the village. Hence the difficulty was neatly avoided” (1937: 6)<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Etienne L. (1937) A Study of the Bemba and the Neighbouring Tribes, Chinsali: The Language centre.

When delivery of a child was difficult, they had recourse to incantations. The old women and *bana chimbusa* present did not consult the *Inganga*, but dealt with *imipashi* themselves. This rite was known as *ukubuka akanweno* (incantation of the little pot). Its object was to find out which of the family *imipashi* was angry and was causing the difficulty in delivery of the child. Incantations were recited, and to appease the angry *imipashi*, one of the women would go out to the bush and place a few beads at the foot of a big tree. If it so happened that despite the recitations and appeasement of *imipashi* the woman still could not deliver the child and died, the case was treated as an impediment caused by the infidelity of her husband. Kambole (2003), indicates that death of this nature is known as *inchila* and the people would say that: '*Afwa ne nchila*' (Her death has been caused by *inchila*). However, if the woman died of a haemorrhage or from any other cause, such a death was seen as a result of her own infidelity and is known as *inchenta* and the people would say that: '*Afwa ne nchenta*' (Her death has been caused by *inchenta*).

## **ACCIDENTS AT BIRTH**

### ***UKUFYALA UMUCHA*** (Birth of a premature baby)

*Umucha* (premature baby)

These were seen as ordinary beings incapable of living. If a premature birth was certain, it would take place outside the village. After the birth of *umucha* the mother had to protect herself from all sorts of dangers and remove the impediment that had occurred to her. To do this she had to wash her whole body with a decoction of *munawe* and *musaye* medicines.

### ***UKUFYALA AKAPOPO*** (Miscarriage)

Miscarriages often happened especially in first pregnancies. This was attributed to the fact that marriages were encouraged too early for the girls. Once this happened the dead foetus was buried in the bush at the base of a *mubanga* tree. It is at the foot of this same tree that all those afflicted with *akapopo* would come to seek a cure for their ailment. Since the foetus was not considered to possess *umupashi*, as it was not a human being in the full sense, it was not supposed to be buried at the ordinary cemetery. No burial rites were performed and no one was expected to moan. The mother and *banachimbusa* performed the burial of the foetus. After burial an object, easy to identify, was fixed on the spot to mark the burial site. Before returning home the mother had to be cleansed by bathing in medicated water prepared at the *masanas* (crossroads). The medicine used for this purpose was known as *mufuba*.

**ABANA BA MIPAMBA** (Children of bad omen)

**CHIMPU** sing. *BACHIMPU* pl.

Girls who began their menstrual cycle late were not allowed to get married as they could not go through *chisungu* initiation school. Sometimes such girls were involved in illicit sexual relations with young men. If children resulted, those children were called *chimpu* and were considered to be bad omen. *Chimpu* was believed to devour the food from people's granaries and cause all the plantations to become sterile. To prevent this from happening, precautionary measures were taken. For instance the fruit of *umufungufungu* (sausage tree) was laid down along the *myungu* (edible gourd) fields to protect them against the influence of *chimpu*.

**CHITONGO** (*Bachitongo* pl.)

Chitongo is a term used to describe those young marriageable girls who have not been initiated into pre-marriage rites like *chisungu*. Children born to these girls were also considered a bad omen.

### **ABNORMAL CHILDREN**

Children with certain abnormalities were considered unlucky, but were not gotten rid of. Such children included hermaphrodites, disabled, blind etc.

#### ***BA MPUNDU* (Twins)**

Giving birth to *bampundu* was not considered as normal case (socially unusual), but at the same time did not entail disastrous consequences. This situation was transformed into a joyous and honourable occasion. The father and mother of *bampundu* would hence forth be known as *shimpundu* and *nampundu* respectively.

### **CEREMONIES PRACTICED AT THE BIRTH OF *BAMPUNDU***

As soon as the birth of twins was known, the village was considered polluted (*Umushi wafina*). No fire was lit in the huts and the ashes collected from a previous fire would be thrown *kumasamba* (to the west). The *nachimbusa* who delivered *bampundu* would have to be cleansed and during this period she was not allowed to have sexual relations with her husband until the whole village was purified. *Ashinganga* was invited to find suitable remedies to get rid of the bad omen. In order for him to do this, the *shimpundu* would give him *akasembe* (small axe), *akalonde* (small hoe) and *akalongo* (small pot) for him to use for collecting *muti*. Besides using these tools for collecting *muti*, they constituted his remuneration for performing the task of cleansing. *Shinganga* would set out to the nearby bush and cut four small forked branches of equal lengths (these forked branches are generally called *amampanda* but

in this case since they are small they would be called *utumampanda*). The *utumampanda* would come from *mulombwa*, *mulunguti*, *musuku* and *mulungi* trees. Once *utumampanda* have been collected *amasansa* is selected where a small platform (*akantamba*) would be made. Beneath this platform aloes (*intembusha*) are transplanted. Once this was completed, the tools were hidden somewhere in the bush and then *shinganga* returned to the village to collect the parents of *bampundu*. Both parents wore *indupu* (rough pieces of cloth made from tree bark) and were smeared with ashes all over their bodies. The mother carried *bampundu* in a winnowing basket known as *ulupe*. The children were carried naked. The *shinganga* then led the parents with the whole village in procession to the *masansa*.

Upon arrival, the *ulupe* in which *bampundu* were carried was placed on the platform and then dancing and singing ensued. During this time *shimpundu* was rebuked and castigated for not performing within limits (producing only one child at a time), while at the same time he was smeared with ashes on his face and at times even spat on. When the dancing was over, *shinganga* prepared a potion in which everyone would wash. This potion was then put on a fire made under the platform. The residue was ground into powder to be used for purifying all those members of the clan who were not present at the ceremony (The ingredients for the purification are roots from *mulombwa*, *musangati* and *musuku* trees). When the dancing and purification process were concluded, *shinganga* decorated the *ulupe*, in which *bampundu* were carried, with *impemba* (white kaolin) and *inkula* (red ochre). The procession was then led back to the village. The purification ceremony did not end there as the purification of the village followed immediately. This involved *ukupanga ichuupo* (having sexual

intercourse) by *shimpundu* and *nampundu*. Mukolongo (2003)<sup>9</sup>, observes that purification of the village by *ukupanga icuupo* must be done in the presence of two witnesses, though in earlier days it was done in the open courtyard. Soon after this the village was considered purified and all huts would be whitewashed with a mixture of *impemba* and clay.

On the fall of the umbilical cords of *bampundu*, they would be interred with the placenta besides the aloes planted at the *masansa* under the platform. Kambole (2003)<sup>10</sup>, points out that *bampundu* were not given other names instead they were simply called *mpundu*. However the child that followed after *bampundu* was called *Chola* and this has continued to date. Kambole further points out that when one of *bampundu* died he would be buried at the *masansa*, where the purification was done, without any burial rituals performed and no moaning or lamentations were allowed. This was the case as it was feared that full burial rituals and lamentations would haunt the remaining *mpundu* and cause him to want to join the other *mpundu* in the world of *imipashi*.

## **NORMAL BIRTH**

At the birth of a child, the mother receives congratulations from everyone. The common salutations include: *Twatota we mwana wesu, mwapusukeni, waika ku muti* (we congratulate you our child, you have survived, you have come down from the tree). Others would include: *Samalale* (congratulations). The husband too would come

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<sup>9</sup> Dorothy Mukolongo, 1999, October 7, personal communication with the informant, Kitwe.

<sup>10</sup> R. M. Kambole, 2003, December 22, personal communication with the academic, Kasama.

to see his child. However, he is also expected to bring a present to his wife. Flanshi, notes that:

“In the early days the husband went out to the bush and collected firewood which he brought back to the village as a present for his wife. The wood was customarily presented by throwing the bundle down with considerable ostentation while saying the words ‘*Kuno ndi ne mwinakantwa*’ (Here I am, I belong to such and such a totem). He would have to name the totem of his family and then proceed to see his child” (Fulanshi 2003)<sup>11</sup>.

#### ***UKWINKA UMWANA ISHINA*** (Naming the child)

*Ukwinka umwana ishina* ceremony was done a day after the child was born. This practice has since been changed to a couple of days or even a whole week. “We see these changes taking place mainly because of urbanization which has caused family member to live further apart from each other” (Ilunga, 2002). Furthermore, Ilunga explains that due to families living in different places, people have to wait for some family members to travel long distances in order for them to come and take part in such ceremonies. However, in times when families lived in the same villages the ceremony was even performed on the same day the child was born. The name of the child is known as *ishina lya mutoto* (the name of the navel).

To perform the ceremony the grandmother (*nakulu*) or the paternal aunt, who in the Bemba sense is not an aunt but a mother (*nyina*) proceeds with the invocation of *imipashi*, an exercise known as *ukubuka*. It should be noted that if *nakulu* or *nyina* did not know how to invoke *imipashi* another elderly family member would be asked to

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<sup>11</sup> D elfista Fulanshi, 2003, December 15, personal communication with the informant, Kasama.

perform this task. Kapwepwe M, (ibid), has indicated that in the late 1800s the name of the first born child was usually sought by the *shinganga* who performed the ritual of *ukubuka* based upon several names that the family suggested to him. Kapwepwe further indicates that for *shinganga* to come up with a suitable name, he laid his tools (*ifisoko* – medicines and charms – *ifishimba* or *inkomba*) on the ground and repeated all the names that were suggested to him. As he proceeded he observed *ifisoko* and *ifishimba*. When they moved and formed a certain pattern he repeated that name several times for everyone to hear. This name was then given to the child. The aim of this ceremony is for the family to find a suitable *umupashi* that would reside in the child's soul and protect it from any form of danger. "It is interesting to note that among the Bemba names are taken from those of their deceased relatives without distinction of gender. This is the case as they believe that *imipashi* have no gender" (Etienne, 1937: 52)<sup>12</sup>.

In times when a child was born shortly after the death of a chief, while the throne was vacant, he was named after the chief. The reason for this was basically because of the status that the chief held while he was alive and likewise his *umupashi* was treated with higher status than those of ordinary members of the ethnic group. "The people believed that since the chief had the interest of his people at heart while he was alive, he would obviously protect the new born child of the ethnic group" (Chinyanta N., 2002)<sup>13</sup>.

After invocation of *imipashi* a name is selected. The father of the child takes a *lukombo* (gourd with a curved neck used as a drinking vessel) or *akasupa* (a small

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<sup>12</sup> Etienne Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Nathan Chinyanta, son of the late Mwata Kazembe, Paramount chief of the Lunda, a retired clerk of the Supreme Court.

calabash) and places it *mwifungu* (underneath the bed) towards the head side (*kumitwe*). This vessel will be the child's vessel and residence of its protecting *umupashi*. As a first offering, a few white beads are put into the *lukombo* for good luck. Every time beer was brewed in the house, a small quantity would be poured into this *lukombo* as a libation to propitiate the *mupashi* that protects the child. The *mupashi* is commonly referred to as *mboswa* (protector). If a child has been given a name and it cries continuously, it is known that the child has rejected the name or two or more *mipashi* in the child's soul are fighting for tenancy. Should this be the case invocation of the *mipashi* would be conducted all over again until the suitable name is given to the child.

#### **UMULILO WAMWANA** (The child's fire)

The fire used for preparing the child's food or warming water for bathing is known as *umulilo wa mwana*. This fire should be made by rubbing two sticks together until the friction produces a fire. However, from the 1930s the use of matches was introduced by the White Fathers who came into Bemba-land to do missionary work. Matches was accepted because to light a fire you need a match stick and a friction pad and this principle fell in line with the Bemba custom (Etienne, 1937)<sup>14</sup>. Kapwepwe M (2002)<sup>15</sup>, points out that this serves as a precautionary measure against polluting the child. The mother of the child ensured that she made *umulilo wa mwana* for fear that if a contaminated person made the fire, touched *ishiko* (the fire hearth) or *ifwesa* (hearth stone), the child would be contaminated too. "Contamination mostly came

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<sup>14</sup> Etienne Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Mulenga Kapwepwe, 2002, December 16, personal communication with the academic, Lusaka.

from sexual intercourse, menstruation and other causes by *imipashi* that are evil” (Fulanshi, 2003)<sup>16</sup>.

A contaminated child would be noticed by *ichapu* (continuous sneezing), which usually resulted in loss of appetite and weight, and eventually led to death. “However it was safer to collect fire from another mother who had *umwana umubishi* (a fresh child) as it was obvious that she too was observing the taboos strictly” (Mukolongo, 2002)<sup>17</sup>.

#### ***UKUKUSHA UMWANA*** (Raising a child)

Six to eight months after the child was born the parents had sexual intercourse on a selected night. The following morning *akanweno kapalwino* (little bowl used for all ritual purifications following sexual relations – see plate No. 45 on page \_\_ ) is prepared by pouring water in it and placing it on the fire, both husband and wife holding it together. When the water is warm, *akanweno* is removed from the fire in the same way it was put on. Ceremonially they both wash their hands. Thereafter *umushingo* (small string worn around the waist like a belt) is placed in the ritual water by the wife. Mutale (2003)<sup>18</sup>, notes that if the child was a girl, *umushingo* was replaced by a small piece of cloth to cover her pubes. Together with *umushingo* two *impimpi* (small sticks about the size one and a half centimetres long and half a centimetre diameter) were placed in the ritual water. *Impimpi* came from the roots of *mulunguti* and *bungano* trees. Both these trees are hard wood whose toughness is expected to be transmitted to the child. The *kanweno* is then placed *mwifungu* (under

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<sup>16</sup> Fulanshi Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Mukolongo Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Godfrida Mutale, 2003, December 15, personal communication with the informant, Kasama.

the bed) at the head side (*kumitwe*) so that the contents could soak overnight (This process is known as *ukwabikila*).

The next day the parents do not leave the house, instead they would spend time looking after the child. The child is not breast fed and there is no cooking, fire or even wood allowed in the house. Relatives would bring prepared food for them to eat. The child's food would come from the mother's *nachimbusa* who observes certain taboos. That night the parents are not expected to have sexual relations. From then on the child would be allowed to feed with everybody else though great care is to be taken at all times.

#### ***UKUFWIKA UMWANA*** (Clothing the child)

*Ukufwika umwana* involves the actual putting on of *umushingo* on the child. If the child is male, the father would lay an axe on the floor and then hold the child, in a standing position, on it. Then he would tie the *umushingo* around the waist of the child. Using his left arm, he would pass the child to the mother who has to receive him with the left arm as well. If the child is a girl, the mother would hold her upright on the grinding stone and tie the *umushingo* around the waist of the child. After that using her right arm, she would pass the child to the father, who receives her with his right arm, and immediately gives her back to the mother in the same way. After this the residue of *akanweno* are poured out on *umulilo wa mwana* to conclude *ukukusha umwana* while at the same time this serves as a transition from *ububishi* (freshness) to *ukukaba* (being warm). The parents too are now warm (*bakaba*) and are allowed to have sexual intercourse, though not on a regular basis until *ukubangula umweshi* (the

feast of the new moon). Ilunga (2002)<sup>19</sup>, states that after the ceremony of *ukukusha umwana*, the father of the child took *Ubulungu ubwabuta* (white beads) to his wife's *nachimbusa*. To present it, he flashed it in her face, to prevent her from becoming blind, which would happen if this precaution was not taken. Thereafter a token of appreciation, for the assistance she rendered to his wife, was presented to her. This token was usually in the form of a basket of *amale* (millet), *amataba* (maize) or even *inkoko* (a live chicken).

### **IMFWA (Death) AND UKUPYANA (Succession)**

#### **UKULWALA (Sickness)**

The Bemba viewed disease (*ubulwele*) and (*ukulwala*) as being possible due to the intervention of some supernatural forces; irritated manes, *imipashi* (good spirits) and *indoshi* (sorcerers). Chances of considering natural causes were very slim. To deal with an ailing person, the use of herbal medicines and *ifishimba* was very common. *Ichishimba* was used alongside *muti* to render the remedy effective (Etienne, *ibid*)<sup>20</sup>. Kambole (2003)<sup>21</sup>, further points out that the function of the *ichishimba* had two dimensions which included: firstly, giving the *muti* healing power and secondly, neutralising the supernatural cause of *ubulwele*. Before external help in dealing with *ubulwele* was sought, the elderly family members would try and administer first aid using *muti* that they knew, after *ukubuka*. If no positive results were forthcoming the services of a Shinganga were sought as he was more qualified to deal with such problems. According to Fulanshi (*ibid*)<sup>22</sup>, all members of the family would make it a strict duty to visit the patient during the whole course of illness. Fulanshi insists that

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<sup>19</sup> Phoebe Ilunga, 2002, January 24, personal communication with the informant, Lusaka.

<sup>20</sup> Etienne *Ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> Kambole *Ibid*

<sup>22</sup> Fulanshi *Ibid*.

this was not done out of human affection for a family member, but instead was taken as an indispensable measure for clearing oneself from all suspicion. Mutale (2003)<sup>23</sup>, further states that an absent member of the clan would be suspected of having provoked the disease in one way or the other, hence his absence being attributed to a guilty conscience.

### ***IMFWA*** (Death)

Like *ukulwala*, *imfwa* was not thought of as occurring due to natural causes. Kunda (2002)<sup>24</sup>, claims that *imfwa* was viewed as the separation of the *umupashi* (soul) from the body, or in more precise terms, the disincarnating of the *umupashi*. Etienne (ibid)<sup>25</sup>, also indicates that wherever *imipashi* dwell the conditions are somewhat akin to that of human beings here on earth. Nonetheless, *imipashi* would enjoy more extensive powers over natural forces, especially those of former chiefs or *bashimpundu* who would be endowed with the faculty of making themselves obnoxious to the living by causing *ubulwele* and *imfwa*.

*Imipashi* (good souls, spirits) and *ifiwa* (ghosts, evil souls) constitute two categories of souls that are connected to *imfwa*. The former wield a benevolent influence, provided that one shows them due respect, while the latter have become evil, harmful etc. either because they had left this 'vale of tears' with resentment in their heart, or because they had become spiteful after life due to constant vexing and neglect on the part of the living (Etienne, ibid)<sup>26</sup>. *Ifiwa* depart with a grudge, such that they would forever try to harm the object of their hate, usually a member of their family or clan.

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<sup>23</sup> Mutale Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Abraham Kunda, 2002, January 24, personal communication with the informant, Lusaka.

<sup>25</sup> Etienne Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Etienne Ibid.

This belief has such a hold on the Bemba, as Malama (2002)<sup>27</sup>, points out that all suicides are considered acts of spite with a view to vengeance. Malama continues that people once incensed by what he thinks unbearable injustice may take his life, so that his *umupashi* may become *ichiwa* and thus wreak vengeance upon the living. Ngandu, points out that:

“To get rid of such pestering menace, the services of a Shinganga are required and the process of *ukubuka* is the first step taken. In most cases *kabosha* (decaying remedy) is used for purification and ensuring that there is no possibility for *ichiwa* to reincarnate. However, in more drastic circumstances disinterment of the skeleton and cremation of the remains would be the procedure to follow, thus effectively cutting all possible communication between this life and the next” (1922: 56)<sup>28</sup>.

It should be noted that purification, after experiencing *imfwa* in the family, is inevitable as it provides protection for the living, from those *ifiwa* who are known to have no fixed abode (Ilunga, *ibid*)<sup>29</sup>. Ilunga also states that *ifiwa* roam the bushes and also gang around the burial grounds of their mortal remains. In certain places, like Munkonge village, people assert that after dusk palavers take place in the cemeteries.

Since *imfwa* constitutes pollution or contamination infecting the living, and indeed the whole village, purification ceremonies are inevitable. To reduce the level of contamination, in the early days (around the 1900s) when people recognised the symptoms of *imfwa* the sick person was taken outside the village and looked after until *afwa* in a shed (*ulusasa*), which was built for this purpose. At the shed children or pregnant women were not allowed to go to the shed, except the wife of a dying

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<sup>27</sup> Innocent Malama, 2001, January 30, personal communication, Mufulira.

<sup>28</sup> Aaron S. Ng'andu (1922) Bemba Cultural Data: Ukupyana (succession), Imiti (Medicines) and imilimo (Work), Chinsali: The language Centre.

<sup>29</sup> Ilunga *Ibid*.

man. At the point of *imfwa* the hands of the dying person were kept closed. Should a finger extend, this was a sure sign of the presence of *ichiwa* in the clan. Ngandu (ibid), indicates that when *imfwa* happened within the village contamination was not ruled out, and the people would refer to this situation as: *umushi wabundwa* (the village is flooded). To purify the village, all fires in the huts must be extinguished; cinders and ashes must be scattered *kumasamba* and from then on until the end of all the purification ceremonies cooking must be done outside the huts on new fires.

#### **UKUSHIKA (Burial)**

When a person finally passed away the attendants would ensure that the eyes and mouth were closed. Then *ukonga* (preparation for burial) began. According to Etienne (ibid), the traditional posture for burial of the corpse (*ichitumbi*) was as follows: The arms are folded in a position that brings the closed fists under the chin, the legs are doubled up with knees touching the abdomen, while the heels of the feet touch against the lower part of the thighs (a posture similar to that of a foetus in the womb). This is known as *ukufuka umubili* (folding up of the body). The corpse is then trussed up in this position by means of *ulushishi* (strips of bark) and is finally wrapped in a piece of cloth and rolled in *ubutanda* (reed mat) tied at both ends. This marked the end of *ukonga*. If the deceased was an old person or a dignitary, the corpse was borne into his former hut to lie in state until burial. The carrying of the body back to the village is expressed as *ukusenda akanyebele* (to carry in the fashion of the ants). The corpse was usually buried after 24 hours unless there was a special reason, and then the

duration would be prolonged. Ng'andu (ibid)<sup>30</sup>, notes that during that time a ritual hunt (*ukusowa ifibanda fya chisubo* – the hunt of the anointing) would be conducted. This hunt will be explained in detail later. The aim of the hunt was to get a general idea of the cause of *imfwa* whose results were only communicated to the members of the clan, and remained confidential.

At the cemetery usually a spot close to the grave of a relative was sought and a deep narrow vertical hole (*ichilindi*) was dug, of about 2 metres in depth. Malama (ibid), points out that if the deceased was an important person, a kind of recess was made at the bottom of the grave to accommodate *ichitumbi*. The recess would be partitioned with sticks vertically placed to prevent earth from covering *ichitumbi*. *Ichitumbi* would be laid with head facing the east, in the hope that his *umupashi* would rise with the sun. Kunda (ibid)<sup>31</sup>, further points out that to ensure the body's confinement to the grave the deceased's bracelet and necklace were broken and thrown into it. The relatives also showered the grave with offerings such as *impande* (polished shells) and *ubulungu ubwabuta* to honour the deceased, and give him the means to buy fire when he reached *Lesa* (God). Without this precaution he would not know where to go and end up roaming about.

Before filling the grave the relatives of the deceased would throw in some earth, by kneeling at the edge of the grave and pushing some earth with their elbows. The grave would then be filled in by grave diggers. Kambole (ibid)<sup>32</sup>, states that the grave was well smoothed over and a small *ifwesa* (ant mound) was placed *kumitwe* (on the side where the head rests) while bracelets, necklaces, *inongo* and other small utensils were placed all over the grave. For these utensils to be of any use to the deceased, they

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<sup>30</sup> Ng'andu Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Kunda Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Kambole Ibid

were destroyed by piercing or cracking them before placing them on the grave. After this the burial rite would be concluded with everyone leaving the cemetery.

### **UKUSOWA IBANDA** (The ritual hunt)

Etienne (ibid), observed that *ukusowa ibanda* involved all the men of the village and a few selected young boys who assisted in carrying the offerings and the nets that were blessed. The offerings were mainly *lupao* (which included splinters of wood and two white beads – *ubulungu ubwabuta*) covered with maize meal. According to Ngandu (ibid)<sup>33</sup> *lupao* was made for the *mboswa* (protecting spirits of the forest) so that they could prevent accidents. Ngandu has also indicated that the ritual hunt was led by *umwine we banda* (the father of the deceased or husband in the case where the deceased was married). In the forest the hunting nets were set at a spot thought to be favourable. Then the young boys would disperse far and wide and begin *ukusowa* (to drive game towards the nets) while the elders would hide in the shrubs, ready to pierce the animals with lances. If *chisongo* (Bush buck) or *Katili* (Stein bock) were caught, it meant that *imfwa* was caused by *indoshi* because *indoshi* use the horns of these animals for keeping *ifishimba*. The cause would call for the immediate consultation with a *shinganga* who would be expected to hunt down the *indoshi* responsible (Labrecque, ibid)<sup>34</sup>. *Kolwe* (Monkey) or *Kabundi* (Lemur) were considered bad omens (*imipamba*) in the ritual hunt as they indicated that *imfwa* would strike another member of the deceased's family (Kambole, ibid)<sup>35</sup>. If a bird got entangled in the nets it was a clear indication that the cause of *imfwa* came from an agent far away, since birds can travel long distances. This was expressed in the phrase: *chaba mpupukila* (the omen flew from far away). According to Boyd (in

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<sup>33</sup> Ng'andu Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Labrecque Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Kambole Ibid

Labricque, 1947)<sup>36</sup>, if it happened that one or two male or female animals like *Impombo* (Duiker), were caught and killed in the net, this was treated as inconclusive evidence, and the hunting continued. Boyd further states that if two animals of opposite sex were caught and killed the hunt would continue until two animals of the same sex were killed, and then a conclusion would be drawn. The evidence would be presented to a *shinganga* who would perform *ukubuka* and reveal the cause.

It should be noted that if *imfwa* was caused by *indoshi*, and he was identified by the *shinganga*, the heads of the two animals slaughtered at the hunt would be presented to him. Cooking and eating the meat from the heads with his clan expressed an admission of guilt. Compensation was required of him and then the matter was settled. However, if the suspect denied the charge by not eating the heads, he had to prove his innocence by submitting to one of the ordeals, which included: drinking *umwafi* (poison) and *amenshi ayakaba* (boiling water).

**UKUWAMISHIWA PANUMA YAKUPONENWA NE MFWA** (Purification after death)

Purification was a necessity to ward off *imipamba* and was always conducted soon after *imfwa*. The grave diggers and the husband of the deceased, (a woman, or father if a man), must immerse themselves in a river. The rest of the mourners must carefully wash their hands and feet in the river. Boyd (ibid)<sup>37</sup>, indicates that the reason for this act was based on the belief that the water in the river would carry away all traces of the accursed soil and contamination. Boyd further indicates that nobody was exempted from that preliminary purification. It should be noted that if someone

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<sup>36</sup> Labrecque Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Labrecque Ibid

refused to take part in the purification he would be suspected of *ubuloshi* (witchcraft). *Indoshi* were known to use soil from the grave to mix with other decoctions to make *ifishimba* to use in their destructive endeavours.

Labrecque (ibid)<sup>38</sup>, found out that when all the people left the village for the cemetery, two people were left behind to conduct purification at the hut of the deceased, a woman, *munungwe* (belonging to the opposite correlating clan of the deceased) and a *shinganga*. The duty of *munungwe* is *ukukusa ichito* (sweeping the hut and getting rid of the dirt) and *ukushingwila ilingwe* (to smear a layer of fresh clay on the floor of the hut, especially on the part on which *ichitumbi* was laid). Labrecque further found out that the duty of *shinganga* was to prepare a new fire, by friction, at the funeral house and *muti* (*mulunguti* and *musamba mfwa*) at the *masansa* for the mourners to come and wash their hands upon their return from the cemetery. Etienne observed that:

“The summary purification is sufficient for those who were simply attendants. All that remained for them to do was to pass in front of the funeral hut (*inganda yacililo*) and cast a glance inside (*ukulengela munganda*). By so doing they left all the last vestiges of death (*emo basha mfwa*). As they did this, they carried lit wisps of straw collected from the thatching on the roof of *inganda ya cililo*. While they walked past the hut each one had to pass his hand rapidly through the flame of the straw” (1937: 64)<sup>39</sup>.

### **UKUWAMYA ULUPWA (Purification of the family)**

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Etienne Ibid

Since family members were close to the deceased and were directly involved in preparing of *ichitumbi* and the grave, they were more contaminated than anybody else in the village. For them to be cleansed a piece from a broken earthen pot and *muti* was secured from a *shinganga*. This shard was supposed to be placed on the fire by all the family members (all at once). To be able to perform this ceremony *ulushishi* (strip of a bark of a tree) would be tied to the shard in short and then all the family members would hold on to it at once. The grave diggers would actually hold the shard and then place it on the fire and also remove it from the fire. According to Ngandu (ibid)<sup>40</sup>, as the shard was being placed and removed from the fire, instructions were said out loud by the grave diggers: *Twalatekapo pamulilo* (we are going to place it on the fire), *twatekapo pamulilo* (we have placed it on the fire), *twalateulapo pamulilo* (we are going to remove it from the fire) and *twateulapo pamulilo* (we have removed it from the fire). Thereafter, all of them would smear the *muti* on their bodies beginning with those who were in close contact with *ichitumbi*. It should be noted that even all the remaining tools the deceased possessed would be smeared with the same *muti* from the shard.

#### **UKUSANGULA UMUSHI** (Purification of the village)

Purification of the village was done more or less in the same way as purification of the family. The major additions included sexual intercourse and the ritual killing of a hen. All the people in the village, save the children who were kept in huts far away, were expected to leave the village and only return after either the brother or the sister had sexual intercourse with his/her spouse. After having sexual intercourse the couple were expected to perform the marriage purification, but this time *ulushishi* would be

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<sup>40</sup> Ng'andu Ibid

tied to the *akalongo kapalwino* (the small clay pot used for purification after sexual intercourse – see plat No. 43 on page 261) so that all the people could take part in placing and removing it from the fire. The *muti* in the shard would have a mixture of *amale* (millet) and *ulubalala lwa mupwilapo* (the groundnut that marks the end) (Etienne, *ibid*)<sup>41</sup>. Thereafter the people would smear the *muti* on their hands and wait for the ritual killing to be performed. Mukolongo (*ibid*)<sup>42</sup>, observed that a hen was brained against the lintel of the door and its blood would be sprinkled all over the village including the foundation hole of the village. Once this was done everybody was at liberty to carry out daily chores and resume everyday courses.

#### ***UKUNWA AMENSHI*** (To drink water)

*Ukurwa amenshi* refers to the ceremony when attributes of the deceased and the name are temporarily given to a child or relative of the same sex until the proper successor is found. The attributes include: bows, arrows, axes and hoes, if it is a man, and a belt or girdle if it is a woman. Mukolongo (*ibid*)<sup>43</sup>, claims that the bows and arrows of the deceased are supposed to be hung somewhere in the hut (*ukusamika amata*). If this is not done and they are left lying about, the deceased person may believe that he has been abandoned and despised and reprisals would follow. It should be noted that in a case where the deceased had no close relatives around, during the time of his passing, his belongings would be hung on a tree close to the village until a successor (*impyani*) was found.

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<sup>41</sup> Etienne *Ibid*

<sup>42</sup> Mukolongo *Ibid*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*

According to Etienne (ibid)<sup>44</sup>, the *ukunwa amenshi* ceremony proceeded as follows: A child, related to the deceased and of the same sex, was selected one or two days after the funeral. The child was taken to a selected hut where *akalongo* (small pot) was filled with water and placed on the fire. When the water boiled *ubwali* was prepared and this was mixed with *umufuba*. Then the child would simulate the eating of this mixture. As he did this he would be given *ulubalala lwa mupwilapo*, which he must crack between his teeth. Then he was smeared on his forehead with a pinch of the mixture. Thereafter a band of cloth, torn from the shroud at the burial, was tied around the child's loin, who was then made to sit on the deceased's *ichipuna* (stool). He was anointed with *amafuta yachenjela* (fresh oil), which had been kept for centuries. The bow and arrows of the deceased would be placed in the hands of the child (or in the case of a woman, the girl is girded with the cincture), and the finally he would be given *amenshi ya kunwa* (water to drink). It should be noted that it is from this last rite that the name of the ceremony comes: *ukunwa amenshi*. From this time the child would bear the name of the deceased and receive the respect and honour that was accorded to the deceased person.

**UBWALWA BWE SHINDA** (The beer of the clues lit. implied meaning: The beer to erase all clues of death)

A few weeks after the funeral *ubwalwa bwe shinda* was brewed, firstly, to get rid of all the clues of *imfwa* and also to prevent it from striking again. Secondly, *ubwalwa* served as a token of appreciation to all those who attended the funeral. Kambole (ibid)<sup>45</sup>, believes that there was no special ceremony for the preparation of *ubwalwa*, but it is clear that it was brewed by a *munungwe* woman who used *amale* taken from

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<sup>44</sup> Etienne Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Kambole Ibid

the deceased's granary. On the eve of the drinking party, *insupa yabwalwa* (a calabash of beer) was taken to the cemetery, following the path that was taken by the funeral procession, where it was left on the deceased's grave overnight. This gesture was intended to give the deceased a chance to have the first drink. The following day, *ubwalwa* was collected from the cemetery and mixed with the rest of the beer and served to all those who attended the funeral, thus giving everyone a chance to commune with their deceased relative and friend.

**UBWALWA BWA LUPUPO** (Beer drunk in honour of the deceased)

This beer party took place a few weeks after the *ubwalwa bwe shinda*. It was organised in honour of the deceased person. "*Lupupo* was held chiefly to propitiate the manes of the dead person and render them favourable to the living" (Etienne, 1937: 70)<sup>46</sup>. If *lupupo* was not held it was likely that *umupashi* of the deceased would make a nuisance of itself by appearing in everyone's dreams. This time the preparation of *ubwalwa* had two significant rituals to be performed by the *munungwe* responsible for brewing. Firstly, during *ukushimpula ubwalwa* (putting the mixture of *amale* and *umusunga* into hot water), the *mununge* would perform *ukupala* (blessing) expressed in the following phrase: *Nga uli mipashi usuma ubwalwa ubu bukalowe, pakuti bakakuchindike bwino* (If you are a good spirit, let this beer be good and strong, so that your memory may be adequately revered). Secondly, during *ukupota ubwalwa* (mixing *ifipote* with hot water – *ifipote* is a dry mixture of cooked millet and porridge), it is done at the spot where the deceased took his last breath. After this the beer making proceeded in the usual way.

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<sup>46</sup> Etienne Ibid

When *ubwalwa* was ready *ukupala* was enacted by a venerable member of the family (grandfather or grandmother). Kawimbe (in Etienne, 1937)<sup>47</sup>, states that *ukupala* was an earnest appeal made to *umupashi* of the deceased relative, which was expressed as follows: *We mupashi nga uli musuma utwiminine pakuti abantu ba sansamuke bwino, belacita ulubuli* (If you are a good spirit, protect us so that the party may be peaceful with no quarrels to mar the good will of all present). After the beer party *akasupa ka bwalwa* (a small calabash of beer) was carried to the cemetery and the *ubwalwa* was poured on the grave of the deceased. It should be noted that this libation is the proper *lupupo*. If the cemetery was very far *lupupo* was done in a *lufuba* (offering) made in the deceased's fields.

During *lupupo* lamentations, explicit comments and songs were emitted by relatives just to manifest the spirit of the occasion. Here is an example of one of the *lupupo* songs collected from Labrecque's unpublished work:

*Nshinshimune mushimu,*

Let me propitiate the spirits,

*Nali nindala.*

I have been lying down.

*Akashitu akalala mayo kawa amangala*

The grove where my mother lies is adorned with feathers.

*Wilanseka akashamo ico uli na noko*

Do not mock me in my grief since you are still with your mother.

*Nani nobe ukayako ku nshila ya muyayaya?*

Who are you going with on the path that never ends?

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid

*Nalishingwa njikumbate ne mulanda*

I am lonely, let me embrace myself, I whom misfortune has befallen.

*Kushala neka namona amalwa*

Remaining alone makes me suffer a great deal

*Namona ubuland, namona inshiku shambiko.*

I have seen grief, I have seen days of sorrow

*Umwana wa mufu ekala mulukolo*

The orphan sits on the veranda

*Inkumbu shaba, letako akase*

There is grief, bring me a small hoe

*Tukashule nyina uko alala.*

Let us exhume the mother where she lies

*Fwe misusu ya nkoko twakulalubaana.*

We the chicks of the hen shall always be lost.

#### INTERPRETATION

Such songs were intended to show respect for the *umupashi* of the deceased person that is supposed to take care of its living family. The song also reveals the pain and sorrow that the orphans have to go through because of the absence of their protector and provider. On the other hand it serves an appeal to the clan members to get together and ensure that the orphans and the widow or widower are well looked after.

***UBWALWA BWA CHISHINSHI CHINSHI*** (Beer of the silent meeting)

A short time after the celebration of *lupupo*, the family convenes to decide on who was to succeed the deceased (*ukupyana*). The successor replaces the deceased and is endowed with his rightful privileges (Kawimbe, *ibid*)<sup>48</sup>. Beer was brewed with no special ceremonies and as was the meeting convened. The only significant feature was that it was a very quiet occasion. *Chishinshi chinshi* refers to the quiet discussion of pending matters.

#### **UBWALWA BWA CHANSULA MABULA** (Beer for the removing of the leaves)

The name *ubwalwa bwa chansula mabula* alludes to a custom performed when a person of importance in the community has passed away. It was necessary to build *ifisasa* (temporary shelters) in the bush, which were removed or destroyed when the final arrangements of *ukupyana* and *impyani* was named. During this occasion *ubwalwa* was served.

#### **UKUPYANA** (Succession)

When death strikes the clan claims its rights. These are primarily a claim:

- On the *mupashi* of the deceased person.
- On the rights and privileges which the deceased enjoyed during his lifetime.
- On the property he/she has left and the children (Etienne, *ibid*).

As we have seen in the previous sections on *imfwa*, its occurrence places the spouses in a very awkward position as they remain in close contact with *imfwa* (*ali ne mfwa*). This emanates from the most intimate relationship between husband (*umulume*) and wife (*umukashi*). If one dies something of the dead person remains in the living. If the *mupashi* returns it is most likely that it would choose the former partner. That is why

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*

the clan of the deceased has to remove all connections that might still remain. Social functions that the deceased held when living are also taken into account and are preferred to remain within the same clan. It is inevitable that a member of the deceased's clan must inherit all that belonged to the deceased. However, "The children belong to the clan of their mother as the Bemba are matrilineal" (Kambole, *ibid*)<sup>49</sup>.

*Ukupyana* is not done in the same way for every *imfwa*. Depending upon the circumstances and the agreement reached by the clan the following options may be considered:

Firstly, in the case of *shimfwilwa* (widower), *impyani* for his wife must be her sister or a close family member from her clan. The family may choose a married woman or maiden.

#### **UKUPYANA BY A MAIDEN (UMUSHIMBE)**

*Shimfwilwa* and *impyani* have to meet and have sexual intercourse and perform the purification that is done in marriage. They both have to place *akanweno kapalwino* on the fire and likewise remove it afterwards. After this purification they have to take a little *ubunga bwa male* (millet flour) and *mufuba* (prepared by *shinganga* at the purification of the village) in the remaining purification water. This mixture is put on the fire and cooked in the same way as *ubwali* is done (*ukunaya*). Once the mixture is ready officiants both have to take *akalutoshi* (small ball) of the mush and eat it. Etienne (*ibid*)<sup>50</sup>, states that the couple have to remain indoors and observe the following taboos: No fire is allowed to be made and no cooking must be done. Food

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<sup>49</sup> Kambole *Ibid*

<sup>50</sup> Etienne *Ibid*

would be brought for them by relatives and the remains must be thrown far away in the bush.

On the morning of the day ending seclusion, both *shimfwilwa* and *impyani* shave and anoint themselves with *amafuta yachenjela* (virgin oil) taken from the chief of the village. Thereafter the *ukushikula* ceremony takes place outside the hut in the presence of all clan members from both sides. It should be noted that this is a miniature of the *ukushikula* ceremony that takes place during marriage ceremonies (a detailed account is given in chapter 4 page 114). Upon completion of all the purification formalities the maiden has succeeded her relative (*apyana*) and she will bear the name of the deceased and assume all privileges, and as a distinctive sign will wear *umushingo* (girdle) (Kawimbe, *ibid*)<sup>51</sup>. In the early times it was very common that *shimfwilwa* took *impyani* as his wife.

#### **UKUPYANA BY A MARRIED WOMAN**

When a situation where the family of the deceased has no maiden to succeed her sister a married woman is the only option. Ngandu (*ibid*)<sup>52</sup>, indicates that *impyani* in this case takes the name *ichishishi* (light ember) as the name invokes an image such as a live ember being taken momentarily from the fire to perform a passing function, such as lighting a pipe, then returned to its former state. Ngandu further indicates that the married woman will likewise be taken away from her husband only momentarily for the purpose of receiving *imfwa* from *shimfwilwa* and thereafter return to her spouse. *Impyani* in this case will only perform the cleansing ceremony without the knowledge of her husband. She will have to leave him on some pretext or other.

