

Maxwell bases this study of the Bemba on the distinction between an oral-aural culture, one that pertains to the mouth and ear, and a visualist culture, which pertains to the eye.

Kaunda and Chammah J. Kaunda Abstract The article argues that imbusa among the Bemba people of Zambia is not only a ritual and ideological space in which women engage in premarital teaching of young brides, but also an important site for sexual expression. The traditional sexual dance infunkutu is analysed to demonstrate how it has functioned as an instrument of subverting the domestication of the female body. In imbusa, women teach each other the art of deriving sexual pleasure from erotic encounters. Like in other societies, sexuality plays a key role in Bemba society and women are rigorously prepared for this. In the Bemba traditional thought system, sexuality is perceived as essential for human health, which includes the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing of women and men. An economic study of the Bemba tribe London: Oxford University Press, As early as eight³ years, girls are encouraged to play with their genitals to get familiar with all their body parts and to facilitate sexual intercourse at a later age. They are taught how to make contractions with their vagina as well as how to elongate their labia minora in groups – giving them a sense of kinship and encouragement. The elongation of the labia is believed to increase sexual pleasure for the couple and to help in child birth. A Reader, Sylvia Tamale speaks of the functions of labia elongation among the Baganda women of Uganda in a similar way. The current cultural limitation that comes from discrimination against certain sexualities seems to have played little or no role in the experience of labia elongation or in the sexual dance discussed below. In Bemba traditional thought, sexual satisfaction for both women and men was a concern of the whole community. The community was involved in the entire ritual teaching of the bride during imbusa. In addition to celebrating female sexuality through the rites of icisungu and imbusa,⁶ on the morning after the wedding night the entire community would celebrate the consummation of marriage with music and the traditional dance of infunkutu. A Reader Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, , A study in Cultural History. In this article, I employ Bemba people to include the following communities: In the beginning, Lesa created two genderless beings. Lesa gave to one of them two parcels with the command to open them only after they had reached mutuality and oneness. In the unfolding of time, one of the parcels started to emit a bad odour. The being that was carrying the parcels threw it away and opened the other. Immediately thereafter, the disobedient being was endowed with ubwaume maleness. Seeing what had happened, the second being returned to Lesa and was bestowed with female sexuality. The first ritual is for girls at their first menstruation and is called icisungu; a word derived from the noun icisungusho a miraculous event. Since the ritual once took part in the forest, the girl was perceived as being on a journey from the forest into the village with nacimbusa her liminal guardian. Out of the liminality of the Divine as well as the dark and cold forest, she brought new life into the village. For this reason, menstruation is regarded as kumpepo ⁹ In Bemba cosmology, blood is passed on from generation to generation through the woman. In this culture, the father has no right over his children. Brill, , For a different version of this same myth see Clement M. Lutherworth, , Through her menstrual blood, the girl petitioned the Supreme Being for empowerment in her religious and social role of obtaining the gift of life: Immediately thereafter, the initiated girl was expected to get married – hence in traditional communities, imbusa was part of icisungu. Today, however, imbusa refers to the premarital education given to the bride in preparation for marriage. Imbusa as preparation for marriage The ritual of imbusa is a rite of passage given to young women a month or a few weeks prior to their wedding. Practiced by almost all ethnic groups in Zambia, the ritual involves older married women giving indigenous wisdom, explicit sexual lessons and other homemaking skills to the young woman before entering into marriage. Due to the sacredness associated with female sexuality, these lessons are communicated in symbolic terms. Banacimbusa utilise indigenous methodologies including songs, dance, riddles, folklores, kitchen utensils, methods of preparing certain types of food, and so on. From this perspective, imbusa is a process designed or tailored to chisel and carve out the woman to bring out her divine status as given by Lesa. Maxwell, Bemba Myth and Ritual: The Impact of Literacy on an Oral Culture. Since ifikolwe were the first to