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>52</sup> Ng'andu *Ibid*

As in the case of *ukupyana* by a maiden, sexual intercourse is the purification measure taken. In this case no ritual ablution is performed, but instead both will go into the bush, at the *masansa*, where the funeral procession passed. To perform this purification two *inongo*, one bearing the name Kalubi (little idol) and representing the deceased woman, the other *Chikota* (the female), are used for mixing ground roots *mubwilili* and *musamba mfwa* together with *mufuba*. A fire is made for preparing the decoction and as the *impyani* places and removes the *inongo* on the fire, *shimfwilwa* will not touch them, but have contact and participate by placing his hands on *impyani's* shoulders. When the decoction is warm *shimfwilwa* has to smear it on his hands and soles of his feet, while *impyani* has to smear it on her hands, arms and face. The decoction used for this purpose must come from *Chikota* while those from *Kalubi* are thrown on the path that the funeral procession followed. When they return home there is no seclusion or *ukushikula* because *impyani's* husband must not catch wind of this *ukupyana*.

Upon *impyani's* return to her husband, she must observe various taboos, such as *tutema* and *chilolela*, after having sexual intercourse with him. This is the case since she did not perform the ablution during *ukupyana*, and purification must be done without any knowledge of her husband. The purification she has to perform would include the use of *kokolwe* (a root) which she has to secretly put in *akalongo ka palwino* (the pot used for purification after sexual intercourse) as they enact purification after sexual intercourse. This subsequent ablution will have the effect of washing away any

pollution. “This cute trick played on her husband is kept as a secret for the rest of her life” (Kambole, *ibid*)<sup>53</sup>.

Secondly, in the case of a widow (*mukamfwilwa*) the clan may choose a married man or a bachelor (*nkungulume*) as the other officiant.

### **UKUPYANA BY A MARRIED MAN**

This is not a secret proceeding, but the husband must come to an understanding with his wife. In most cases, as a protective measure, the wife would give her husband *akalungu akabuta* (white beads) or a small strip of cloth from her *umushingo*, which he would tie around his wrist or to any part of his body. At the moment of sexual intercourse that *akalungu* or *umushingo* would be placed on the bed next to the *umushingo* of the widow. This is meant to deliver the *mukamfwilwa* (widow) from death. The *akalongo ka palwino* (the pot used for purification after sexual intercourse) would be prepared by *mukamfwilwa's* relatives and both would place it on and remove it from the fire. They would wash their fingers with the *muti* in *akalongo* and then prepare a small *bwali* made from *mwangwe* and *mufuba* (prepared by the *shinganga* when performing the post-funeral purification of the village) mixed with *ichiko* (scrapings of dirt from the deceased's bow). When the mush is ready, both would swallow *ulutoshi* (small ball) and if the deceased had children, they too must eat of the mush (which is called *kakabe*) (Etienne, *ibid*)<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> Kambole *Ibid*

<sup>54</sup> Etienne *Ibid*

For the purification of the rest of the clan members *amafuta yachenjela* is mixed with a little *mufuba*, *ichiko* and *inkula*, which would be used for smearing their hands and arms. In the early days this oil mixture would also be sent in small bottles to all relatives even living far away. Seclusion and *ukushikula* would follow after the purification (it takes the same format as that in the case of a maiden). *Impyani* is thus endowed with the name, functions and dignity of the deceased relative. Kambole (ibid)<sup>55</sup>, notes that if *impyani* so wills, the woman may become his second wife. If not, she is free to 'get married to' (marry) somebody else. Kambole further notes that in Bemba tradition polygamy happened mainly due to such situations as *ukupyana* (as shown above) and the reason for this was to take care of the deceased's family by a surviving relative.

If it happened that *mukamfwilwa* was taken as a second wife, the two women must exchange the wifely insignia. This was done by the husband getting both *imishingo* and then after sexual intercourse with each of his wives, *imishingo* would be sprinkled with the purification water from *akalongo kapalwino* (pot used for purification after sexual intercourse). Lastly, the two women must exchange fires (*usansha umulilo*).

#### **UKUPYANA BY A BACHELOR** (*Nkungulume*)

In this case *impyani* would have sexual intercourse with *mukamfwilwa* and then perform the purification ritual. Just as in the case above, *akalongo ka palwino* would be prepared by the relatives of *mukamfwilwa* and then both would place it and remove it from the fire. They would purify their fingers in the *muti* and then prepare a small *bwali* made from the mixture of *mwangwe*, *mufuba* and *ichiko*. When the mush is

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<sup>55</sup> Kambole Ibid

ready, both would swallow a small *ulutoshi* and the same must apply to the children of the deceased person. As explained above, the mixture of *amafuta yachenjela* would be given to all the members of the clan for their purification. Seclusion and *ukushikula* would proceed after the purification (it takes the format as that in the case above). Should *impyani* find it appropriate, especially if *mukamfwilwa* is young and suitable, he would decide to take her as his wife. Mukolongo (ibid)<sup>56</sup>, observes that in such a situation *impyani* would not be expected to give marriage payments, likewise no marriage ceremonies would be celebrated. However he would assume the title and functions of his predecessor and look after the family.

Due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic the Bemba are no longer keen to use sexual intercourse as a purification measure for anyone who loses a spouse. This matter has been discussed at length in the House of Chiefs, of the Zambian Parliament, and a general consensus has been reached where traditional practices that endanger the lives of people have been discouraged. Kazembe (2003)<sup>57</sup>, Paramount Chief of the Lunda, recommend that it was the duty of those in positions of authority, like chiefs, to review and discourage some of the traditions and customs which threatened the lives of people. Kazembe further pointed out that chiefs should use their office to help combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic in order to save the lives of the people they lead. What is commonly practiced today as observed by Mukolongo (ibid)<sup>58</sup>, is that a few days after the funeral a meeting known as *isambo lyamfwa* is held. At this gathering the cause of *imfwa* is revealed to the clan and at the same time *impyani* is named. If *impyani* is a married man he would be asked to have sexual intercourse with his wife

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<sup>56</sup> Mukolongo Ibid

<sup>57</sup> Mwata Kazembe Kanyembo (Paramount chief of the Lunda), 2003 December 10, Government of the republic of Zambia unpublished document.

<sup>58</sup> Mukolongo Ibid

(*akaba*) and then take *ubulungu ubwabuuta* and tie it around *mukamfwilwa*'s wrist. *Impemba* will be smeared on *mukamfwilwa*'s forehead and *impyani* would bless her (*ukupala amate*) and *mukamfwilwa* is free from *imfwa*. The family of the deceased would then hand *impyani* the *imishingo* of the deceased and *Impyani* is thus endowed with the name, functions and dignity of the deceased relative. The same procedure is followed in the case when *impyani* is a married woman. However, if *impyani* is a maiden or a bachelor there is no act of sexual intercourse involved in the purification, but *mukamfwilwa* will be smeared with *impemba* on her forehead and *impyani* would bless her. The family of the deceased would then hand her *impyani* with *imishingo* of the deceased. *Impyani* is thus endowed with the name, functions and dignity of the deceased relative.

#### **IMIKOWA** (Totems – *Umukowa* sing.)

Since Bemba life revolves around the clan system, the clan is determined by *umukowa*. The *umukowa* is a particular sign, often an animal, tree or grass, which serves as a distinctive sign for which the clan is recognised. This identification indicates a tie of blood between individuals having the same *umukowa*. A person has *umukowa* from his father and his mother, but the one that matters is the one that comes from the mother. As it is already pointed out, the reason for this is because the Bemba are matrilineal. Malama (*ibid*)<sup>59</sup>, points out that a person may claim that from his father he is *umwina nama ishikulu* (big animals) and *umwina bowa* (mushrooms) from his mother, therefore he is *umwina bowa* because of his mother. In the case of inheritance the children look up to their uncle (*nalume* – male mother lit.) and not

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<sup>59</sup> Malama *Ibid*

father or his brothers. Kambole (ibid)<sup>60</sup>, continues that in the case of the *bena ngandu* (crocodile and royal clan) the chief's nephews (his sister's sons) are the ones who can succeed him. The oldest *nalume* assumes the role of head of the clan and he is expected to make decisions and ensure that all is well within the clan. There is no formal appointment that is made as age and wisdom are the deciding factors. Labrecque (ibid)<sup>61</sup>, found out that the origin of *imikowa* is not known, but it may be due to a mysterious superstitious association with the forces and characteristics of families with a particular animal, object or a rallying sign of migrating families (*chipanduko* – a symbolic object). Labrecque further found out that on each individual *imikowa* impose prescriptions to be observed or taboos to be followed.

The following list will give an example of *imikowa* and their classification according to their objects of origin. It should be noted that this is not the complete list of all *imikowa*. (The prefix *umwina* refers to a single person and *abena* to several people):

#### **ANIMALS (*Inama*)**

Abena ngandu (crocodile)	Abena mpuku (field rat)
Abena nsofu (elephant)	Abena nkamba (tortoise)
Abena nkalamo (lion)	Abena luo (frog)
Abena ngo (leopard)	Abena milongo (white ant)
Abena mbwa (dog)	Abena mboo (buffalo)
Abena mbushi (goat)	Abena nsengo (antelope)
Abena ngulube (bush pig)	Abena kaongwa (elephant)
Abena isabi (fish)	Abena inama (wild animals)
Abena kashimu (bee)	Abena nsoka (snake)
Abena nguni (honey bird)	Abena nshimba (civet cat)

#### **MINERALS (*Umukuba*)**

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<sup>60</sup> Kambole Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Labrecque Ibid

Abena mbulo (iron)

Abena lungu (iron forge)

**UTENSILS AND SOUND INSTRUMENTS (*Ifipe* and *iflimba*)**

Abena nongo (pot)

Abena nsupa (calabash)

Abena mumba (pot)

Abena ngoma (drum)

**WEATHER**

Abena mfula (rain)

**PLANTS AND FOOD (*Ifilimwa* and *ifyakulya*)**

Abena bwali (maize, sorghum)

Abena masuku (fruit)

Abena male (millet)

Abena nkonde (banana)

Abena kaleshi (millet)

Abena miti (tree)

Abena besa (millet)

Abena cani (grass)

Abena mono (castor oil)

Abena kani (grass)

Abena bowa (mushroom)

Abena citondo, pumbwa,  
Samfwe, ngona (mushroom)

**PEOPLE (*Abantu*)**

Abena nkashi (sister)

(Labrecque, 1947: 20)<sup>62</sup>

The following list offers an example of some of *imikowa* with their correlating *mikowa* (*abanungwe*):

**UMUKOWA**

**CORELATIVE MUKOWA**

Abena ngandu (crocodile and royal clan)

Abena luo, isabi

Abena ngo (leopard)

Abena nama, imbushi

Abena mfula (rain)

Abena mbulo, nkalamo

Bwali, bowa, kani

Abena mumba (Mupundu fruit)

Abena ngoma, mbulo

Abena mumba nongo (pot)

Abena mfula

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid

Abena mumba mungu (edible gourd)	Abena mfula
Abena ngombe (cattle)	Abena mbulo
Abena isabi (fish)	Abena ngandu
Abena kani (grass)	Abena mfula
Abena miti (trees)	Abena mumba, mbulo
Abena nsofu (elephant)	Abena mbulo
Abena mbulo (iron)	Abena nsofu, miti, mfula
Abena bowa (mushroom)	Abena mfula
Abena luo (frog)	Abena ngandu
Abena kaleshi (eleusinian millet)	Abena nguni, mbulo, mfula
Abena ngona (small mushrooms)	Abena mfula
Abena kashimu (bee)	Abena nguni
Abena ngulube (bush pig)	Abena bwali, kani
Abena mbeba (rat)	Abena bwali, kani
Abena nsoka (snake)	Abena kani, mbeba
Abena nguni (bird)	Abena bwali

(Etienne, 1937: 111)<sup>63</sup>

It is important to note that every clan has its *banungwe* (correlative clan which has already been mentioned when explaining the funeral and purification ceremonies). To illustrate the correlation of *imikowa* here are some examples:

***ABENA NKALAMO*** (The lion clan)

The lion is a carnivorous animal and the Bemba believed that the commonest and easiest animal it could catch was *igulube* (bush pig). Therefore, the *banungwe* of *abena nkalamo* are *abena nama* especially *abena ngulube*.

***ABENA NG'ANDU*** (The crocodile and royal clan)

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<sup>63</sup> Etienne Ibid

The crocodile lives mostly on fish and frogs found in the water. Therefore, *abanungwe* of *abena ngandu* are *abena isabi* and *abena luo*.

#### **ABENA MFULA** (The rain clan)

Rain water provides nourishment to the grain, which is used for making flour (that is used for the preparation of *ubwali*), and also to all the plants that grow on land. Therefore, *abanungwe* of *abena mfula* are *abena bowa*. *Abena mbulo* (iron clan) are also *abanungwe* of *abena mfula* because water was used to temper the iron.

The relationship between *umukowa* and *abanungwe* is intimate to an extent that the *abanungwe* are at liberty to revile and curse the others without anyone taking offence. This kind of relation is usually expressed during occasions such as the appearance of the new moon, marriages, funerals etc. It is amazing that even the chiefs, who are usually meticulous, do not take offence of *abanungwe*'s behaviour. To keep *abanungwe* quiet the chiefs usually offer them small gifts known as *ichisombo*.

Some *imikowa* have certain prerogatives that go with them and are highly respected by the Bemba. For instance:

*Abena ngandu* – people of the royal clan

*Abena male, kaleshi, besa* – these are people who are grave diggers for the chiefs

*Abena nsofu, luo, mbao* – these are the hierarchy of priests

Chipalo (in Labrecque, 1947)<sup>64</sup>, claims that each *umukowa* uses expressions or passwords that other members of the same *umukowa* would recognise. In this way a person could be helped with food or shelter. Some of these expressions include:

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<sup>64</sup> Labrecque Ibid

*Umwina nsofu – nafwa kaongwa akalupota kubuta* (I am dying, I the elephant with a white task).

*Umwina mfula – nafwa kasambi ne mwina pa ngamo* (I am dying for rain, I who live in a grove).

*Umwina mbushi – nafwa ne mwina mbushi ne ukulwa ku mwando* (I am dying, I the goat who is drawn with a rope).

### **AMALYO AND IMIPAMBA** (Good and bad omens)

Kapwepwe (2003)<sup>65</sup>, believes that in the Bemba tradition there are many superstitious beliefs about omens and dreams. Some omens are viewed as good while others are bad. The good omens are commonly known as *amalyo* (referred to in the phrase – *ukumona amalyo*) while the bad omens are known as *imipamba* (referred to in the phrase – *ukutola imipamba*). Here are some of *amalyo* listed by Kapwepwe:

To have an itchy feeling in the palm of the hand, known as *kabafi*, means that one will receive a gift.

An itchy sensation under the feet means that one will receive visitors who have been on a long journey.

To meet a woman carrying a pot of beer on her head means good luck.

To find a *lucebu* or *mwabi* (coleoptera) in your path means a good meal ahead.

To see *mulumbwalumbwa* (black and white hawk bird) flying ahead of you means that you will find good things where you are going.

To see *impombo* (a duiker) crossing the road to your right signifies a good future ahead.

A nervous twitching of the upper eyelid (*ichipa cha linso chiteba*) is good luck.

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<sup>65</sup> Kapwepwe Ibid

To feel one's mouth watering (salivate) means a feast or much pleasure and enjoyment lies ahead.

To swallow *lunshi* (a fly) is sign of good luck.

Here are some of *imipamba* listed by Kapwepwe:

To find *luminuminu* (earthworm) along the way means that there will be a death in one's family.

The twitching of the lower lid of the eye (*mponesha filamba*) means that tears of sorrow will soon fall from your eye.

To see a dry branch of a tree fall in front of you (*ukuponenwa ne chileka*), which is a dead part of the tree, portends death.

To dream of *inkalamo* (lion) walking towards you along the road or in your house is a sign of bad luck.

To see a moving *ifwafwa* (python) signifies the death of someone close.

To hear *nkondonkondo* (green pigeon) cooing is a curse.

It is a sign of bad luck when *isembe* (axe) falls from *umupini* (the handle) while someone is working. It is a warning against a fatal accident.

To hear *swelele* (owl) screech signifies death, especially if someone in the family is seriously ill.

Finding *iyongolo* (snake) lying still across the doorway is a sign of death in the family.

If a *kabambala* (caterpillar) falls on a pregnant woman it means she will have a miscarriage.

Chipalo (ibid), claims that during marriage training the midwife (*nachimbusa*) takes time to share these *amalyo* and *imipamba* with the bride (*nabwinga*) so that she may learn that life is not always enjoyable, there are also sad moments.

## **BEMBA NAMES AND THEIR MEANINGS**

*Ishina lya mutoto* (the name of the navel) given to a person at birth can never be changed. However it is a usual practice for the Bemba to adopt new names at various stages of their lives or even when there is a change in life circumstances. As people experiences life and acquire skills and capabilities, they would show this in the form of praise of one's qualities (*ukuilumba*). In other cases such names would come from other people because of the reputation or particular character traits that one displays (Kapwepwe, ibid)<sup>66</sup>. Physical appearance or peculiarities also gave rise to new names for people. Kapwepwe (ibid)<sup>67</sup>, further notes that when a couple married, there was no obligation for the woman to take her husband's name, or the husband to take his wife's name. However, when their first child was born, both parents changed their names to indicate that they had become parents. For instance if the firstborn child was *Mulenga*, the new father would be called *shiMulenga* (father of *Mulenga*) and the new mother *naMulenga* (mother of *Mulenga*). If this is the first grandchild then automatically the grandparents would be called *shikuluMulenga* (grandfather of *Mulenga*) and *nakuluMulenga* (grandmother of *Mulenga*).

“During their marriage if a couple gave birth to *bampundu* (twins), the name of the firstborn was automatically taken over by this event and the couple would be known as *shiMpundu* (father of twins) and *naMpundu* (mother of twins)” (Kapwepwe,

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<sup>66</sup> Kapwepwe Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

ibid)<sup>68</sup>. Likewise the grandparents would be known as *shikuluMpundu* (grandfather of twins) and *nakuluMpundu* (grandmother of twins). Kambole (ibid)<sup>69</sup>, notes that the child born after *bampundu* was always called *Chola* and was seen as *umupamba* (bad omen). The names of the parents then changed from *shiMpundu* and *naMpundu* to *shiChola* (father of *Chola*) and *naChola* (mother of *Chola*).

Bemba names also take different structures and forms such as an entire phrase that has historical significance and describes the qualities or attributes of the person who bears it. Examples of these names are listed by Kapwepwe as follows:

*Chiluba waluba kuben bukwe* – *Chiluba* the one who does not know where his in-laws are (one who is lost, *ukuluba* – to be lost).

*Chilufya wa lufya manga ne yakwe* – *Chilufya* who has lost the charms or fetishes. (*ilufya* – forgetfulness).

*Chilumba nkankala* – the arrogance of being wealthy (*Chilumba* – arrogance, *nkankala* – wealthy).

*Chisenga Bantu mpanga ya nama* – The soil is for humans, the forest is for animals (*Chisenga* – soil, *mpanga* – forest, *nama* – animals).

*Chishala mwitilwa mpangu* – The rubbish heap where the discarded items are thrown (*Chishala* – rubbish heap, *mpango* – discarded articles or left behind when people move to a new village).

*Kanyanta mu filundu* – the one who steps/walks on the bark cloth (*ukunyanta* – to step, *ifilundu* – pieces of cloth made from bark of a tree).

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Kambole Ibid

Sometimes people composed poems in praise of themselves (*amalumbo*) and from this a name was derived. For example:

*Nine Mulundu umoneka, muka Cholwe* – I am *Mulundu*, the hill that is seen, the husband of *Cholwe*.

*Nine Chongo wa tundusa, muka Musonda* – I am *Chongo*, the corpulent one, the husband of *Musonda*.

*Nine Chisongo nama mbi, mushifumbulwa mukoshi, muka Mumbo* – I am *Chisongo* (bushbuck), the ugly animal that has a large neck that is difficult to share, the husband of *Mumbo*.

Mutale (ibid)<sup>70</sup>, observes that some meanings of Bemba names have changed due to changes in the socioeconomic structure of Bemba society today. Besides depicting the local ecology, animal and plant life, mineral and natural phenomena, some names derive from man-made objects and different implements that are used in daily life. Influences from external forces, such as Europeans, have also contributed greatly to the formation of new names and their meanings. Kapwepwe (ibid)<sup>71</sup>, adds that some names and their meanings show the structure and historical evolution of the Bemba government and monarchy. In many instances, people gave a chief names that referred to particular qualities of his character, his style of leadership or circumstances leading to his succession. Kambole (ibid)<sup>72</sup>, further points out that it was also very common to use names derived from those of divinities, demi-gods and nature spirits of the Bemba spiritual realms.

Names that derived from climatic conditions, natural features and phenomena:

*Mufumbi* – continuous rain

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<sup>70</sup> Mutale Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Kapwepwe Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Kambole Ibid

*Mwela* – wind

*Kalumba* – lightning

*Matongo* – desert

*Chongo* – noise

*Lubilo* – speed

*Kasuba* – sun

*Chipanta* – dry spell in the rainy season

Names derived from craftsmen and social positions:

*Chibinda* – expert craftsman or artist

*Kafula* – blacksmith

*Kasomo* – leader of a troupe, the flag bearer

*Mupendwa* – a great antbear hunter

*Muloshi* – sorcerer

Names derived from plants, animals and insects:

*Bwalanda* – a mushroom that grows on the bark of a dead tree

*Changwe* – euphorbiaceae tree

*Chembe* – fish-eagle

*Chinungi* – porcupine

*Chikwekwe* – a species of the roller bird

*Kashembe* – tsetse fly

*Matete* – reeds

Names derived from human qualities:

*Bulwani* – enmity, hostility

*Bupe* – generosity, liberality, a gift

*Busuma* – beauty (moral or physical)

*Chintomfwa* – a stubborn person

*Kasalwe* – the chosen one

*Lwinso* – a man who courts many girls

*Mwenso* – fear, timidity, cowardice

*Masange* – joyful, playful

Names derived from tools or objects, activities and phenomena:

*Bwanga* – charm

*Cheswa* – broom

*Chikweta* – a kind of dance

*Chinkumbi* – slit drum (musical instrument - idiophone)

*Kabondo* – a bracelet of beads

*Lumbwe* – consort of a queen

*Nkoloso* – platform on which millet is dried

Names derived from human body parts and sensations:

*Chanshi* – muscle cramp

*Kwapa* – armpit

*Mafupa* – bones

*Chitangala* – bladder

*Mulopa* – blood

*Mpofu* – blind person

*Mate* – saliva

Names derived from position of a child at birth in a family:

*Chola* – the child who is born soon after twins (referred to as the one who takes away the swelling of the twins).

*Kasapo* – a child born after the mother was given the *kasapo* charm for fertility.

*Kabinda* – last born

*Mpundu* – twin

*Chisanga* – child from another marriage

*Lesá* – child born unexpectedly (*lesa* – God)

*Luse* – child born when parents are advanced in age (*luse* lit. - kindness)

Names derived from external contact:

*Bulaya* – Europe

*Bungoni* – Nyasaland

*Chikoti* – sjyambok

*Chibiliti* – matches (Swahili)

*Kapitolo* – capital

*Kalyati* - Prison

*Melu* – mail

*Ndalama* – money

*Musonko* – tax

*Pensulo* – pencil

Names derived from spiritual deities, divinities and demi – gods:

*Changa*

*Chisha*

*Kabanda*

*Kapambwe* (*Kapembwa* – according to the Mambwe or Lungu people)

*Mulenga*

*Musonda*

*Mwenya*

Names derived from ancestral spirits:

*Chanda*

*Chewe*

*Kabwe*

*Kampinda*

*Katongo*

*Mwaba*

*Nondo*

It should be noted that since the Bemba functioned within social structures that delineated clan groupings which identified relationships and roles between groups and individuals, *imikowa* (totems) were established as family names. That is why we find that if we compare in the western sense, the Bemba do not have names that could be referred to as surnames. Kapwepwe argues that:

*“Imikowa, were critical spiritual, genealogical, historical, political and ritual symbols for the Bemba. Important information was stored in the meanings of these imikowa and the names held important accounts in the collective memory of the people. With the advent of Christianity and colonialism, many people were forced to take a surname. Surnames were not a feature of Bemba naming structures. That is why today quite a good number of people use their imikowa as their surnames” (2003, 26)<sup>73</sup>.*

From this quotation, Kapwepwe alluded to Christianity and colonisation. It is very clear that the transformation of the socio-structure of Bemba society today has led to the assimilation and/or adaptation of cultural practices pertaining to the people who interact and live with the Bemba. This interaction with other people has resulted into some foreign names acquiring Bemba versions. Here are some of the foreign names that have acquired Bemba versions:

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<sup>73</sup> Mulenga Kapwepwe (2003) *Some Bemba Names and their Meanings*, Lusaka: Published by Mulenga kapwepwe.

*Afe* – Heavy

*Andele* – Andrew

*Fulanko* – Francis

*Malita* – Martha

*Ndeni* – Denis

*Ndolotiya* – Dorothy

*Ngoloshitino* - Augustine

*Shetu* – Gertrude

*Safeli* – Xavier

*Yusufu* – Joseph

#### **NAMES ASSOCIATED TO THE BEMBA MONARCHY**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the name Chitimukulu was established as the title for the Bemba chiefs (*chiti* – tree, *mukulu* – in Luba language means eldest). Like their subjects, Bemba chiefs take an additional name given to them by their subjects. These names often pertain to the qualities, character and style of leadership that the chief displays. In some cases names came from circumstances leading to the succession of a particular chief. The first chief of the Bemba was known by the name Chiti mu Luba (*Chiti* a Luba) whose name was later changed to Chitimukulu.

The following are some of the names of the chiefs listed by Kapwepwe:

*Chitimukulu Chilufya cha mata yabili*

*Chilufya cha mata yabili* (*Chilufya* with the two bows; *amata* – bows, *yabili* – two).

When *Chilufya*'s uncle *Nkole* died he was too young to rule. His uncle *Chimba* acted as regent until he was ready to take over. As a result of this arrangement *Chilufya* was

given two royal hunting bows from his uncles and hence the name *Chilufya cha mata yabili*.

#### *Chitimukulu Chibengele*

*Chitimukulu Chibengele* marched to battle so often and took over so much land and wealth from the neighbouring tribes. His military action was likened to the white ant (*chibengele*), which devours all things in its way at great speed.

#### *Chitimukulu Salala abana bonke*

*Chitimukulu Salala abana bonke* was a fierce warrior, who silenced all the enemies and brought peace to LuBemba (Bembaland). Due to the peace that prevailed in his kingdom people could raise their children properly. He was named *Salala abana bonke* meaning 'lie back and let the children feed from your breast'.

#### *Chitimukulu Lwipa chichila mabyalwa*

(*chichila* comes from *ukuchila* which means to surpass, and *mabyalwa* means siblings). Despite being young, *Lwipa* was favoured as the chief because of his sober and thoughtful character.

Kapwepwe (Ibid)<sup>74</sup>, observes that as the Bemba established themselves in the present day LuBemba, they also established royal positions which bore the titles of the first office holders. These titles are presently used upon inheritance of a position in the royal establishment. Kapwepwe (ibid)<sup>75</sup>, further observes that some of these titles came from names of notable people who led the Luba migration.

Some of these titles include:

*Chitikafula* – Royal embalmer and high priest

*Nkolemambwe* – Royal embalmer

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

*Lumpombwe* – Pall bearer for Chitimukulu and senior advisor

*Kapukuma* – Royal physician

*Maloba* – One who performs the burial rituals for the Chitimukulu

*Kafulakuma* – One who is in charge of Chitimukulu's logistics in times of travel.

## TIMES AND SEASONS

The natural environment provided the knowledge and sense of time and seasons. People often observed the colour of the sky, movement of wind, changes in vegetation and the cycles of the sun (*akasuba*) and moon (*umweshi*). Kapwepwe (ibid)<sup>76</sup>, notes that due to the changes in seasons, the natural world, peoples' and animals' activities the Bemba measured time. Hence a complete cycle of seasons and accompanying agricultural activities was known as *umwaka* (one year). The position of the sun during daytime was the main time indicator and this was expressed in various phrases such as:

*Akasuba katula* (the sun has risen) – 06:00 hours

*Akasuba kaba pakati ka mutwe* (the sun is at the middle of the head) – 12:00 hours

*Akasuba kasendama* (the sun is sleeping) – 15:00 hours

*Akasuba kaya ku kuwa* (the sun is almost falling) – 17:00 hours

*Akasuba kawa* (the sun has fallen) – 18:00 hours

*Pakati kabushiku* (at the middle of the night) – 24:00 hours

Activities of the sun, moon and stars (*intanda*) marked *ubushiku nakasuba* (night and day), and a complete cycle of night and day was expressed as *ubushiku bumo* (one day). The Bemba did not have divisions of time equivalent to a week. However, with the advent of Christianity and colonialism the measure of a week (*umulungu umo*)

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid

was included (Kapwepwe, *ibid*). Otherwise the complete cycle of the moon was known as *umweshi umo*.

The cycles of the moon played a very important role in determining what activities the people would be involved in, and when. It was common practice to celebrate the new moon and the event was characterised by shouts of greetings and praise. *Uku chimba umweshi* or *uku banula umweshi* were common phrases that expressed celebration of the new moon. The moon was closely observed and special attention was paid with regard to its shape, size and brightness. Kambole (*ibid*)<sup>77</sup>, found out that the full moon was a sign of happiness and excitement, and its appearance caused the people to stay out late talking, singing and dancing. Kambole further found out that during this time *ukwalikana* (mock fights) took place between *imikowa* and their *banungwe*. Certain rituals, such as *ilamfya* (the great - war horn of the tribe), were performed when the moon appeared crescent-shaped. The monthly ceremony, which involved the exhibition of *ilamfya* at a special place in the village, was known as *ukwandila ilamy*. Within families it was usual practice for young children to celebrate the appearance of the new moon by asking for a gift from their grandparents. Such a gift was known as *ichisombo* which was usually a chicken or small trinket. The moon was not only associated with joy and excitement, but also with fear it brought fear during the time when it disappeared. The absence of the moon was known as *lupaluba* (*luba* means to get lost or disappear). During such times people often feared to travel as there was a great risk of getting lost, and they also went to bed early.

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<sup>77</sup> Kambole *Ibid*

There were certain beliefs and taboos that were associated with the seasons which the people adhered to very strictly. A child born during a thunderstorm was perceived to be weak and not normal. Such a child was referred to as *mumbuluminwa*. It was believed that the children born during the dry season (*ulusuba*) would be healthier than those born during the rainy season (*amainsa*). It was considered extremely unlucky and harmful if a girl experienced her first menses during the hot season (*ulusuba lukalamba*) and this was expressed in the phrase ‘*ukuwa ichisungu ulusuba*’ (to experience first menses during the hot season). Kapwepwe, notes that “*Chisungu* rites could not be held between the months of September (*ulupukutu lukalamba*) and November (*ulusuba lukalamba*), when the trees are shedding their leaves, as it was considered *umupamba* (bad omen) to bring a young girl into womanhood when the earth was dry and trees were dying” (2003: 13)<sup>78</sup>. Between January (*Akabengele kanono* – *kabengele* means termite and *kanono* means small) and March (*Kutumpu*) chiefs could not be installed as this period was not auspicious. Dreaming of the rain during the dry season was *umupamba* which signified death. The rain in such a dream would be interpreted as untimely tears.

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<sup>78</sup> Mulenga Kapwepwe (2003) *Times and Seasons in Bemba*, Lusaka: Published by Mulenga Kapwepwe.

## CHAPTER 2

### UKUSONGA AND UKUKOBEKELA

Marriage among the Bemba may be seen as a rite of passage for the couple concerned, through which they are transferred from the unmarried to married group and thereby undergo a change of status in their society. In Bemba terms this is a transfer from *nkungulume* (bachelor) state for the young man, and *umushimbe* (spinster) state for the young woman, to a state of social maturity. But Bemba marriage is more than this. Marriage alliances establish kinship ties between two families and not just between two individuals, and carry a set of basic rules for the marriage partners and their families, which govern their social and domestic interaction. These rules carry certain social, moral, economic and legal obligations which may not be ignored, and they have a reciprocal effect on the marriage, the domestic and financial arrangements in it and the wider social and kinship linkages, which aim at establishing cordial relations between them. A marriage also entails the loss of a family member especially in the case of the young woman who is expected to be absorbed into the family of the young man. This has the potential to disturb the desired accord and equilibrium between the kinship groups which must be maintained at all times. This is secured by certain expected behaviour and essential acts that are a vital part of the traditional Bemba marriage customs.

Within them are a number of significant social conventions which should be kept in mind if the unique features and implications of Bemba traditional marriage are to be understood, and also the important role music plays in them.

When a young man is old enough to marry, he is encouraged by his elder brothers, his uncles or even his friends to look for a girl to marry. Upon finding a suitable girl, he

will obviously have to tell some close members of his family about his intentions. Most young men prefer to inform their grandparents first, and still do today. When the course of love has run smoothly and the young man wishes to bring the matter to public attention, *apabuuta*, he will have to tell his father that he wants to marry *ukuupa*. *Apabuuta* means 'in broad daylight', which in this sense is an implication of an obligatory action that must be open to public scrutiny. Some young men fail to approach their fathers personally and rely on their grandparents to request their parents to begin marriage negotiations. The parents will then discuss the matter with their son's uncles and aunts and decide who is to approach the girl's parents about marriage. Approaching the girl's family is a delicate matter and requires very tactful handling, and so a go-between, called *Shibukombe* is carefully chosen to act as an ambassador. A *Shibukombe* does not belong to either of the families, that of the young man or woman.

He is an independent, elderly, respected and trusted member of the community on whose tact and goodwill the young man's family can rely. His duty is performed with great care, skill and diplomacy. The ability to negotiate successfully raises his status within his community. *Shibukombe* is responsible for facilitating the actions and reactions between the two groups (families), and is better able to deal with any misunderstandings and rebuffs than the young man's parents, who are actually involved in the matter. According to Bemba custom a woman is never chosen as *Shibukombe*, and the young woman's family may not employ anyone to act as *Shibukombe* on their behalf. The position of *Shibukombe* also requires the services of a person who knows very well *intambi* (the Bemba traditions, customs and values), and the traditions of the particular area in which he is operating.

## 2.1. UKUSONGA AND UKUKOBEKELA

*Ukusonga* is the first step in the marriage negotiations. After a *Shibukombe* has been identified by the young man's family, the formal betrothal presentation is arranged. Then a message is sent to the young woman's parents, through the young woman herself, to inform them that they are going to receive special visitors.

A convenient date is set in the same manner. After securing the services of a *Shibukombe*, the young man's family arranges for the betrothal gift, called *insalamo*, to be taken to the parents of the young woman (Chondoka 1988: 87)<sup>79</sup>. In earlier times, *insalamo* consisted of a small amount of money (cash in local currency Kwacha) or a copper wire bracelet known as *ulusambo*. *Ubulungu* (beads) and other small valuables were also accepted as *insalamo* (Chondoka *ibid*)<sup>80</sup>.

The traditional way of bearing *insalamo* to the father of the young woman is by placing it in between two special marriage plates, the one plate covering the other, and the gift upon it. Such plates are known as *indupe* and are woven from river-reeds. However, nowadays such *indupe* may be replaced with enamel plates which are called *amabakuli* (*ibakuli* sing.). According to Innocent Malama, traditional *indupe* are rarely used nowadays because they are very difficult to find, people no longer make them, and they are not available in the town shops. Enamel plates are readily available in the markets in towns, in common use, and may serve the same purpose of *indupe* without distorting or offending tradition (Personal communication, Innocent Malama, January 30, 2001)<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> Yezenge A. Chondoka, *TRADITIONAL MARRIAGES IN ZAMBIA- A Study in Cultural History*, Ndola: Published and Printed by Mission Press, 1988

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>81</sup> Innocent Malama, a retired assistant General Manager for the Zambia State Insurance Corporation. Personal informant, January 30, 2001.

It is the special task of *Shibukombe*, who knows the locality of the young woman's parents, as well as other information about them and their daughter to make a journey to their home in order to deliver *insalamo*. He is accompanied by a number of people who act as escorts, and the delivery is usually made on a Saturday afternoon. This represents a slight change in custom, since *insalamo* was previously delivered in the early evening, so that the negotiations would not interfere with the daily chores of the family members. The current practice of *insalamo* presentations at nightfall is therefore one of convenience, to suit Bemba people's modern life style and daily routines (Ilunga, 2002)<sup>82</sup>.

At the young woman's home, *shibukombe* and his entourage present themselves to her parents, who are attended by other family members, the young woman herself, and her aunts and uncles. After the customary warm welcome by the host members, *shibukombe* carefully explains the purpose of his visit, framing his words according to expected language conventions. For example, he speaks in the first person, as if he is the one who intends to marry. He draws upon a number of stock phrases which are a standard feature of this procedure in the marriage negotiations, a common opening phrase being '*Ndefwaya ukukakila*' (I have come to be engaged to your daughter), (Chondoka, *ibid*)<sup>83</sup>. The declaration of his intentions to marry the daughter of the family will be visibly endorsed by his presentation of *insalamo* to her father. Before accepting it, the father will ask the girl: '*Bushe namubeshiba aba Bantu?*' meaning 'Do you know these people?' If she replies in the affirmative, he will accept the plates, referred to as *ifipe*, which contain *insalamo*. He will then ask *shibukombe* to come for his formal answer to his marriage proposal, at a later date (to be decided

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<sup>82</sup> Phoebe Ilunga, commonly known as mama Ilunga, is a prominent nachimbusa and panellist serving on the Zambia National Broadcasting Services Banachimbusa Programme. Personal informant, January 24, 2002.

<sup>83</sup> Chondoka, *ibid*

upon). This is also done in a very formal manner, with the young woman's father saying something like: "*Twaumfwa fyonse ifyo mwalanda, lelo tuli nokumyasuka*" meaning that "we have heard all you have said; however, we will respond later" (Kapwepwe 1994: 21)<sup>84</sup>. During the negotiating formalities, the hosts' family provide refreshments for their guests, in the form of beer. The matter of whether or not the young woman had a previous betrothal will also be discussed (Ilunga, *ibid*)<sup>85</sup>. Although the presentation of *insalamo* is a formal affair, it is in no way binding, but is an indication that the young man is serious about his intentions to marry the young woman. If however, for whatever reasons the engagement is broken off, then the *insalamo* gift would not be refunded, nor would the matter be deemed serious enough to involve legal procedures (Kambole 1978: 46)<sup>86</sup>. Following the conclusion of this first phase of marriage negotiations, it behoves the young woman's family to set up a meeting for the appropriate, formal answer to be given to *shibukombe* on his return visit.

During this second visit, the *shibukombe* behaves in a less formal manner; he may even tell jokes and exchange them with the young woman's family members. A friendly atmosphere is established, during which the young woman's father will find the appropriate moment to announce what everyone has been waiting and hoping to hear- that the marriage proposal conveyed by *shibukombe* has been accepted. The acceptance of the marriage proposal means that the young man has engaged the young woman, and is known as *ukukobekela* in Bemba. This instigates further discussions during which the customary gift of beer is served by the host members. At this point

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<sup>84</sup> Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe, ICUUPO NOBUYANTANSHI, Lusaka: Zambia Education Publishing House, 1994.

<sup>85</sup> Ilunga, *ibid*

<sup>86</sup> R.M. Kambole, NKOBEKELA TECUUPO, Lusaka: Zambia Education Publishing House, 1978.

the young woman's parents will assure the *shibukombe* of their daughter's continued health, happiness and good conduct, now that she is engaged, *ukukobekelwa* (Ilunga *ibid*)<sup>87</sup>. Upon receipt of the good news, the *shibukombe*'s party will arrange another marriage payment, known as *ichilomba*. *Ichilomba* is a presentation in the form of money, by which the young man demonstrates his commitment to setting up a home of his own (Kambole 1980: 63)<sup>88</sup>. Once *ichilomba* has been accepted by the parents of the betrothed (young woman), a further marriage payment is made to her family, by that of her fiancé. This is also in the form of money and is referred to as *ichipuula*. It notifies the young woman's parents that her fiancé wishes to have a large, full marriage celebration, *ubwinga*, and not *ichombela ng'anda*, which is a much smaller affair involving only a few people (Personal communication N. Chinyanta, January 24, 2002)<sup>89</sup>. Upon receiving *ichipuula*, the young woman's parents call a meeting for all their relatives, and some close friends who are known experts at making *ubwinga* arrangements, and eminently capable in imparting cultural knowledge and traditions. Other marriage payments have also to be made, which are of vital importance in the whole negotiating process. These are *ubwimashi*, which is a further indication of the young man's intent to marry, and that the young woman herself is unavailable to other suitors, being affianced. The amount of money for *ubwimashi* is fixed by the young woman's family, as is the amount for *ichuuma chachisungu*, literally 'money for virginity'. This is the most important of all the marriage payments, and is expected to be made before the preparations for *ubwinga* commence.

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<sup>87</sup>Ilunga, *ibid*

<sup>88</sup> R. M. Kambole, UKUFUNDA UMWANA KUFIKAPO, Lusaka: Zambia Education Publishing House, 1980.