receive the secret of sexual dance from Lesa God and were the first to perform it, ifikolwe give an ancestral blessing to the bride through the imbusa ceremony. During the ceremony, this divine gift is ritualistically re-enacted through music and dance. In Bemba cosmology, sexuality is central to the various responsibilities entrusted to women by the Supreme Being. Aside from possessing the power to be the subject of her sexuality, a Bemba woman has the freedom to choose when to have sex or to abstain. In traditional society, this freedom was communicated through three beaded bracelets of different colours. The first one is red, which represents the menstrual blood kumwenshi or kumaluba. The wife put on the red bracelet to alert the husband that she was menstruating. The second is black, representing death, sickness and whatever marital issues that required couples to abstain from sex until they were mutually resolved. The third is white, which symbolises purity and fertility. It represented the cervix and safe periods when the couple could enjoy sexual intercourse as much as they could. In addition to passing on indigenous sexual knowledge from generation to generation, in imbusa women celebrate the power and the divine gift of female sexuality. As Karla Poewe argues in *Matrilineal Ideology*, Bemba women value their sexuality and solidarity as well as survival strategies have been established to ensure attaining sexual pleasure from intercourse with men. When a Bemba girl reached puberty, she was put in isolation in order to be cleansed of childhood while being initiated into adulthood. During this period, nacisungu would only eat uncooked food without salt; in short, she was only allowed to eat food that has not been on the fire. Bembas attribute their origin to a female cultic Queen, Mumbi Makasa, who is believed to have come from heaven. Since Bemba traditional religion is female centred, Alice fit into this worldview when she took the name Lenshina Regina ; the very name her followers would be identified with. It is believed that she had ears as large as an elephant and was mysteriously discovered in the forest embodying the divinity as well as the animal and human worlds. Unlike in patrilineal cultures, Mumbi Makasa was not a vulnerable woman. According to Bemba mythology, the Bemba earthly king who found Mumbi and later married her is the one who became vulnerable to the power of the sacred Queen. *Women, Tradition, and Church in Africa Pietermaritzburg: Trenton, ,* Whereas men are critical to procreation, the product of sex belongs to the mother. Female elephants are therefore not sexually vulnerable to the male. By re-enacting this myth in the sexual dance, it can be argued, Bemba women seek to reclaim the elephantine power of their sexuality. They also have the power to take control of their sexuality like their elephantine mythical ancestress Mumbi Makasa. Christine Mushibwe and Patrick Mumbi independently frame imbusa and infunkutu within the neo-colonialist patriarchal model of oppression. In this argument, women are portrayed as passive sexual objects dexterously controlled to perpetuate patriarchal demands of procreation. This argument, however, ignores the role of imbusa spaces in subverting and empowering women to resist the patriarchal domination of women. It is a form of worship, a means through which they communicate with the Supreme Being. It is also the means of expressing the beauty of female sexuality. When the woman danced for her husband and both were sexually satisfied, the hope was that the Supreme Being, the Creator would respond favourably by giving her children. It was the woman through her dance who was entrusted with the power to bring life into the world and thereby extend the family. In this regard, the sexually charged dance in marriage unites the couple and the Supreme Being, resulting in the sacred gift of children through the female body. That said, imbusa, though planted in traditional cosmology, has been modernised to meet the needs of post-colonial Zambia. Women have not only deftly mastered the art of dancing their sexualities, but they also continue to reinvent, renovate and reconfigure it to the post-colonial socio-political and 27 Christine P. While colonial officials and missionaries were highly suspicious of imbusa and negatively regarded it as immoral,²⁹ Bemba women continued to uphold this empowering tradition. Since precolonial times, trusted women or tutors called banacimbusa play an important role of guiding the girls imbusa in understanding their sexual role in marriage and the community. However, the close interpretation is that banacimbusa are ritual tutors or experts in traditional marital wisdom. Since the colonial times, women have subversively preserved this female-empowering cultural ritualâ€”thus saving imbusa from both colonial and Christian annihilation. Sense Publishers, , , 7. Sacred emblems of the Bemba Mbala-Zambia: Basic Books, ; Keith N. But as shown by Naomi Haynes, traditional and cultural teachings are employed in this female-only liminal space. When writing about Bemba dance, one cannot avoid infunkutu. It is the indigenous dance publicly danced in various