<sup>89</sup> Nathan Chinyanta, son of Mwata Kazembe Paramount Chief of the Lunda people of Luapula Province of Zambia, and retired Clerk of the Court, personal informant, January 24, 2002.

The parents of the young woman share the settlement equally (Ilunga, *ibid*)<sup>90</sup>. Thus this particular marriage payment differs from the other forms which have been discussed *isalamo*, *icilomba*, *icipuula*, *ubwimashi* and also *impango* which is given to the parents of the betrothed young woman, and distributed among the persons within their family group, and also to all those friends who contributed to the occasion, and were generally supportive. Bemba marriage payments are in the form of cash, but historically they comprised valuables and necessities. Of these, one may mention *isandulula*, *ichipafya*, *inyemba*, *ifukafuka*, *impasa yetongwa*, *ichipaapa nabwinga* and *inkula* etc (Kambole, *ibid*)<sup>91</sup>. These have fallen into disuse, although still remembered as vitally important processes in marriage negotiations. But marriage payments as such remain essential requirements in Bemba marriages, being visible and binding tokens of major marriage conventions operating in marriage ceremonies. The Bemba maintain a strong sense of oral tradition, despite socio-economic changes and Bemba marriages are contracted by word of mouth, and not by certificates. Therefore marriage payments and gifts serve as an affirmation of what is said during marriage negotiations (Kapwepwe, *ibid*)<sup>92</sup>. Once all marriage payments have been paid, the young man will now assume the title *Lumbwe*, which is used for all married men.

To return to the matter of *ubwimashi* and *icuumu cacisungu*: following the acceptance of these by the *Lumbwe*'s family, he begins to behave like a son-in-law, *umupongoshi*, towards his future in-laws, and their close relatives (aunts and uncles). This is reciprocated by the young woman, who must conduct herself fittingly towards her future in-laws and their relatives (Chondoka, *ibid*)<sup>93</sup>. The structural implications

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<sup>90</sup> Ilunga, *ibid*

<sup>91</sup> Kambole, *ibid*

<sup>92</sup> Kapwepwe, *ibid*

<sup>93</sup> Chondoka, *ibid*

of the marriage payments are thus far reaching since they underlie and also prescribe a number of important social relations between kinship groups, which in turn are vital in day to day interaction. Being *umupongoshi* carries certain taboos which have to be strictly observed by the betrothed pair, their parents and close relatives. These taboos include: '*Takuli ukulolesha abapongoshi mumenso*' which means that 'one must not look his in-laws directly in the face'. This refers to the behaviour expected of the betrothed pair: that they should show great courtesy when in the presence of in-laws by not looking directly at them, but look with eyes cast down, in an attitude of respect. If the in-laws want to be less formal with their prospective son-in-law, they will give him a gift of cash, which is known as *ukushikula*, and then permit him to talk freely with them, in an easy and relaxed manner. If this *ukushikula* has not been made, it means that the taboo of avoidance of speech with the in-laws has to be observed.

The proverb '*takuli kusosha abapongoshi kano bakushikula*' which means that 'one must not talk directly to in-laws unless permission is granted by means of giving him/her a taboo breaker in the form of money' endorses this. There are more taboos to be followed but these mentioned here are among the most important (Kunda, 2002)<sup>94</sup>.

It should be noted that in the Bemba sense the title *umupongoshi* is used to refer to both son-in-law and daughter-in-law. The same procedure is followed when addressing both sets of parents (in-laws); the prefix *umu* becomes *aba* to make the title *abapongoshi*. This follows Bemba social protocol, according to which a younger person must address an older person in the same way, with the prefix *ba* added to their name or rank: e.g. *batata* (my father), *bamayo* (my mother).

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<sup>94</sup> Abraham Kunda, a retired Teacher and Journalist, and member of the Chief Kashiba Royal Family, personal informant, January 24, 2002.

After all the negotiations have been completed, there comes the time when *Lumbwe* is formally introduced to both kinship families, in a situation attended by all parties concerned with the engaged couple, their respective families and close relatives. This begins with a visit by the *Lumbwe* to his fiancé's home, escorted by *shibukombe* and one or two relatives. At this stage the *Lumbwe* is not expected to speak, or eat or drink anything served to the party by their hosts.

The event involves a form of introduction of *Lumbwe*, after which the two families will converse and exchange news about current issues in the community.

In earlier times, it was common practice that many Bemba men began their marriages by engaging a young, prepubertal girl, who was not consulted about the betrothal arrangements (Chondoka *ibid*)<sup>95</sup>. In such a case, from the time of the *insalamo* payment, and as long as the girl did not attain puberty, her parents allowed her to visit her betrothed, sometimes on her own but preferably in the company of friends. On her first visit she was not allowed to enter her fiancé's house, or even speak with him, until she had been given a gift as a cordial gesture, known as *ukushikula*. *Lumbwe* was responsible for this gift, and once it was accepted his *nabwinga* (bride) was allowed to speak with him, and even perform some domestic chores for him in the house. She would sweep the house; draw water for cooking, and drinking, heat water for his bath and also wash his clothes. These tasks were performed whenever *nabwinga* thought it necessary whenever she paid him a visit (Chondoka *ibid*)<sup>96</sup>. The tasks performed by a *nabwinga* are intended to show her fiancé what to expect of his wife-to-be (*umukashi*) once she was married to him (Kapwepwe *ibid*)<sup>97</sup>.

In Bemba traditional society this was considered a mock- marriage which was usually a period of courtship and was locally known as *ukwishisha* or *ukwisha*. During this

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<sup>95</sup> Chondoka, *ibid*

<sup>96</sup> Chondoka, *ibid*

<sup>97</sup> Kapwepwe, *ibid*

period, the family of *nabwinga* was responsible for *Lumbwe's* daily food requirements.

When a young man was ready to marry, it was a prerequisite that he build his own house in the village where he was living. After finalising marriage negotiations of *ukusonga* and *ukukobekela*, he had to build a house in the village in which his in-laws were living, if he was not in the same village. It was the responsibility of *nabwinga's* family to provide food for *Lumbwe* (Ilunga ibid)<sup>98</sup>. However, the first dish of *nshima* or *ubwali* with chicken which was given to him was not consumed by him. Instead he asked an elderly relative, usually his aunt, to collect the food, who in turn gave it to another family. That family ate the food, and prepared another dish for *Lumbwe*. Chicken is traditionally a dignified relish which to the Bemba people symbolises respect for the person to whom it is presented (Ilunga ibid)<sup>99</sup>. It should be noted that *nshima* or *ubwali* is the staple food of the people of Zambia. It is made of thick maize meal porridge. When chicken is prepared for an in-law, it is never cut up into pieces, but prepared as a whole. This is so because it symbolizes respect for the person who receives it.

If the chicken is cut into pieces then the in-law will not accept, that dish, because such a preparation of chicken demonstrates that the family of *nabwinga* has no respect for him (Kambole ibid)<sup>100</sup>. After the first dish has been sent to *Lumbwe* by *nabwinga's* mother, the dishes that follow will be prepared by her grandmother or elder sister. Traditionally *Lumbwe* is obliged to ask for the source of the food brought to him. This he does for every *bwali* that is brought to him.

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<sup>98</sup> Ilunga, ibid

<sup>99</sup> Ilunga, ibid

<sup>100</sup> Kambole, ibid

As a gesture of appreciation for the services accorded to him by *nabwinga's* family, *Lumbwe* had to cultivate the fields for his in-laws. Arrangements were made by *shibukombe* for the exact location of the fields. On the first day *Lumbwe* was allowed to invite two or three of his relatives and *shibukombe* to help him work in the field. On this day *Lumbwe's* team never stopped work without being given gifts by *nabwinga's* parents. The gifts were mainly in the form of traditional beer, *katata*, made from *amale* (finger millet). However, on subsequent days *Lumbwe* was expected to do the work on his own and did not wait to be given gifts before he stopped work (Chondoka *ibid*)<sup>101</sup>. Work in the fields included clearing and stamping trees, which is known as *ukutema ubukula*, *ukulima* (ploughing), *ukubyala* (planting seeds), *ukusekwila* (weeding) and *ukusombola* (harvesting the crops).

On this matter, Nathan Chinyanta, a retired Clark of the Court and son of Mwata Kazembe Paramount Chief of the Lunda people of Luapula Province of Zambia gives reasons why it was obligatory for *Lumbwe* to work for his in-laws. He points out that first of all; it was intended to prove that *Lumbwe* is strong and hard working, and that he is capable of providing food for his future wife and family. Secondly, the Bemba people expect a married man not only to provide food for his immediate family, but also for the extended family as well, the extended family being his own family and that of *umukashi* (wife) (Chinyanta *ibid*)<sup>102</sup>. Simon Kapwepwe also says in plain words that it was common practice in Bemba tradition for *Lumbwe* to stay with his in-laws until he had had about three children, when he would then be allowed to take *umukashi* wherever he wanted to settle. The reason for this was that *Lumbwe* was supposed to do agricultural work for his in-laws. Kapwepwe further explains that there is one very important issue which needs to be addressed in connection with

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<sup>101</sup> Chondoka, *ibid*

<sup>102</sup> Chinyanta, *ibid*

working for in-laws. This is that the Bemba people were never very wealthy and as such did not have enough goods to present as *insalamo*. As a result, most parents requested their sons-in-law to work for them for some time, and that sufficed for marriage payments. Even if *Lumbwe* left the village of his in-laws for his own, he was still expected to send some food to them from time to time.

This is expressed in the Bemba saying '*Kubuko nikucishala uli nokwitolakofye pe*', translated as 'Your in-laws' home is like a garbage dump you have to pour dirt there all the time'. This means that in reality in-laws become part of the family (Kapwepwe *ibid*)<sup>103</sup>.

*Ukwishisha* was not allowed to continue when it was noticed that the girl was about to experience her first menstruation, that is, nearing her first menses. This was so because the parents feared that their child would fall pregnant before *icuupo*. If it happened that a girl became pregnant before marriage it brought shame and serious problems to both parties, the family of *Lumbwe* and that of the *nabwinga*.

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<sup>103</sup> Kapwepwe, *ibid*

## CHAPTER 3

### UKULASA IMBUSA AND AMATEBETO

#### 3.1. *CHISUNGU*

*Chisungu* is the name for the girls' puberty ceremonies of the Bemba. They are associated with physical maturity and serve to mark the transition of the girl (initiate – called *nachisungu*) from childhood to social adulthood, and also the public recognition and celebration of her change of status. *Chisungu* ceremonies have been regularly performed for a very long time. In earlier times, ( before 1913) their duration was six months, but as time passed, bringing about significant social, political and economic changes in Bemba society, the six month period was gradually reduced to one month, then to a fortnight, and finally to a stretch of three to four days, which is the norm today. The shortening of the *chisungu* period was due to pressure from European Missionaries and other colonial bodies, who condemned traditional cultural practices of the Bemba, because they were not compatible with the educational package deal, they offered. Later on, compulsory education prevented Bemba girls from attending *chisungu* because it interfered with the school term. To accommodate this certain rites such as the seclusion period, *ukulasa imbusa* (lit. 'Shooting at the sacred emblems') were attenuated and relocated respectively; seclusion was shortened, while the emblem ritual was moved from its customary observance on the final day of *chisungu*, to one or two days before *ubwinga* (wedding ceremonies). In this way girls are able to attend school without radical disruption, and resume it after initiation. They do not enter into marriage, which was the norm, according to Bemba cultural conventions.

*Chisungu* is inaugurated by the onset of the menses, and the first senior woman to learn of this (she is not the girl's mother), assumes the role of *nakalamba* (great mother), who will assist the girl throughout the ceremonies. *Nachisungu* has to be isolated from the rest of the community, and during her seclusion she undergoes various rites and ceremonies. She is also attended by a senior woman who is appointed *nachimbusa* ('mother of the sacred emblems') who is the organiser and main instructor in the initiation procedures. Other female assistants are *banachifyashi* (midwives), *banyina* (*nachisungu's* mother) and a number of girls who have undergone *cisungu*.

*Chisungu* ceremonies occur in three phases. The first is in the nature of a private celebration, during which *nachisungu* receives instructions on matters of personal hygiene from a grandmother and a friend who has already undergone initiation. The second phase is of a public nature involving mainly dancing and processions. In contrast to this, phase three is highly secretive, being held in a special hut in the bush, away from the community, and attended by specially selected participants. Apart from being instructed on matters of hygiene, *nachisungu* is also instructed on matters pertaining to marriage, wifely duties and childbearing. Traditionally *chisungu* commenced with a formal procession to the chief's palace by which men, women and children (community members) were permitted to approach the chief and receive his blessing, which is believed to be especially powerful, because the Bemba chief is regarded as an effective mediator between his subjects and their ancestors. En route to the palace special songs and dances were performed through which the people expressed their joy at *nachisungu's* attainment of puberty. As a clan member she has reached physical and social maturity and will be able to have children, thereby

ensuring the continued existence of the clan. After this celebratory procession, and audience with the chief, *nachisungu* and the women return to the initiation site.

*Chisungu* rituals are restricted to females, and a priest among the Bemba, Fr. Corbeil, who wrote about these rituals, gained access to information, by being granted permission to attend *ukulasa imbusa* (striking at the emblem). This was in 1916, and he subsequently admitted that he was given access only because he used his religious status as leverage to coerce Helen Chilupula of Mubanga village, Chinsali district, to divulge all that happens at *cisungu*. In return he promised to readmit her into the Catholic Church (Corbeil, *ibid*)<sup>104</sup>. From Fr. Corbeil's account, it is obvious that the ceremonies had been contrived in order to accommodate him with some spurious information, rather than with the true facts (Chinyanta, *ibid*)<sup>105</sup>. Nowadays processions no longer take place to open *chisungu*. Instead, *nachisungu* is escorted privately to the initiation site by her *nakalamba*. This change is also due to urbanizing influences and socio-economic changes in the country generally.

*Nachimbusa* plays an important role and has two major responsibilities:

1. To guide *nachisungu* through the rites and to instruct her on marriage protocols.
2. After marriage, to deliver *nachisungu*'s first-born child.

The second responsibility is no longer binding nowadays, since most women give birth in hospitals. As teaching aids, *nachimbusa* uses *imbusa* (sacred emblems). These are in the form of fired clay objects and figurines, and floor and wall paintings, designs and configurations which have been sculpted in relief, so that they project

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<sup>104</sup> Chondoka, *ibid*

<sup>105</sup> Chinyanta, *ibid*

from the floor, and the walls of the initiation hut. These paintings are made especially for different ceremonies, at the conclusion of which they are demolished.

The fired clay objects, which have been used in previous rituals and ceremonies, are stored for use in future *chisungu*. They are given to *nachimbusa*, who hides them in a secret place known only to her and her daughter. A river-bed is a favourite place of concealment, and when they are again required they are retrieved from the river-bed, and redecorated with white clay (*impemba*) and red clay (*inkanka*). The earthen models come in specific forms and appearances, and are highly symbolic. Some of the models are immediately recognizable as true-to-life representations, while others are more abstruse and have esoteric meanings. The relief drawings are visual reminders for *nachisungu*, and help her to memorize all the instructions she receives during *chisungu*. For each pottery item and each painting there is an associated didactic song and dance. Each song, which has both literal and implicated meanings, is structured antiphonically, with *nachimbusa* and the rest of the participants in regular solo- and-chorus alternations. According to Bemba conceptualization the two levels of meaning in the songs are directed to the general community, on the one hand, and to uninitiated and married people, on the other. But *nachisungu* is expected to learn all the songs by heart, when they are being sung (Corbeil, *ibid*)<sup>106</sup>.

### 3.2. UKULASA IMBUSA (Striking at the emblem)

*Nachisungu's* seclusion hut is the venue for this important rite and ceremony, which is enacted on the final day of *chisungu*. *Lumbwe* receives a formal invitation to attend, and he must be accompanied by his sister or another female relative, bringing with

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<sup>106</sup> Corbeil, *ibid*

him a bundle of firewood and quantities of salt and meat (beef). Having entered the hut, the older women sing and dance as he unties the firewood bundle, and presents *nakalamba* with two live fowls, one for herself and the other for her *nachisungu*, who has to prepare them for cooking (Chondoka, *ibid*)<sup>107</sup>. While this is under way, *Lumbwe* leaves the hut, to return some time later, accompanied by several relatives who have to witness his performance at the *ukulasa imbusa* rite. For this, *Lumbwe* has to have a bow and arrow, with which to strike the emblems. The approach to the initiation hut must be accompanied by singing, and once inside it, *Lumbwe* must stand in the centre of the room, while *nachisungu* seats herself below a special *mbusa* projecting from the hut wall. *Lumbwe* has to strike the special *mbusa* with his bow and arrow, before all the people assembled for the ritual. When he shoots at the last *mbusa*, *nachisungu* must jump over another *mbusa* that has been specially situated for her. Her action is met with applause, praising and shouts of encouragement. Should *Lumbwe* fail to strike the targeted *mbusa*, his performance is not treated lightly, and he will be asked to repeat the performance at a later stage. This is because the actual act is a test of *Lumbwe*'s powers of concentration, and is indicative of his worthiness and capability as a good husband (E. Chinyanta, *ibid*)<sup>108</sup>.

### **UKULASA IMBUSA SONGS**

The classification of the songs, and their order of appearance in this study does not accurately reflect Bemba categories, or the true order in which they are sung in the real socio- ritual situation. However, Corbeil's arrangement is practical and makes for easy understanding of the use of the songs in ritual action.

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<sup>107</sup> Chondoka, *ibid*

<sup>108</sup> E. Chinyanta, *ibid*

Some of these songs are used during marriage training, a few days before *ubwinga*, when *nabwinga* is put in seclusion. It should be noted that some of these song texts and tunes have been adapted and considering that the duration of the ceremony has been reduced, this means that only carefully selected songs to suit this shortened ceremony will be used (Chinyanta, *ibid*)<sup>109</sup>.

*Mbusa* songs are sung in the following ritual contexts which are marked by specific kinds of instructions: (The songs have emblems used as visual aids – see plates 6 to 33)

1. *Nsonge*, a prayer by *nachimbusa* to an honoured ancestor *nachisungu*.
2. Premarriage warnings.
3. Husband's obligations.
4. Wife's obligations.
5. Mutual obligations.
6. Motherhood duties.
7. Social duties
8. Domestic duties, those regarding both the husband and the wife.
9. Agricultural duties
10. Conclusion of the ceremony.

#### 1. *NSONGE* (Prayer)

<i>Utwafwe ko</i>	Help us
<i>We wa buchindami.</i>	you honourable one.
<i>Mu milimo yesu,</i>	in our difficult work,
<i>Utusoseleko</i>	speak (pray) for us.

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*

## INTERPRETATION

At the commencement of *chisungu*, *nachimbusa* places some strung white beads *ubulungu ubwabuta* around the neck of a small clay pot *inongo*, and praises a well-known and honoured ancestor of *nachisungu*.

She prays to him and asks him to bless the ceremony, and also help her perform a very important and delicate task. She also asks the ancestor to inspire her to find suitable words with which to instruct *nachisungu/ nabwinga*, and encourage her to be a good wife and mother, when the time comes for marriage. The *nsonge* prayer is also used for the preparation of traditional beer *katata*, *chipumu* or *katubi* for *ubwinga* and during the harvesting of vegetables (*chibwabwa*-pumpkin leaves, *kalembula*- sweet potato leaves, etc)

The *nsonge mbusa* is a small *inongo* with *ubulungu ubwabuta* around its neck. The name 'nsonge' comes from a kind of millet, which is used to symbolise an offering to the ancestors, who are being asked for favours or being thanked for the harvest.

## 2. PRE MARRIAGE WARNINGS

### SONG 1

*MWANSA CHIYEPE* (Name of a person)

*Wamona Mwansa Chiyepe.*

Look at Mwansa Chiyepe,

*Mulume wangala.*

The handsome gentleman.

## INTERPRETATION

The song stresses the need for the individual to be careful in her choice of a marriage partner before entering marriage. Once this has been formalised, it will be too late to consider changing one's mind. The words of the text address the person concerned:

and warn her not to marry someone because he is good-looking. Looks are deceptive and such handsome men often make bad husbands and abandon their wives. The future husband is also admonished in this song, being advised to judge a potential wife by her behaviour, and not by her beauty, which might only be skin deep, so to speak.

## SONG 2

### *KALOMBO WE MUSHA*

*Kalombo, we musha.*

Kalombo, you slave.

*Uko wile kuteba,*

Why haven't you returned from where

*taulabwela.*

you went to fetch firewood.

### INTERPRETATION

The words of the song speak directly to the *nachisungu/ nabwinga* and her husband-to-be. The latter is expected to carry out certain obligatory duties 'like a slave', and these will test his patience. For example, he is expected to fetch firewood for cooking a special relish for his bride-to-be (*nachisungu/ nabwinga*) and hot water to brew *katubi* traditional beer.

All this instructs him on what to expect as a married man, and duties he is to perform, especially when his wife is pregnant. Whatever she demands for should be provided, and when she does something wrong, he is expected to be lenient with her as she is not in a normal state. However after his wife gives birth, his slavery ends. On the other hand, the song stresses that it is the wife's duty to ensure that there is enough firewood for daily cooking.

## SONG 3

### *BWATO* (Boat)

*We kali peshilya.*

You, the paddler, who is on the other side

*Chobangombe*

*Abangobele baya.*

The one who has paddled me across has  
gone.

*Tata, tubule chobangombe.*

Father, let us get the paddler.

*Abangobele baya.*

The one who has paddled me across has  
gone.

#### INTERPRETATION

Initiation is like crossing a dangerous river. In this song *Nachisungu* pleads with her father and all those who are on the other side of the river to come and fetch her. She wants to join the others and not remain alone. An uninitiated girl suffers much from social exclusion, being barred from attending most social gatherings and communal activities, because she is still ignorant about marriage. This makes her feel fearful about her future responsibilities as a wife and mother. After her *chisungu*, she can confidently and proudly accept a higher social position with all its obligations.

#### SONG 4

*MUNDU (Lion)*

*Ne mundu kapondo*

I ma the lion the enemy.

*Nile ubukalamo mayo ee*

I roar like a lion, oh mother

*Ndile ubwa ng'ombe, busha buno.*

I low like a cow, this slavery.

*Shakila ku mutopoto*

The lion is roaring in the beans  
Garden.

*Pali uko mundu asumine nama.*

Somewhere, a lion has caught an  
Animal.

#### INTERPRETATION

Lion in Bemba is *Nkalamo*, and *Mundu* is just a nickname commonly used to refer to its strength and pride. In this song *Lumbwe* imitates the roar of the cat by bellowing as *mundu* does. A parallel is drawn between this, and the roaring of a lion. Although *Lumbwe* is boastful about the advantages he is mindful of his obligations, which temporarily reduce his proud status to one of a slave, who 'lows' like a cow.

The sacrificial *mbusa* in this particular context is a large earthen pot with two small openings at the top. When you blow through one of them whilst blocking the other, you can produce a roaring sound.

### 3. HUSBAND'S OBLIGATIONS

#### SONG 5

*NGWENA* (Crocodile)

*Lungamba, uikata ku matete.*

Crocodile, you have caught  
something in the reeds.

*Nani nshalike ku matete.*

Who has been left in the reeds?

#### INTERPRETATION

The husband is regarded as the crocodile that provides everything as does a chief for his people. The crocodile lives in the river-reeds, which is symbolic of the guarding of the secrets of the home. A husband must behave like the crocodile if his wife deceives him. The reeds also represent the offences that a woman may commit by revealing marriage secrets. The wife must be very careful in all she does as she could be divorced if she is not.

## SONG 6

*CHIBONI MUSUBA* (The Euphorbia tree)

<i>Iwe mune, waleta chintomfwa</i>	You have brought a stubborn child
<i>Naine, nafyala chintomfwa</i>	I too have born a stubborn child
<i>fyakumana na chintomfwa.</i>	they match.

## INTERPRETATION

Both parents of the couple realise that their children may be stubborn and foolish at times. They are very well matched, and therefore must receive proper marriage instructions so that they may have a happy marriage. It should be known that those who love each other tend to tease each other at times, so the couple should expect such moments in their marriage.

*Chiboni* is the giant euphorbia tree, it is also the name of the beautiful *mukolo* (first-wife) of a legendary chief. The allusion here is to the wife: A man must consider his wife to be the most beautiful of all women, just as the chief prefers his *mukolo* to all the others.

## SONG 7

*IKOSA* (Bracelet)

<i>Ulengumina pa likosa,</i>	You are beating me for the bracelet,
<i>nshalilombe.</i>	I did not ask for it.
<i>Ndelitwala pe bwe,</i>	I will take it to a stone,
<i>ndisansaule.</i>	and break it.

## INTERPRETATION

'If you beat me too much, I will run away and break our marriage'. This is a strong warning to the husband to treat his wife with respect and not as a slave.

## SONG 8

*CHEMBE* (Fish eagle)

*Chembe nemutwa,* I, the invited eagle,  
*naipuma mumashiba.* Through myself into the pools.

Or

*Chembe we mutwa,* *Chembe,* you guest,  
*waipuma mumasha yabene.* You throw yourself into other people's  
dances, you are a nuisance.

## INTERPRETATION

Young men, you must respect this young woman, she is promised to someone else. The main lesson from this song is that adultery is totally forbidden, and one must never ever think of it.

## 4. WIFE'S OBLIGATIONS

### SONG 9

*IYONGOLO* (The snake)

*Yongolo lyapinda* The iyongolo snake stretch  
*ng'anda, ee ee* across the house, yes yes  
*Yongolo* the iyongolo snake

## INTERPRETATION

*Iyongolo* refers to a type of snake. In this context, it refers to the husband, wife and home. A home is not complete without a man. But there is no place for a second man because polyandry and adultery are forbidden in Bemba tradition. One man should be

big enough and handsome enough to satisfy her. This is a warning to the *nabwinga* that she should be faithful to her husband. Just as he must consider his wife to be the most beautiful woman in the world, so must she esteem her husband as the best man she can find.

The *iyongolo mbusa* is imaginary, and not real. The name *iyongolo* also has sexual connotations when used in this context. The conventional *mbusa* is a snake encircling a hut. It is represented by numerous ridges around the clay pot. The realistic one is covered with beans meticulously arranged along the snake's body.

#### SONG 10

##### *INTNADA* (Stars)

*Ulasha intanda ubushi.*                      You light the stars at night.

*Ulantuka ukashika.*                      You revile me obscenely, you are red.

#### INTERPRETATION

The light which shines through is like the menses of the woman, which must not be seen. The most horrible curse a man can use is to swear by the menstruation of his wife. However, no matter how badly a husband swears at his wife, she should not answer back. The wife has to show forgiveness even if her husband abuses her obscenely.

### 5. MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS

#### SONG 11

##### *TOMFWA MAFUNDE* (Lit. He/she does not follow the rules)

*Uyu mwana tomfwa mafunde.*                      This child does not take heed of advice.

*Mfukatile pakanena.*                      Let me cover the bottom of my abdomen

(pubes)

## INTERPRETATION

A woman who does not take advice is like a pot with many holes. Any instructions her husband gives her leave her head like a pot with water running through its holes. If a woman is very stupid, the husband may not be interested in having intercourse with her because of his disappointment in her. The obligations of marriage demand that procreation must be treated with respect, hence if a husband wants to have sexual relations she must consent, unless she has a good reason not to.

## SONG 12

*LUKOMBO* (Cup)

*Chibale, Chibale*

Chibale, Chibale

*Kasambe umulume we chinangwa.*

Give your husband a bath, you  
useless thing.

*Na panshi utote, we chinangwa,*

And bow down when greeting him  
you useless thing.

*Chibale, Chibale*

Chibale, Chibale

## INTERPRETATION

Chibale is a unisex name in Bemba sense. In this case it refers to *nachisungu*. If the wife wants to be happy in marriage, she has to be obedient to her husband. It is also the responsibility of the woman to ensure that the husband looks smart and wears clean clothes. Apart from looking after the husband and keeping him clean, the song also refers to the purification after the marital duty, sexual intercourse.

## SONG 13

*ICHIPUNA* (Stool)

*Bamuteka pa kapuna.*

He has made her sit on a stool.

*Ni Lesa wamusansabika.*

It is God who exalted her.

#### INTERPRETATION

If a husband offers his stool to his wife, it means that, as she is obedient, he is willing to honour her. When one is a good wife, she will be blessed with happiness from God. A woman should not please her heart in love charms, because it is not an honest way to gain her husband's love. Good understanding and mutual sacrifice are the foundation of a permanent marriage.

#### SONG 14

##### *CHINUNGI* (Porcupine)

*Chinungi, posa amatamba.* Porcupine, push away the waves.

*Kuno twaililwa na bemba.* Here, we are benighted by the waves.

#### INTERPRETATION

'*Amatamba*' means waves literally and porcupine quills metaphorically. The lesson for the couple is for them to discard their bad manners just as the waves of the sea wash all the rubbish upon the shore. The husband's anger may be like the bristling quills of the porcupine when it is attacked. The second lesson is that if a woman deceives her husband, he may react by throwing his quills. Becoming angry can never be hidden, it will always come to light. The couple should avoid quarrelling in order not to hurt each other's feelings.

## 6. MOTHERHOOD OBLIGATIONS

### SONG 15

*NG'OMBE NAIMITA* (*N'gombe* is pregnant)

*We ntuntu kafumo.*                      You who is pregnant.

*We ntuntu, we ntuntu kafumo.*      You who is pregnant.

### INTERPRETATION

“You silly, uninitiated girl, who is already pregnant without being married. You just stole the baby without the consent of the elders”. A young woman has to be prudent in her relations with young men until her marriage. This is a strong warning that although she is ready to bear children, she must be faithful to her future husband.

### SONG 16

*ING'ANDA* (House)

*Umwana alelila,*                      The child is crying,

*Nshisalile uko allele,*              I did not close the door where it is sleeping,

*tandabula.*                              the door is swinging.

### INTERPRETATION

The child is crying because her mother has gone to a beer party, and has left it behind. The song stresses a mother needs to learn to look after her children properly. If children are not cared for, one must not expect blessings from the clan, ancestors and God.

### SONG 17

*UYU MWANA* (This child)

*Uyu mwana ali nanyina,*              The girl who is with her mother,

*tomfwa na mafunde.*                  does not listen to instructions.

*Ele aletengesa fye.*                      She cannot walk properly because of her

large abdomen.

#### INTERPRETATION

Customarily, a girl should be initiated by a *Nachimbusa*, and not her mother, because her mother would be too lenient to do certain things that require total strictness. In this song the uninitiated girl was foolish and became pregnant, now she is at the point of giving birth. Had she been cautioned by *Nachimbusa*, she could have avoided falling pregnant.

### 7. SOCIAL DUTIES

#### SONG 18

*UMUKOWA* (The clan)

*Ichupo wasenda pa mutwe,*

Carry your marriage on your head,

*umukowa eo wasesha kuminwe.*

your clan in your hand.

#### INTERPRETATION

For the couple, their marriage must be given the first priority, and then followed by concern for their relatives. Although marriage is the most important factor they must not neglect their extended family.

#### SONG 19

*NALOMBA* (I beg)

*Nalomba, umusha talomba.*

I beg, a slave cannot beg.

*Kamo nalomba, umsha talomba.*

I have to beg, a slave cannot beg.

#### INTERPRETATION

Social relations in a family clan are based on giving and receiving. The Bemba do not make an exception to this rule. When a poor member of the clan asks for something,

the other members should help him, and at the same time he should not reject the offer, as beggars cannot be choosers.

#### SONG 20

*FULWE* (Tortoise)

*Fulwe pa fyakwe,*                      The tortoise for its own thing,

*Aingisha umukoshi*                      gets it head

*mu cifwambako.*                      into its shell.

*Pa fya banankwe,*                      But for its friends' things,

*Akolomona umukoshi,*                      it sticks its neck,

*mu cifwambako.*                      out of its shell.

#### INTERPRETATION

A good wife is that one who provides good hospitality to visitors, friends and relatives. You cannot expect other people to be hospitable to you when you have not been hospitable to them. According to custom a *nacisungu* is expected to be generous.

### 8. DOMESTIC DUTIES

#### SONG 21

*KAMULONGWE* (The small water pot)

*Koni mulongwe, ee*                      Thou little bird,

*Katape amenshi.*                      Go and fetch water.

*We koni mfundwa,*                      you little bird that we teach,

*Amenshi bafundaula, ee*                      they have made the water muddy.

#### INTERPRETATION

When a wife does not do her domestic duties properly, her husband may be forced to beat her. It is her responsibility to ensure that everything is in order before the husband gets back from work, to avoid having differences with him. The song also warns the wife to be careful as she may attract other men as she goes about her domestic duties. It is entirely up to her to be prudent and never to take notice of other men.

#### SONG 22

*KASENGELE* (The little reed mat)

*Yansa akasengele ee,*                      Oh, spread out the little mat,  
*Tulale, yansa.*                              So that we may lie down, spread it out.

#### INTERPRETATION

It is the wife's duty to prepare the mat for her husband to sleep on. It must never be done for anyone other than her husband.

#### SONG 23

*INKUNI* (Firewood)

*Muchilwa someone,*                      Oh uninitiated one, come and see,  
*na ino ni mbusa, ni mbusa.*                      even this is an emblem, an emblem.

#### INTERPRETATION

'*Muchilwa*' refers to an already initiated girl not well versed with the meanings of some of the *mbusa*. If she is present at *chisungu* and fails to explain the meaning of a *mbusa*, the *nachimbusa* will start this song and everybody present will join in. At the end of it, everybody will laugh at the girl.

## 9. AGRICULTURAL DUTIES

### SONG 24

*IMPUTA* (The mounds)

*Mwibala teti mupite muntu,* No one should pass through the garden,  
*nga apita, ni muka mwaume.* Except her husband.

### INTERPRETATION

One meaning is that it is a woman's duty to cultivate, and be industrious in the garden. The other meaning is that a married woman is like a garden through which other men should not pass, knowing that she belongs to someone else. For the men, they should respect other people's wives if others are to respect their wives.

### SONG 25

*AKALONDE* (The little hoe)

*Nimpa akalonde* Give me my little hoe  
*indeya ku mabala,* so that I may go to the garden,  
*akabala kalala.* the little garden is asleep.

### INTERPRETATION

The wife is urged to cultivate her garden and to work hard in order to feed her family properly. She is also urged to bear children to increase the members of the clan.

## 10. CONCLUSION OF THE CEREMONY

### SONG 26

*INKOBA* (The Egret)

*We kakoba, we koni,*

*shimwalaba mpemba,*

*we kakoba, iya ya.*

*We kakoba, shicalaba mpemba,*

*Iya ya.*

You little egret, you little bird,

do not forget the white clay,

you little egret.

you little egret, painted in white

white clay.

### INTERPRETATION

*Nacisungu* has to say goodbye to her childhood and take on the responsibilities of adulthood. She has to be purified before marriage, in a rite of purification from the menses and her past misdeeds. She is also reminded of the prospect of her future married life. Reference is also made to the whitening and beautifying of her body, mind and soul.

### SONG 27

*CHABALA, FUMBE NGALA* (*Chabala*, cover up the head-dress)

*Chabala, fumbe ngala.*

*We kaice, longe fipe.*

*Ukwima kufumpuka, ee*

*Few bapali Shibambala.*

*Ukwima kufumpuka, ee*

*Chabala*, cover up the head-dress.

You, young one pack up all the emblems.

Our departure will be sudden.

We are of *Shibamabala*

Our departure will be sudden.

### INTERPRETATION

*Chabala* is a unisex name, which in this case refers to *nachimbusa*'s daughter, who always has to escort her mother to the *chisungu*, and to the secret place at the river where the *mbusa* are stored. 'Ingala' are the long feathers from the tail or wings of birds, often used to make different types of head-dress. *Shibambala* is the name of a village.

*Nachisungu* is told that *chisungu* has come to an end, and because *nachimbusa* and all *banachifyashi* have completed the task of training her, they must leave. The onus is now on her to follow all the advice that she has been given through *Chisungu* instruction.

### 3.3. AMATEBETO

*Amatebeto* refers to the ceremony at which food is presented to a son-in-law. When different dishes are customarily presented to him, to give him a taste of what cooking he has to expect from his fiancée, this act is known as *ichilanga mulilo* (lit. to show the fire). The significance of this act is the message it imparts, namely that a wife must be creative in the way she prepares and serves food to her family and visitors (Ilunga, *ibid*)<sup>110</sup>. The food prepared for *ichilanga mulilo* includes: (It should be noted that for some of the foods translations of their names into English have not been provided because I could not find them)

- *Nshima*, made from maize, cassava and millet meal.
- Meat- chicken, beef, and game meat like Kudu or Impala.
- Fish- *Pale* (Tilapia), *Kapenta*, *Kasepa*, *Imintesa* etc.

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<sup>110</sup> Ilunga, *ibid*

- Vegetables- *Chibwabwa* (pumpkin leaves), *Kalembula* (sweet potato leaves), *Kachesha*, *Lubanga*, *Katapa*(cassava leaves), *Bondwe*, *Pupwe*, *Impwa* (garden eggs).
- Mushrooms- *Tente*, *Ichikolowa*, *Chitondo*, *Kabansa*, *Busefwe*, *Pampa*.
- Seeds- *Impuupu* (pumpkin seeds), *Chilemba* (beans seeds), *Imbalala*(groundnuts), *Ilanda* (cowpeas), *Intoyo* (ground beans).
- Root tubers- *Kandolo* (sweet potatoes), *Chikanda*(wild orchid), *Tute* (cassava).
- *Ifishimu* (caterpillar), *Amankolobwe* (spiny cucumbers).
- Drinks- *Katata* (beer made from millet), *Katubi* (beer made from millet), *Umunkoyo*.
- *Mosi* lager, Fanta and Coca cola, have recently been included on the list of drinks that are presented at *ichilanga mulilo*.

It should be noted that it is customary for some chickens to be presented live, and the seeds uncooked (Muloshi, 2002)<sup>111</sup>. The *Nabwinga* party has to ensure that virtually all the food listed above is available and prepared for the ceremony, because if half of the food is not presented it means that they have no respect for their son-in-law (E. Chinyanta, *ibid*)<sup>112</sup>.

The preparation of the food is done customarily, at the home of *nabwinga*'s parents, by her mother together with her close relatives and friends, who are experienced in preparing traditional dishes and in teaching *intambi*; they get together to demonstrate to *nabwinga* what is expected of her in her home when she is married. During the preparations, *nabwinga* is taught how to prepare and serve different dishes to her

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<sup>111</sup> Flora Chitalu Muloshi is a Bemba who went through marriage training in February, 2002, when she got married, and is currently a Masters Degree student at UCT.

<sup>112</sup> E. Chinyanta, *ibid*

husband, in-laws and visitors through the songs and dances performed during the event. Two separate dishes of chicken are prepared for *Lumbwe* and *shibukombe*, and their *nshima* is prepared by *nabwinga*.

To prepare this special *nshima*, *nabwinga* is helped by everyone present, during which a special song is sung, and the whole event is witnessed by her father. The chicken is prepared without being cut into pieces, with its gizzard (*inondo*) stuffed inside it. Should the chickens be sent without gizzards, the recipients would reject them (Muloshi, *ibid*)<sup>113</sup>. Once the food is ready, it is put in *amabakuli* and tied in special cloths to prevent the lids from falling off. The drinks are put into suitable containers for easy transporting. It should be noted that nowadays sodas like coca cola, fanta and sprite, and lagers are also presented for *ichilanga mulilo* and have been accepted.

To transport the food to *Lumbwe's* home, the party to walk to their destination. However for the long distances that people have to travel to deliver the food, vehicles are used to transport them up to a certain point close to the home. There, the party will gather and start singing until *Lumbwe's* party comes to meet them and present them with small gifts of money. At the gate of *Lumbwe's* home the party will make a stop as they have to be presented with small gifts before they may continue on their way. The common song sung for this procession is:

#### SONG 28

*Nse, nse, tubatwalile.*

Let's take it to them.

*Tubatwalile abene bakayonawile.*

Let's take it to them. They

will spoil it themselves.

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<sup>113</sup> Muloshi, *ibid*

When the procession reaches the entrance to the house, the people have to enter facing the outside, while singing the song:

#### SONG 29

<i>Twingile shani ee?</i>	How should we enter?
<i>Twingile musense nga bakolwe.</i>	We should enter backwards like monkeys.

This song is sung with the action of entering in reverse in order to show respect to *Lumbwe*, as they are representing the *nabwinga*. As this song is sung the recipients will continue offering small gifts of cash until the party enters the house. Inside the house, another song will be sung to request assistance in putting down the containers.

#### SONG 30

<i>Mayo ntuule ntundu,</i>	Mother help me put down this load,
<i>Fili muntundu fyalema.</i>	what's in the load is heavy.

The food is placed on a mat in front of *Lumbwe* who is flanked by an uncle, and *shibukombe* who make commentaries to explain and interpret the meanings of the songs and *intambi*. At this point both parties perform songs and dances for each other in a humorous and joking manner. While this is going on, gifts of money are given to the performers to encourage and thank them for their contribution (Kunda, *ibid*)<sup>114</sup>.

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<sup>114</sup> Kunda, *ibid*

SONG 31

*Kasambe umulume wechinangwa.*

Go and bath your husband you  
useless thing.

*Chibale, Chibale.*

*Chibale, chibale.*

*Napanshi utote, wechinangwa.*

And bow down when greeting him,  
you useless thing.

*Chibale, Chibale*

*Chibale, Chibale*

As this song is sung, a *nachimbusa* from *nabwinga's* party washes the hands and feet of *Lumbwe* with soap and water, to demonstrate that it is his wife's duty to wash his hands before he has his meals. After this has been done, two members of *nabwinga's* party remove the lids from *amabakuli*, customarily with their teeth. Then every dish is shown to *Lumbwe* through the song:

SONG 32

*Mulamgile,*

Show him,

*Mulangile amone.*

Show him so that he can see.

This song explains the whole essence of *ichilanga mulilo*, which is to show *Lumbwe* what food he should expect his wife to cook for him. Once everything has been present, *nabwinga's* party is also offered gifts of beer, to take away, as a gesture of appreciation and to reciprocate the good will offered to their hosts (Ilunga, *ibid*)<sup>115</sup>.

To announce their departure, *nabwinga's* party usually sings a song as they leave:

SONG 33

*Nasha nalaya umusololo,*

I am bidding you farewell,

*Lolo wamalwa.*

*Mwikeba ati lolo talaile,*

Do not say that I didn't say

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<sup>115</sup> Ilunga, *ibid*

goodbye.

*lolo wamalwa.*

Through this song the party is saying that since they have played their part and completed their task, and they have to depart.

After the departure of the guests, food is served to all members of *Lumbwe's* party. The special dishes, for *Lumbwe* and *shibukombe* are eaten by the owners, while the rest is distributed among the members present. It is customary for *Lumbwe* to taste all the food brought for him (Kunda, *ibid*)<sup>116</sup>. The plates are returned to their owners by *shibukombe* with a gift of money placed inside one set of *amabakuli*, one of these being placed on top of the other and covering the money between them. This is done to thank *nabwinda's* parents for all the food presented and the gesture of respect accorded to *Lumbwe* (Malama, *ibid*)<sup>117</sup>.

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<sup>116</sup> Kunda, *ibid*

<sup>117</sup> Malama, *ibid*

## CHAPTER 4

### UBWINGA (WEDDING)

The term 'wedding' has been used instead of marriage to explain the meaning of *ubwinga*, because this is what the Bemba say to differentiate it from 'marriage', which is *icuuipo*. *Ubwinga* ceremonies are celebrated in three ways: The first is 'Ukutolanafye' (lit. picking each other), which refers to the union of a man and woman, who have been married before, without the consent of their other family members. The second is 'Icombela ng'anda' which entails going through all the marriage procedures without involving too many people, which usually happens when a couple does not live in the same community. The third is 'Ubwinga bwakapundu' where many people are invited for celebrations, with beer and drumming as the main part of the festivities (Kambole, *ibid*)<sup>118</sup>.

The focus in this study will be on *ubwinga bwakapundu* which the Bemba consider the best way to go through marriage instructions. *Ubwinga bwakapundu* is organised in two parts, with one part of the celebrations being held at *shibwinga's* home and the other at *nabwinga's*. However, it should be noted that the concentration of *ubwinga* ceremonies is at the *nabwinga's* home.

#### 4.1. UKUTWA UBWINGA (Pounding the wedding)

The day before *ubwinga*, a ritual is performed to prepare the *nabwinga* for the various ceremonies. Elderly women are invited to this function, which takes place at *nabwinga's* parents' home. *Nabwinga* is asked to place her hands on the *umuseke wa male* (basket of millet), while all the other invited women sit round her in a circle as her father performs *ukupaala ubwinga* (blessing the wedding). After the father

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<sup>118</sup> Kambole, *ibid*

finishes *ukupaala ubwinga*, a selected *banasenge* (aunt) will ululate with joy to announce the beginning of *ubwinga*, and this is known as '*ukwaula akapuundu kaku sekelela ubwinga*' (Ilunga, *ibid*)<sup>119</sup>. On the morning of *ukutwa ubwinga*, *nabwinga* is asked to stand outside her mother's house and her aunt pours the millet that was blessed by her father, in front of her, and ululates, inviting the other women to bring the millet for *ubwalwa bwa bwinga* (beer for the wedding). After all the required millet has been collected, *nabwinga* is taken to her grandmother's home where she is expected to stay until *ubwalwa bwa bwinga* is ready for drinking. *Nabwinga* is not allowed to see the preparation of the millet for her *ubwinga*, because the Bemba believe that if she does, the millet will rot. From this day, *Lumbwe's* title changes to *shibwinga* until all *ubwinga* ceremonies have been performed, and then reverts to the original one.

In earlier times, on the day of *ukutwa ubwinga*, people of the village did not go out to work in their fields as they were required to assist in the preparation of the millet and *ubwalwa bwa bwinga* (E. Chinyanta, *ibid*)<sup>120</sup>.

To grind the millet, elderly women, apply *amafuta yamono* (castor oil) and *inkula* (white kaolin) onto their bodies, wear *ingala* (long bird feathers) on their heads, and perform *insimba* dance in a circle while stamping on the millet with their feet. The following song is sung for this event:

#### SONG 34

<i>Makubi mwee!</i>	Makubi!
<i>Eee!</i>	Yes!
<i>Mutalile</i>	Do not cry

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<sup>119</sup> Ilunga, *ibid*

<sup>120</sup> E. Chinyanta, *ibid*

<i>Awe</i>	No
<i>Mupe cani?</i>	What should I give you?
<i>Awe</i>	No
<i>Mupe kaoli?</i>	Should I give you beans?
<i>Awe</i>	No
<i>Mupe mbalala?</i>	Should I give you groundnuts?
<i>Awe</i>	No
<i>Mupe malezi?</i>	Should I give you millet?
<i>Awe</i>	No
<i>Mupe cisaka?</i>	Should I give you sorghum?
<i>Awe</i>	No
<i>Mupe mapapa?</i>	Should I give you maize?
<i>Eya, eya</i>	Yes, yes
<i>Tuli makoshi sompa.</i>	We are the long necked.
<i>Tuli makoshi sompa.</i>	We are the long necked.

#### INTERPRETATION

This song is teaching *nabwinga* that all men are not easy to please, unless the woman follows his instructions. As this song is sung, the women form a circle around the mother and aunt of *nabwinga*, who kneel in the centre of it, and they poke the two with their fingers as they dance and stamp on the millet.

Once the millet is ready it is taken into the house customarily with the mother and aunt, of *nabwinga*, crawling while the other women herd them like cows whipping them lightly with thin sticks as they sing a song:

## SONG 35

*Namwali*

*Yulili ngombe shingile.*

*Namwali*

*Shalya malemba shapita.*

*Namwali*

Open so that the cows can enter.

*Namwali*

The have eaten beans, they have gone.

## INTERPRETATION

The song is saying that sometimes a husband may leave his home and go and stay somewhere else, and return after some time. Upon his return, the wife has to welcome him.

To conclude the grinding of the millet, young girls gather with pounding pestles to finish off the process properly. They do this while kneeling in a circle and singing. The ground millet is collected and taken to the river for soaking, and also the chuff is thrown into the river. This is done to get rid of *nabwinga's* 'madness', which is known as '*Ukuposa icishilu cakwa nabwinga*'. At this stage, *shibwinga* is presented with *akasupa ka bwalwa* (a small calabash of beer) to prevent him from meeting *nabwinga*. This is done to avoid *nabwinga* becoming pregnant, and also for the couple to miss each other more keenly (Kambole, *ibid*)<sup>121</sup>.

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<sup>121</sup> Kambole, *ibid*

#### **4.2. UBWALWA BWA BWINGA** (Beer for the wedding)

To prepare the porridge for the beer, a young girl who has not reached puberty is asked to take the maize meal and put it into the brewing pot which already contains warm water, and then the rest of the task is done by elderly women.

A child is asked to start the preparation of the beer because it is believed that the beer may easily go sour if this ritual is not done this way. Anyone who has had sexual intercourse would easily cause the beer to go sour, but a child is innocent and pure, will prevent such impurities.

#### **4.3. UKUPOTA UBWALWA** (Brewing the beer)

'*Ukupota ubwalwa*' means 'to mix maize meal porridge with millet'. This is done very early in the morning by elderly women, together with *nabwinga*'s aunt, assisted by young girls who fetch water for them to mix the porridge and the millet. When *ukupota ubwalwa* has been completed, the mother of *nabwinga*, accompanied by a few women, sets out for the bush to collect *impemba* (white kaolin) for decorating *imbusa*, (which have already been elaborated in the previous chapter). Their return is customarily done in a procession, with the mother of *nabwinga* covered in a *chitenge* material (local Zambian fabric) while the other women carry leaves and swing them as they walk back to the house amidst ululating and jubilation. Preparations of *imbusa* and the *ukulasa imbusa* ceremony follow (for *ukulasa imbusa*, refer to 3.2. on page 79).

In the early days, all the people from the village contributed different foodstuffs for *ubwinga*. These were collected by young women who went from house to house with *nabwinga*'s aunt, with a calabash of beer, inviting contributors to take a sip. This was

a gesture of appreciation for the contributions. During this procession, the young women sang songs and also performed actions of *ukulasa imbusa* with *ubutaa no mufwi* (bow and arrow) and *ulupe with imbusa* (basket with an emblem), which were carried by two different people (Muloshi, *ibid*)<sup>122</sup>.

#### SONG 36

<i>Seeya ee!</i>	<i>Seeya</i>
<i>Yangayo</i>	rejoice
<i>Bamulasa</i>	has been shot
<i>Pachikwembe.</i>	on the cloth around her waist.

#### INTERPRETATION

The song emphasizes that the success of a marriage lies in the couple being faithful to each other. The *ubutaa* and *umufwi* represent the husband, while the *ulupe with imbusa* represent the wife.

In the evening *nabwinga's* aunt, accompanied by some young women, fetch *nabwinga* from her grandmother's home.

From there she is taken back to her mother's home, born upon her aunt's back, in order to bid farewell to her parents. The procession is a joyful affair with much singing and ululating.

#### SONG 37

<i>Tucitwale uko bacibashile,</i>	Let us take it back where it was
	curved,
<i>Wecinkolobondo.</i>	you unrecognisable curving.

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<sup>122</sup> Muloshi, *ibid*

*Tucitwale uko bacibashile,*

Let us take it were it was

curved,

*Wecinkolobondo.*

you unrecognisable curving.

#### INTERPRETATION

This song is used to announce to the public that nabwinga is being taken to her mother's home for her to bid farewell to her parents as she is about to be taken to live with her husband.

#### 4.4. UKUCILIKA MUSAMBI (Waiting for the beer to ferment)

In the early hours of the next day, the women gather at nabwinga's parents' home to check how nabwinga spent the night. This is done with the traditional singing which accompanies foot stamping, and pounding of pestles on the ground.

#### SONG 38

*Mwana musambi nalwala ee,*

*Musambi's child is ill,*

*Alele ngolobela.*

She did not sleep properly.

*Mwana musambi nalwala ee,*

*Musambi's child is ill,*

*Alele ngolobela.*

She did not sleep properly.

*Natucinde natusansamuke.*

Let us sing and rejoice.

*Tulye nshaba,*

and eat groundnuts,

*Chansa walala.*

*Chansa you have slept.*

#### INTERPRETATION

The song says that since *ubwinga* can cause *nabwinga* to fall ill or even die of great fear, it is a blessing to find her alright in good health.

#### SONG 39

*Chili, chilli*

Block, block

*Twamucilika fwebakumakando yanama.*

We have blocked her we  
who are from the hooves of  
the animal.

*Chili, chili*

Block, block

*Twamucilika fwebakumakando yanama.*

We have blocked her we  
who are from the hooves of  
the animal.

#### INTERPRETATION

This song is saying that *nabwinga* is protected from worries as her elders have gotten rid of all the fears and anxieties she may have, by stamping on them, as do the hooves of animals on grass.

The singing continues until *nabwinga's* mother offers them a gift of *akasupa ka bwalwa* (a calabash of beer), and then they leave for their homes. *Ubwalwa bwa bwinga* takes a few days before it brews. On the day it is ready, all the food is collected and made ready for *ubwinga*. While this is being done, the women drink *peemba* traditional beer.

#### SONG 40

*Peemba, peemba*

*Peemba, peemba*

*Panama tapashima moto panama.*

The fire does not go out when you

cook meat.

*Peemba, peemba*

*Peemba, peemba*

*Panama tapashima moto panama.*

The fire does not go out when you

cook meat.

#### INTERPRETATION

*Peemba* is a name of a traditional beer made from millet. The song cautions *nabwinga* to ensure that the food prepared for the husband is properly done.

A woman who never takes care when preparing food is useless and foolish, and this may cause her husband to neglect her and go to other women.

#### 4.5. UKUTIYA UBWINGA (Beginning of the wedding)

On the day of *ukutiya ubwinga*, *nabwinga*'s aunt goes around the neighbourhood to invite some women to help in preparing the first *mutondo* of *katubi* (*mutondo* is a clay pot specially made to cool and store drinking water), which is called *icambulamemba*. Once these women gather, *nabwinga* is called to witness the ritual which is done by all the women who encircle the *mutondo*, with hands and knees on the ground, and who slowly move round the receptacle in this position. As this is done, they all take turns pretending to sip from the *mutondo*, and from time to time one of them lifts it high above her head, swings it over the other women's heads and then put it down again as they sing:

#### SONG 41

*Chembe wemutwa*

*Chembe*

*Waipama peshiba lyakwe waipamapo.*

You have bumped yourself

on her lake.

*Chembe wemutwa*

*Chembe*



SONG 43

*Kwenda naenda mutukonko ee*

The walking I have done through  
the valleys,

*amolu yakalipa.*

my legs are sore.

*Nani akantasha ati waenda?*

Who is going to praise me that  
I have walked?

*Amolu yakalipa.*

My legs are sore.

INTERPRETATION

The song is a warning to the wife to be patient and courageous, because some husbands like complaining and scolding their wives. If a wife is very scared of him she may end up making too many mistakes, so she has to be calm all the time.

On this day *shibwinga* and his party is expected to show up at his in-law's home, and is met by some selected relatives of *nabwinga* who are supposed to be given small gifts of money. At this time, if *shibwinga* has not completed his marriage payments, he is asked to do so, because if he has not done so, the proceedings cannot continue. However, if he does not have the money, *shibukombe* will put small sticks in between two *amabakuli* marriage plates, one on top the other, and present this to the parents of *nabwinga*. This gesture in Bemba is interpreted as: '*Bankake amaboko nshale ndeyenda. Nabampele umukashi wandi tule sungana*' meaning 'tie my arms so that I can at least walk. Give me my woman so that we can look after each other'. This means that he (*shibwinga*) is very committed to marriage, and will complete the payments at a later date (Chinyanta, *ibid*)<sup>123</sup>.

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<sup>123</sup> E Chinyanta, *ibid*

The following morning, the couple are taken into the bush for marriage lessons, and to be shown different traditional medicines they may use. This is done in two groups: *shibwinga's* and *nabwinga's* parties set out separately, and meet later on at the appointed time. On their return, *shibwinga* comes back with *ichenge* (lighting splinter) and *umusukuso* (twig used for brushing teeth) while *nabwinga* comes only with *umusukuso*. If one of them has certain faults that the elders have noticed, they will be given difficult tasks to perform, such as carrying a very heavy load of firewood. For well-mannered children there is no need for such treatment (Kunda, *ibid*)<sup>124</sup>. Another ritual that is performed this day is *ukushikula nabwinga ichisungu* (meaning- blessing *nabwinga's* virginity), which is done, indoors, by *shibwinga* lighting *ichenge* and passing it over *nabwinga's* head to the people on the opposite side, who place it in between *ifipe*, covered one on top of the other (Kambole, *ibid*)<sup>125</sup>. The couple are then taken for shaving and bathing before they are formally shown around to everyone. During this display, *shibwinga* is asked to whip *nabwinga's* back. This teaches *nabwinga* that in marriage when there is a misunderstanding she must not keep a grudge, and even display her anger to outsiders.

#### **4.6. UKULUULA AND UKUSHIKULA (Undoing of taboos)**

This is a ceremony whereby the two families, *shibwinga's* and *nabwinga's*, introduce themselves and explain their totems and clans, and also give some marriage tips to the couple through songs. *Ukuluula* is done in the afternoon at the home of *nabwinga's* parents, with the couple seated apart from the rest of the people who have gathered. Two marriage plates are placed in front of them, on which *ukushikula* will be done, this is placing of a small gift of money on the marriage plates before speaking to the

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<sup>124</sup> Kunda, *ibid*

<sup>125</sup> Kambole, *ibid*

couple. The first to speak is *nabwinda's* father, who must first present *umufwi* to *shibwinda*, and then introduce the members of his clan. *Shibwinda* is given the spear so that he will have enough power to protect his wife from other men and enemies. Thereafter, anyone is free to address the couple, but before doing so they must put a small gift of money on the marriage plates (Kambole, *ibid*)<sup>126</sup>.

Before the evening marriage instructions the couple exchange their *imisukuso*, with which they returned from the session in the bush. This symbolises the strengthening and exchange of fertility. After this they are taken separately for further marriage instructions. These marriage instructions are concerned with exposing the couple to the functions of their reproductive organs and systems, and they are also expected to have their first sexual intercourse, which is done before the main celebrations begin. As the people wait for the marriage instructions to end, they sing and dance.

#### SONG 44

*Kalombo we musha uko wile kuteeba*

*taulabwela.*

*Kalombo we musha uko wile kuteeba*

*Taulabwela.*

#### INTERPRETATION

When this song is sung it serves as a reminder to *banachimbusa* and *shibukombe* that time is flying and that they should hasten their instructions. Their response would be in the song:

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<sup>126</sup> Kambole, *ibid*

#### SONG 45

Leader: *Bamayo njisemoomo?*

Mother, may I come in?

Chorus: *Wakwisa ulimunensu.*

Why not? You are our friend.

Leader: *Bamayo njisemoomo?*

Mother, may I come in?

Chorus: *Wakwisa ulimunensu.*

Why not? You are our friend.

#### INTERPRETATION

This song is saying that since *nabwinga* has gone through initiation and the marriage instructions, she is free to take part in all social activities that involve older women.

#### SONG 46

*Akebo banjebele,*

The work you gave me,

*nacita.*

I have done.

*Ngakuli kambi,*

If there is another one,

*banjebe.*

tell me.

#### INTERPRETATION

*Nachimbusa* is announcing that she has completed the task of imparting marriage norms and traditions, which she was given by *nabwinga's* parents, and that she is prepared to perform other tasks if there are any more left to be done.

#### SONG 47

*Wakula mayo wansanga ee!*

You have grown up, mother, you

have caught up with me!

*Wemwengele wandi.*

You light splinter of mine.

*Wakula mayo wansanga ee!*

You have grown up, mother, you  
have caught up with me!

*Wemwengele wandi.*

You light splinter of mine.

## INTERPRETATION

*Nabwinga* is being told that she has grown and caught up with her mother as she has experienced what her mother went through. She will be doing what her mother does to her father. The following song also has the same meaning:

### SONG 48

*Munjili mwana wandi.*

Warthog my child.

*Njenje munjili mwana wandi njenje.*

Warthog my child.

*Njenje wakula twalingana njenje.*

You have grown and caught up  
with me.

*Njenje wamona ifyo namona njenje.*

You have seen what I have seen.

*Njenje munjili mwana wandi.*

Warthog my child.

#### 4.7. UKOWA ULUCHELO (Bathing in the morning)

It is customary for the couple to be taken for an early morning bath in order to get rid of all the *amashamo* (misfortune) that they may have accumulated from childhood. In earlier times *ukowa uluchelo* was done at the stream or river, where some traditional medicine was thrown towards the source of the river as the couple immersed themselves in the water. Nowadays this is done in the bath tub and the medicine is

thrown into the cold water for bathing (Kambole, ibid)<sup>127</sup>. After *ukowa*, *nabwinda's* aunt prepares *ubwali* (maize meal thick porridge) for the couple, which is done customarily by the couple placing *inongo ya chupo* (marriage clay pot) on the fire before she (aunt) prepares the food. This is done because there are certain taboos that have to be followed after the first sexual intercourse. The couple are not supposed to start a fire, cook or light a cigarette as they will become unclean, *ukukowela* (contaminated) and may have '*icifuba camankowesha*' (a cough contracted due to contamination). *Inongo ya chupo* is also supposed to be used by the couple to wash their hands after having sexual intercourse. If they do not wash their hands in the *inongo*, they are considered to have '*ututema*' (be unclean), and they may not touch any child or shake hands with other people (Ilunga, ibid)<sup>128</sup>.

All the leftover food, the ashes from the fire that was used for brewing beer and cooking, and the hair from the couple's first shavings, are taken and buried under a *Mfungo* or *Mpundu* tree. In future, should the couple have fertility problems, the roots from the tree where the residual matter was buried will be used for restoring fertility. The Bemba believe that through this act the couple's ancestors will help in restoring fertility (Kambole, ibid)<sup>129</sup>.

#### **4.8. UKUSULULA IFITETE (Conclusion of the wedding)**

*Ukusulula ifitete* lasts for almost the whole day at *nabwinda's* parents' home, where the elders from both parties spend time, with the couple, going through some of the most important issues that are taught during marriage instructions and the different ceremonies of the marriage rites. The whole event is done in the form of a question

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<sup>127</sup> Kambole, ibid

<sup>128</sup> Ilunga, ibid

<sup>129</sup> Kambole, ibid

and answer discussion with questions being posed to the couple by a specially appointed elder. The couple are expected interpret *imilumbe*, *amapinda* and *imishikakulo* (riddles, proverbs and poems). In conclusion the couple is given the proverb: '*Kabusha takolelwe bowa*' (he who asks will never be intoxicated by mushrooms).

The couple are reminded that it is up to them to consult seniors whenever they have very serious problems as it is believed that '*umukalamba tapusa keebo, apusa akabwe*', meaning that 'an elder never gives wrong advice, but can miss when he throws a stone' (Kambole, *ibid*)<sup>130</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> Kambole, *ibid*

## CHAPTER 5

### UKWINGISHA

#### 5.1. UKUFYALWA KWA MWANA (Child birth)

After *ubwinga* the couple's titles change to *umukashi* for the wife and *Lumbwe* or *umulume* for the husband. However *Lumbwe* is the most preferred title for the husband. As the couple settles into marriage, their parents keep an eye on them to ensure that they put into practice what they learnt during the marriage instructions. Both families are very hopeful for a newborn baby, to an extent that, if it takes more than a year for *umukashi* to conceive, her parents advise her to seek medical assistance. The Bemba believe that having plenty of children means that a person is wealthy as these children will bring in more wealth when they grow up and start working. In earlier times, the infertility of husband or wife led to a breakdown in marriage. However, nowadays people have become more liberal minded, and as such compromise societal obligations (Malama, *ibid*)<sup>131</sup>.

Once *umukashi* conceives and begins to show signs of being pregnant, no one is supposed to mention it to her, until her aunt performs the ritual of *ukusonta ifumo* (lit. pointing the pregnancy). *Ukusonta ifumo* is done in the early hours of the day, by an appointed aunt, who stores the traditional medicine in her mouth and wakes up *umukashi* and then blows the medicine onto her belly and says the words: '*Walikwata ifumo wilasasukila abantu*' meaning 'You are pregnant, do not be sarcastic to people'. After these words she ties *ubulungu ubwabuuta* (white beads) on one of *umukashi*'s

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<sup>131</sup> Malama, *ibid*

wrists (Mukolongo, 1999)<sup>132</sup>. During a first pregnancy, the *umukashi* has to be carefully looked after, and given the proper nutrition, by *Lumbwe* and *nachimbusa* until the time of delivery. This is very important because, if a woman dies in pregnancy, it is known as *inchila*, which means that her husband slept with another woman, which is considered a very serious offence, and involves the entire clan. As part of the punishment the man is asked to remove the foetus by opening the mother's belly with a sharp stick and burying the two separately, single-handed. However, if a woman dies after giving birth, it is known as '*afwa ku nchenta*', which means that the woman had sexual intercourse with another man, and such a death is a source of embarrassment to the parents of the deceased (Chinyanta, *ibid*)<sup>133</sup>.

When a child is born *nachimbusa* has to assist the mother in performing *intambi shakufyalwa kwa mwana* (the ritual of birth).

This involves waiting until the umbilical cord falls off and then burying it next to the veranda of the house. Great care has to be taken before the cord falls, because the Bemba believe that if it falls on the child's genitals, then the child will become infertile. Three months after the birth, traditional beer is brewed and food is prepared for the father and presented as *amatebeto*. This time the *amatebeto* are not presented as the ones outlined in the previous chapter, the food is presented to *Lumbwe* and his invited friends and family members without a procession before arriving at the house. The singing and dancing is focused mainly on instructions on how to tend and nurture children. The significance of these *amatebeto* is that this is a way of thanking *Lumbwe* and all those who assisted during the birth of the child.

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<sup>132</sup> Dorothy Mukolongo, a highly experienced and well known *nachimbusa* in Chingola town of Zambia, personal informant, October 7, 1999.

<sup>133</sup> E. Chinyanta, *ibid*

## SONG 49

*Umwana alelila ibeele,  
wishi alelila akanena.*

The baby is crying for the breast,  
The father is crying for the pubes.

*Namukobwa,  
namukobwa pabili.*

You are hooked,  
you are hooked on two sides.

*Namukobwa,  
namukobwa pabili.*

You are hooked,  
you are hooked on two sides.

## INTERPRETATION

The wife is reminded that previously she only had to look after her husband, but now that she has a child, she is expected to take care of two people, hence her responsibilities have increased, and therefore she has to be very careful in the way she sets her priorities.

## SONG 50

*Nemwine nshilya fya mako.*

I do not eat what belongs to my  
In-laws.

*Nabampe nsenya wandi nabampe.*

Give what's mine give me.

*Nemwine nshilya fya mako.*

I do not eat what belongs to my  
In-laws.

*Nabampe nsenya wandi nabampe.*

Give me what's mine give me.

## INTERPRETATION

The couple are reminded to take good care of the child as it is the greatest love, honour and gift.

Six months after the birth, the child will be checked for the growth of the teeth. In the early days the Bemba believed that the first teeth must emerge from the bottom gum.

If they grew from the top gum, the child was called *ichinkula* or *ichiwa* (a ghost) and was not allowed to grow, instead it was thrown into the river and left to die by drowning. No funeral was held for such a child, but instead her mother just tied a scarf on her head known as *umupango* (Mukolongo, *ibid*)<sup>134</sup>.

## **5.2. UKWINGISHA** (lit. to put something into receptacle)

This ceremony is not performed for every married man, but only for those who prove themselves to be caring, loving and hardworking husbands and fathers. To be accorded this prestigious ceremony, one has to display the set and accepted mode of behaviour within his home, clan and the entire community. After *ukwingisha*, one acquires a higher social status, respect and is often consulted on matters related to marriage and other community issues. On the very day of *ukwingisha*, *Lumbwe* acquires a higher social status and respect than his peers, and is often consulted on important matters. Food and traditional beer is served to *Lumbwe* and his party by his in-laws at their home (Chondoka, *ibid*)<sup>135</sup>.

Before *Lumbwe* sets out for *ukwingisha*, he has to wash his hands in warm water that has *amashikulo* (small gift of money) to prepare himself. Upon arrival at the in-laws' home, *Lumbwe*'s party forms a single file led by an elder selected to perform the ritual of *ukushikiula*, which requires a gift of money and collects *ubulungu ubwa buuta* (white beads), which is placed at the entrance of the house. This action is a gesture of welcome by the in-laws. As this is done a song is sung for them.

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<sup>134</sup> Mukolongo, *ibid*

<sup>135</sup> Chondoka, *ibid*

## SONG 51

<i>Mwaingilamo</i>	You have entered
<i>Mung'anda yacipungu lisheni amapi.</i>	In the house of your in-laws clap your hands.
<i>Mwaingilamo</i>	You have entered
<i>Mung'anda yachipungu lisheni amapi.</i>	In the house of your in-laws clap your hands.

## INTERPRETATION

*Lumbwe* is told that whereas previously he could not enter the house of his in-laws, now that he has proven himself a responsible person, he can mix with them and enter their house freely, and everybody can join in the celebrations and rejoicing.

*Amatebeto* follows the proceedings (as described in chapter 2, with the additional serving of *katubi* (traditional beer) to *Lumbwe* and his party. As the beer is being served the following song is sung:

## SONG 52

<i>Sonwe!</i>	Come and drink!
<i>Niwe walele nsala bukwe bwandi.</i>	You are the one who slept hungry my in-law.
<i>Sonwe!</i>	Come and drink!
<i>Niwe walele nsala bukwe bwandi.</i>	You are the one who slept hungry my in-law.

## INTERPRETATION

*Lumbwe* is invited to have a drink and take food with his in-laws, because there is no need for him to stay hungry when he may mix with them, unlike to the previous times when he had to keep his distance.

On the conclusion of *amatebeto*, *Lumbwe* and his party leave to consume the food at a specially selected home or his own home if he lives in the same locality as his in-laws. Later on *Lumbwe*'s party returns to his in-laws' home. This time both parties are served with traditional beer as they wait for *ukwingisha* to begin. As people are having a drink, a selected aunt of *Lumbwe*'s wife will start the following song, and as this song is sung, she will be blowing through *Lumbwe*'s ears (Kambole, *ibid*)<sup>136</sup>:

#### SONG 53

<i>Komo, komo</i>	Unblock, unblock
<i>Komona umwana amatwi.</i>	Unblock the child's ears.
<i>Komo, komo</i>	Unblock, unblock
<i>Komona umwana amatwi.</i>	Unblock the child's ears.

#### INTERPRETATION

In this song *Lumbwe* is being advised to prepare himself to pay much attention to what will be said through the songs.

Both parties will then sing and dance, led by anyone who feels like making a contribution.

#### SONG 54

<i>Mayo njelela.</i>	Mother forgive me.
<i>Njelela ee wakalomo katali.</i>	Forgive me you with a long lip.

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<sup>136</sup> Kambole, *ibid*

*Mayo njelela.*

Mother forgive me.

*Njelela ee wakalomo katali.*

Forgive you with a long lip.

#### INTERPRETATION

*Lumbwe* is asked to pardon his in-laws for any wrong they may have done him, because now he is considered to be their own son.

#### SONG 55

*Itumba lilelila,*

The drum is sounding,

*kanshi kumako balenjeba fimbi.*

As my in-laws are telling me something else.

*Bantutile ngoma.*

Play the drum for me.

*Shichasulwa nabanyina fyala.*

The one who is not respected by his in-laws.

#### INTERPRETATION

In this song the son-in-law tells his in-laws that he is aware that they just pretend to respect him, but in reality they do not.

#### SONG 56

*Uyu tata aba nemitumfya,*

This young man likes teasing

*Yakutumpika chintu eshibe.*

foolishly on things he knows.

*Nomba ninkula.*

I have now grown up.

*Tuipante, tuinyante.*

Let's kick ourselves, let's step on ourselves.

*Bambi bese mukulamununa.*

Others must come and separate us.

## INTERPRETATION

The mother-in-law is asking her son-in-law to feel free to discuss any issue with her because his social status is now higher than his peers.

### SONG 57

*Wemuko ee!*

My in-law!

*Ukanguma wemuko ee ukapuma.*

You will beat me, you  
in-law, you will beat  
me.

*Pantu ulekaka inkanshi pampumi ukampuma.*

Because you frown  
and have wrinkles on  
your forehead, you  
will beat me.

## INTERPRETATION

*Lumbwe* is being reminded, by his in-laws, to be more pleasant and welcoming to visitors and family members from his own, and his wife's kin.

After a good number of songs and dances have been performed, *Lumbwe* is taken around the in-laws' house searching for all the different items that have been hidden in various places. The search for the hidden items is known as '*konkola*'<sup>137</sup>, which is the most significant part and marks the climax of *ukwingisha*, because these items are placed in all the rooms of the house and also outside it. *Konkola* is done in order to give *Lumbwe* the opportunity to enter all the rooms in his in-laws' house. From this

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<sup>137</sup> The word *konkola* comes from the action of scraping, with the index finger, the last bit of food that sticks at the bottom of the pot. In this context it means to pick up the items that have been hidden in various places.

day on he may interact with his in-laws just as their own children do. During the procession of *konkola* the following song is sung:

SONG 58

<i>Nshimba konkola,</i>	<i>Nshimba</i> pick,
<i>konkola.</i>	pick.
<i>Konkola noomu,</i>	Pick from underneath,
<i>konkola.</i>	pick.
<i>Konkola naapa,</i>	Pick from here,
<i>konkola.</i>	pick.
<i>Konkola namulya,</i>	Pick from there,
<i>konkola.</i>	pick.

INTERPRETATION

The song is sung to guide *Lumbwe* in his search for the hidden items. It should be noted that the whole procession takes part in the singing and performance of the actions of *konkola*, which are done according to the rhythm of the song.

When all the items have been collected, the in-laws give *Lumbwe* small gifts of money, known as *ukufuta*, for certain items to left behind, otherwise the rest of them are taken away. Thereafter, *Lumbwe's* party leaves for their respective homes (Mukolongo, *ibid*)<sup>138</sup>.

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<sup>138</sup> Mukolongo, *ibid*





## CHAPTER 6

### THE DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE

#### MUSIC OF THE BEMBA

##### 6.1 SONG TRANSCRIPTIONS

For the transcriptions I used a modified western staff notation which Gerhard Kubik (and others) have adapted for much of African music. This system, and its notation symbols, can demonstrate effectively and reliably the fundamental concepts and formal structural principles operating in the music:

- The underlying elementary pulses (as the referential rhythmic units in a song, with a durational value of a quaver )
- The pulse grouping into longer and shorter 'beats' (being  – a duple beat,  – triple beat and  – double beat).
- Their ever-repeating total patterns of fixed length (indicated by double bars and dots) and which create the cyclic form of the songs. Cyclic length (and the number of pulses within the pattern) is indicated by a Form (or Cycle) Number, placed at the beginning of each transcription e.g. 24.
- The symbol (●) indicates the vocal notes, and in each appearance this note is held until the occurrence of the next vocal note, or a stop sign indicating the end of the song. The dot (●) also has a minimum durational value of a pulse, and may occur on a pulse line or between such lines, and it also denotes the pitch of that note by its place in the stave. It should be noted that the pulse is the basic rhythmic reference unit and not the smallest rhythmic unit. As my transcriptions show, occasionally there occurs a subdivision of the elementary pulse. But these divisions 'have no orientation function' but are passing embellishments of the pulse. Although I am aware that durational values, as

expressed in flags and stems attached to the dots, can be misleading, because their groupings carry implications of western duple and triple phrasing, I have opted to use these duration symbols in my transcriptions in order to show precisely where certain vocal sounds (in relation to drum strokes) occur, and in relation to each other in two or more aligned patterns. To represent reference beats I have used the symbol ( x<sup>1</sup> ) with a stem and flag to indicate durational value. The symbol ( x<sup>1</sup> ) has also been used to indicate the 'non-melodic' sounds, and the pitches of these phrases have been written in the space below the staff. The bottom line of the staff acts as an indicator for the rise and fall of the pitches, and not necessarily the actual pitch levels or key in which the song is set.

The use of the five-line/four spaces staff is appropriate because the pitches of the Bemba scale can be represented in it, although these pitches do not concur with the absolute pitches of the western tempered scale.

Further modifications have been made to avoid distortion of the music and overcrowded 'score'. In order to make it easy for comparisons and contrasts to be made, in terms of melodic, tonal and rhythmic traits, the songs have been transposed into the same pitch region. The songs have been looked at as individual items and also as part of a particular tradition of Bemba music.

The transcriptions are based on a sampling of twenty-eight songs which I recorded in Kasama and Lusaka. The recordings were made in marriage ceremonies arranged by my informants (ritual specialists) in which I was a participant observer. I was also able to experience for myself the actual performances, and to

learn and understand some of the techniques behind their production especially the drum patterns, and also to check and understand the song texts and their deeper meaning with the help of my informants.

## 6.2. BEMBA MUSICAL CONCEPTS

Bemba conceptualizations of traditional marriage ceremonies as rites of passage, and the music performed within the various ceremonies, are based on that music's function, meaning and value and are described accordingly in *Ichibemba* as:

*Inyimbo sha mufisungu* (music of *chisungu* ceremonies);

*Inyimbo sha pa matebeto* (music of the *matebeto* ceremony);

*Inyimbo sha pa bwinga* (music of the wedding ceremonies);

*Inyimbo sha pa kulasa imbusa* (music of the *mbusa* ceremony).

In their detailed analyses of African musics, Blacking (1982)<sup>139</sup>, Rycroft (1968)<sup>140</sup>, Hansen (1981)<sup>141</sup>, Dargie (1988)<sup>142</sup>, have shown that the forms of African songs depend very much on the social situations in which they are performed, the size of the performing group, the musical ability, ingenuity and versatility of individuals within that group, the presence or absence of a good lead singer, lead – dancer and instrumentalists. In all traditional Bemba marriage ceremonies musical activities are not confined to one context, but to all situations where they are required. In the performance of songs and dances *bana chimbusa* (midwives – *nachimbusa* – sin. and

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<sup>139</sup> John Blacking (1982) *Music of the Venda-Speaking People*, South African Music Encyclopedia, Cape Town: Oxford University Press

<sup>140</sup> Rycroft Ibid

<sup>141</sup> Hansen Ibid

<sup>142</sup> D. Dargie (1988) *Xhosa Music: Its Techniques and Instruments, with a collection of Songs*, Cape Town: David Philip (Pty) Ltd.

*bana chimbusa* – pl.) and the participating audience seem to observe certain conventions. *Bana chimbusa* usually lead the songs and dances, supported by the participating audience and then other people who respond in customary sequence. The size of the participating audience is determined by the nature of the ceremony. For instance, the size of *chisungu*, *ukulasa imbusa*, *amatebeto* and *ukwingisha* ceremonies are smaller than *ubwinda* ceremonies. This is one of the crucial factors that determine performance presentations. In these contexts the singing and choreography of a song and the manner in which it is performed, including characteristic movement styles and behaviour, is determined by the particular ceremony and the performers. This often results in the relative shortening or lengthening of some activities. During indoor ceremonies such as *amatebeto* and *ukwingisha* the presence of so many people in a confined area inevitably constricts and limits musical activities. Due to overcrowding one may be inclined to think that the quantity and quality of the music is adversely affected. However, as Fulanshi (2003)<sup>143</sup>, observes, disturbance and distortion of music is avoided in the following ways:

- By the seating arrangements which are adjusted to the position of the person being initiated, and who must be at the centre of the available space.
- By the limited size of the performing group, as in antiphonal performances of songs and dance, in which the Lead singer is responded to and supported by a comparatively small Chorus group and a manageable amount of dancers – being two to four in number
- By the control and directions given by *nachimbusa* (midwife) in charge of the ceremonies.

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<sup>143</sup> Fulanshi Ibid

It is evident that with the consumption of alcohol and overwhelming excitement people tend to start shouting rather than singing, and talking increases as singing continues. However, this does not dominate the occasion as constant reminders to be orderly and serious are given by *nachimbusa*. During the singing and dancing, drumming increases in volume as the chorus joins the leader in singing. Should someone feel like giving an explanation of the interpretation of the song and dance, the participating audience will remain silent until the end of the explanation, when acclamation is made by hand clapping and ululation.

Another important aspect of musical performance in the marriage ceremonies is the association between the participating audience (members of which have undergone the rituals) and the *nachimbusa*. Although the former may not be specialist midwives, because they have gone through the rites of passage, they know the repertoire of songs and how to present them. As such, their participation reiterates and reinforces the lessons provided by *banachimbusa* and sometimes even introduces issues that may have been omitted or overlooked by *banachimbusa*. As Mutale (2003)<sup>144</sup>, points out, during the seclusion of *nabwinga*, the number of people involved in marriage training are few in number, but they are specially selected, and tend to be specialist singers, dancers and educators, so their social position as *nachimbusa* is acknowledged throughout their community. The marriage music, together with the particular dances and acts which it accompanies, is music that is on a different level from the ordinary music that is performed as a form of recreation. In this regard, Kambole (2003)<sup>145</sup>, points out that the marriage music could be performed purely for recreation, and out of context, but for those who have gone through marriage training,

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<sup>144</sup> Mutale Ibid

<sup>145</sup> Kabole Ibid

the meaning and interpretation of the same music would have deeper symbolic meaning. A typical example of this is the song '*Itumba lilelila kubuko*' (song number 24 on the accompanying CD). This song was played on western musical instruments (electric guitars and drum set) and performed in a Bemba contemporary style of music known as *Kalindula*. I learnt during my fieldwork, that this song was in fact, from the marriage music repertoire, when a *nachimbusa* started singing the song during the ceremony of *ukufunda umukashana* (training the girl), which I witnessed in Kasama.