social and religious contexts. Like any culture, however, Bemba tradition and sexuality have been affected by patriarchal cultures within Zambia as well as by colonialism, Christianity and globalisation. This means that while the tradition of sexual dance continues for Bemba women, some aspects of imbusa have not remained the same as they did in pre-colonial Africa. The ritual of imbusa involves verbal teachings, drum beating, singing and dancing as Audrey Richards has observed. While banacimbusa are the key teachers, the rite is open to all initiated women as long as they are ready to teach and showcase their sexual skills to new brides. In this space, every initiated married woman in imbusa is both a spectator and a participant. Even the most reserved and shy woman who might not talk about sexual issues in public, in imbusa spaces is liberated and empowered to share her sexual skills and wisdom. In imbusa spaces, women openly articulate their own sexual pleasures and longings as they engage in both slow and rough sexual dances. But they also function as safe spaces to enable the divine spark of female sexual subjectivity while advocating sexual pleasure for women in marriage. The teaching of infunkutu to imbusa brides takes up most of the time because a woman is instructed on how to sexually satisfy herself and her husband. Included in imbusa are techniques on female ejaculation and reaching orgasm.

Chapter 2 : [PDF/ePub Download] bemba myth and ritual eBook

Literacy is restructuring Bemba consciousness and society, making vision the primary sense and written codes, not tribal personalities, the basis of government. Literacy de-animates cognitional objects, develops language for hermeneutical precision and frees individuals from the tribal needs to remember and conform.

The concepts of "life" and "death" are not mutually exclusive concepts, and there are no clear dividing lines between them. Human existence is a dynamic process involving the increase or decrease of "power" or "life force," of "living" and "dying," and there are different levels of life and death. Many African languages express the fact that things are not going well, such as when there is sickness, in the words "we are living a little," meaning that the level of life is very low. The African religions scholar Placide Tempels describes every misfortune that Africans encounter as "a diminution of vital force. Death does not alter or end the life or the personality of an individual, but only causes a change in its conditions. This is expressed in the concept of "ancestors," people who have died but who continue to "live" in the community and communicate with their families. This entry traces those ideas that are, or have been, approximately similar across sub-Saharan Africa. The concepts described within in many cases have been altered in the twentieth century through the widespread influence of Christianity or Islam, and some of the customs relating to burials are disappearing. Nevertheless, many religious concepts and practices continue to persist. The goal of life is to become an ancestor after death. This is why every person who dies must be given a "correct" funeral, supported by a number of religious ceremonies. If this is not done, the dead person may become a wandering ghost, unable to "live" properly after death and therefore a danger to those who remain alive. It might be argued that "proper" death rites are more a guarantee of protection for the living than to secure a safe passage for the dying. There is ambivalence about attitudes to the recent dead, which fluctuate between love and respect on the one hand and dread and despair on the other, particularly because it is believed that the dead have power over the living. Many African peoples have a custom of removing a dead body through a hole in the wall of a house, and not through the door. The reason for this seems to be that this will make it difficult or even impossible for the dead person to remember the way back to the living, as the hole in the wall is immediately closed. Sometimes the corpse is removed feet first, symbolically pointing away from the former place of residence. A zigzag path may be taken to the burial site, or thorns strewn along the way, or a barrier erected at the grave itself because the dead are also believed to strengthen the living. Many other peoples take special pains to ensure that the dead are easily able to return to their homes, and some people are even buried under or next to their homes. Many people believe that death is the loss of a soul, or souls. Although there is recognition of the difference between the physical person that is buried and the nonphysical person who lives on, this must not be confused with a Western dualism that separates "physical" from "spiritual. The death of children is regarded as a particularly grievous evil event, and many peoples give special names to their children to try to ward off the reoccurrence of untimely death. There are many different ideas about the "place" the departed go to, a "land" which in most cases seems to be a replica of this world. For some it is under the earth, in groves, near or in the homes of earthly families, or on the other side of a deep river. In most cases it is an extension of what is known at present, although for some peoples it is a much better place without pain or hunger. The Kenyan scholar John Mbiti writes that a belief in the continuation of life after death for African peoples "does not constitute a hope for a future and better life. To live here and now is the most important concern of African religious activities and beliefs. Even life in the hereafter is conceived in materialistic and physical terms. There is neither paradise to be hoped for nor hell to be feared in the hereafter" Mbiti , pp. The African Concept of the Afterlife Nearly all African peoples have a belief in a singular supreme being, the creator of the earth. Although the dead are believed to be somehow nearer to the supreme being than the living, the original state of bliss in the distant past expressed in creation myths is not restored in the afterlife. The separation between the supreme being and humankind remains unavoidable and natural in the place of the departed, even though the dead are able to rest there and be safe. Most African peoples believe that rewards and punishments come to people in this life and not in the hereafter. But if a person is a wizard, a murderer, a thief, one who has broken

the community code or taboos, or one who has had an unnatural death or an improper burial, then such a person may be doomed to punishment in the afterlife as a wandering ghost, and may be beaten and expelled by the ancestors or subjected to a period of torture according to the seriousness of their misdeeds, much like the Catholic concept of purgatory. Among many African peoples is the widespread belief that witches and sorcerers are not admitted to the spirit world, and therefore they are refused proper burial—sometimes their bodies are subjected to actions that would make such burial impossible, such as burning, chopping up, and feeding them to hyenas. Among the Africans, to be cut off from the community of the ancestors in death is the nearest equivalent of hell. The concept of reincarnation is found among many peoples. Reincarnation refers to the soul of a dead person being reborn in the body of another. There is a close relationship between birth and death. African beliefs in reincarnation differ from those of major Asian religions especially Hinduism in a number of important ways. Hinduism is "world-renouncing," conceiving of a cycle of rebirth in a world of suffering and illusion from which people wish to escape—only by great effort—and there is a system of rewards and punishments whereby one is reborn into a higher or lower station in life from whence the caste system arose. These ideas that view reincarnation as something to be feared and avoided are completely lacking in African religions. Instead, Africans are "world-affirming," and welcome reincarnation. The world is a light, warm, and living place to which the dead are only too glad to return from the darkness and coldness of the grave. The dead return to their communities, except for those unfortunate ones previously mentioned, and there are no limits set to the number of possible reincarnations—an ancestor may be reincarnated in more than one person at a time. Some African myths say that the number of souls and bodies is limited. It is important for Africans to discover which ancestor is reborn in a child, for this is a reason for deep thankfulness. The destiny of a community is fulfilled through both successive and simultaneous multiple reincarnations. Transmigration also called metempsychosis denotes the changing of a person into an animal. The most common form of this idea relates to a witch or sorcerer who is believed to be able to transform into an animal in order to perform evil deeds. Africans also believe that people may inhabit particular animals after death, especially snakes, which are treated with great respect. Some African rulers reappear as lions. Some peoples believe that the dead will reappear in the form of the totem animal of that ethnic group, and these totems are fearsome such as lions, leopards, or crocodiles. They symbolize the terrible punishments the dead can inflict if the moral values of the community are not upheld. Burial and Mourning Customs Death in African religions is one of the last transitional stages of life requiring passage rites, and this too takes a long time to complete. The deceased must be "detached" from the living and make as smooth a transition to the next life as possible. In the village of Eshowe in the KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa, a Zulu Isangoma diviner, with a puff adder in his mouth, practices soothsaying, or predicting, with snakes. It is impossible to generalize about concepts in African religions because they are ethno-religions, being determined by each ethnic group in the continent. If the correct funeral rites are not observed, the deceased may come back to trouble the living relatives. Usually an animal is killed in ritual, although this also serves the practical purpose of providing food for the many guests. Personal belongings are often buried with the deceased to assist in the journey. Various other rituals follow the funeral itself. Some kill an ox at the burial to accompany the deceased. Others kill another animal some time after the funeral three months to two years and even longer is the period observed. The Nguni in southern Africa call the slaying of the ox "the returning ox," because the beast accompanies the deceased back home to his or her family and enables the deceased to act as a protecting ancestor. The "home bringing" rite is a common African ceremony. Many African burial rites begin with the sending away of the departed with a request that they do not bring trouble to the living, and they end with a plea for the strengthening of life on the earth and all that favors it. According to the Tanzanian theologian Laurenti Magesa, funeral rites simultaneously mourn for the dead and celebrate life in all its abundance. Funerals are a time for the community to be in solidarity and to regain its identity. In some communities this may include dancing and merriment for all but the immediate family, thus limiting or even denying the destructive powers of death and providing the deceased with "light feet" for the journey to the other world. Ancient customs are adapted in many South African urban funerals. When someone has died in a house, all the windows are smeared with ash, all pictures in the house turned around and all mirrors and