It should be noted that no special time is set aside for rehearsing marriage music. In fact, at no time will anyone claim to be rehearsing marriage music. This is a characteristic which is peculiar to marriage music only, as other musics in Bemba musical culture have special times set aside for rehearsals. Kambole (ibid)<sup>146</sup>, points out that people acquire proficiency in performing marriage music by taking part in many different ceremonies, and this involves years of experience. Fulanshi (ibid)<sup>147</sup>, further points out that the person undergoing marriage is not expected to sing and dance, but once she is married, her full participation in the music will be expected, as will a degree of expertise. In fact, these are the times when people can demonstrate their knowledge and musical abilities in effective performances. Although *bana chimbusa* are the main trainers and organisers of marriage ceremonies, they need groups of people with which to perform their tasks. This aspect creates teams or small groups of marriage trainers within a given community. However, this does not mean that the entire community is excluded from the training programme. The small groups lead in the organization of the event while the rest of the community support their efforts by contributing food and beer, and by participating in certain ceremonies,

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid

<sup>147</sup> Fulanshi Ibid

especially the *ubwinga* ceremonies. It should be noted that, while Bemba marriage music may be performed by all those people who have gone through marriage training, this does not apply to the playing of the drums. Within the different groups of *bana chimbusa*, only some of them are specialized drummers, who are then called upon for all the marriage ceremonies within a given community

### **6.3. THE FORMAL STRUCTURAL AND STYLISTIC TRAITS OF BEMBA MARRIAGE MUSIC**

Bemba traditional music is predominantly vocal and communal, and performance styles are varied according to context and purpose, but employ singing, dancing, drumming and/or handclapping. Bemba marriage music represents one of the many different forms of multipart vocal music which are fairly widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa. Such structures also have a very long history in the continent. They were encountered by earlier travellers and missionaries well before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who wrote reports and observations of music making in many African cultures, and which make interesting reading. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards there were attempts to notate this music (Kubik, 1997)<sup>148</sup> and the written descriptions, give a clear picture of the prevalence of multipart vocal and instrumental music.

For the Bemba, the first sound recordings of their multipart singing were made in Zambia in 1908 (Kubik, *ibid*)<sup>149</sup>. From all the evidence available, and from that which was obtained from further intensive research by Kubik and others during the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "It can be taken for granted that (the multipart system) arose

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<sup>148</sup> Gerhard Kubik (1997) 'Multipart Singing in sub-Saharan Africa: remote and Recent histories unravelled, in papers presented at the *Symposium on Ethnomusicology*, Grahamstown: Rhodes University, N0. 14 pp85-97.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*

before any contact with European navigators from the 15<sup>th</sup> century on, and independently of the history of polyphony in other parts of the world” (Kubik, 1997: 86)<sup>150</sup>. As Kubik further points out, these multipart structures precede white colonization in Africa and also Arab – Islamic contact in the continent. A fairly detailed descriptive account of ‘Bemba music’ (Religion and Music of the Bemba-speaking people in the Northern and Luapula Provinces of Northern Rhodesia) appeared in the African Music Journal of 1963, by Cajetan Lunsonga, who at the time was Head teacher of Chibole Upper School in Mushota area in what was then Northern Rhodesia, and who had done extensive research in Bemba culture. Lusonga provides some data on Bemba cultural history, but is mainly concerned with drawing upon the older classical music of the Bemba in order to create a liturgical music suitable for African Christian Church worship. What makes his article informative is his emphasis on the vocal nature of Bemba music, and the use of drums and drumming, which receives lesser attention. He makes only passing reference to Bemba sound instruments (apart from drums) and never actually states the precise nature of these instruments. The overall impression one gains from such an article is that the Bemba did not make much use of sound instruments, apart from drums. However, Ng’andu (1999)<sup>151</sup>, during his fieldwork when he studied *Inshimi* (Bemba Storytelling) reveals that he encountered a Kalimba (lamellophone) player. This revelation suggests that there are other instruments, besides the drum, but that they are not as commonly used to accompany communal music. Malama (ibid)<sup>152</sup>, further points out that among the Bemba of Luapula Province string instruments such as the three stringed home-made ‘banjo’ and *chilimbwi* (commonly known as ‘*babatoni*’ –

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid

<sup>151</sup> Joseph Ng’andu (1999) Reassessing the Music Education in Zambia: Towards a New Direction for Music Education in Zambia, Unpublished MMus dissertation, University of Cape Town.

<sup>152</sup> Malama Ibid

three string bass, similar to the one-string 'tea box bass' that Kubik encountered when he studied Malawian music and music of the Kachamba brothers) were commonly used, in the 1950s, for the contemporary music *Kalindula* although in recent times these instruments have been substituted for western musical instruments (electrical guitars and drum kits). It should be noted that both Ng'andu and Malama base their findings on personal experiences; however, I feel that more research on Bemba musical instruments is required to be done before a conclusion of this nature can be drawn.

The Bemba songs and their tonal-harmonic patterns demonstrate one of the many and diverse multipart homophonic vocal structures found in Sub-Saharan African cultures, and which are characteristic of different regional style, and based on different underlying tonal systems. These diverse structures are found in penta-, hexa- and hepta systems, and they can be based on distinctly differ tonal-harmonic principles. The interdependence of harmonic structures, and their underlying tonal systems, in certain African music, was first pointed out by Percival Kirby in 1930<sup>153</sup>, *Study of Negro Harmony*, who noted that there was a correlation between tone combinations or chordings and the pentatonic tonal systems of the music of certain Nguni peoples in South Africa. But Kirby did not elaborate further on this, and the actual correlations were only further elucidated from the late 1950s onwards. In this regard one must refer to Jones' observation about African multipart structures, and his establishment of what has been referred to as 'harmony map' of African peoples who practise diverse kinds of multipart music, and these 'harmony areas' were further correlated with African language areas. Jones identified certain people as being '4ths and 5ths

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<sup>153</sup> Percival Kirby (1930) *A Study of Negro Music: Musical Quarterly*, 16: 404

people', because these intervals were prominent in their music, while other African peoples were '3rds people', (with parallel thirds prominent in their music). Furthermore, others were identified as 'unison and octaves people' (with parallel octaves and unisons prominent in their music) (Jones, 1957)<sup>154</sup>.

Gerhard Kubik and other scholars (notably Simha Arom who focused on Central African aerophone polyphonies) investigated African multipart structures, and it was subsequently shown that, while a 'harmony map' may be acceptable on the 'face' of the musics it identified, it was in fact not possible to identify such harmonic areas, let alone arrive at a sort of typology of harmonic practices in Africa, because, for instance, penta multipart structures could derive from very different tonal-harmonic schemes, as could hexa and hepta structures. Different African communities may demonstrate preference for the same intervals in their music, but these 'same' intervals may have very different origins. Thus African tonal systems should not be evaluated in terms of their 'subjective' (heard, sonic) results, but their underlying tonal systems should also be identified (Kubik, *ibid*)<sup>155</sup>. Because of the tonal-harmonic interdependence of vocal and instrumental music in many parts of Africa, it was also commonly assumed that penta systems with their 4ths – 5ths harmonic results probably derived from musical bow experiences, in which the harmonic partials over a single, or second fundamental gave rise to the vocal and instrumental scales. However, this notion was also refuted in further research, some of it as late as the 1970s, which provided evidence that, while bow technique possibly inspired certain tonal systems, all of them did not necessarily derive from musical bow usage, but had vocal origins i.e. from vowel formations in human speech. As pointed out by

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<sup>154</sup> A. M. Jones (1959) *Studies in African Music*, London: Oxford University Press.

<sup>155</sup> Kubik *Ibid*

Kubik: "When speaking the different vowel sounds are produced by different shapings of the mouth as a resonance chamber, altered by movement of the tongue and shaping of the lips..... So each vowel has its own sound spectrum, it is defined as a difference in the selective reinforcement of harmonics" (1997: 92)<sup>156</sup>. Kubik therefore concluded that: "In Africa both multipart singing styles and also unison can be based on scalar patterns generated by representations of speech-derived partials over a single fundamental" (1997: 91)<sup>157</sup>. The origins of such scales and tonal systems are in speech. The Gogo of Tanzania have a tonal system which underlies their multipart vocal music, and which presents an example of a speech-derived or inspired tonal system. In the 1970s Kubik and a research team found that the Gogo practiced diaphonic singing, (which also has a remote history in Mongolia in the Khoomi technique favoured by shamans, and a form of which was also found in practice among a few Xhosa women in the Cacadu district of the Eastern Cape Province (Dargie 1988)<sup>158</sup>. This vocal technique had never become a full Xhosa tradition among these people, being practiced by only a few of them to this day). Thus the Gogo scale is derived from the partials series, as are many African scales, but it is vocal and not instrumental in origin (Kubik, Ibid)<sup>159</sup>.

#### **6.4. FORM AND STRUCTURE OF THE SONGS**

The form of the songs is cyclic, often comprising a total pattern of music, of fixed length (the form numbers of songs are commonly put in 12, 16, 18 and multiples, etc), which is repeated indefinitely and usually terminated at the completion of the activity that it accompanies, often suddenly by the song leader, or by another song started by a

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid

<sup>157</sup> Ibid

<sup>158</sup> Dargie Ibid

<sup>159</sup> Kubik Ibid

new song leader. The basic metrical patterns of the songs are expressed audibly by hand claps, which are supplemented by drum – rhythm patterns and in some cases by rhythmic body movement patterns made by dancers. It should be noted that, during actual marriage ceremonies songs may be accompanied by hand clapping and drumming, or by hand clapping only. The recordings on the CD provided do not demonstrate the use of all these aspects of performance. Most of the songs are accompanied by drumming, and some of them by hand clapping only. The reason for this is simply because the recordings were made in arranged ceremonial context, and at my request in order for me to be able to distinguish and translate the vocal and drum patterns in the songs.

The melodies of songs are structured antiphonically (commonly referred to as call and response) and comprise at least one pair of complementary phrases of solo and chorus. This is a basic melodic structure in Bemba marriage songs. I have observed that the melodic structures of songs can further be described as follows:

- Songs with the chorus phrase beginning immediately after the end of the solo phrase, i.e. without overlapping.
- Songs with the chorus phrase beginning before the end of the solo phrase with a small overlap (what David Rycroft has described as single-ended overlap)
- Nearly all the songs have very short melodic phrases.

Improvisation is restricted in these songs and when it does occur it involves the interpolation of additional words, usually names of people. Harmonization is done by singing the same melody a third higher or lower. What is important here is that the harmonizing melody has to follow the contours of the main melody at approximately a third interval. Harmonization usually occurs in conjunction with the chorus phrases

and not with the solo vocal phrases. From the transcriptions I made of Bemba marriage music, it is evident that the melodic phrases (of the call phrases) usually begin with a step or a second step from the tonic note and then begin to descend stepwise with a combination of thirds. Comparatively speaking the song: '*Naloli Ng'ombe*' (I can see cattle) has a 7<sup>th</sup> between the end of the solo phrase and the beginning of the chorus phrase, a characteristic which suggests that this song comes from another musical culture. *Naloli Ng'ombe* is a Mambwe song which has been assimilated into the Bemba marriage music repertoire through inter-marriages (as pointed out earlier in detail in the history of the Bemba-speaking people in chapter 1).

An interesting feature in the melodic structure of the songs is that songs like:

- *Twingile shani ee* (How should we enter?) (number 04 on the CD)
- *Fulwe pafyakwe* (The tortoise and its possession) (number 16 on the CD)
- *Nasekela seke* (I am filled with joy) (number 12 on the CD)
- *Mwimbona mamba munuma* (Do not see the scales on my back) (number 13 on the CD)

have vocal phrases rendered rhythmically with rise and fall in speech resembling speech, which in the western musical sense would be categorised as chanting, but the Bemba people classify this as singing and call the structures *inyimbo* (songs). The other feature is the juxtaposition of such a vocal phrase in the solo part, with the chorus which has marked melodic contours with pitch differentiation – a tune (this is evident in the songs '*Twingile shani ee*' and '*Fulwe pafyakwe*').

From the evidence provided by the analysis of twentyeight songs, which I recorded during my field work, it is clear that the multipart singing is based on the principle of

analogous movement within a tempered scale approaching equidistance (Kubik, 1997)<sup>160</sup>. The songs are set in hexatonic and heptatonic scales. In the case of the latter, the extra note is rendered sometimes as B, and sometimes as B flat. This occurs in songs which come from the Ushi and Ngumbo people who reside in Luapula province, which covers the western part of northern Zambia, and it possibly has its origins in the dialect spoken by these people. A total and satisfactory performance of the songs involves singing, drumming, and/or clapping, in which all the performers must “.... Submit to the rhythm of an invisible conductor” (Blacking, 1990: 60)<sup>161</sup>. In such songs experienced song leaders are of crucial importance. And they are always initiated women who are well acquainted with the song styles. The songs represent different types of creative actions which reflect Bemba cultural experiences. When the songs are performed, these experiences are reinforced, experiences which are central to Bemba social and adult life. So when these songs are performed they are done so according to long-standing cultural rules which are part of the Bemba cultural tradition. Marriage confers full adult status to individuals, and so in the contexts of certain ceremonials, the marriage songs impart instruction on marriage behavioral norms and expectations. These are therefore transformed into musical action. The songs are designed for educating and training in marriage conventions, and so they are led by individuals who are experienced and knowledgeable about the performance style and enactment of the various activities.

A good song leader is indispensable in such performances. She/he is also expected to add something new each time a song is performed, but given the nature and purpose of each song, this will occur according to certain restraints. Because of the purpose of

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid

<sup>161</sup> Blacking Ibid

the songs, they are generally less open to musical variation (innovation) than other categories of Bemba music. As these examples of songs demonstrate, musical variation usually occurs in the solo phrases, where something new happens, and this usually coincides with changes in words or parts thereof, which generate small melodic variations because of the changes in speech-tone which the new words bring about. In other song genres performers are able to give way to greater musical freedom, replacing actual words with phonemes (e.g. ee) and nonlexical syllables (*welwele welele*), but this is restricted in the marriage songs, occurring in only a very few of them. Blacking observed this among the Venda, when he noted that the ritual music "... was less open to creative musical expression than recreative social music e.g. Venda girls' 'amusement' *Tshigombela*" (1990: 67)<sup>162</sup>. The antiphonal structure of the marriage songs is more than just a basic structure; it is implicitly a "... socially derived form... which ... reflects both musical balance and also sociological behaviour." (1990: 66)<sup>163</sup>. In all marriage songs, variations may occur in the solo phrases while the chorus phrases remain fixed (without variation). Sometimes individuals in the chorus phrases will enrich the harmony by singing a 5<sup>th</sup> below the melody note (the 3<sup>rd</sup> below the third so to speak) and also the 3<sup>rd</sup> interval to accommodate their vocal range. (See song No.1 in which the chorus features bichords of sixths, being the inverted 3rds).

From the evidence provided by 28 songs, it is clear that, while speech-tone requirements exert some influence on the setting of words to music, this is most obvious in the 'non-melodic' songs, in which the intonation patterns of statement and question utterances exert a strong influence. In the melodically rendered songs, the

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid

<sup>163</sup> Ibid

descending intonation contour of speech statements is retained, and is evident in the direction of the melodic movement. However, it should be noted that the rhythms of the spoken words of the song texts generally differ greatly from the rhythms of the songs, and this is logical because the songs are intended to be singing and not speaking. A significant feature of certain marriage songs is that they are dynamic .i.e. their structures may expand or contract. In such a song, it is up to the song leader to initiate the proper processes; she must know how many times a basic pattern has to be repeated, and when it must contract, and then expand to revert to its original length. Song number 27, on the CD, illustrates this very clearly. The song leader's phrases undergo no less than five variations. Such a song may be said to have a 'variable metre', a description used by Hansen (1981, 1993) in an analysis of a song of Xhosa-speaking Xesibe people of South Africa. In it, the total pattern comprises 2-3 alternating cycles of varying metrical length. According to Hansen this form derives from a non-musical oral tradition – *izibongo* (praises) – which are unmetred, with lines of text of different length. Given the function of this song, severe criticism of a perceived greedy ruler, the basic structural feature of praises was transformed in this song with its variable metre (Hansen, 1993: 59)<sup>164</sup>. This 'variable meter' is encountered in the marriage songs but it is not common. Possibly it has origins in the instructional nature of these songs, in which the musical action has to cover several 'injunctions' from the song-leader to the chorus, and the song leader is free to render these injunctions as often as possible, and also to vary their musical delivery, and even point of entry in the cycle. This means that the basis of this practice is more sociological than musical and reflects the cultural restrictions that operate in these songs, to which I have referred earlier on.

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<sup>164</sup> D. D. Hansen (1993) "Structural relationships between music, social life and social identity, with reference to songs of Xhosa-speaking xesibe Indlavini of EmaXesibeni district, Transkei, SouthAfrica" in Symposium Proceedings: *Eleventh Symposium on Ethnomusicology, University of Natal*, 53-65.

Virtually all the songs (there is one exception) are built on multiples of 8, 12 and 16 triple beats (with form numbers 24, 36 and 48 respectively). These are the common lengths, but there are a few songs which have, comparatively speaking, unusual form numbers e.g. 7 triple beats and multiples thereof (i.e. form numbers 14, 21 and 42 respectively). Regarding the exception the triple – based metrical framework, this particular song (*Naloli ng'ombe* – No. 23 on the CD), as stated earlier on comes from the Mambwe people who are from a different culture and locale. With regards to the harmonies that occur, mainly in the chorus phrases, the singing of bichords in 6ths is really singing of 3rds, this being a transformation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> intervals due to the singers' voice range and its limits. Furthermore, the marriage songs show certain unique traits (mainly due to the context and function of the music) but at the same time they also show an affinity with other Bemba musical styles, particularly in the harmony and tonality and rhythmic patterning.

From the song recordings it is clear that the rhythmic foundation of most of the songs is drumming, while for the 'non-melodic' songs it is clapping. The meter is established by one of the drummers, while the other two combine in cross-rhythms, and may even play the same pattern with entries staggered/crossed (i.e. not beginning at the same time). Therefore, only one drum is responsible for the basic metre, and another drummer may perform the regular elementary pulsations, while the third drummer will produce this grouping iambically. What is noticeable is the occurrence of the reference beat (the basic metrical pattern) within a pulse grouping (either on the first or the second of the pulses) and not with the first of every triple pulse grouping. The basic tempo is expressed implicitly by accented performance (inherent accents in

the melodic phrases), or explicitly by one of the drummers who acts as a time-keeper. This beat is sometimes played with a high pitch tuned drum, being approximately a 5<sup>th</sup> above the fundamental drum pitch.

It should be noted that this analysis is based on twentyeight recordings I made personally, and I also learned to sing the songs and play the drum patterns. My aim in this study is musical analysis in cultural context, so I did not feel it necessary to give more than the basic patterns which identify a song and which are repeated in performance.

#### **6.5. THE SONG TEXTS, THEIR CONTENT, STRUCTURE AND MEANING**

Music is a tool for communication, which combines vocal and instrumental elements for both individual and communal expression. The vocal part of music is expressed in melody, and the words, which form the text of the song. In his study of Ewe music, Agawu (1995)<sup>165</sup>, observes that of the many features of spoken Ewe, two are fundamental to any discussion of music, and these include 'tone' and 'rhythm'. In addition, Nketia, points out that: "The treatment of the song as a form of speech utterance arises not only from stylistic considerations or from consciousness of the analogous features of speech and music; it is also inspired by the importance of the song as an avenue of verbal communication, a medium for creative verbal expression which can reflect both personal and social experiences" (1974: 189)<sup>166</sup>. Nketia continues that:

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<sup>165</sup> Kofi Agawu (1995) *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective*, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>166</sup> Kwabena J. H. Nketia (1974) *The Music of Africa*, New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company.

“Accordingly, the themes of songs tend to centre around events and matters of common interest and concern to the members of a community or social groups within it. They may deal with everyday life or with the traditions, beliefs, and customs of society. This is true not only of serious songs of the court and songs associated with ceremonies and rites, but even of simple tunes, like cradle songs sung to children who may not have mastered their mother tongue enough to appreciate the meaning of the texts” (Ibid)<sup>167</sup>.

Based upon Agawu and Nketia’s studies, one would realise that song texts are expressed in different languages. Some of the languages are more tonal than others, involving variations in the pitch of syllables, which in most cases determines their meaning. To simplify the actual sound structure, while at the same time bearing in mind that speech tones are relational, Agawu (Ibid)<sup>168</sup> represents them in three tones: low, mid, and high. Of course it is important to remember that when dealing with languages tone is not the only quality that should be considered, but also that in some languages stress (as Agawu calls it, the relative weight or accent borne by a given syllable) is very important.

Bemba marriage songs have song texts which bear the following characteristics:

- The solo and chorus phrases share the same text e.g. literally or with minimal differences.
- Sometimes the text of the solo phrase is in the form of a question to which the chorus part provides the answer.
- The text of the solo phrase is the beginning of an axiom or proverb-phrase (*insoselo* and *amapinda* – sayings and proverbs) to which the chorus phrase provides its logical completion.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid

<sup>168</sup> Agawu Ibid

- The text in the solo phrase provides instructions, to do something while the chorus phrase names the person to perform the task).

It should be noted that morphemes of words are fused when the words are spoken or sung. The same syllables are separated when written. For instance:

- Written: *Bamayo ako baombele*
- Spoken or sung: *Bamaywa ko baombele*
- Written: *Mulangile amone*
- Spoken or sung: *Mulangilya mone*

The fusion of ‘o’ and ‘a’ creates the sound ‘wa’ and ‘e’ and ‘a’ creates ‘ya’. Fusion of vowels in this way is a very common feature of *ichibemba* and other African languages.

## 6.6. DRUMS AND DRUMMING IN BEMBA MARRIAGE SONGS

As stated earlier, most of the Bemba marriage songs are accompanied by drumming and hand clapping, but some songs, especially those that are sung with ‘non-melodic’ solo phrases are accompanied only by hand clapping. The drums are known in Bemba as *Ingoma* (both singular and plural). Some Bemba drums have special names such as *Kamangu* (the drum used by royal musicians for sending messages) or *Imangu* (the sound produced on *Kamangu*), and *Itumba*, the drum commonly used in marriage music. Other drums derive their names from the standard rhythm motifs produced on them (such as *sensele*). In the Bemba marriage music there is a stock of drum rhythm patterns and these are then used for the much larger repertoire of marriage songs, an aspect which meets all the songs. The drum rhythms and the tonal sequences employed in the accompaniment of marriage songs come from *imfunkutu* music of the

Bemba, which Ng'andu (1999)<sup>169</sup>, describes as a genre of songs used by adults to convey certain knowledge for ushering a young individual into adulthood. Mapoma (in Ng'andu, *ibid*)<sup>170</sup>, further states that *imfunkutu* also has a function of communicating, between the living and their deceased ancestors, through its intricate drum rhythms and accompanying song texts. These express deep sentiments and symbolic cultural statements. Other types of music that are prevalent among the Bemba include: *Ifimbo fya malilo* (funeral songs), *Imipukumo* (praise songs) and a contemporary style *Kalindula*. The Bemba classify drumming according to genre, and to specific drum rhythm patterns, and these are expressed in the following terms:

1. *Ingoma sha baume* (drum rhythms for men)

2. *Ingoma sha banamayo* (drum rhythms for women)

3. *Ichibitiko*  (basic rhythm motif)

4. *Ichimpengwila*  (basic rhythm motif)

5. *Sensele*  (basic rhythm motif)

In order to deal with and understand the fundamental concepts of drum rhythm creation and its relation to Bemba musical performance, body movement and sound production have to be considered as integrated activities. It should be noted that certain co-ordinated physical movements greatly influence the process and product of musical production. As Kubik, has pointed out:

“Indeed motional style, at least in its basic principles, has been among the most persistent traits in African cultures. In Black Africa identical motional patterns and concepts embrace music and dance, as there is always more than one motional centre in a given Black African dance, so there is also in the playing of musical instruments. The musician does not only produce sounds but moves his hands,

<sup>169</sup> Ngandu *Ibid*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*

fingers and even head, shoulders, or legs, in certain co-ordinated patterns during the process of musical production” (1981: 92)<sup>171</sup>.

From the fieldwork I conducted, my experience has been that the accompaniment provided by the drummers emphasises the basic metrical pattern inherent in the song. The reference beat is usually reinforced by hand clapping which coincides with the accentuations provided by the lead drummer and rhythm patterns deriving from this, and either contrasting in substance, or else identical but played in staggered entries to secure cross rhythms. In the examples provided on the CD, songs number 1, 6, 7, 19, and 20, have a master drum pattern included in the performance. It should be noted that the master drum patterns are derived from the rhythmic movements that dancers perform during the different ceremonies. The patterns are not continuous, but are introduced at certain points, in the cycle, for a short period, and then reintroduced later, in accordance with the dancer’s movement patterns. In other words, the master drummer’s patterns express audibly the rhythms of the dancer’s movements. An observation I made during field work was that at all ceremonies I attended, only women played the drums. One striking feature of drumming I encountered was that the women in the urban areas employed the *ichibitiko* drum pattern in combination with the master drum patterns. Ilunga (ibid)<sup>172</sup>, has noted that the *ichibitiko* drum rhythm pattern is very popular in urban areas because it is simpler to play, as opposed to *ichimpengwila* and *sensele* rhythm patterns. In reiteration, Ng’andu (1999)<sup>173</sup>, further points out that the common combination of drum rhythms includes the synchronization of *sensele* and *ichibitiko* as an ostinato accompaniment, embellished with intricate master drum patterns, which include much variation. It is evident that

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<sup>171</sup> Gerhard Kubik (1981) “Music and Dance”, In Cultural Atlas of Africa, Jocelyn Murray, ed., Oxford: Elsevier.

<sup>172</sup> Ilunga Ibid

<sup>173</sup> Ng’andu Ibid

some songs like *Naloli Ng'ombe* indeed have specified drum rhythm accompaniment, which is not derived from *imfunkutu* genre. As stated earlier on, this song has a drum rhythm accompaniment from Mambwe music, and is known as *Insimba*. It should be noted that at a ceremony I witnessed in Kasama, a Mambwe percussion instrument known as *Vingwengwe* (idiophone), was also incorporated into the accompanying ensemble (see plate No.42 for an elaborate description of the instrument). Beside the introduction of *vingwengwe*, *umukonkoshu* (a stick used for striking the side of the drum to enhance the reference beat and keep time) is included in the accompaniment of some songs. Fulanshi (ibid)<sup>174</sup>, states that *umukonkoshu* is often used to help keep time when drummers tend to drag or retard the tempo of the songs, and also to brighten the more sombre sounds produced by the drums (especially when the drums are played without any singing). In addition, Nketia notes that: "Because of the difficulty of keeping subjective metronomic time in this manner, African traditions facilitate this process by externalizing the basic pulse, which may be shown through hand clapping or through the beats of a simple idiophone" (1974: 131)<sup>175</sup>. Mutale (ibid)<sup>176</sup>, further states that during some ceremonies, a *nachimbusa* will criticize and correct the drummers' performance, and if need be, she will join in the drumming herself. The drummers play a very important role in determining the performance of a song and dance. I have witnessed occasions when the proceedings of a ceremony were stopped and (came to a standstill) because the drummers could not maintain the desired tempo, and the required timbres. Blacking also experienced a situation where music was stopped, when he tried to play the *dumbula* drum of the Venda, during a Venda possession dance (*ngoma dza mizimu*), because the dancer claimed that he was ruining the effect of the music by 'hurrying' the tempo just enough to inhibit the onset

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<sup>174</sup> Fulanshi Ibid

<sup>175</sup> Nketia Ibid

<sup>176</sup> Mutale Ibid

of trance. From this experience, Blacking pointed out that “The effectiveness of the music therefore depends on the context in which it is both performed and heard; but ultimately it depends on the music itself” (1995: 66)<sup>177</sup>.

In addition to the musical uses of drums, their sounds may function as signals (call signals or warning signals) (Nketia, Ibid)<sup>178</sup>. Agawu, continues that: “The principle behind the organization of an announcement resembles those that constrain the use of drums as speech surrogates, and both modes of communication operate in aural mode, and both involve the dissemination in coded form of specific verbal messages” (Ibid: 46)<sup>179</sup>. In most African traditions sending messages on drums is restricted to specially select royal court musicians. As stated earlier on, the Bemba *Kamangu* is one such drum.

## 6.7. DRUMS

To a great extent, African music is inclined towards percussion and percussive textures, as a result emphasis and complexities in rhythmic structures predominates the music, as opposed to melodic sophistication (Nketia, 1974)<sup>180</sup>. Further more, Nketia notes that:

“The melodic and polyphonic forms utilized in African music derive their dynamic qualities from the rhythmic framework within which sound materials are organised. African traditions are more uniform in their choice of rhythms and rhythmic structures they are in their selection and use of pitch systems” (1974: 125)<sup>181</sup>.

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<sup>177</sup> John Blacking (1995) *Music, Culture and Experience: Selected Papers*, USA: University of Chicago.

<sup>178</sup> Nketia Ibid

<sup>179</sup> Agawu Ibid

<sup>180</sup> Nketia Ibid

<sup>181</sup> Ibid

For this reason, percussive instruments (membranophones) stand out to be most dominantly used for the accompaniment of much African music, and the drum is particularly the most commonly used instrument. Drums are made from various materials, for their resonating bodies, which include: hollowed out tree trunks, strips of wood bound together by iron hoops, potsherds – for making round frame drums, large gourds, and industrial metal drums (in recent times). The drum heads (membranes) are usually made from various animal hides, some of which include: cow or ox hide, snake or crocodile skins and goat hide. The shapes of the drums vary from place to place, as Nketia (Ibid)<sup>182</sup>, observes that the most common ones appear to be: cylindrical, semi-cylindrical (with a bulge in the middle or a bowl shaped top), conical, and hourglass shaped. Likewise drums appear in a wide variety of sizes as well as weight. Nketia, further observes that some of these drums are single headed (with a sonorous membrane on one end and open at the other end), while others are double headed (with sonorous membranes at both ends). Nketia continues that:

“The manner in which the drum head is fixed varies. It may be glued down to the shell, nailed down by thorns or nails, or suspended by pegs that can be pushed in or out to regulate its tension. The head may also be laced down by thongs to a tension ring at the bottom, or to another skin at the other end; the lacing may be Y-shaped, W-shaped, or occasionally X-shaped” (1974: 86)<sup>183</sup>.

It is important to note that designing and construction of drums depends upon the desired timbres of the tone and pitch to be produced on that particular drum (Mwela, 2003)<sup>184</sup>.

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid

<sup>183</sup> Ibid

<sup>184</sup> Obino Mwela, 2003, December 20, personal communication with the informant, Lusaka.

All the Bemba drums consist of either a cylindrical or conical resonating body made from a hollowed – out tree trunk. The drum heads are made from cow or ox hide, which are laced one on each side of the resonating body (the lacing strips coming from the hide itself). The lacing is pulled to a desired tension that in turn enables the drum to yield the desired sound. *Sensele*, the smaller and high pitched drum, is made from a cylindrical resonating body while *Itumba*, the larger and low pitched, could either be made from a conical or cylindrical resonating body (plate No. 38 and No.39 on page 258 show examples of the two drums). I also encountered single skin conical drums, *Itumba* and *Sensele*, made from hollowed – out tree trunks, with drum heads pegged on to the wider end of the resonating body. The height of the drums was exactly the same, but the circumference varied according to the size of the drum, and the general quality of sound it produced. Mwela (2003)<sup>185</sup>, observed that in the thirty years that he has been playing these drums, there has not been a set standard as to the exact measurements of the Bemba drums. The size (height and width) of the drum is determined entirely by the maker of the drum. Due to external factors, such as temperature changes, moisture, movement and transportation the drums' skins loosen and hence lose their 'correct' tone. To re-tune them players either put them in the sun for sometime until the skins stretch in the heat and produce the desired sound, or else place them close to a fire to warm up, and then beat them from time to time until the desired sound is elicited.

It is becoming increasingly common for drum makers in the urban areas, especially in Lusaka and the Copperbelt provinces, to use twenty litre metal industrial drums as resonating cylinders for drums. The drum-heads and lacing materials and method of

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid

construction are exactly the same as the drums with wooden resonators. In this case, the diameter of the drum will vary according to that of the industrial drums. One thing the drum-maker has to be aware of is the size, which should not be too large as this affects the quality of the sound of the drum. It should be noted that metal cylinders are not only used for *imfunktutu* drums, but also for *Kalela* dance music, where the larger metal industrial drums are preferred. In Mufulira, at an *ukwingisha* ceremony I attended, I witnessed a drummer playing on a plastic twenty litre cooking oil container. Here she had to use two thirty centimetre round sticks which she struck on the base of the container. This was a very serious infringement of *imfunktutu* musical practice as the timbre of the sound produced on this container was very rough and undesirable.

#### **6.8. TECHNIQUES OF PLAYING THE DIFFERENT DRUMS**

In his extensive study of the music of the Venda people of South Africa, Blacking, stated that: "Analyses of music are essentially descriptions of sequences of different kinds of creative act. At the surface level, creativity in music is expressed in organizing new relationships between sounds and new ways of producing them, that is, in musical composition and in performance" (1995:58)<sup>186</sup>. This statement should be taken into consideration when dealing with African drumming, because the very nature of African drumming is quite complex, according to the actions used in the process, the distribution of timbres, by striking a different drum area, and the agent used for striking. Agent, in this case, could be defined as that which generates movement or actions (performs an act or means), and these may include hands,

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<sup>186</sup> Blacking Ibid

percussion sticks and drum-beaters (Kubik, 1997)<sup>187</sup>. Kubik, further points out that in drumming it is important to consider the sonic (sounded) and non-sonic aspects, the latter may involve ‘motion’ (movement behaviour) of the player. Therefore, one cannot just give ‘impact notion’, based on the audible sounds, but instead, also needs to see what the player is doing between the ‘impact points’, his movements, and his actions of drumming. Kubik calls this the ‘kinetic aspects’ (kinetic – pertaining to, or due to motion), and suggests that “We have to identify the kinemes within each agent’s movement, that is the smallest discernable action units that seem to be significant for the performer, such as stroke with the flat right palm or stroke with the right fist” (1997: 132)<sup>188</sup>. In addition Blacking (1973)<sup>189</sup>, notes that at the *domba* (Venda girls’ initiation), two girls play *mirumba* (alto drums), and as they play they sway their bodies from side to side, keeping a steady rhythm so that the drumbeat is part of a total body movement.

As is often the case in African music, there is a difference between a listener’s auditory impression and a performer’s motor concept of sound patterns. As Blacking observed, in Venda initiation music: “If two drummers play the same surface rhythm but maintain an individual, inner difference of tempo or beat, they produce something more than their individual efforts.... These combined patterns alone can assume a variety of new forms when different parts of a drum-skin are beaten and/or the tones are muffled or clear” (1995:59)<sup>190</sup>. In order to determine and interpret what is intraculturally significant, Kubik suggests the following procedures:

1. “Interpreting verbal statements given by the performer himself, and

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<sup>187</sup> Kubik Ibid

<sup>188</sup> Ibid

<sup>189</sup> John Blacking (1973) *How Musical is Man*, Seattle: University of Washington Press.

<sup>190</sup> Blacking Ibid

2. Determining each supposed kineme's variation margin by looking a sequence of several repetitions either in a live performance or on film" (1997: 132)<sup>191</sup>.

Playing techniques, styles or timbres are not achieved at random as the players deliberately repeat the same actions several times. For instance a player may hit the drum head with a flat palm of the right hand and then hit with the left hand, using his finger-tips. Deliberate variations of kinemes (fingers splayed or together, cupped hand, scooped or flat hand) may be introduced and repeated. In addition, Nketia notes that: "The playing techniques that are applied to particular drums may also be chosen with the sonorities of the drum in mind, as such, some drums are played with sticks – straight and round sticks with or without a knob at the end, or curved or slightly bent sticks – with the weight of the stick depending entirely on the drummers" (1974: 89)<sup>192</sup>. In order to avoid making incorrect conclusions one would definitely need the player to confirm this sort of action.

A player may have a stock or range of ways of striking the drum (which Kubik calls 'action modes'). This is because the player wants to produce different timbres for specific strokes (which Kubik calls 'timbre units'). For instance (○) produced by the RH (right hand), and (●) produced by the LH (left hand). The timbre units are produced thus:

- With a 'dry stroke' (closed, stopped, or muted stroke – after striking the drum-head the hand rests on the skin for a specific duration. This gives a 'dry' timber, resulting from what some earlier writers called 'damping' of the skin prior to striking it).

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<sup>191</sup> Kubik Ibid

<sup>192</sup> Nketia Ibid

- With an ‘open stroke’ (prolonged sound e.g. hand lifted off the head of the drum, what was earlier called ‘free beating’), combined with an ‘accentuated stroke’ (hitting the same area of the drum, bouncing back immediately, resulting in an open sound of some duration).

In some African cultural drumming, drummers aim at producing not merely ‘rhythms’ but different ‘pitches’ or timbre units. Variations in the way of striking the drum-head result in the production of what may be called a ‘deep tone’, ‘middle tone’ or ‘high tone’ (Kubik, *ibid*). I actually experienced this, during my fieldwork, when Mwela was demonstrating to me how to play *sensele* and *ichimpengwila* (Bemba drum rhythm patterns), and this is evident in my recordings on the CD provided.

A significant aspect of this study is the presence of a counter elementary pulse line, which the master drummer introduces. As a way to show this, Kubik adds extra vertical lines in his transcriptions. It is essential when analyzing African drum rhythm patterns to identify the ‘elementary pulsation’. Kubik, in his study of drum patterns in the ‘Batuque’ of Benedito Caxias pointed out that:

“In African and African-American music, this term signifies a continuous flow of fast reference units in the mind of the performers and the dancers. These reference units, although subjective, are so omnipresent and deeply entrenched in the mind that one does not actually think of them. And yet they serve as a most important temporal orientation screen for the performers. The elementary pulsation can be objectified by actual strokes, but it can also be silent or represented in fragmentary fashion with strokes ‘left out’ (1997: 133)<sup>193</sup>.

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<sup>193</sup> Kubik *Ibid*

In Bemba drumming sound is produced by striking the drum-skin head with open hands. To vary the sound the player may do the following:

- Strike the drum head at different points such as in the centre or on the rim.
- Strike the drum with the whole hand.
- Strike the drum with fingers only.
- Strike the drum with scooped hands or flattened hands
- Strike the drum with a gentle bounce (open strike).
- Strike the drum with a forceful slap (closed strike).

All these methods of playing the drum, plus the quality of the materials used in making the drum, help determine the timbre and volume of the sound produced on the drum. It should be noted that drumming techniques vary in specific details from one player to another. However, the most common ways include:

- Placing the drum between the drummer's legs, which are curved around the circumference of the cylinder or cone of the drum, with one end of the drum (head) resting on the ground at a slanting angle of about 30° towards or away from the player.
- Placing the drum between the drummer's legs without the drum resting on the ground. In this position the drummer may be either standing or sitting. This position is commonly adopted or taken when playing a small and light drum.
- Placing the drum with one head resting on the ground completely leaving the playing head horizontally in front of the player.
- Placing the drum in a vertical position on its side with its resonating cylinder resting on the ground and leaving both drum-heads perpendicular to the ground. The drummer has to straddle the drum in such a way that one of the drum-heads is facing in front of him/her while the other is facing behind. It

should be noted that this position of playing is not common as drummers tend to sit on the drum when they feel tired. Sitting on the drum is not favoured as it may cause damage to the instrument. As a young child I was taught that if I sat on a drum I would not be able to bear children when I grew up! Up to this day I have never sat on a drum although I know that still can have children even if I had sat on it. Kapwepwe S (1990)<sup>194</sup>, points out that such taboos were imposed on young children in order to teach them respect for property.

Despite the different drum playing positions, the drum is played by striking the drum head with both hands and not with beaters. Though to an observer it may appear that drummers employ the free – beating method when striking the drum-head, Mwela (ibid)<sup>195</sup>, stresses that a drummer selects the exact place on the drum-head in order to produce the desired sound and also to produce varying sounds, including ‘damping’ or ‘closed’ beating.

With regards to performance, Blacking (Ibid)<sup>196</sup>, observes that drums are assigned different roles according to the number used and the nature of the social event they accompany. For instance in Venda, *vhusha* and *tshikanda* song accompaniment, the tenor drum is the ‘time-keeper’ used to announce the basic meter of the song, the alto drum may reinforce the time-keeping of the tenor, and another alto drum may improvise a rhythm which stresses the underlying eighth pulse. Similarly, the Bemba *sensele* drum is the time keeper of the basic meter of marriage songs, while *itumba* drum is used as the master drum. With regards to Bemba marriage music

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<sup>194</sup> Simon Kapwepwe Ibid

<sup>195</sup> Mwela Ibid

<sup>196</sup> Blacking Ibid

accompaniment, Lunsonga (1965)<sup>197</sup>, observes that it is common practice that three drums are employed, and these include: *sensele* (the high-pitched drum) and two *itumba* drums (one medium-pitched and the other low-pitched).