televisions and any other reflective objects covered. During the time preceding the funeral—usually from seven to thirteen days—visits are paid by people in the community to comfort the bereaved family. In the case of Christians, consolatory services are held at the bereaved home. The day before the funeral the corpse is brought home before sunset and placed in the bedroom. A night vigil then takes place, often lasting until the morning. The night vigil is a time for pastoral care, to comfort and encourage the bereaved. A ritual killing is sometimes made for the ancestors, as it is believed that blood must be shed at this time to avoid further misfortune. Some peoples use the hide of the slaughtered beast to cover the corpse or place it on top of the coffin as a "blanket" for the deceased. Traditionally, the funeral takes place in the early morning often before sunrise and not late in the afternoon, as it is believed that sorcerers move around in the afternoons looking for corpses to use for their evil purposes. Because sorcerers are asleep in the early morning, this is a good time to bury the dead. In some communities children and unmarried adults are not allowed to attend the funeral. During the burial itself the immediate family of the deceased is expected to stay together on one side of the grave at a designated place. They are forbidden from speaking or taking any vocal part in the funeral. Many people follow a cleansing ritual at the gate of the house, where everyone must wash off the dust of the graveyard before entering the house. Sometimes pieces of cut aloe are placed in the water, and this water is believed to remove bad luck. Churches that use "holy water" sprinkle people to cleanse them from impurity at this time. In southern Africa the period of strict mourning usually continues for at least a week after the funeral. During this time the bereaved stay at home and do not socialize or have sexual contact. Some wear black clothes or black cloths fastened to their clothes, and shave their hair including facial hair from the day after the funeral. Because life is concentrated in the hair, shaving the hair symbolizes death, and its growing again indicates the strengthening of life. People in physical contact with a corpse are often regarded as unclean. The things belonging to the deceased should not be used at this time, such as the eating utensils or the chairs the deceased used. Blankets and anything else in contact with the deceased are all washed. The clothes of the deceased are wrapped up in a bundle and put away for a year or until the extended period of mourning has ended, after which they are distributed to family members or destroyed by burning. After a certain period of time the house and the family must be cleansed from bad luck, from uncleanness and "darkness. The time of the cleansing is usually seven days after the funeral, but some observe a month or even longer. A practice that seems to be disappearing in African urban areas is the home-bringing ritual, although it is still observed in some parts of Africa. A month or two after the funeral the grieving family slaughters a beast and then goes to the graveyard. They speak to the ancestors to allow the deceased to return home to rest.

Chapter 3 : Bemba Myth and Ritual

Get this from a library! Bemba myth and ritual: the impact of literacy on an oral culture. [Kevin B Maxwell].