## 6.9. DANCE STRUCTURES AND MOVEMENT ORGANIZATION IN BEMBA MARRIAGE SONGS

In many African societies music and dance are interrelated, and that music stimulates a person to respond, in one way or another, with his body. Nketia, in his broad survey of the musical traditions of Africa, observes that:

“The importance attached to the dance does not lie only in the scope it provides for the release of emotion stimulated by music. The dance can also be used as a social and artistic medium of communication. It can convey thoughts or matters of personal or social importance through the choice of movements, postures, and facial expressions. Through the dance, individuals and social groups can show their reactions to attitudes of hostility or cooperation and friendship held by others towards them” (1974: 207)<sup>198</sup>.

From Nketia’s observations one would easily understand that dance, in the African sense, is a conduit of expression, and people often relay their morals and beliefs through the selection of appropriate dance vocabulary and symbolic gestures, and all the different body movements, in a dance are linked to the purposes of the social context in which the dance is being performed. In dance, the motor feeling that a person has is derived from the rhythmic structures inherent in the accompanying music, and any changes in the tempo of the music will result in certain mechanized changes in the dance movements. As Nketia further points out: “Rhythm and

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<sup>197</sup> Cajetan Lunsonga (1965) *Bemba Music: Africa Music: A Journal of African Music Society*, Tranvaal: Published by the African Music society. Vol. 3(4).

<sup>198</sup> Nketia Ibid

movement are more closely knit. A series of prearranged movement sequences or figures may each be identified with a distinctive rhythmic pattern so that changes in rhythm are automatically accompanied by changes in the dance” (1974: 211)<sup>199</sup>. In addition, Agawu, notes that: “The spontaneity with which movements are begun in response to music, movements ranging from a modest hand clap to an elaborate body turn, adds to the view that, here as in African cultures, sound and movement are inextricably intertwined” (1995: 91)<sup>200</sup>. Agawu continues that: “The music [sound] in this case is only one of the several ingredients that create the exciting atmosphere during a performance” (1995: 93)<sup>201</sup>. In this regard the Bemba attach great importance to the selection of drummers who provide accompaniment for the songs and dances during the different marriage ceremonies.

An African dance may be made up of movements that are either simple or somewhat complicated in conception. A basic dance structure could be a sequence of different steps or movements, or a single pattern of very few steps and movements (a motif), which is repeated for a certain period of time. This involves movements of various parts of the body, which are performed simultaneously, in combinations of hand and leg gestures, shoulder and hip movements, and shuffling and stamping of the feet (Nketia, *ibid*)<sup>202</sup>. With regards to body movements in Zambian dances, Kambole (2003)<sup>203</sup>, asserts that dances among the Ngoni people, from the Eastern Province, involve mainly swinging of the arms and stamping of the feet, while dances among the Lozi and Mambwe people, from the Western and Northern Provinces respectively, involve rotation or upward and downward movements of the shoulders along with

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<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>200</sup> Agawu *Ibid*

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>202</sup> Nketia *Ibid*

<sup>203</sup> Kambole *Ibid*

some arm movements, and contraction and release of the shoulder blades. Kambole continues to say that diversity in the types of movements within the dances also extends to other factors such as quality, speed and flow of movements. In the same vein, Nketia (Ibid)<sup>204</sup>, further points out that some body movements are more vigorous and sharper in quality, which superficially, (to an onlooker), may appear to demand a great deal of effort, although sometimes this may be an illusion created by the quality and tempo of the movements. In reiteration, Agawu notes that: “Dance styles are likewise varied – by speed of gesture, by the part of the body on which movement is focused, and so on, and within the norms of dancing, room should be made for individual interpretation” (1974: 113)<sup>205</sup>. The different movements convey certain messages, such as, Nketia points out:

“When a dancer points the right hand or both hands skyward in an Akan dance, he is saying, (I look to God). When he places his right forefinger lightly against his head, he means, (It is a matter for my head, something I should think seriously about, something I must solve for myself). If he places his right forefinger below his right eye, he is saying, (I have nothing to say but see how things will go)” (1974: 208)<sup>206</sup>.

Likewise, in Bemba tradition when a dancer stoops his head down and holds it with both hands, he is saying (There is a bereavement in my family).

Blacking (1985)<sup>207</sup>, in his study of Venda girls’ initiation found out that dance performances could be categorised as individual (solo) dances and communal (group) dances. The dances could further be categorised into: solo dancing by males and solo dancing by women, and communal dancing by males and communal dancing by

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<sup>204</sup> Nketia Ibid

<sup>205</sup> Agawu Ibid

<sup>206</sup> Nketia Ibid

<sup>207</sup> John Blacking (1985) “Movement, Dance, Music and Venda girls’ Initiation Cycle” in Paul Spencer ed., *Society and the Dance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

females. And most of the communal dances were circle dances with the general movement being counter-clockwise. This performance formation, according to Blacking, “.....was appropriate for the restricted dancing space that was common in the mountainous Venda countryside, but it could also be related to the symbolic significance of the circle in Venda thought” (1985: 75)<sup>208</sup>. Although most of the African traditional musical and dance performances are set out-of-doors, in unbounded space, there are some performances that are set indoors, in a confined, bounded or closed space. However, Bemba marriage musical and dance performances fall into the confined or closed space category. This is because, as Mutale (Ibid)<sup>209</sup>, points out the space must hold the participating audience that is specially selected from initiated adults and who respect the secrecy of some of the information being imparted into those who are being initiated or undergoing marriage training. In the same vein, Agawu (Ibid)<sup>210</sup>, further points out that among the northern Ewe people of Ghana, the idea of ‘qualified participant’ in a musical event is strictly observed, and that there is a rule that only ‘insiders’ (defined as elders and citizens of Akpafu – an ethnic group in Ghana), may enter the prescribed space. It should be noted that not all Bemba marriage music is performed indoors, some of it is performed during processions, such as those that precede *amatebeto* (the food offering ceremony). The women, from the bride’s family, carrying containers of food on their heads, and making a modest swaying from side to side, walk to the accompaniment of singing and drumming, in a formal procession to the groom’s house (an elaborate description has already been provided in chapter 3).

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid

<sup>209</sup> Mutale Ibid

<sup>210</sup> Agawu Ibid

For all Bemba marriage songs there is expected motor behaviour consisting of specially designed and recognised movement patterns which have to be executed, and which are the basic language – both musical and metaphorical – of a particular dance genre, and indeed of the whole musical culture. What is more, African movement organisation has been rightly described by a dancer (in Kubik 1981: 82)<sup>211</sup>, as ‘polycentric’: different kinetic processes may occur simultaneous in different body areas, so that several subtle rhythmic patterns are combined in the overall rhythmic flow. And even those body areas that appear to be passive are in fact all part of the rhythmic process. This is very pertinent for the dance styles of Bemba marriage songs.

In the marriage ceremonies, *amasha* and *imfunkutu* are the principle dance ‘style structures’ that are integrated with drumming and singing. When these are performed, certain requirements have to be met regarding the performance area; the location of the dancers in relation to each other, and to their audiences. The dance area is situated in a room inside a house (in urban areas the living room is the designated area, while in the village the only room in the hut is used, as the huts are usually single-roomed). A circular or semi-circular formation in the choreography of the performance is maintained, with the person being initiated sitting in or near the centre (refer to figure No. 1 on p. 171). The circle represents and symbolises symbiotic human values in relation to the village, small groups or gatherings, and the individual (Kambole, *ibid*)<sup>212</sup>. The person presenting or performing the song and dance has to do so in the centre of the circle, while the participating audience remains freely around the opening. The presenter dances, more or less on the same spot, but may gradually

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<sup>211</sup> Kubik *Ibid*

<sup>212</sup> Kambole *Ibid*

move a very minimal distance of about a few steps. Two to three other people in attendance will also step inside the circle from time to time to support the song-dance presenter. (Throughout my fieldwork experience, I did not witness an occasion where all the people present participated in the dancing. There was always one group that ensured that the singing continued, and that the proceedings were as much as possible conducted in an orderly fashion). The drummers are placed either within the circle, or just outside the circle depending upon the size of the performance area.

In *amasha* dancing there is distinctive motor behaviour in which the most visibly active area of the body is the lower trunk area, but this activity integrates with rhythmic processes in other areas, notably the feet, and also generates subtle rhythmic movements in the head, arms and shoulders. A dance sequence is always initiated by antiphonal exchange between solo and chorus, with a few repetitions of the cycle. The dancing begins with the dancer in their normal vertical position, with both feet on the ground and legs together, with the knees straight. The arms hang from the shoulder joints and are bent inwards at the elbows, so that the dancers' hands approach each other in front of the upper torso and the wrists hang flexibly. The basic kinetic action involves a rapid swivel of the hips in a lateral movement from right to left, within a duration of three pulses or triple beat (♩ in transcription). This is simultaneous with the same directional movement of the dancer's feet: but she rises on to the ball of each foot, with the torso stretching slightly upward in order to execute the swivel. This also incurs the transference of weight support laterally from right to left foot, but the knees always remain in a straight position. The speed of the continuous swivelling action is determined by the drumming, in which the reference beat is maintained by one of the drummers. The rapid hip swivels appear to be twisting or rotating, but in fact no

rotation is actually achieved. The dancer's feet provide the basis for the swinging/turning action. Unlike other genres of Bemba communal music, which require special dancing dress, Bemba marriage songs do not demand this. The Bemba refer to the hip-swivelling in terms of 'waist' (*Umusana*), meaning literally smaller part of the body between thorax and hips, and it is common practice from men and women to tie a *chitenge* (a length of Zambian print cloth) around the waist and hips, which enhances the swivelling movements. But wearing the garment around that part of the body helps the dancer to focus mentally on the lower torso area, which is the main area of kinetic energy, and in this way the whole torso is split into two areas, within which the obligatory patterns may be executed in combination (as stated earlier on). The swivelling is very difficult to execute, and although individuals may bring their own personal 'inventiveness' to its performance, there is a right and wrong way of doing it. The arm position and hand gestures (flapping from the wrists) are retained throughout, but a dancer may also execute slight – even imperceptible – waving motions manually, while swivelling, and/or make small 'nodding' movements of the head.

The marriage songs are strongly context-specific, but not all the songs employ the *amasha* dance style. In other songs dancers perform movement patterns which are representational and have extra-musical significance, either emulating, or symbolizing expected behaviour patterns in adult social and married life. For example there are sequence of movements, gestures and stances which are described in the Bemba language as: *umuchinshi pa ku pekanya imbuto nefyakulya*, (being careful, gentle and respectful when preparing seeds for planting, and when serving food to other people, regardless of who they are – see plates No. 35 and 36 on page 256). Other

representational dance patterns occur within mimed scenarios which send messages of the importance of social harmony and mutual co-operation in marriage, and the undesirable results of being a bad spouse (see plate No.37 on page 257). During *ukufunda umukashana* (teaching the initiate) instruction on sexual matters is conveyed with music and simulated sexual behaviour. All the actions are performed as organized movement patterns, accompanied by the singing, drumming and clapping. Nketia, observes that “The structural relationship between dance and music facilitates their integrated use for dramatic communication” (1974: 218)<sup>213</sup>. In addition, Nketia further points out that the dramatic use of music and dance derives its highest expression in the dance drama, which involves mimed actions incorporated into dance or extensions of the dance proper.

*Insimba* is another dance style that is performed with certain marriage songs e.g. *Naloli Ng'ombe* (I have seen cattle). The dance's 'style structure' is very different from that of *amasha* and the basic movements centre on the shoulders. Each shoulder is rotated, one after the other, in gentle undulating movements forwards and backwards. As the dancers execute the shoulder movements, they slowly and gracefully bend the knees until they reach a crouching position. An individual may perform this dance alone, but the common practice is to do it in pairs. The rotary motion of the shoulders, together with the sinuous waist movements, which are distinctive to this dance style, have been described by Kambole (2003)<sup>214</sup>, as being symbolic of status, beauty and co-existence. Just as the dancers, singers and drummers compliment each other in order to give a splendid performance, so is it expected of all adults living in the same locality to support each other in building a

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<sup>213</sup> Nketia Ibid

<sup>214</sup> Kambole Ibid

moral and productive community to live in. Kapwepwe (1994)<sup>215</sup>, adds that the Bemba believe that the dancing human body can be used to bring rhythm and movement to day-to-day chores, and these are then recreated with exaggeration and abstraction and incorporated into the musical performance. From Kapwepwe's analogy it is clear that many of the dance actions and movements performed during the marriage ceremonial songs, are symbolic of actual life experiences of the Bemba. One could even say that the musical language of the songs (which includes the dancing) is also a metaphorical language in which the norms and values and experiences of Bemba life are expressed. While we expect the dances – in their classical form and style – to reflect aspects of Bemba cultural life, this does not mean that there is no room for innovation. In fact Bemba choreographies have undergone changes and innovations, without losing their fundamental essential style structures, and these changes reflect the new developments in the socio-economic life of Bemba communities. In this regard, one could say that the Bemba fully appreciate the value of musical conservation, which is effectively achieved in the community of their musical traditions in an active process. Ilunga (ibid)<sup>216</sup>, has proposed that the dance 'style structures' and movement organization in these songs have a direct connection with the fundamental Bemba idea that life is one continuous process. This concept is expressed in the phrase '*Insoka ukusuma umuchila waiko chilangililo cha ku lundulwila kwa bumi*' (the snake biting its tail is an indication of the continuity of life from one generation to the next). This continuity is reflected in structural musical terms in the cyclic form of the songs, and externalized in the spatial arrangement of the dances on the floor area in a circle, surrounded by their audiences, and also in the

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<sup>215</sup> Simon Kapwepwe Ibid

<sup>216</sup> Ilunga Ibid

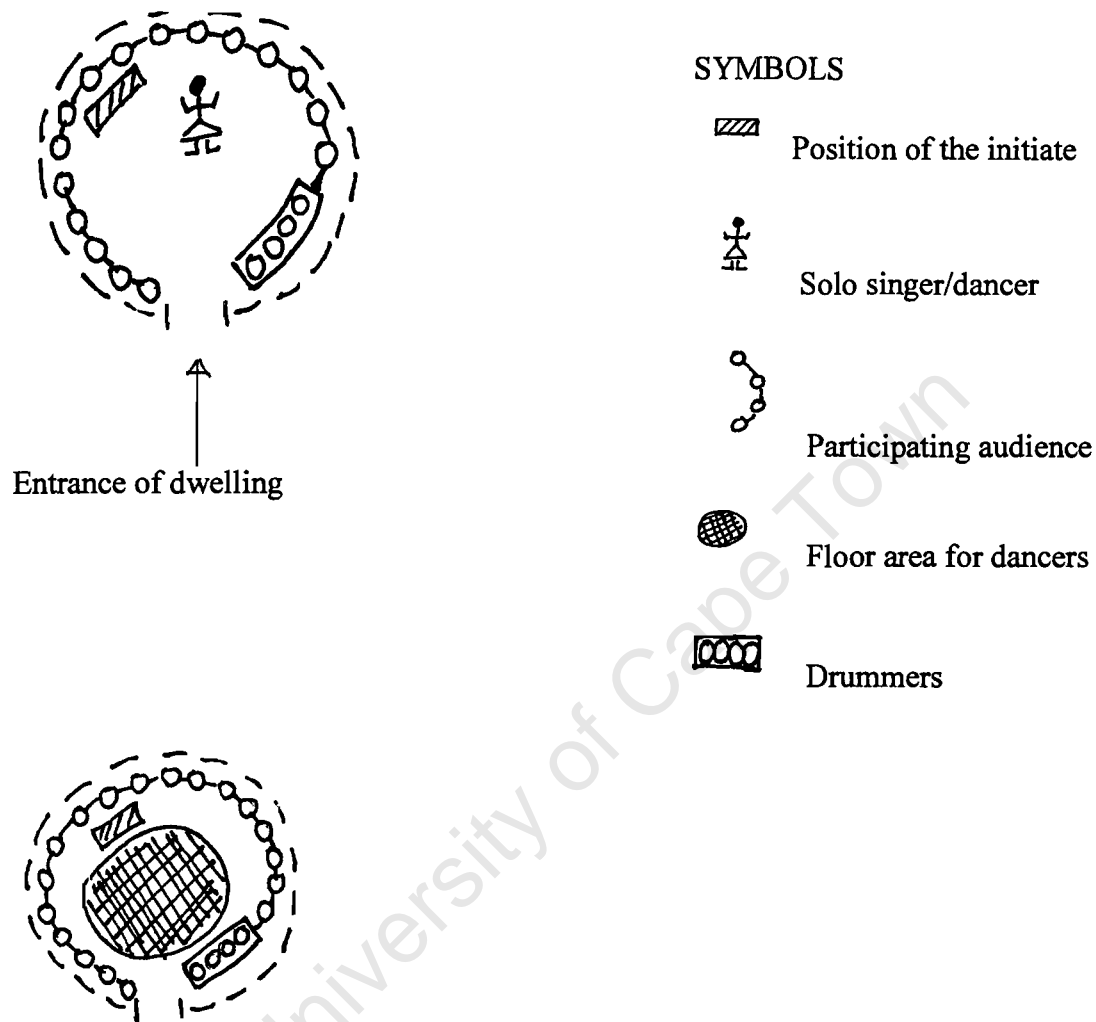
dance patterns, their physical shapes and actions, and all of which express metaphorically the norms, values and aspirations of Bemba society.

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**FIGURE 1**

**FLOOR PLAN AND ARRANGEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS IN A MARRIAGE CEREMONY**

**1. Arrangement of participants in a traditional dwelling**



**2. Arrangement of participants in a house**

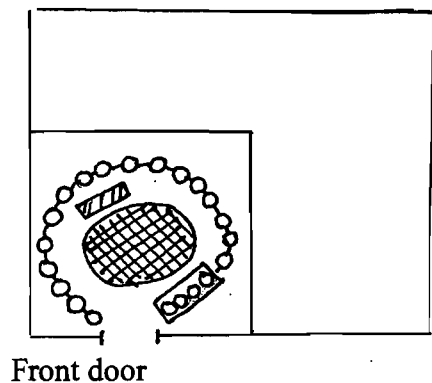


FIGURE 2

TITLE: KALEYA LEYA WANSOMBO

FORM NUMBER: 48

SCALE: Heptatonic

TEMPO: \_\_\_ = 138 M.M.

The musical score is written on five systems of staves. The first system is marked with a circled '48' and a 'Solo' label. It includes a vocal line with lyrics: 'Ka le ya le ya wa nso mbo ka le ya le ya wa nso mbo Ka le ya le ya ee ee ka le ya le ya wa nso mbo Ne'. Below the vocal line is a 'Chorus' part and a 'Rtg. B' (rhythm guitar) part. The second system also has a 'Solo' label and lyrics: 'mai ne nda mu pa mpa nta Ne mai ne nda mu su nsa nta Ka le ya le ya ee ee Ka le ya le ya wa nso mbo'. It includes a 'Chorus' part. The third system has a 'Solo' label and lyrics: 'Ka le ya le ya wa nso mbo ka le ya le ya wa nso mbo Ka le ya le ya ee ee ka le ya le ya wa nso mbo Ne'. It includes a 'Chorus' part. The fourth system has a 'Solo' label and lyrics: 'mai ne nda mu pa mpa nta Ne mai ne nda mu su nsa nta Ka le ya le ya ee ee Ka le ya le ya wa nso mbo'. It includes a 'Chorus' part. The fifth system is labeled 'Drums' and shows a rhythmic pattern. A large 'University' watermark is visible across the bottom half of the page.

FIGURE 3

TITLE: MULANGILE AMONE

FORM NUMBER: 24

SCALE: Heptatonic

TEMPO: \_\_\_ = 138 M.M.

24 Solo

Mu la ngi lya mo ne Mu la ngi le-e Mu la ngi lya mo ne Mu la ngi le-e Mu la ngi lya mo ne

Solo

Chorus

Mi sa ngo ya mbusa Mu la ngi lya mo ne mi sa ngo ya mbusa Mu la ngi lya mo ne Mu la ngi le-e

Solo

Chorus

Mu la ngi lya mo ne Mu la ngi le-e Mu la ngi lya mo ne Mi sa ngo ya mbusa

**FIGURE 4**

TITLE: *YANSA AKASENGELE*

FORM NUMBER: 48

SCALE: Hexatonic

TEMPO:  $\underline{\quad}$  = 138 M.M.

(48) solo

Ya nsa ka se nge le mu ne-ee Ya nsa ka se nge le tu la le

Chorus

Solo

Ya nsa ka se nge le tu la le Ya nsa ka se nge le tu la le

Chorus

The musical score is presented in two systems. Each system consists of three staves: a vocal line, a guitar line, and a bass line. The first system is marked with a circled '48' and 'solo'. The vocal line contains the lyrics 'Ya nsa ka se nge le mu ne-ee Ya nsa ka se nge le tu la le'. The guitar line features a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The bass line consists of a simple bass line with 'x' marks indicating fretted notes. The second system is also marked 'Solo' and contains the lyrics 'Ya nsa ka se nge le tu la le Ya nsa ka se nge le tu la le'. The guitar and bass lines continue with similar accompaniment. A large watermark 'University of Cape Town' is visible across the page.

**FIGURE 5**

TITLE: *NASEKELA SEKE*

FORM NUMBER: 12

TEMPO: \_\_\_ = 144 M.M.

(12)

Solo

Na se ke la se ke Na te mua Na ba ta ta Na te mua

Chorus

Solo

Na ba ma yo Na te mua

Chorus

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the song 'Nasekela Seke'. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked with a circled '12' and a 'Solo' label. The melody is written on a treble clef staff with lyrics 'Na se ke la se ke Na te mua Na ba ta ta Na te mua'. Below the melody is a guitar accompaniment on a bass clef staff with 'x' marks indicating fretted notes. A 'Chorus' label is placed between the two systems. The second system is marked with a 'Solo' label and contains the melody 'Na ba ma yo Na te mua' with its corresponding guitar accompaniment. A 'Chorus' label is also present below the second system. A large, diagonal watermark 'University of Cape Town' is visible across the lower half of the page.

**FIGURE 6**

TITLE: *NKOKO YANDI CHITETELA*

FORM NUMBER: 48

SCALE: Heptatonic

TEMPO:  $\underline{\quad}$  = 132 M.M.

(48) Solo

The musical score consists of three systems. Each system has a vocal line and a guitar accompaniment line. The first system is labeled 'Solo' and contains the lyrics 'Nko ko ya ndi chi te te la ee Ya bi ki la mu kwe ncla'. The second system is also labeled 'Solo' and contains the lyrics 'Nko ko ya ndi chi te te la ee Ya bi ki la mu kwe nda'. The third system contains the lyrics 'Na ka li mbu la A li le Na ka li mbu la A li le'. The guitar accompaniment is indicated by 'x.' marks on the strings.

Nko ko ya ndi chi te te la ee Ya bi ki la mu kwe ncla

Nko ko ya ndi chi te te la ee Ya bi ki la mu kwe nda

Na ka li mbu la A li le Na ka li mbu la A li le

**FIGURE 7**

TITLE: *FULWE PAFYAKWE*

FORM NUMBER: 48

TEMPO: \_\_ = 144 M.M.

(48) Solo

The musical score is written on two systems of staves. The first system consists of a vocal line and a guitar accompaniment line. The vocal line is marked 'Solo' and contains the lyrics: 'Fu lwe pa fya kwe Ta se ka Pa fya ba na nkwe'. The guitar line features a series of 'x' marks on the strings, indicating muted notes. The second system also consists of a vocal line and a guitar accompaniment line. The vocal line is marked 'Solo' and contains the lyrics: 'A te ngo lo mu ko shi mu chi kwa mba'. The guitar line continues with 'x' marks. A 'Chorus' label is placed below the first system's vocal line and above the second system's vocal line. A large, faint watermark 'University of Cape Town' is visible across the bottom half of the page.

Chorus

Solo

Chorus

**FIGURE 8**

TITLE: *NALOMBA*

FORM NUMBER: 12

SCALE: Hexa based pentatonic

TEMPO: \_\_ = 144 M.M.

(12)

Solo  
Na lo mba mu sha ta lo mba ka mo

Chorus

**FIGURE 9**

TITLE: *NALOLI NG'OMBE*

FORM NUMBER: 24

SCALE: Heptatonic

TEMPO: \_\_ = 144M.M.

(24)

Solo  
Na lo li ngo mbe pa nyi ka Na lo li ngo mbe pa nyi ka I-ye le li A ti u wa ne wa ue la I-ye le li A ti u wa ne wa ue la

Chorus

**FIGURE 10**

TITLE: *UYU MWANA MUNANGANI*

FORM NUMBER: 48

SCALE: Heptatonic

TEMPO:  $\underline{\quad} = 144$  M.M.

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The first system is marked with a circled '48' and a 'Solo' instruction. The lyrics for the first system are: 'U yu mwa na mu na ngo ni na ka ta nga la ee Ni na ka ta nga la ee - e ni na ka ta nga la mwa ba na'. The second system is also marked 'Solo' and has lyrics: 'Na ka ta nga la mwa ba na Ni na ka ta nga la ee - e ni na ka ta nga la mwa ba na'. The third system is marked 'Solo' and has lyrics: 'Ka so ngo mu na ngo ni na ka ta nga la ee Ni na ka ta nga la ee - e ni na ka ta nga la mwa ba na'. Each system includes a 'Chorus' label and a 'Ref. B' label with a corresponding piano accompaniment line.

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## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study is based upon an investigation on how music is incorporated and utilized in Bemba traditional marriage ceremonies. In this study, the following ceremonies have been identified as the main components of the entire marriage process: *Ukusonga* and *ukukobekela*, *cisungu*, *ukulasa imbusa*, *amatebeto*, *ubwinda* and *ukwingisha*. The data on which my findings are based comes from personal experience and communication, in the form of interviews with selected authorities on Bemba marriage issues, customs and traditions, and also from published literature on certain marriage ceremonies. The aim of this study was to investigate the role that music plays in the imparting of marriage instructions at every stage of the marriage process and within the different ceremonies that a person has to go through before and within married life. Within this scope of recognizing and adhering to specific conduct in Bemba society, music as a rich and interwoven expression of a way of life echoes strong and true. Bearing the above in mind, this research was based on the claim that music in Bemba society forms a crucial part of its cultural and oral traditions. Using this as my basis, I aimed to investigate the specific role of music particularly within the traditional marriage of the Bemba-speaking people. Special attention was given to the specific type and meaning of the music, and how, and why it is used in a particular way. I also hoped to show that the utilization of music in this context is to perpetuate cultural and religious values, so as to ensure the continuation and survival of such cultural traditions. I also hoped to show by way of study, that music plays an integral role within oral traditions, enabling the passing on of cultural values and morals from one generation to the next. Of concern here, is the way in which music is used to announce, initiate and to demarcate the different components of the marriage ceremonies over a period

of time. As such music acts to signify, validate and incorporate the marriage ceremonies as an important part of Bemba philosophy.

From the time a young man finds a young woman to marry, to the time they actually marry, there are different ceremonies that have to be performed. These ceremonies are performed in the following order: *Ukusonga*, *ukukobekela*, *amatebeto* and *icilanga mulilo*, *ubwinga* and *ukwingisha*. *Ukusonga* marks the beginning of the marriage process. It involves the delivery of a marriage proposal by a man to a woman through an intermediary (go-between or spokes man) known as *shibukombe*. *Ukukobekela* follows immediately after that, and involves the presentation of a betrothal or engagement present called *insalamo* to the family of the young woman. Once all the marriage negotiations are concluded the two families begin to make necessary preparations for *ubwinga*, which is celebrated at the home of *nabwinga*. With time a married man who proves to be a good husband, a good father and indeed a good member of the community, will be honoured by his in-laws who will initiate the *ukwingisha* ceremony on his behalf. Since the notion of having honour and being honoured is highly valued in Bemba society, this ceremony is particularly important to a married man as it establishes a strong sense of pride and belonging in him for his family. As such *ukwingisha* can be regarded as a public display of worthiness, which suggests that certain codes of conduct have successfully been negotiated, on the part of both the man and the woman.

My study of the traditional marriage of the Bemba has shown that, marriage among the Bemba is seen as a rite of passage for the couple concerned, through which they are transferred from the unmarried to married group and thereby undergo a change of

status in their society. The Bemba have terms for this, being a transfer from *nkungulume* (bachelor) state for the young man, and *umushimbe* (spinster) state for the young woman, to a state of social maturity. In a deeper sense, marriage is not only the union of a man and woman, but also signifies the bringing together of the bride and groom's immediate and extended families, thereby extending the sense of communalism in Bemba society. In this study it has been shown that Bemba marriage begins with selection of a suitable partner by a young man, and then advancing *ubusonge* to the parents of the young woman, which is done by a *shibukombe*, a carefully chosen person to act as an ambassador. *Ubusonge* is done by a betrothal gift, called *insalamo*, which is done in the traditional way by placing it in between two special marriage plates (*amabakuli*), the one plate covering the other, and the gift upon it. The acceptance of the marriage proposal means that the young man has become engaged to the young woman, and is known as *ukukobekela* in Bemba. After *ukukobekela*, other marriage payments have to be made, which are of vital importance in the whole negotiation process. These are *ubwimashi*, which is a further indication of the young man's intent to marry, and that the young woman herself is unavailable to other suitors, being affianced. *Ichuuma chachisungu* (money for virginity), is the most important of all marriage payments, and is expected to be made before preparations for *ubwinga* commence. The other forms include *ichipuula* and *ichilomba*. Due to the strong sense of socio-moral traditions that the Bemba maintain, despite socio-economic changes, marriage payments and gifts serve as an affirmation of what is said during marriage, and hence serve as an oral contract. Once all marriage payments have been paid, the young man assumes the title *Lumbwe*, which is used to address all married men. The betrothed pair, being *umupongoshi* to each other's parents, carries taboos which have to be strictly observed.

*Chisungu* (girls' puberty ceremonies) are performed to mark the transition of the girl from childhood to social adulthood, and also the public recognition and celebration of her change of status. It is inaugurated by the onset of the menses, when *nachisungu* (the initiate) has to be isolated from the rest of the community, and during her seclusion she undergoes various rites and ceremonies, which occur in three phases:

1. The first is in the nature of a private celebration, during which *nachisungu* receives instructions on matters of personal hygiene from a grandmother and a friend who has already undergone initiation.
2. The second phase is of a public nature involving mainly dancing and processions.
3. Phase three is highly secretive, being held in a special hut in the bush away from the community, and is attended by specially selected participants.

Apart from matters of hygiene, *chisungu* is also aimed at imparting matters pertaining to marriage, wifely duties and childbearing. Through the years, *chisungu* has undergone changes in duration, from the earlier times of six months, reduced to one month, then fortnightly, and finally to a three or four day stretch. The processions no longer take place to open *chisungu*. Instead, *nachisungu* is escorted privately to the initiation site by her *nakalamba*. The reason for shortening the period of *chisungu* was due to pressure from European Missionaries and other colonial bodies, who condemned traditional cultural practices of the Bemba, because they were not compatible with the educational package deal they offered. *Chisungu* rituals are restricted to females and *nachisungu* is attended by a senior woman who is appointed *nachimbusa* ('mother of the sacred emblems') who is the organiser and main instructor in the initiation procedures. Other female assistants are *nakalamba* (great mother), *banyina* (*nachisungu's* mother) and a number of girls who have undergone

*chisungu*. As teaching aids *nachimbusa* uses *imbusa* fired clay objects and figurines, and floor and wall paintings, designs and configurations which have been sculptured in relief, so that they project from the floor, and the walls of the initiation hut. For each pottery item and each painting there is an associated didactic song and dance, and each song has both literal and implicated meaning. *Ukulasa imbusa*, a very important rite and ceremony, is enacted to conclude *chisungu* ceremonies.

*Ubwinga* ceremonies are celebrated in three ways:

1. *Ukutolanafye*, which refers to the union of a man and woman, who have been married before, without the consent of their other family members.
2. *Ichombela ng'anda*, which entails going through all the marriage procedures without involving too many people, which usually happens when a couple does not live in the same community.
3. *Ubwinga bwakapundu*, where many people are invited for celebrations, with beer and drumming as the main part of the festivities.

This study focused on *ubwinga bwakapundu* which the Bemba consider the best way to go through marriage instructions. It is organised in two parts, with one part of the celebrations being held at *shibwinga's* home and the other at *nabwinga's* where it is heavily concentrated. *Ubwinga bwakapundu* is celebrated in eight ceremonies which include:

1. *Ukutwa ubwinga* which involves *ukupaala ubwinga* (blessing the wedding), done by the father of *nabwinga* which is attended by elderly women at *nabwinga's* parents' home.
2. *Ubwalwa bwa bwinga*, preparation of traditional beer for the wedding done customarily with rituals that go with this activity. A child is asked to start the

preparation of beer because it is believed that the beer may go sour if this not done this way.

3. *Ukupota ubwalwa* is the mixing of maize meal porridge with millet, and it is done by *nabwinga's* aunt who is helped by other elderly women and the young girls. This is followed by the collecting of *impemba* (white kaolin) for decorating *imbusa*, which is done by *nabwinga's* mother. *Ukulasa imbusa* is done on this day, later in the evening.
4. *Ukucilika musambi*, the early morning visit for *nabwinga* by the women of the community, to check on how she spent the night, in preparation for her presentation to *shibwinga*. This is done customarily by the women stamping their feet and hitting pestles on the ground while singing.
5. *Ukutiya ubwinga* starts with *ichambulamemba*, the preparation of the first *mutondo* of *katubi* (traditional beer made from millet), which is customarily done by all the women kneeling and encircling the *mutondo* with knees and hands on the ground, and moving around it on their knees. As this done, all take turns pretending to sip from the *mutondo*, and from time to time one of them lifts it on high and swings it over their heads, and puts it down again as they sing. The couple are also given further marriage instructions, in the bush, and the ritual of *ukushikula nabwinga ichisungu* is performed. The couple are also taken on a tour after shaving and bathing.
6. *Ukuluula and ukushikula* is a ceremony whereby the two families- *shibwinga's* and *nabwinga's*- introduce themselves and explain their totems and clans, and also give some marriage tips to the couple through songs. *Shibwinga* is given a spear by his father-in-law, so that he will have enough power to protect his wife from other men and enemies. The couple receives

marriage instructions concerned with advising them about the functions of their reproductive organs and systems, and they are expected to have their first sexual intercourse which is done before the main *ubwinga* celebrations begin.

7. *Ukowa uluchelo* is a ritual performed in order to get rid of all the *amashamo* (misfortune) that the couple may have accumulated from childhood. This involves bathing in medicated water very early in the morning. After the first sexual intercourse, there are certain taboos that have to be followed: the couple are not supposed to start a fire, cook or light a cigarette as they will become unclean, *ukukowela* (contaminated) and may have '*ichifuba cha mankowesha*' (contagious cough). To counter the consequences of these taboos, the couple are supposed to use *inongo ya chupo* to wash their hands after having sexual intercourse. All the left-over food, the ashes from the fire that was used for brewing beer and cooking, and the hair from the couple's first shavings, are taken and buried under a *Mfungo* (*Anisphylla pomifera* – scientific name) or *Mpundu* (*Parinarium mobola* – olive) tree. In future, should the couple have fertility problems, the roots from the tree where the residual matter was buried will be used for restoring fertility.
8. *Ukusulula ifitete* is the conclusion to the wedding that lasts one full day at *nabwinga*'s parents' home, where the elders from both parties spend time with the couple, going through some of the most important issues that are taught during marriage instructions and the different ceremonies of the marriage rites. Paramount to all the deliberations here, is the interpretation of *imilumbe*, *amapinda* and *imishikakulo* (riddles, proverbs and poems) which the couple have to learn and recite.

After *ubwinda* both families are very hopeful for a new-born baby, and also keep an eye on the couple to ensure that they put into practice what they learnt during marriage instructions. Once *umukashi* conceives and begins to show signs of being pregnant, her aunt has to perform the ritual of *ukusonta ifumo*, which is usually done in the early hours of the day, by blowing traditional medicine, which she stores in her mouth, onto the belly of *umukashi* and saying the words: '*Walikwata ifumo wilasasukila abantu*' ('You are pregnant do not be sarcastic to people'), and fastening *ubulungu ubwa buuta* (white beads) onto one of her wrists. When a child is born *nachimbusa* has to perform *intambi shakufyalwa kwa mwana* (rituals of child birth), which involve waiting for the umbilical cord to fall off and then burying it next to the veranda of the house.

*Amatebeto* (honouring/food offering ceremonies) are presented in two ways: *ichilanga mulilo* and as a means to honour *Lumbwe* by his in-laws. These are done three months after a child is born and also during the *ukwingisha* ceremony. *Ukwingisha* is a ceremony that is not performed for every married man, but only for those who prove themselves to be caring, loving and hardworking husbands and fathers. After *ukwingisha*, one acquires a higher social status and respect than his peers and is often consulted on important matters. *Ukwingisha* is opened by *amatebeto*, with an additional serving of *katubi* (traditional beer) to *Lumbwe* and his party. This whole ceremony is centred on communicating through song and dance by both parties. The most significant part and climax of *ukwingisha* is '*konkola*' which is the search for the hidden items in various places in the in-laws' house. From the day of *ukwingisha*, *Lumbwe* may interact with his in-laws just as their own children do with them.




The inclusion and use of music and dance in Bemba marriage ceremonies occurs from the time *ukusonga* and *ukukobekela* negotiations have been concluded, starting with *chisungu*, *ukulasa imbusa*, *amatebeto*, *ubwinga* and going through all these ceremonies up to *ukwingisha*. In all these ceremonies and rituals described in this research, from chapter three up to chapter five, the music, together with the particular dances and acts which it accompanies, is music that is on a different level from the ordinary music that is performed as a form of recreation. Bemba traditional music is predominantly vocal and communal, and performance styles are varied according to context and purpose, but employ singing, dancing, drumming and/or handclapping. Bemba marriage music represents one of the many different forms of multipart vocal music which are fairly widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa. Such structures also have a very long history in the continent.

The form of the songs is cyclic, often comprising a total pattern of music, of fixed length (the form numbers of songs are commonly in 12, 16, 18 and multiples thereof), which is repeated indefinitely and usually terminated at the completion of the activity that it accompanies, often suddenly by the song leader, or by another song started by a new song leader. The basic metrical patterns of the songs are expressed audibly by hand claps, which are supplemented by drum – rhythm patterns and in some cases by rhythmic body movement patterns made by dancers

In this study, it has been found out that the melodies of songs are structured antiphonically (commonly referred to as call and response) and comprise at least one pair of complementary phrases of solo and chorus.

This is a basic melodic structure in Bemba marriage songs. It has been observed that melodic structures of songs could further be described as follows:

- Songs with the chorus phrase beginning after the end of the solo phrase, i.e. without overlapping.
- Songs with the chorus phrase beginning before the end of the solo phrase with a small overlap (what David Rycroft has described as single-ended overlap)
- Nearly all the songs have very short melodic phrases.

With one exception in my collected songs, the metrical patterns are all based on regular triple beats, which are externalised in three ways by each of the three drummers. Subdivision of the beats are “basically iambic () in quantity but they may or may not be iambic in accentuation” (Blacking, 1967: 160)<sup>217</sup>. So the subdivisions may be accentuated as () or (). In some marriage songs the rhythmic foundation is triple but the vocal pattern is duple. Singing is syllabic and in thirds (or 5ths being the lower third of the missing inner third in a triad) but the inherent melody accents and the beats (triple) tend to coincide only within the chorus phrase or towards its end. This reflects Jones’ ‘teleological trend’ which he observed in some African music (Jones 1959: 49)<sup>218</sup>. Hansen (1981)<sup>219</sup> reported that the trend as one of two major trends in the Xhosa strophe structures and the coincidence of melody and metre. Because of the alignment of the triple beat motifs in the drumming patterns, so that they have different accents and even starting points, one gets an effect of three triple rhythm patterns combined, but each one is ‘pulled a pulse or beat to the left’, so that the three patterns yield a complex structure which a master drummer may intensify, if present. The vocal phrase-patterns (especially the soloist’s) then further

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<sup>217</sup> Blacking Ibid

<sup>218</sup> A. M. Jones (1959) *Studies in African Music*, London: Oxford University Press.

<sup>219</sup> Hansen Ibid

complicate the structure by introducing duple grouping, yielding a 3:2 rhythmic alignment that has been observed in so much African music. In such an alignment the vocal notes fall often between the triple drum beats so that the respective implied beats of voice and drum patterns are crossed.

Polyrhythm (crossrhythm) is less marked in certain songs with simple call and response exchanges, (e.g. especially those in a 'non-melodic' vocal style), but the inter play is there; for example, song number 07 on the accompanying CD – *Mulangile amone*. In song number 01 – *Kaleya leya wansombo*, the vocal phrases (in duple rhythm) are accompanied by drumming conforming to a triple metre. It will be noticed in the recording that at the beginning of the song the vocal effort and hand claps combine for a short period of time in duple rhythm (possibly the soloist was directing the singers for a time).