Co-authored with Chammah J. Abstract The article argues that imbusa among the Bemba people of Zambia is not only a ritual and ideological space in which women engage in premarital teaching of young brides, but also an important site for sexual expression. The traditional sexual dance infunkutu is analysed to demonstrate how it has functioned as an instrument of subverting the domestication of the female body. In imbusa, women teach each other the art of deriving sexual pleasure from erotic encounters. Like in other societies, sexuality plays a key role in Bemba society and women are rigorously prepared for this. In the Bemba traditional thought system, sexuality is perceived as essential for human health, which includes the physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing of women and men. Since sex is considered a significant element of the cultural fabric among the Bemba, sex education is a life-long learning process which begins in early childhood and continues through life. As early as eight³ years, girls are encouraged to play with their genitals to get familiar with all their body parts and to facilitate sexual intercourse at a later age. They are taught how to make contractions with their vagina as well as how to elongate their labia minora in groups^{â€}giving them a sense of kinship and encouragement. The elongation of the labia is believed to increase sexual pleasure for the couple and to help in child birth. A Reader, Sylvia Tamale speaks of the functions of labia elongation among the Baganda women of Uganda in a similar way. The current cultural limitation that comes from discrimination against certain sexualities seems to have played little or no role in the experience of labia elongation or in the sexual dance discussed below. In Bemba traditional thought, sexual satisfaction for both women and men was a concern of the whole community. The community was involved in the entire ritual teaching of the bride during imbusa. In the beginning, Lesa created two genderless beings. Lesa gave to one of them two parcels with the command to open them only after they had reached mutuality and oneness. In the unfolding of time, one of the parcels started to emit a bad odour. The being that was carrying the parcels threw it away and opened the other. Immediately thereafter, the disobedient being was endowed with ubwaume maleness. Seeing what had happened, the second being returned to Lesa and was bestowed with female sexuality. The first ritual is for girls at their first menstruation and is called icisungu; a word derived from the noun icisungusho a miraculous event. Since the ritual once took part in the forest, the girl was perceived as being on a journey from the forest into the village with nacimbusa her liminal guardian. Out of the liminality of the Divine as well as the dark and cold forest, she brought new life into the village. Through her menstrual blood, the girl petitioned the Supreme Being for empowerment in her religious and social role of obtaining the gift of life: Immediately thereafter, the initiated girl was expected to get married^{â€}hence in traditional communities, imbusa was part of icisungu. Today, however, imbusa refers to the premarital education given to the bride in preparation for marriage. Practiced by almost all ethnic groups in Zambia, the ritual involves older married women giving indigenous wisdom, explicit sexual lessons and other homemaking skills to the young woman before entering into marriage. Due to the sacredness associated with female sexuality, these lessons are communicated in symbolic terms. Banacimbusa utilise indigenous methodologies including songs, dance, riddles, folklores, kitchen utensils, methods of preparing certain types of food, and so on. From this perspective, imbusa is a process designed or tailored to chisel and carve out the woman to bring out her divine status as given by Lesa. Since ifikolwe were the first to receive the secret of sexual dance from Lesa God and were the first to perform it, ifikolwe give an ancestral blessing to the bride through the imbusa ceremony. During the ceremony, this divine gift is ritualistically re-enacted through music and dance. In Bemba cosmology, sexuality is central to the various responsibilities entrusted to women by the Supreme Being. Aside from possessing the power to be the subject of her sexuality, a Bemba woman has the freedom to choose when to have sex or to abstain. In traditional society, this freedom was communicated through three beaded bracelets of different colours. The first one is red, which represents the menstrual blood kumwenshi or kumaluba. The wife put on the red bracelet to alert the husband that she was menstruating. The second is black, representing death, sickness and whatever marital issues that required couples to abstain from sex until