Improvisation is restricted in these songs and when it does occur it involves the interpolation of additional words usually names of people. Harmonization is done by singing the same melody a third higher or lower. What is important here is that the harmonizing melody has to follow the contours of the main melody at approximately a third interval. Harmonization usually occurs in conjunction with the chorus phrases and not with the solo vocal phrases. The song texts bear the following characteristics:

- The solo and chorus phrases share the same text e.g. literally or with minimal differences.
- Sometimes the text of the solo phrase is in the form of a question to which the chorus part provides the answer.

- The text of the solo phrase is the beginning of an axiom or proverb-phrase (*insoselo* and *amapinda* – sayings and proverbs) to which the chorus phrase provides its logical completion.
- The text in the solo phrase provides instructions, to do something while the chorus phrase names the person to perform the task).

The songs are usually performed at three levels:

1. Singing in call and response (antiphony) with a leader calling while the rest of the group responds in chorus.
2. Drum accompaniment (usually played by three drummers or in some cases four).
3. Hand clapping accompaniment (which is done by the participating audience).

Some songs are sung rhythmically in virtual spoken tone. To a western music oriented person, such music may be described as chanting rhythmic recitation. However, the Bemba do not see it that way, instead they describe it as *ulwimbo* (song) plural *inyimbo* and *ukwimba* (to sing), *imba* (sing).

Bemba conceptualizations of traditional marriage ceremonies as rites of passage, and the music performed within the various ceremonies, are based on that music's function, meaning and value and are described accordingly in *Ichibemba* as:

*Inyimbo sha mufisungu* (music of *chisungu* ceremonies);

*Inyimbo sha pa matebeto* (music of the *matebeto* ceremony);

*Inyimbo sha pa bwinga* (music of the wedding ceremonies);

*Inyimbo sha pa kulasa imbusa* (music of the *mbusa* ceremony).

Though the classification is as such, it is clear that most of these songs are not confined to one particular ceremony, but instead they may be used in several different marriage ceremonies. When such a thing happens, the song may be repeated to reinforce or emphasize a point (lesson) and in some cases the meaning may change. A good example of such is the song '*Kalombo we musha*', used in *ukulasa imbusa* ceremony (from chapter 2) and also in *ubwinga*, *ukuluula* and *ukushikula* (3.6 of chapter 3). When the song is used for *ukulasa imbusa* ceremony, it is outlining the obligatory duties expected of the husband-to-be, such as going out to fetch firewood for cooking and heating water for bathing, which are duties expected to be done especially when his wife is pregnant. When it is sung during *ubwinga* ceremonies, on the night the couple have their first sexual intercourse, it serves as a reminder to *banchimbusa* and *shibukombe* that time is flying and that they should hasten their instructions. We also see that marriage songs have two meanings, some of which are meant to be understood by initiated girls and married people who have gone through marriage instructions. Father Corbeil, in 1962, had an encounter at *Mulilansolo* Mission in Chinsali District:

“At *Mulilansolo* Mission the four inside walls of the church were decorated by midwives with mud paintings. One Sunday, I had to read a parable from the gospel about a ‘sower who went out to sow’ (Matthew 8: 3-9). Instead of reading it, I just pointed to a wall painting representing a hoe and a garden. As I pointed to it, a woman started drumming and the others started singing the song connected with this wall painting. The song was repeated several times. Then I preached on this short traditional song saying: ‘You can cultivate’. The children understood at once that their fathers’ duty is to cultivate with his hoe in order to feed his family. But for the adults the song means marital duty. Then I said ‘According to the song, you must cultivate in your garden’. The children understood that their fathers have no time to work in the garden of other people. But for the adults it means that adultery is forbidden. Finally I said, ‘The song teaches us to cultivate well’. The children understood that if fathers throw the seed without covering it, the birds will eat the

seed and the people will walk on it. But for the adults it means that onanism is also forbidden” (Corbeil, *ibid*)<sup>220</sup>.

From this interaction, Corbeil realised that songs for marriage instructions had two meanings, one for everyone, while the other is exclusively for married people who have gone through marriage instructions and initiated girls (*Ibid*)<sup>221</sup>. It should be noted that when Bemba adults have conversations in the presence of their children they speak without shocking them because the conversation has surface meaning for the children and the uninitiated, and a deeper one for adults. Because of the tremendous amount of information and knowledge that one has to retain through marriage instructions, the Bemba use music and dance, and also emblems (*Imbusa*) in order to achieve the desired results – the marriage partners’ ability to understand, and to interpret the philosophic meanings of the lessons in the marriage instructions. The key marriage instructors and main organisers of the different marriage ceremonies and rituals are *shibukombe* for the man and *nachimbusa* for the woman.

In a nutshell, my findings indicate that with the socio-economic changes and influences from other cultures, the strong and rich Bemba traditional marriage practices, which include songs, dances, rituals and ceremonies, may be distorted and eventually lost completely. That is why such a study is very important and should be supported.

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<sup>220</sup> Corbeil, *ibid*

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*

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## APPENDIXES

### 1. GLOSSARY

1. *Akalonde* - Small hoe
2. *Amachinga* - Trenches camouflaged with earth, leaves and branches at the top, and poisoned spears and spikes at the bottom. They are meant to trap enemies.
3. *Amatambo* - lit. Waves, but figuratively they refer to Porcupine quills.
4. *Amatebeto* - Food offering ceremonies.
5. *Apabuuta* - 'In broad daylight'. In the context used it implies an obligatory action that must be open to public scrutiny.
6. *Banachifyashi* - Midwives
7. *Banyina* - Her mother
8. *Bena ng'andu* - People of the crocodile clan. These are members of Bemba Royal clan.
9. *Bwato* - Boat
10. *Chembe* - Fish eagle
11. *Chilimbulu* - Chief *Mwase*'s wife
12. *Chilufya Mulenga* - *Mukulumpe*'s daughter and mother of *Chilufya* who succeeded *Nkole* as Chief of the Bemba.
13. *Chitemene* - A system of agriculture which involves cutting down trees and burning them in order to clear a stretch of land, and then ploughing the fields with hoes, to mix the ashes and the soil.
14. *Chiti* - *Mukulumpe*'s youngest son and leader of the Bemba when they came into Zambia.
15. *Chitimukulu* - Title of the paramount chief of the Bemba people.

- 16. *Chinungi* - Porcupine
- 17. *Chipumu* - Traditional beer
- 18. *Chisungu* - Bemba girls' puberty ceremonies.
- 19. *Fulwe* - Tortoise
- 20. *Ibakuli* - Traditional enamel plate, used for presenting marriage payments.(pl. *amabakuli*).
- 21. *Ichilomba* - Marriage payment
- 22. *Ichinkumbi* - Slit gong (a musical instrument made of wood. It is classified under Idiophones. As a type it falls under Percussion tube).
- 23. *Ichipuna* - Stool (a seat without a back and with three or four legs – in this case it has no legs).
- 24. *Ichombela ng'anda* - Wedding ceremonies which entail going through all the marriage procedures, and traditionally involving a limited number of people who are expected to participate.
- 25. *Ichuma cha chisungu* - Money paid for a young woman's virginity.
- 26. *Ifipushi* - Pumpkins
- 27. *Ifyumbu* - Potatoes
- 28. *Ikosa* - Bracelet
- 29. *Imbuto* - Seeds
- 30. *Impemba* - White clay
- 31. *Impunga* - Name of the place where the Bemba settled after crossing *Kaunga* River - the term refers to the grief of losing a leader ('*Tuli nempunga*' meaning, 'We are filled with grief').
- 32. *Impuupu* - Pumpkin seeds
- 33. *Imputa* - Mounds for planting crops in a garden.

34. *Inama* - Refers to meat, and by extension, to animals.
35. *Indupe* - Traditional plate, made of reeds, which is used for presenting marriage betrothals. (pl. *Ifipe*).
36. *Ingala* - Long feathers from the tail or wings of birds often used to make different headdress.
37. *Ing'anda* - House
38. *Inkanka* - Red soil
39. *Inkoba* - Egret
40. *Inkoko* - Chicken
41. *Inkuni* - Firewood
42. *Inondo* - Gizzard – the third and principle Stomach in fowls.
43. *Inongo* - Clay pot used for cooking food.
44. *Insalamo* - Betrothol gift presented to the parents of a young woman.
45. *Intanda* - Stars
46. *Intambi* - Traditions, customs, morals and values.
47. *Isabi* - Fish
48. *Isandulula* - Place of settlement established by the Bemba, soon after crossing Luapula River into Zambia.
49. *Kalale* - Town or city
50. *Kamulongwe* - Small clay water pot
51. *Kapopo* - Chief of the *Luba* people at the time *Mubemba* and his people arrived from Kola in *Luba* country.
52. *Kasengele* - Small reed mat (also refers to a small animal of the civet-cat family, known in Bemba as *Nsengele*) *Ka-* in this case means small.

53. *Kashengeneka* - Point at which the Bemba crossed the Luapula River into Zambia.
54. *Katata* - Traditional beer made from millet.
55. *Katongo* - *Mukulumpe*'s first son, whose eyes were plucked out by his father.
56. *Katubi* - Traditional beer made from millet.
57. *Kola* - Place of origin of the Bemba people, which was located in Angola.
58. *Luba* - Kingdom which was situated in Congo. The term also refers to the language which was spoken by the *Luba* people. (*Luba* – Kingdom, *Abaluba* – people, *Ichiluba* – language).
59. *Luchele ng'anga* - Portuguese missionary and doctor who lived among *Mubemba*'s people in *Kola* and moved with them to *Luba* country in Congo.
60. *Lukombo* - Cup
61. *Lumbwe* - Title given to a young man after engagement and throughout marriage.
62. *Lunda* - Kingdom which was situated in Congo. The term also refers to the language which is spoken by the *Lunda* people. (*Lunda* – Kingdom, *Abalunda* – people, *Icilunda* – language).
63. *Mubemba* - Son of *Nshinga*, who succeeded him as leader of the people in *Kola* country.
64. *Muchilwa* - An initiated girl who is not well versed with the meanings of some of the sacred emblems.
65. *Mukulumpe* - *Kapopo*'s son and father of *Katongo*, *NKole*, *Chiti* and *Chilufya Mulenga*. He succeeded his father as chief of the *Luba* people.
66. *Muli babenye* - A place where special items that

- belonged to the deceased Paramount chiefs of the Bemba are kept.
67. *Mumbi Mukasa* - *Mukulumpe*'s wife and mother of *Nkole*, *Katongo Chiti* and *Chilufya Mulenga*. She was said to have dropped from heaven and had ears as large as those of an elephant.
68. *Mundu* - Name given to the lion because of its strength. Its real name is *Nkalamo*.
69. *Mutondo* - Clay pot used for storing water for drinking.
70. *Mwase* - Chief of the *Nsenga* people, who killed *Chiti*.
71. *Mwalule* - Burial ground where Bemba chiefs are buried.
72. *Mwatiyamvo* - King of the *Lunda* country in Congo.
73. *Nabwinga* - Bride
74. *Nachimbusa* - Midwife and main organiser of *Cisungu* ceremonies. (lit. Mother of the sacred emblems).
75. *Nachisungu* - An initiate at the *cisungu* ceremonies.
76. *Nakalamba* - Is the first elderly woman to know of a Girl's first menses and assumes the role of instructor on matters concerning hygiene. (lit. Great mother)
77. *Ng'ombe* - Cattle
78. *Ngwena* - Crocodile
79. *Nkole* - *Mukulumpe*'s son and brother of *Katongo*, *Chiti* and *Chilufya Mulenga*. He led the Bemba into Northern Zambia after *Chiti* was killed by Chief *Mwase* of the *Nsenga* people.
80. *Nkungulume* - Bachelor
81. *Nshinga* - The leader of the people in Kola

- Country, which the Portuguese founded in 1485.
82. *Nsonge* - Prayer sung before *Ukulasa Imbusa* ceremonies and also before preparation of the traditional beer for *ubwinga*.
83. *Shibukombe* - (Go- between or spokesman) one who represents the groom in marriage negotiations.
84. *Shibwinga* - Groom
85. *Shichingo* - Caretaker of *muli babenye*.
86. *Shibambala* - Name of a village.
87. *Ubowa* - Mushrooms
88. *Ubukula* - Field
89. *Ubwali* - Thick porridge made from maize meal.
90. *Ubwalwa* - Beer
91. *Ubwimashi* - Marriage payments made after engagement, to show the commitment of the young man to marriage.
92. *Ubwinga* - Wedding ceremonies which are done in eight phases.
93. *Ubulungu* - Beads
94. *Ukubyala* - To plant seeds or crops.
95. *Ukukobekela* - To engage a young woman for marriage
96. *Ukulasa imbusa* - Shooting at the sacred emblems.
97. *Ukusekwila* - Weeding a field.
98. *Ukushikula* - To offer a gift of money as a sign of respect to in-laws.
99. *Ukusombola* - To harvest
100. *Ukusonga* - (Proposal) the first step in marriage negotiations where a formal betrothal is presented to the parents of the young woman.
101. *Ukutema* - To cut down
102. *Ukuupa* - To marry (used with reference to men).

103. *Ukuupwa* - To be married (used with reference to women).
104. *Ukwingisha* - (lit. to take something inside – from out of doors – or to put an object into a container).
105. *Ulusambo* - Wire bracelet
106. *Umondo* - Small slit gong - musical instrument made of wood. It is classified under Idiophones. As a type it falls under Percussion tube.
107. *Umukashi* - Wife
108. *Umukowa* - Clan name and totem.
109. *Umulume* - Husband
110. *Umusalu* - Vegetables
111. *Umushimbe* - Spinster
112. *Umwana* - Child

University of Cape Town

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **ZAMBIA**

Zambia became independent from British colonial rule on October 24, 1964, and took its name from the Zambezi River, which rises in the northwest corner of the country and forms its southern boundary. The landlocked country lies between latitudes 10 degrees and 18 degrees south and longitudes 22 degrees and 33 degrees east. Its neighbours include: Congo DR to the north and northwest, Tanzania to the northeast, Malawi to the east, Mozambique to the southeast, Zimbabwe to the south, Botswana and Namibia to the southwest and Angola to the west. Zambia covers an area of 464 937 square kilometres and consists, for the most part, of a high plateau, with an average height of between 1060 and 1363 metres above sea level (3 500 and 4 500 ft). Isolated mountain ridges rise to more than 4000m with an occasional peak above 5000m on the eastern border, called Nyika Plateau. Over most of the country the surface tends to be flat, broken by small hills, the result of countless ages of undisturbed erosion of the underlying crystalline rock. These rocks contain the bulk of the county's wealth in the form of minerals, and the 90 mile long corridor known as the Copperbelt, along the north-western part of the country, is the mainstay of the economy. The level of the land falls southward from the Congo DR, dividing in the north towards the Zambezi depression in the south. The plateau is broken by the huge valley of the upper Zambezi and its major tributaries, of which the Kafue and Luangwa Rivers are the largest. One result of the plateau formation of Africa generally is the swift discharge of water towards the coast and the interruption of the rivers by waterfalls and rapids. This has made them of little value for transport over their length, but very suitable for hydroelectric schemes and white water rafting adventures which attract many tourists.

The whole country lies in the watershed between the Congo DR and Zambezi River system. The great natural lakes of the country, Bangweulu, Mweru and the southern end of Lake Tanganyika are all in the north and are part of the headwaters of the Zaire River. Lake Tanganyika is the second deepest natural lake in the world. Along the southern border of the country stretches Lake Kariba, the largest man-made lake in Africa and the second in the world (which is about 280km long and 40km across at its largest point). The general height of the land gives Zambia a more pleasant climate than that experienced in most tropical countries. There are three seasons: cold and dry from May to August, hot and dry from September to November, hot and wet from December to April. Only in the valleys of the Zambezi and Luangwa is there excessive heat, particularly in October and, in the wet season, a high humidity. In the hot- wet season frequent heavy showers and thunderstorms occur, followed by spells of bright sunshine (www.google.com)<sup>222</sup>.

With over 73 different ethnic groups in Zambia, there is wide cultural diversity and it is one of the few countries in Africa with very little tribal animosities, and the existence of so many ethnic groups has proved less of a political problem than in many other African states. English is used as the official language, while Bemba, Nyanja, Kaonde, Lunda, Luvale, Lozi, and Tonga are the main national languages. There are more than twenty annual traditional ceremonies, manifesting customs, social life, rituals, oral history, material and spiritual culture. These ceremonies also provide a valuable insight into a traditional culture that has been passed down for generations. Over the years the decline of traditional customs and culture has been brought about by the infiltration of the European and western ways and the melting

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<sup>222</sup> The material here comes from the computer website www.google.com

pot of various ethnic groups living in the same areas. Recently there has been a realisation of the value of cultural traditions and conscious efforts are being made to preserve them. The government and several non-governmental organizations have shown keen interest supporting such efforts, and doing everything possible to ensure the revival of those ceremonies that have been neglected, and the continuity of those that still exist. The major annual traditional ceremonies include:

<b>CEREMONY</b>	<b>PEOPLE</b>	<b>CHIEF</b>
<i>Ukusefya Pa Ng'wena</i>	<i>Bemba</i>	<i>Chitimukulu</i>
<i>Umutomboko</i>	<i>Lunda</i>	<i>Mwata Kazembe</i>
<i>Nwala</i>	<i>Ngoni</i>	<i>Mpezeni</i>
<i>Lunda Lubanza</i>	<i>Lunda</i>	<i>Ishindi</i>
<i>Lwiindi</i>	<i>Toka Leya</i>	<i>Mukuni</i>
<i>Chabalankata</i>	<i>Lamba</i>	<i>Mushili</i>
<i>Kuomboka</i>	<i>Lozi</i>	<i>Litunga</i>

Zambia's population is close to 12 000 000 and out of the whole population, the Bemba language is spoken more than any other language. The Bemba language can be classified into categories which the Bemba describe as *Ichibemba nkonko* (the real Bemba language) and *Ichibemba ca mukalale* (Town Bemba). Town Bemba has a Bemba base with a heavy code switch with English and neighbouring Bantu languages. It is also a widely used lingua franca in urban, but not rural areas, and it has a higher social status than other language, other than English ([www.google.com](http://www.google.com))<sup>224</sup>.

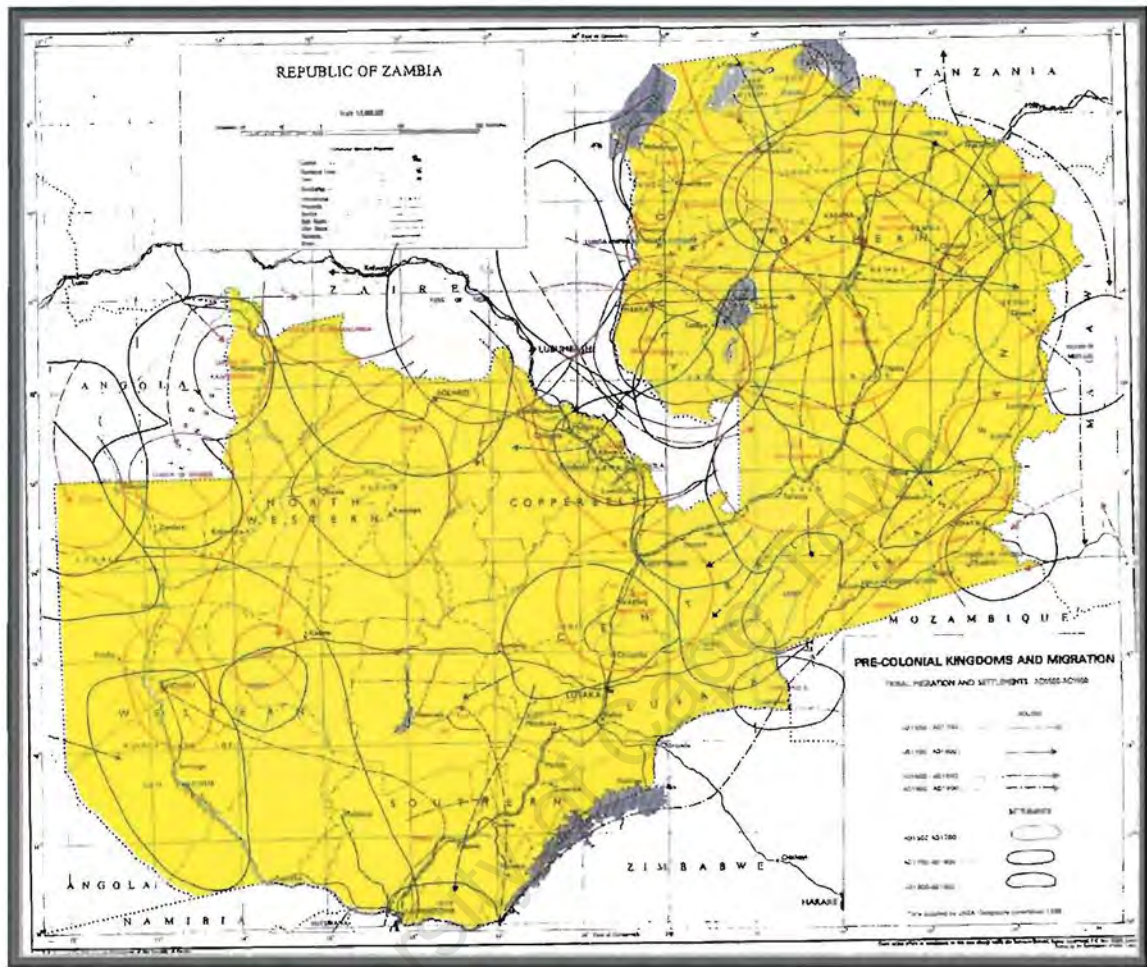
<sup>223</sup> The material here comes from the computer website [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

<sup>224</sup> The material here comes from the computer website [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)



FIGURE 12

PRE-COLONIAL KINGDOMS AND MIGRATION MAP OF ZAMBIA



## APPENDIX 3

### TRANSCRIPTIONS OF VIDEO RECORDINGS

#### 1. *AMATEBETO* CEREMONY FOR MR SYDNEY KOMBE (20.11.99)

A. Preparation of food at the bride's residence (Felda Kachasa).

: *Fyonse ifyakulya natupekanya kanshi natulange bawishi bakwa nabwinga pakuti bapale ilyo tatula twala.*

(All the required food has been prepared, therefore we should call the father of the bride to come and bless it).

: *Ubwali epobuli, chilemba, inkoko, inama, umusalu, imbuto, imbalala, ubwalwa, umunkoyo, inama drinki.*

(There's maize porridge, beans, chickens, beef, vegetables, seeds, groundnuts, beer, and soft drinks)

: *Bane muye ibukisha ukubweshama stampa yapambale shonse, pantu ifipe fila luba munshita sha kusefya.*

(Could you ensure that you bring back all the lids on the plates, as things disappear during such festivities?)

: *Pakusenda inkoko iyilole mufise pefumo, kabili iyibomfyeko ilyo tamula ikaka, pakuti iyalila nagula ukusalakata.*

(When taking the live chicken, hide it on your stomach, but before you cover it, wet it with water so that it does not make a noise of move)

: *Mweba sendele inkoko mwiya tangila iyo, mulepela pakati.*

(The person with the live chicken should not go to the front of the procession, but instead remain in the middle)

B. Presentation of the food at the groom's residence (Mr Sydney Kombe)

: Entry song as the women walk in reverse.

Song 1: Leader: *Twingile shani ee?*

(How should we enter?)

Chorus: *Twingile musese nga bakolwe.*

(We should enter backwards like monkeys)

Song 2: Leader: *Mayo ntule ntundu*

(Mother help me put down this load)

Chorus: *Chili muntundu chalema.*

(What's in the load is heavy)

Song 3: Leader: *Twikale kwi*

(Where should we sit?)

Chorus: *Namantenya*

Leader: *Tuiteneke*

(Should we throw ourselves down)

Chorus: *Namantenya*

: Untying of the cloth that was used for covering the plates.

Song 4: Leader: *Kakula kafundo*

(Untie the knot)

Chorus: *Yangu uyu mwana tabamukakwile*

(The knot for this child has not been untied)

: Uncovering the lids from the plates, using the mouth.

Song 5: Leader: *Bamayo ako baombele*

(The one who has been initiated)

Chorus: *Kakukupukwila, bamayoako baombele, kakukupukwila*

(She has uncovered for you, she has uncovered)

: Showing the food to the groom.

Song 6: Leader: *Mulangile ee*

(Show him)

Chorus: *Mulangile amone*

(Show him so that he can see)

Song 7: Leader: *ShiChembe wesu shichembe*

(Father of *Chembe* my own)

Chorus:

Song 8: Leader: *Chilemba wapabwinga*

(Beans for the weeding)

Chorus: *Chilemba wapabwinga ee*

(Beans for the wedding)

*Tewakulya mulendo ee*

(Is not supposed to be eaten by a visitor)

Song 9: Leader: *Mulangile ee*

(Show him)

Chorus: *Mulangile amone*

(Show him so that he can see)

Song 10: Leader: *Ngecho chinshi?*

(What is that?)

Chorus: *Chimena*

(It's beer)

Leader: *Ngecho pakati?*

(What's that in the middle?)

Chorus: *Chilubelube bachile abakulu*

(It's an object the elders left)

Song 11: Leader: *Mulangile ee*

(Show him)

Chorus: *Mulangile amone*

(Show him so that he can see)

Song 12: Leader: *Finshi filyumu?*

(What's in here?)

Chorus: *Fikankala filimo*

(There are important things)

Song 13: Leader: *Akabushi kamenena bunga*

(The small goat seeks Millie meal)

Chorus: *Akabushi*

(The small goat)

: Washing the groom's hands and feet.

Song 14: Leader: *Kasambe umulume wechinangwa*

(Go and bath your husband you useless thing)

Chorus: *Chibale, Chibale*

Leader: *Napanshi ulala wechinangwa*

(And bow down when greeting him)

Chorus: *Chibale, Chibale*

Song 15: Leader: *Mwalamuke*

(Wake her up)

Chorus: *Mubushe panshi mwalwile*

(Wake her up and turn her over)

Song: 16: Leader: *Ninani akampoka abalume*

(Who will get my husband from me?)

Song 17: Leader: *Nali ukutali balendaisha ati isa tukumane.*

(I was far away when he sent a message to call me)

Song 18: Leader: *Kuli bamayofyala*

(At my mother-in-law's place)

Chorus: *Tabandeki*

(I will not be spared)

Leader: *Kuli bamayofyala*

(At my mother-in-law's place)

Chorus: *Tabandeki ndefwafye kufyebo*

(I will not be spared, I will die of bad words)

Song 19: Leader: *Mwamba mulume wandi*

(*Mwamba* is my husband)

Chorus: *Ndi kasense ndi mukakatile*

(I am a mosquito, I am stuck on him)

: Departure of the bride's party. It should be noted that, at this point, due to poor sound I could not hear the words of the songs clearly. Therefore, instead of writing wrong words, I prefer to omit this part from the transcription.

## **2. UKWINGISHA CEREMONY FOR MR EMMANUEL KATAI KACHASA (12.10.96)**

A. Arrival of Kachasa's party, and preparation for entry into the in-law's house, by forming a single file.

Song 1: Leader: *Walobelamo ee*

(You have fallen into it)

Chorus: *Walobela mwanynabene walobela*

(You have fallen into another person's home)

: Appeal for some of the people in the audience to go and sit outside the house so as create enough space for dancing.

*Nachimbusa: Mukwai bamo nga kuti baya ikalako panes pakuti tukwateko inchende yaku bombelapo imilimo.* (Could some of you go and sit outside the house so that there is enough space for us to do our work?)

Song 2: *Yangu abeni bandi mwebabukwe*

(Oh my visitors my in-laws!)

: *NaChimbusa* goes round shaking hands with the guests

Song: *Tupe myungu tulye*

(Give us edible gourds so that we can eat)

: The guests are given raw seeds, which are kept in their hands.

Song: 3: *Kalondola twakwe*

(The one who collects what belongs to him)

: The seeds are collected from the guests

Song 4: *Kachile lamba*

Song 5: Leader: *Kasambe umulume we chinangwa*

(Go and bath your husband you useless thing)

Chorus: *Chibale, Chibale*

Leader: *Napanshi ulala we chingawa*

(And bow down when greeting him)

Chorus: *Chibale, Chibale*

: Washing of the groom's hands and feet

: A necklace of white beads is put around the groom's neck, and then the *nachimbusa* lies down in humility and respect for the groom.

Song 6: *Yaba yabili amenso*

(There are now two eyes)

Song 7: Leader: *Yande umwana wandi*

(Oh! My child)

Chorus: *Kandeya ndeya nde*

(Let me just keep going endlessly)

: A calabash of *katubi* beer (traditional beer made from millet) is customarily served to the groom. His *shibukombe* (go-between) tastes the beer first and then hands it to the groom.

Song 8: Leader: *We walele ne nsala bukwe bwandi*

(My in-law who slept hungry, come and drink)

Chorus: *Sonwe*

(Come and drink)

Song 9 (Words incomprehensible)

Song 10 (Words incomprehensible)

: Camera shot of what was happening outside the house.

: The groom's party takes the food that was given to them and leaves the house.

: *Shibukombe* gives instructions on how proceedings would be done when the groom's party returns for the second part of the ceremony.

B. At the groom's residence, food is served to all his relatives.

C: The groom's party arrives at the in-law's house at 16:50 hours, and as they prepare to enter the yard a song is sung.

Song 1: Leader: *Umwano yu*

(This child)

Chorus: *Mwikamwesho kumupombolola*

(Do not try to untie him)

: Entry into the house in a single file – the men in front followed by the drummers.

Song 2: Leader: *Watokula kafumo mukukonkola mwanokofyala*

(You have pumped your stomach because of eating from  
your mother-in-law's house)

Chorus: *Watokula akafumo mukukonkola mwanokofyala*

(You have pumped your stomach because of eating from  
your mother-in-law's house)

Song 3 (Words incomprehensible)

: Bottled beer (Mosi lager) is served to the guests.

Song 4 (Words incomprehensible)

Song 5: Leader: *Tambalala*

(Sit down stretching out your legs)

Chorus: *Nani akakweba ati tambalala*

(Who will ask you to sit down stretching out your legs?)

Song 6 (Words incomprehensible)

Song 7: Leader: *Shichiza*

Chorus: *Kilinkiti*

Song 8 (Words incomprehensible)

Song 9: Leader: *Matwi twende*

(Ears, let's go)

Chorus: *Wikesa kumfwa fyakulekaninapo*

(Before you hear what will cause your divorce)

Song 10: *Aba twaufya aba*

(The ones we have married off)

: Camera shot of what was happening outside the house.

Song 11: Leader: *Uyu mwalango mungu*

(Since you have shown him an edible gourd)

Chorus: *Mwikamulanga chalula*

(Do not show him a bitter thing)

Song 12: Leader: *Kapapa kalubalala*

(The unshelled groundnut)

Chorus: *Mwikamono kutuntumana mukati emuli amino*

(The importance is not on the outside, but in the inside)

Song 13: Leader: *Shimolole, shimolole*

(Stretch, stretch)

Chorus: *Shimolole tete mayo*

(Stretch the reed mother)

Leader: *Shimolole tete mayo*

(Stretch the reed mother)

Chorus: *Fyakubuko tafyololwa*

(You will never be considered good by in-laws)

: *Konkola konkola* – the groom goes around the house in search of hidden emblems.

: The groom making his in-laws' bead assisted by *shibukombe*

: In the living room

Song 14 (Words incomprehensible)

Song 15: Leader: *Nasha nalayo musololo*

(I am bidding you farewell)

Chorus: *Lolowamalwa*

Leader: *Mwikebati lolo talaile*

(Do not say that I didn't say goodbye)

Chorus: *Lolo wamalwa*

: Departure of groom's party

**3. AMATEBETO CEREMONY FOR MRS HILDA CHABALA KACHASA  
(19.10.96)**

A. Preparation of food, from the groom's family, to be presented to his wife, at her *amatebeto* (honouring/food offering ceremony).

Song 1: Leader: *Nshakaleke kunaya*

(I will not stop cooking)

Chorus: *Lumbwe*

Leader: *Uyu waisa*

(He has come)

Chorus: *Lumbwe*

B. Arrival at the in-law's house.

Song 2: *Changanawele tumoneko tata uko mwaupila*

(The one who shows off with a knife, let us see where you have married)

: Entry into the house – women walking in reverse.

Song 3: Leader: *Twingile shani ee?*

(How should we enter?)

Chorus: *Twingile musese nga bakolwe.*

(We should enter backwards like monkeys)

Song 4: Leader: *Mayo ntule ntundu*

(Mother help me put down this load)

Chorus: *Chili muntundu chalema.*

(What's in this load is heavy)

Song 5: Leader: *Pa*

(Pat)

Chorus: *Pakupampantana abakalamba balapampantana*

(Let's pat each other because elders pat each other)

: The wife is covered with a *chitenge* (Zambian cloth) over her head and upper part of her body.

Song 6: Leader: *Nabwinga balamutasho kuwama*

(The bride's beauty is praised)

Chorus: *Shamumwene*

(I have not seen it)

: Lighting of a match stick and exchange of *chitenge* for the wife.

Song 7: Leader: *Finshi filyumu?*

(What is in here?)

Chorus: *Fikankala filimo*

(There are important things)

: Presentation of the food

Song 8: Leader: *Kakula kafundo*

(Untie the knot)

Chorus: *Yangu uyu mwana tabamukakwile*

(Oh! The knot for this child has not been untied)

Song 9: Leader: *Bamayo ako baombele*

(The one who has been initiated)

Chorus: *Kakukupukwila bamayo ako baombele kakukupukwila*

(She has uncovered for you, she has uncovered)

Song 10: Leader: *Bamayo ako baombele*

(The one who has been initiated)

Chorus: *Kakukupukwila bamayo ako baombele kakukupukwila*

(She has uncovered for you, she has uncovered)

Song 11: *Shichembe wesu Shichembe*

: Display of all the different foods presented to the wife.

*Fyonsefye epofili. Ubwali epobuli, inkoko, inama, umusalu, isabi. Awe twatemwa nganshi. Nomba tulelolola iwe ukupa pakuti tukalyeko ifisuma.*

(All the expected foods have been brought. There is maize porridge, chicken, beef, vegetables and fish. We are pleased and satisfied. Now we have to wait for your ceremony so that we can come and eat good food).

Song 12 (Words incomprehensible)

: Mother in-law (*bana Kachasa*) addresses her daughter-in-law: *Ala mayo noma wila ntina. Uli mwana wandi, kabili nangu nalwala niwe ukansunga. Nangu nakwata ifiko kuti waisa ngwamya. Nangu nasanga akakulya, nakulayakanyafye pakati, kabili naiwe kuti wachita chimochine. Nomba ubupongoshi bwapwa uli mwana wandi.*

(Do not fear me anymore. You are now my daughter, and even if I fall ill you can nurse me. Even if I am dirty you can give me a bath. Whenever I am hungry and I find some food in your house, I will help myself, and you can also do the same at my house. We will no longer follow the in-law taboos because you are my daughter).

Song 13: Leader: *Kubula mayo kutasa, kubula mayo kutasa*

(If it was not for my mother, if it was not for my  
mother)

Chorus: *Aya mabumba tuyamwene pi*

(How have we seen the crowds?)

Mother-in-law – *Nalikwete batata naine twale ikalafye pamo. Kanshi naimwe ba  
Kachasa nibawishinwe kuti mule soshanya.*

(I also had a father-in-law whom I could mix with freely. You can also mix freely  
with Mr Kachasa your father-in-law).

Song 14: Leader: *Mwine mwana tachepe*

(The owner of a child is never young)

Chorus: *Mwine baka mwine mwana tachepe*

(The owner of the child is never young)

Song 15: Leader: *Bamulamu bamulamu bandi*

(My sister-in-law, my sister-in-law)

Chorus: *Balanda fimbi*

(She says something else)

Leader: *Nafumapo*

(when I leave)

Chorus: *Balanda fimbi*

(She says something else)

Song 16 (Words incomprehensible)

Song 17: Leader: *Balume balume*

(My husband is a husband)

Chorus: *Bandi*

(He is mine)

Leader: *Nangu bangume*

(Even if he beats me)

Chorus: *Bandi*

(He is mine)

Leader: *Nangu bantuke*

(Even if he insults me)

Chorus: *Bandi*

(He is mine)

Song 18: Leader: *Kanjeko*

(Let me go there)

Chorus: *Kwamwana yama*

(At my uncle's child's home)

Leader: *Nchitefi*

(When I do anything)

Chorus: *Kwabe misula na bweni kwabe misula*

(There is disrespect to me the visitor)

Song 19: Leader: *Kaleya leya wansombo kaleya leya wansombo*

(The one who goes around with ankle and wrist bells)

Chorus: *Kaleya leya ee kaleya leya wansombo*

(The one who goes around with ankle and wrist bells)

Song 20: Leader: *Mayo wiyesha*

(Mother do not try)

Chorus: *Wiyesha*

(Do not try)

Leader: *Nga walabako*

(If you forget)

Chorus: *Wikatwala mumisokolo wiyesha*

(Never take it for granted do not try)

Song 21 (Words incomprehensible)

Song 22: Leader: *Nemwine mukashi wandi*

(She is my wife)

Chorus: *Ndi kasense ndi mukakatile*

(I am stuck on him like a mosquito)

: Departure of the groom's party

Song 23: Leader: *Nasha nalayo musololo*

(I am bidding you farewell)

Chorus: *Lolowamalwa*

Leader: *Mwikebati lolo talaile*

(Do not say that I didn't say goodbye)

Chorus: *Lolo wamalwa*

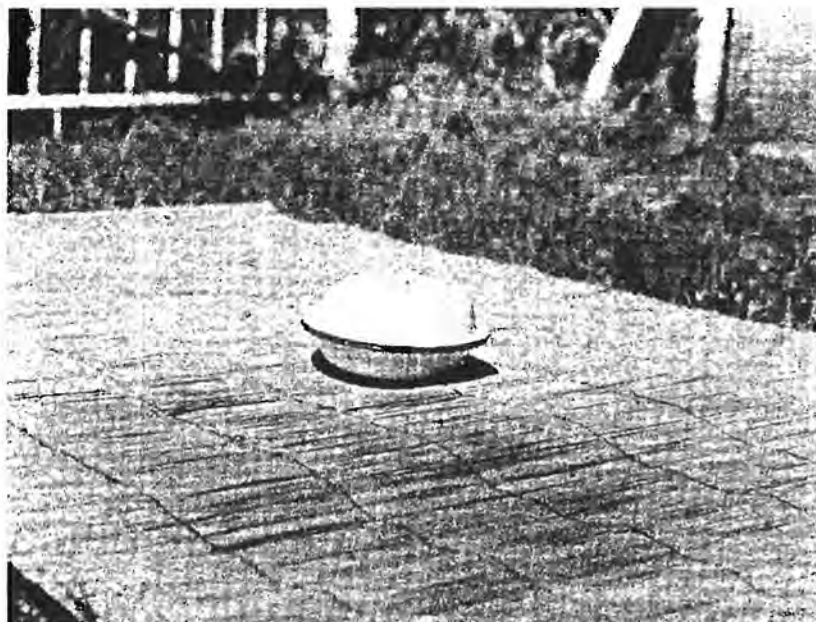
## APPENDIX 4.