they were mutually resolved. The third is white, which symbolises purity and fertility. It represented the cervix and safe periods when the couple could enjoy sexual intercourse as much as they could. In addition to passing on indigenous sexual knowledge from generation to generation, in imbusa women celebrate the power and the divine gift of female sexuality. As Karla Poewe argues in *Matrilineal Ideology*, Bemba women value their sexuality and solidarity as well as survival strategies have been established to ensure attaining sexual pleasure from intercourse with men. Bembas attribute their origin to a female cultic Queen, Mumbi Makasa, who is believed to have come from heaven. Since Bemba traditional religion is female centred, Alice fit into this worldview when she took the name Lenshina Regina ; the very name her followers would be identified with. It is believed that she had ears as large as an elephant and was mysteriously discovered in the forest embodying the divinity as well as the animal and human worlds. Unlike in patrilineal cultures, Mumbi Makasa was not a vulnerable woman. According to Bemba mythology, the Bemba earthly king who found Mumbi and later married her is the one who became vulnerable to the power of the sacred Queen. This understanding affects how Bemba cultures perceive procreation as well. Whereas men are critical to procreation, the product of sex belongs to the mother. Female elephants are therefore not sexually vulnerable to the male. By re-enacting this myth in the sexual dance, it can be argued, Bemba women seek to reclaim the elephantine power of their sexuality. They also have the power to take control of their sexuality like their elephantine mythical ancestress Mumbi Makasa. Christine Mushibwe and Patrick Mumbi independently frame imbusa and infunkutu within the neo-colonialist patriarchal model of oppression. In this argument, women are portrayed as passive sexual objects dexterously controlled to perpetuate patriarchal demands of procreation. This argument, however, ignores the role of imbusa spaces in subverting and empowering women to resist the patriarchal domination of women. It is a form of worship, a means through which they communicate with the Supreme Being. It is also the means of expressing the beauty of female sexuality. When the woman danced for her husband and both were sexually satisfied, the hope was that the Supreme Being, the Creator would respond favourably by giving her children. It was the woman through her dance who was entrusted with the power to bring life into the world and thereby extend the family. In this regard, the sexually charged dance in marriage unites the couple and the Supreme Being, resulting in the sacred gift of children through the female body. That said, imbusa, though planted in traditional cosmology, has been modernised to meet the needs of post-colonial Zambia. Women have not only deftly mastered the art of dancing their sexualities, but they also continue to reinvent, renovate and reconfigure it to the post-colonial socio-political and economic realities. While colonial officials and missionaries were highly suspicious of imbusa and negatively regarded it as immoral,²⁹ Bemba women continued to uphold this empowering tradition. However, the close interpretation is that banacimbusa are ritual tutors or experts in traditional marital wisdom. As Mutale Kaunda argues elsewhere, imbusa spaces play a unique role in the construction of the Bemba female body and sexual subjectivities. But as shown by Naomi Haynes, traditional and cultural teachings are employed in this female-only liminal space. When writing about Bemba dance, one cannot avoid infunkutu. It is the indigenous dance publicly danced in various social and religious contexts. Like any culture, however, Bemba tradition and sexuality have been affected by patriarchal cultures within Zambia as well as by colonialism, Christianity and globalisation. This means that while the tradition of sexual dance continues for Bemba women, some aspects of imbusa have not remained the same as they did in pre-colonial Africa. The ritual of imbusa involves verbal teachings, drum beating, singing and dancing as Audrey Richards has observed. While banacimbusa are the key teachers, the rite is open to all initiated women as long as they are ready to teach and showcase their sexual skills to new brides. In this space, every initiated married woman in imbusa is both a spectator and a participant. Even the most reserved and shy woman who might not talk about sexual issues in public, in imbusa spaces is liberated and empowered to share her sexual skills and wisdom. In imbusa spaces, women openly articulate their own sexual pleasures and longings as they engage in both slow and rough sexual dances. But they also function as safe spaces to enable the divine spark of female sexual subjectivity while advocating sexual pleasure for women in marriage. Although the rite of imbusa has various social teachings, the bedroom or erotic dancing infunkutu dominates the entire ceremony. The teaching of infunkutu to imbusa brides takes up most of the time because a woman is instructed on how to sexually satisfy herself and her husband. Included in imbusa are techniques on female

ejaculation and reaching orgasm. And since imbusa is the female-only space, women freely share their sexual skills with nabwinga bride in anticipation of her role in transferring such knowledge to future brides. Ukucindila Nabwinga Dancing for the Bride The ritual of dancing infunkutu for the bride ukucindila nabwinga is an important Bemba rite of passage employed to resist heteropatriarchy. Men have been known to dominate female sexuality, but in the space of infunkutu Bemba women demonstrate that they are agents of their own sexuality, making the ritual resistant to male dominance. Infunkutu helps women to engage in uncensored dialogue and in constructing their own meanings about female sexual desire and satisfaction. T[he] basic rhythm is accompanied by the clapping of hands, dancing and singing. Within the dance, women affirm their power and ability to act on behalf of their own sexual needs, desires, and wishes with other women. In Bemba cultures procreation, though important, is never viewed as an end in itself but the benefit of sexual pleasure. If pleasure is the primary goal of human sexuality, it follows that imbusa space has room to accommodate diverse sexualities as opposed to heterosexuality alone. In imbusa, sexual education is full of explicit demonstrations and inventive instructions in sexual life. The sexual dance moves change according to the song and the sound of the drumbeat. The bride is told to imitate different sexual positions as women dance in a sexually arousing manner and caress themselves in a self-pleasuring fashion. In this space, women are free to strip naked or just remain with underwear or cycling shorts in order to efficiently teach the young brides how to wriggle their waists. Since the waist is wriggled completely independent of the rest of the body, experienced women would often stand behind the novice and hold her thighs to help her learn to only move the waist. The dance may involve a demonstration of one girl lying down with one of the older women on top. Sometimes an older woman may wear something that looks like a penis to demonstrate the sexual act between a man and women. In her empirical study of imbusa, for example, Mutale Kaunda discovered that in some instances, banacimbusa bring commercial sex workers into this space to teach brides contemporary sexual dances and love-making styles. Such styles function as refresher courses for married women on sexual moves and dance. Imbusa may seem intact and changeless to the practitioners, but in its current practice it has undergone transformation since tradition is experienced in the present and not in the past. This raises a question: Whereas the young bride is taught the art of the sexual dance, imbusa offers space for the celebration of female sexuality and demonstration of female sexual powers.