### PLATES

Sources: Plate 1, 2, 3 and 5 come from (Chondoka, 1988)<sup>225</sup>  
Plates 4, 6 up to 33 come from (Corbeil, 1982)<sup>226</sup>

#### PLATE 1

*AMABAKULI* (Marriage plates - enamel)



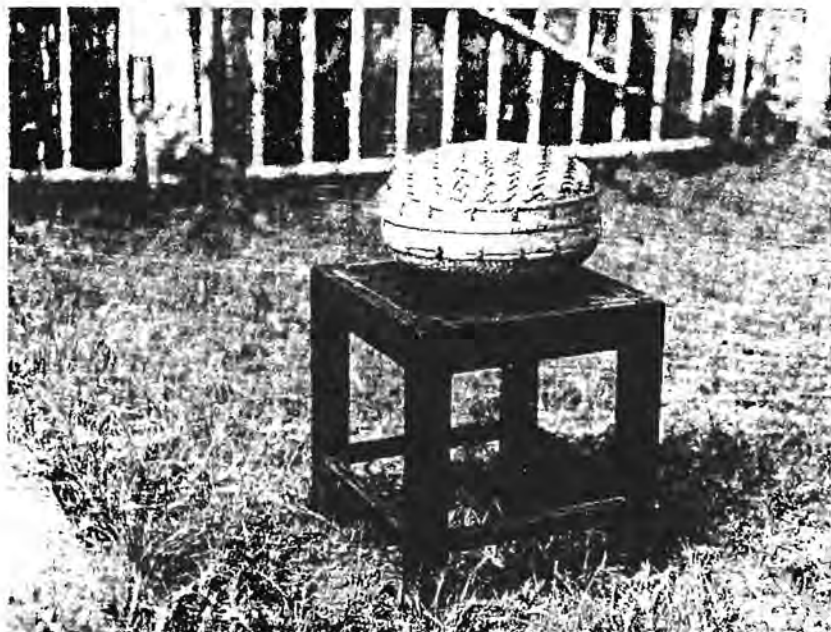
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<sup>225</sup> Chondoka, *ibid*

<sup>226</sup> Corbeil, *ibid*

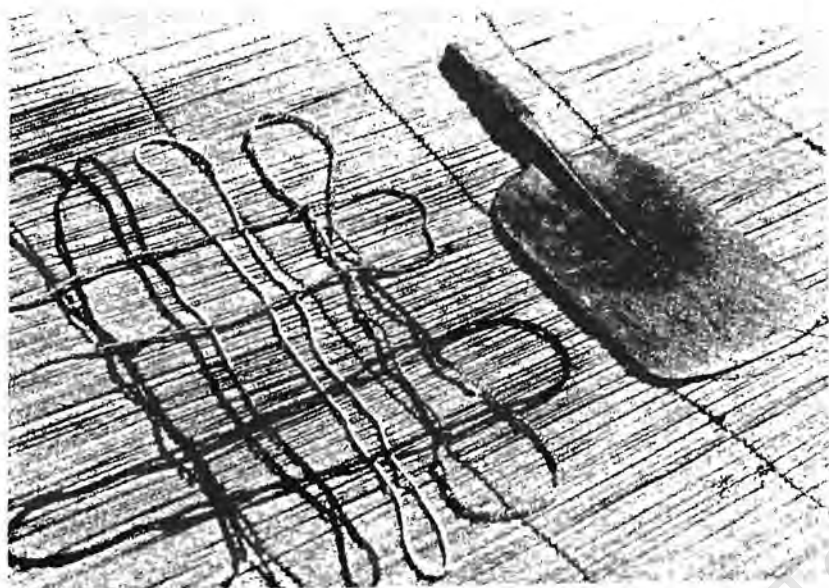
**PLATE 2**

*INDUPE* (Marriage plates – woven reed)



**PLATE 3**

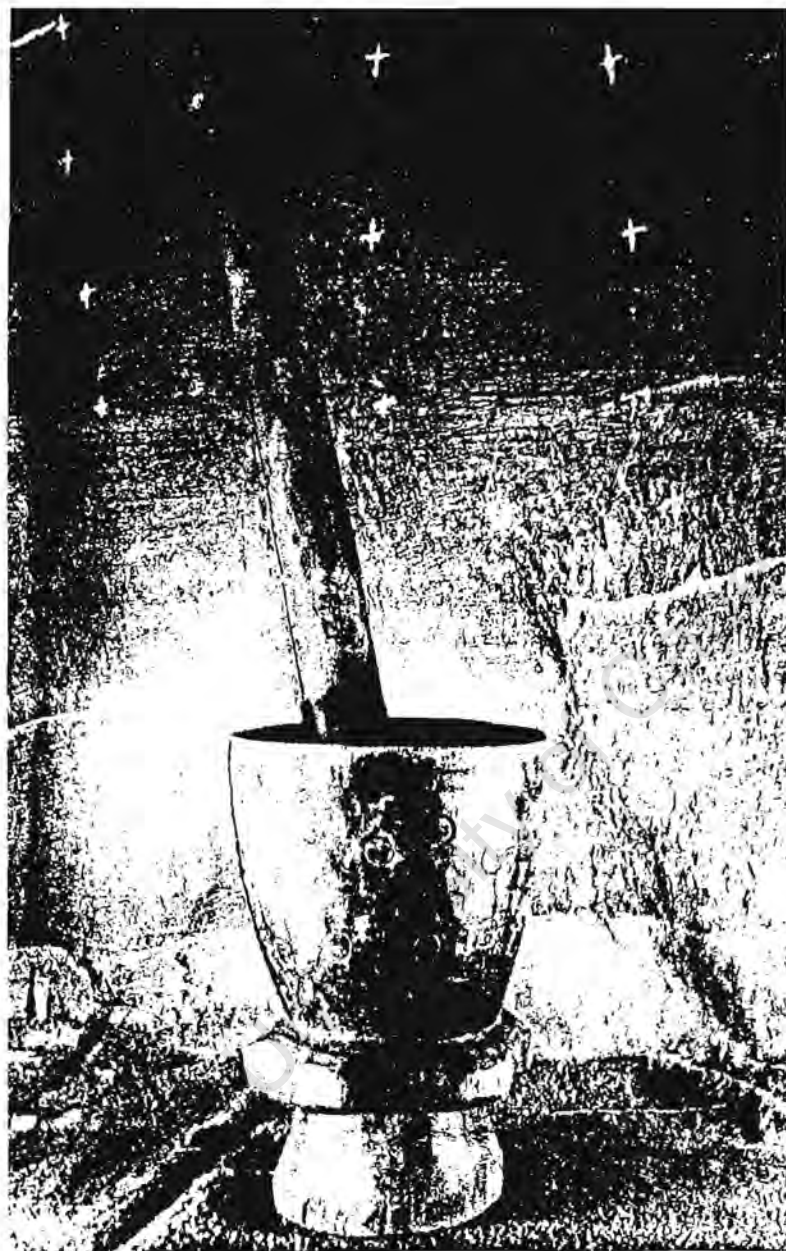
*ULUKASU AND UBULUNGU* (Hoe and beads - marriage gifts)



**PLATE 4**

*IBENDE AND UMWINSHI (Mortar and pestle)*

The mortar and pestle represent an ideal couple, a man and his wife united in body, mind and soul.



## PLATE 5

### *UKULUULA AND UKUSHIKULA*

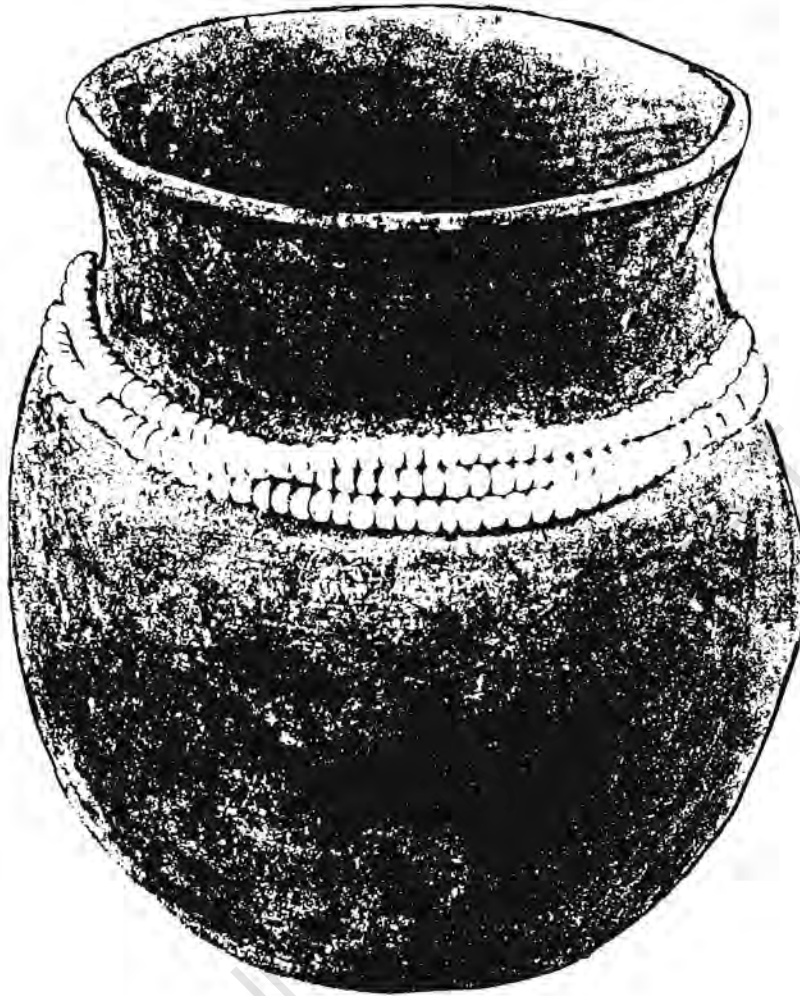
This plate shows a typical setting during the time when the families of *shibwinga* and *nabwinga*, introduce themselves and explain their totems and clans, and also give some marriage tips to the couple. The couple are seated apart from the rest of the people. The two marriage plates, in front of them are used for putting small gifts of money before a speaker addresses them.



**PLATE 6**

*NSONGE IMBUSA* (Prayer)

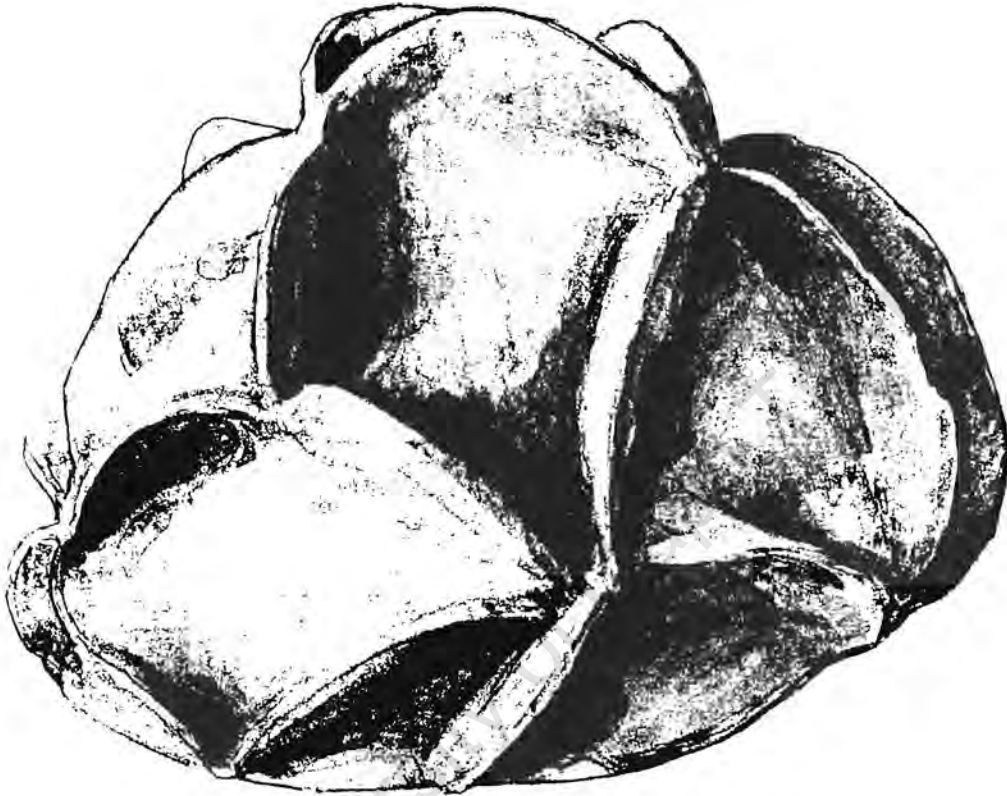
A small clay pot with white beads round its neck. The name of this emblem comes from *nsonge* a kind of millet, symbolizing an offering to the ancestors.



**PLATE 7**

*MWANSA CHIYEPE* (Person's name)

A well decorated clay hat.



Univer

PLATE 8

*KALOMBO WEMUSHA* (A clay image representing *shibwinga* carrying a bundle of firewood).



PLATE 9  
*BWATO* (Boat)



University of

## PLATE 10

### *MUNDU* (Lion)

This is a large pot with two small openings at the top. It is called "the lion" because blowing down one of the holes whilst blocking the other produces a noise resembling a lion's roar.



**PLATE 11**

**NGWENA (Crocodile)**

The crocodile is the emblem of the Royal clan of the Bemba people. In marriage instructions, it symbolizes the husband's authority.



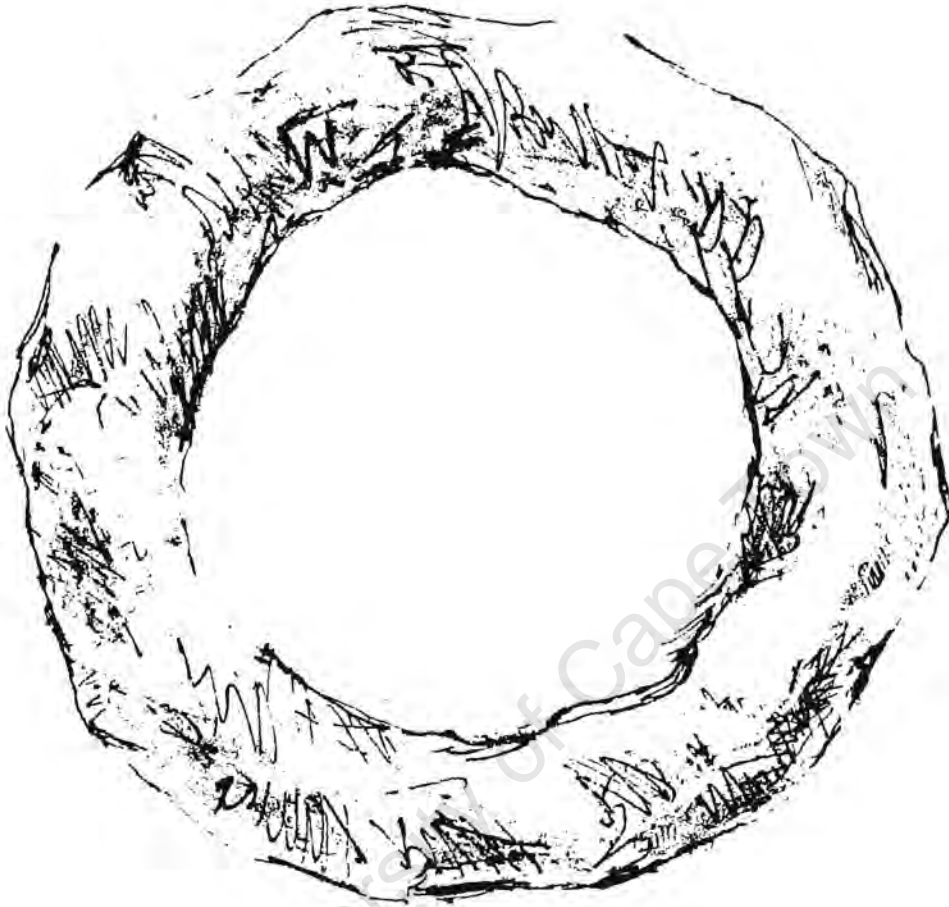
**PLATE 12**

*CHIBONI MUSUBA* (Euphorbia tree)



PLATE 13

*IKOSA* (Bracelet)



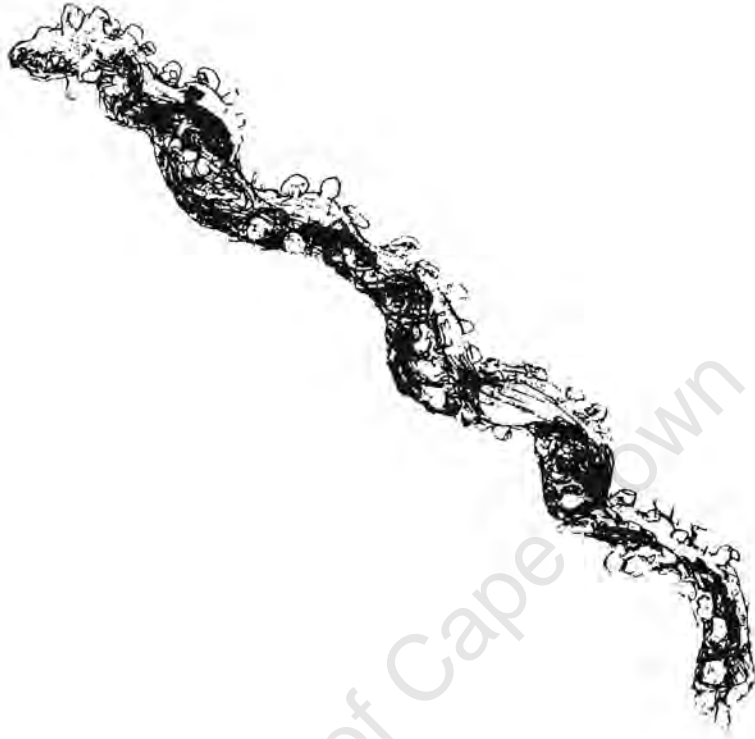
**PLATE 14**

*CHEMBE* (Fish eagle)



**PLATE 15**

*IYONGOLO* (Snake)



**PLATE 16**

*INTANDA* (Stars)

A lit taper is placed inside this perforated pot in order to represent the starlight.

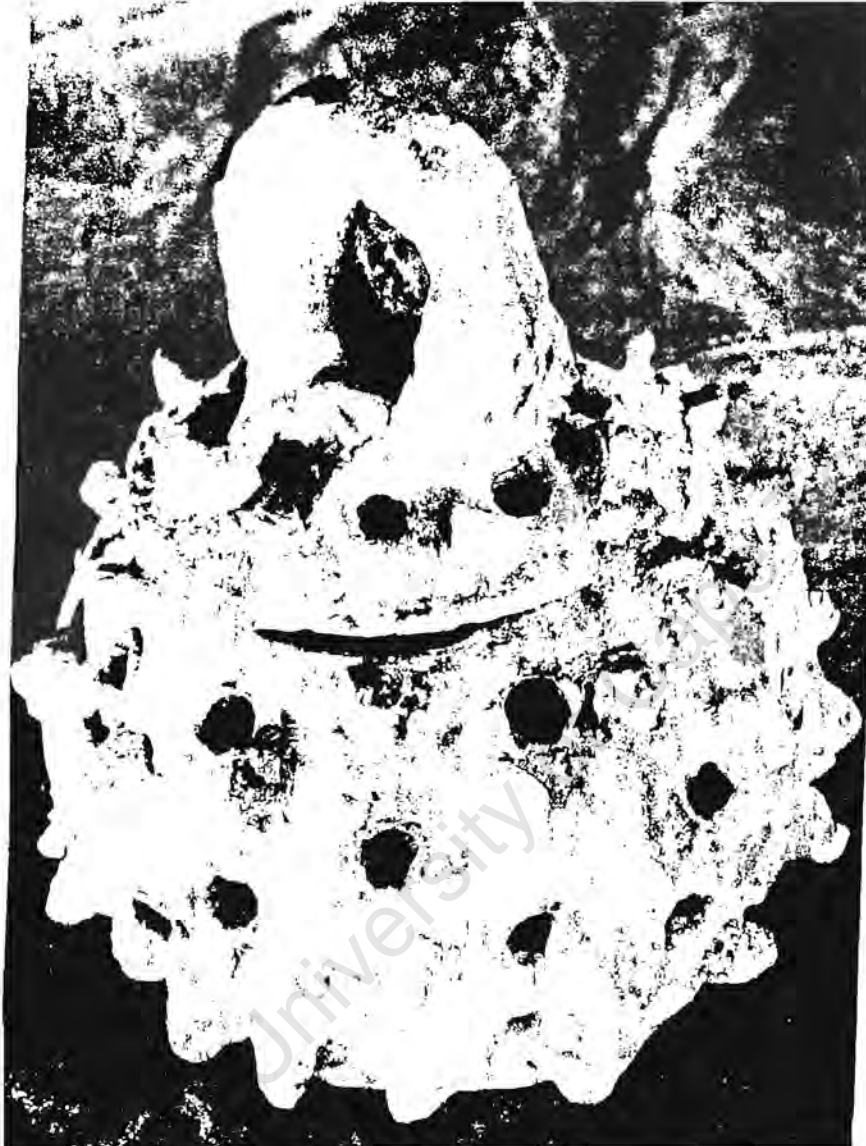


PLATE 17

*TOMFWA MAFUNDE* (lit. He/she does not follow the rules)

Conventional clay image that represents a woman who does not follow rules.



University

**PLATE 18**

*LUKOMBO* (A clay image representing a gourd that is used as a drinking cup)



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PLATE 19

*ICHIPUNA* (Stool)



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PLATE 20

*CHINUNGI* (Porcupine)



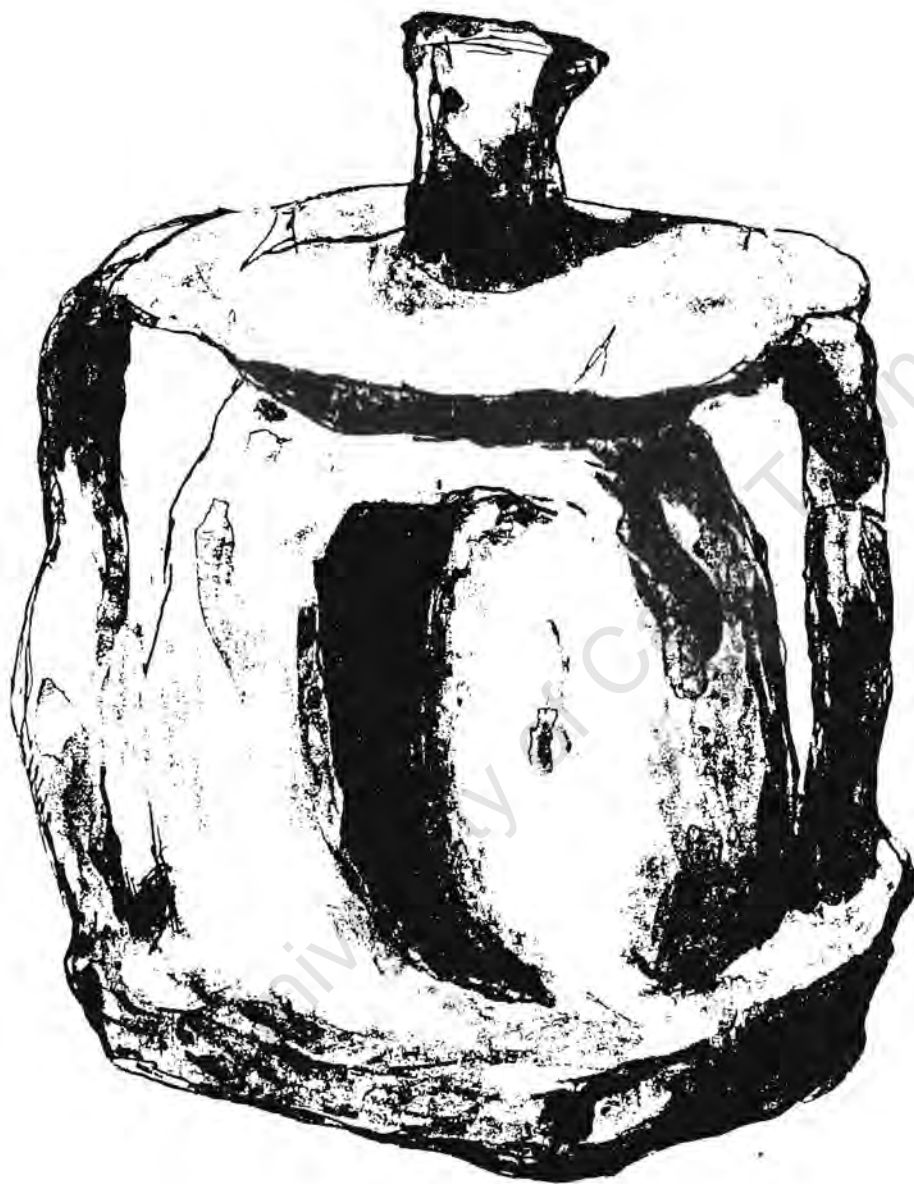
PLATE 21

NG'OMBE NAIMITA (*Ng'ombe* – person's name - is pregnant)



PLATE 22

*INGANDA* (House)



**PLATE 23**

*UYU MWANA* (This child)

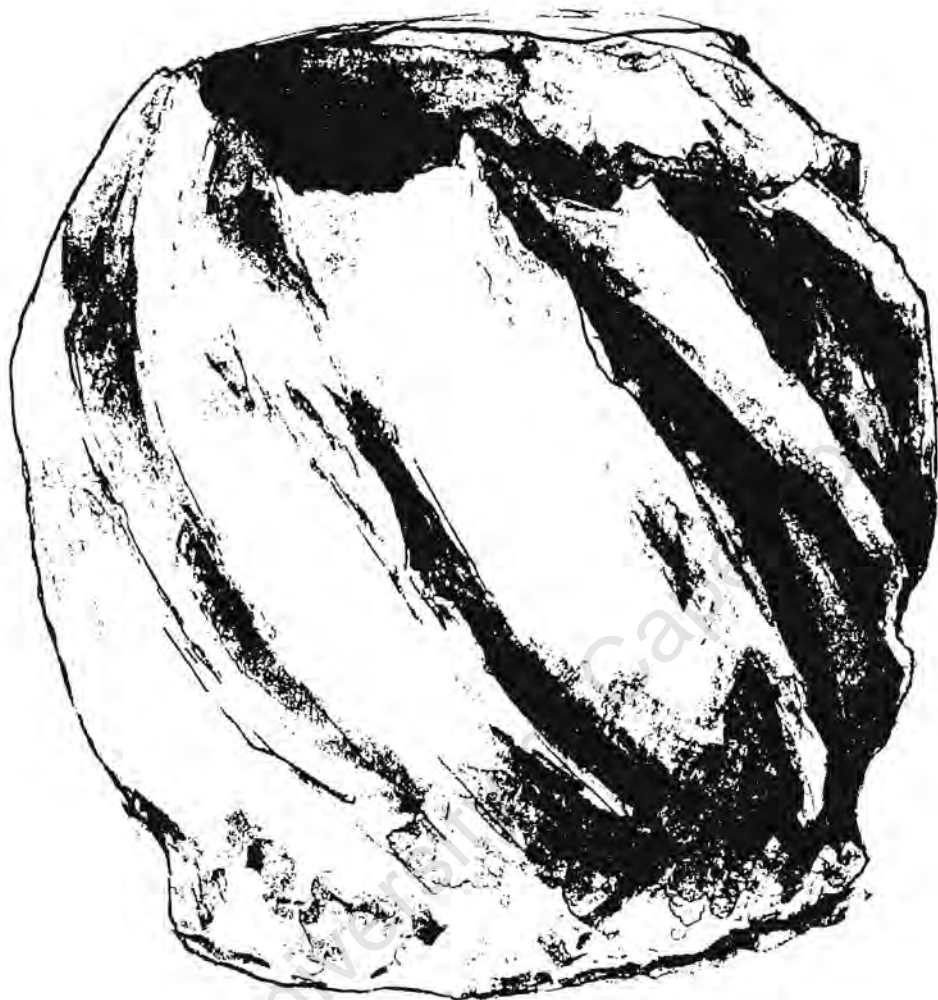


PLATE 24

*UMUKOWA* (The clan)

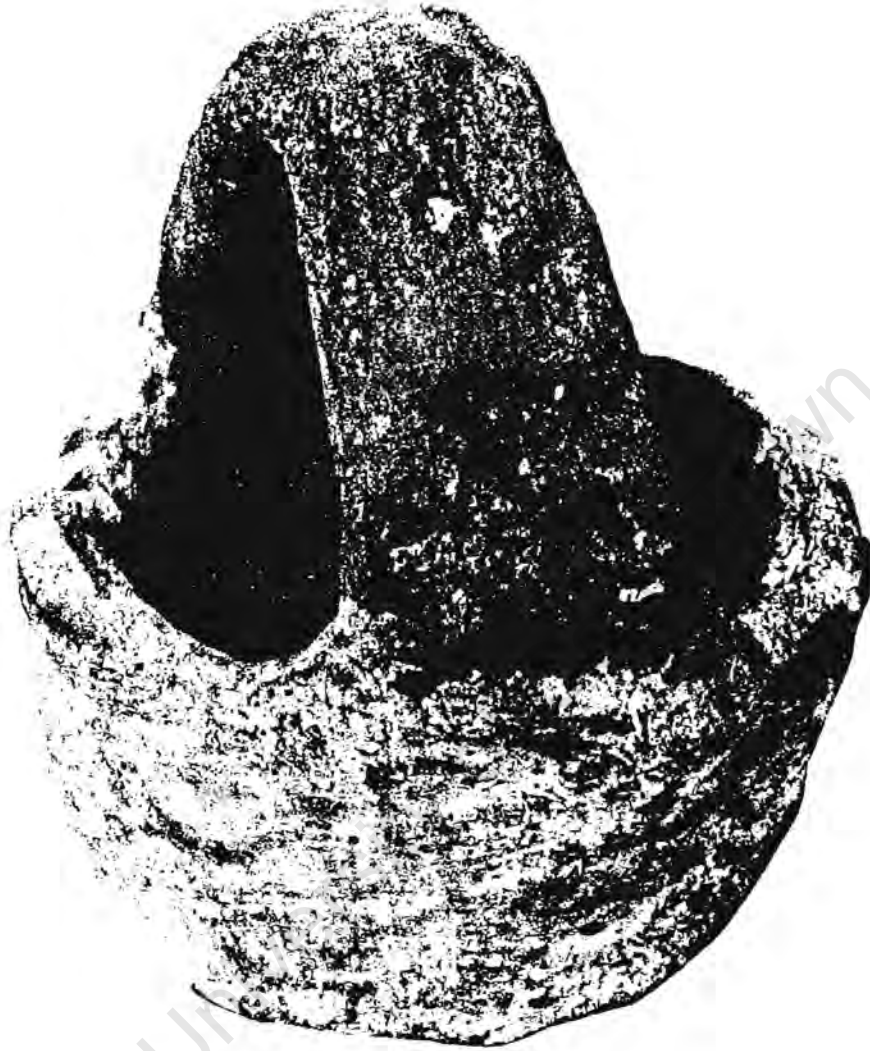


PLATE 25

*NALOMBA* ('I beg')



**PLATE 26**

*FULWE* (Tortoise)



PLATE 27

*KAMULONGWE* (Small water pot)



**PLATE 28**

*KASENGELE* (The little reed mat)

The emblems are conventional representations; the husband is represented by a pestle, his wife by a mortar. The mortar and pestle together represent an ideal couple, united in body and mind. When they apart they represent a couple facing problems whereby a husband goes out looking for other women and the wife other men.



**PLATE 29**

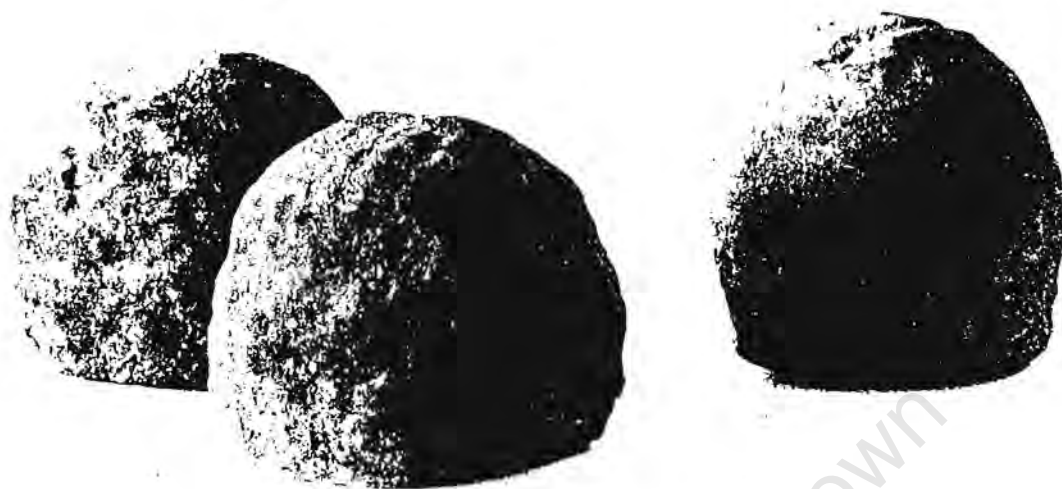
*INKUNI* (Firewood)



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**PLATE 30**

*IMPUNTA* (Clay image representing the mounds of earth for planting crops)



**PLATE 31**

*AKALONDE* (The little hoe)



**PLATE 32**

*INKOBA* (Egret)



PLATE 33

*CHABALA FUME NGALA* (*Chabala* – person's name – cover up the head-dress)



**PLATE 34**



*Bana Fulanshi leads the initiate into the house at the beginning of *Ukufunda umukashana* ceremony (Held at her house in Kasama).*

**PLATE 35**



At the beginning of *Ukufunda umukashana* ceremony, the initiate is shown how to carefully separate different seeds from one basket.

PLATE 36



The initiate is helped, by *bana* Fulanshi her *nachimbusa*, to carry food before serving it to the participating audience at *ukufunba umukashana* ceremony.

PLATE 37



The result of being a bad wife/mother is divorce – this is demonstrated through acting at *ukufunda umukashana* ceremony.

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PLATE 38



*Itumba* drum (the low-pitched-conical shaped *Itumba*)

PLATE 39



*Itumba* Drums (a medium-pitched *Itumba* and a high-pitched cylindrical shaped *Itumba*)

**PLATE 40**



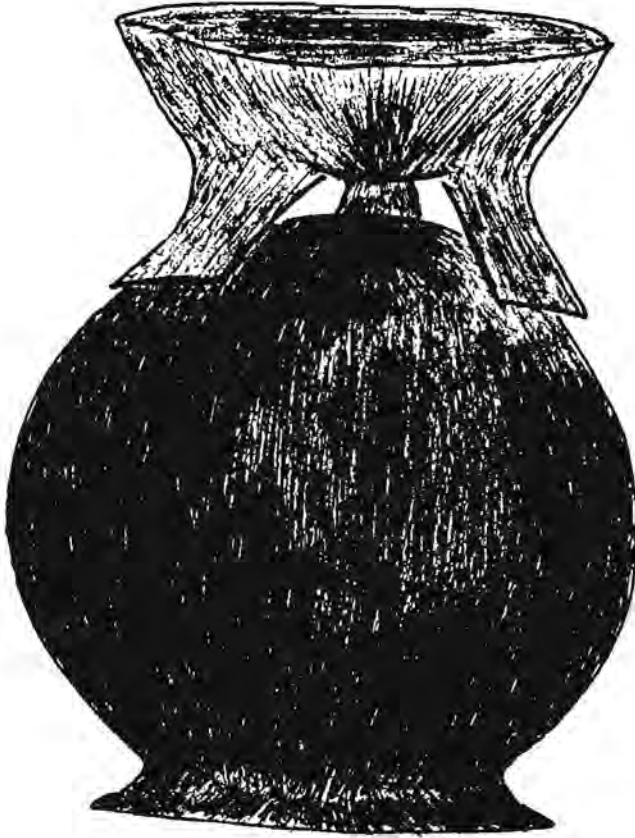
Three single-headed *Itumba* drums

**PLATE 41**



*Bana Mwewa*, a *nachimtusa*, demonstrating how to play *Itumba* drum

PLATE 42



*Vingwengwe* an idiophone used by the Mambwe people for *Insimba* music. The Bemba also use it in marriage music especially in songs assimilated from Mambwe culture such as the song *Naloli Ng'ombe*.

**PLATE 43**

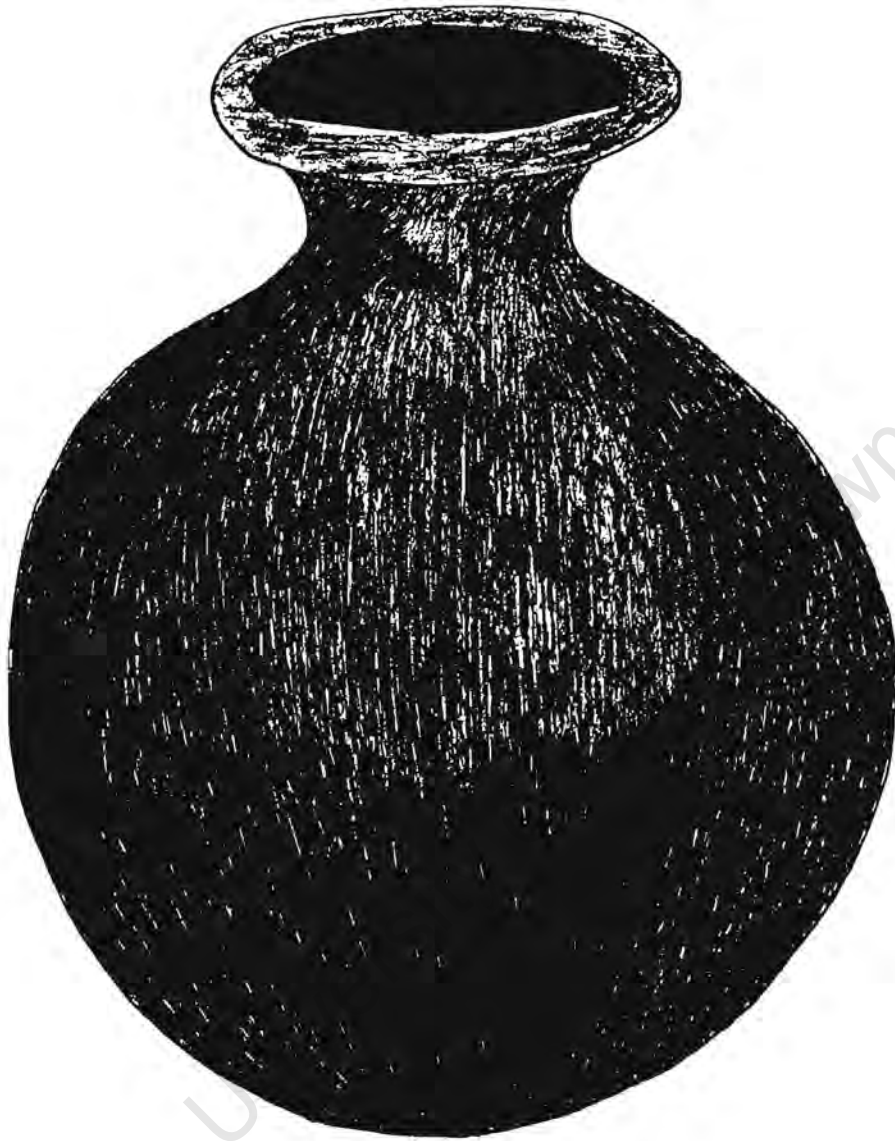
*INONGO* (Clay pot used for cooking)



*Akalongo* (small clay pot) used for the purification ritual after sexual intercourse.

PLATE 44

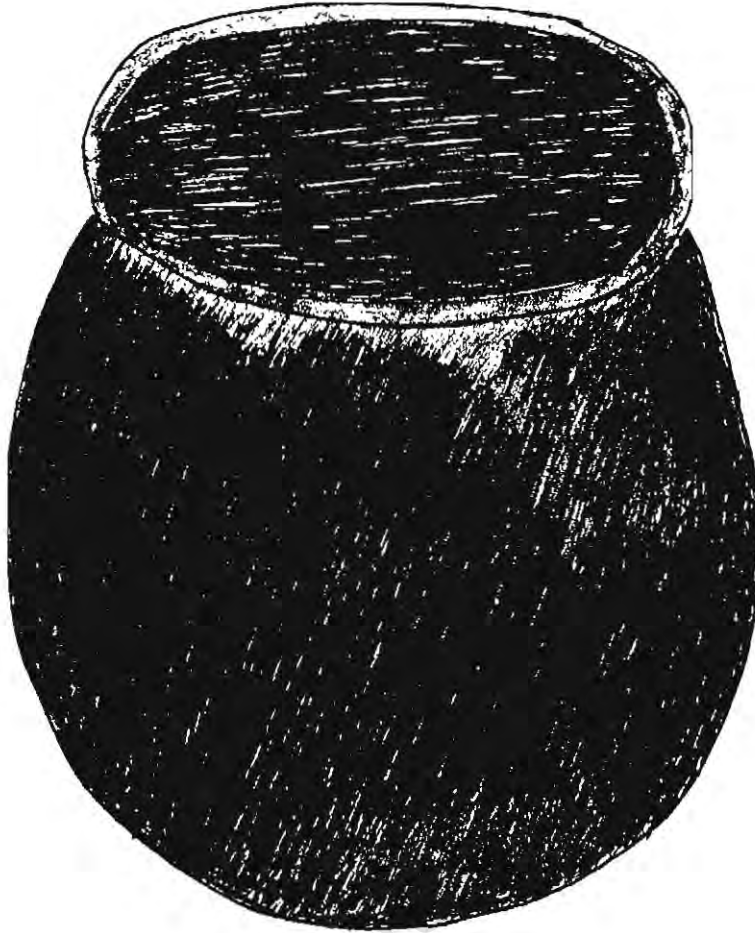
*UMUTONDO* (Clay vessel)



*Umutondo* is clay pot used for drawing and storing water for cooking.

PLATE 45

*ULUNWENO* (A clay bowl)



*Akanweno* (small clay bowl) used for the purification ritual after sexual intercourse.

**PLATE 46**

*INSUPA* (Calabash used for fermenting and storing traditional beer)