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The word "Bemba" has several meanings in present-day Zambia. The core Bemba group are subjects of Paramount Chief Chitimukulu. They live around the center of a plateau called Lubemba in the Northern Province. However, approximately twelve other groups that reside in the Luapula Province, in southern Katanga Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC], and in the rural areas of the Copperbelt Province speak dialects of IchiBemba and consider themselves loosely affiliated with the core Bemba group. In this broad sense the Bemba form the most important ethnic group in the urban areas of the Copperbelt, including Kitwe, Ndola, Mufulira, Luanshya, Chingola, and Chililabombwe in Zambia and a significant minority in Lubumbashi in the DRC. It rises from the lowlands of Lake Bangweulu and the Luapula Valley to the south and west and Lake Tanganyika and the Luangwa Valley to the north and east. The Chambeshi River, which feeds Lake Bangweulu and forms part of the southern Congo drainage basin, meanders through its center. The plateau is made of old crystalline rocks that are rich in minerals but produce poor soil fertility. The natural vegetation consists of thin forests of tall trees termed savanna woodland. The first colonial censuses between 1880 and 1900 estimated the number at 100,000; in the 1901 figure was 150,000. Including those permanently settled in urban areas, the number of people who identify themselves as Bemba is 1,500,000. However, those who speak IchiBemba as a first language number approximately 300,000. IchiBemba or IciBemba consists of several dialects that are associated with the distinct Bemba ethnic groups and have minor differences in pronunciation and phonology. An urban dialect called Town Bemba ichiTauni or ichiKopebeelti is a widely used lingua franca in the Copperbelt towns and consists of a number of loan words from English in Zambia and from French and Swahili in the southern DRC. Portuguese and Swahili loan words indicate nineteenth-century trading contacts. IchiBemba is a Central Bantu language.

History and Cultural Relations The oral tradition of the Bemba court recalls a migration of chiefs from the country of the Luba Kola. The king of Kola, Mukulumpe, married a woman who belonged to the Crocodile Clan Abena Ngandu and had ears like an elephant. She had three sons—Katongo, Chiti, and Nkole—and a daughter, Chilufya. After a fight with their father, Chiti and Nkole fled eastward and were joined by their half brothers Chimba, Kapasa, and Kazembe and their sister Chilurya. After the death in battle of Chiti and Nkole, the son of Chilufya became chief. When they came across a dead crocodile, they decided to settle, for they were of the Crocodile Clan. Chilurya became known as Chitimukulu, or Chiti the Great. Historians have argued that this oral tradition is more a "mythical charter" that legitimizes the rule of the Crocodile Clan than a record of historical fact. The legend probably refers to a migration of Luba or Lunda chiefs that occurred before they had settled in the area more than a thousand years earlier. Local exchanges of iron and salt were important for the consolidation of political power by chiefs, but the long-distance trade in slaves, ivory, and copper with the Portuguese and Swahili on the east coast fortified and centralized the Bemba polity, which reached its zenith in the 17th century. The first written reference to the Bemba is from 1682, when the Portuguese expedition to Mwata Kazembe led by F. de Almeida. The first recorded contact between Portuguese traders and Bemba chiefs took place in 1790, when another expedition to Mwata Kazembe under A. Garnitto encountered Bemba chiefs expanding to the south. Tippu Tip, a Swahili slave trader, had contact with the Bemba in the 1830s, and David Livingstone passed through the area in 1841 and in 1842 shortly before his death near Bemba country. In the 1850s and 1860s European conquest and colonization began. By the 1880s agents of the British South African Company had begun signing treaties with chiefs. Europeans widened internal fissures between the competing chiefships of Chitimukulu and Mwamba, and this contributed to the lack of organized resistance to European colonialism. During the colonial period the Bemba territory became an important labor-supply hinterland for the copper mines. The powers of the Bemba chiefs were reduced by the colonial administration, yet certain Bemba chiefs, including Chitimukulu, retained authority under the colonial practice of indirect rule. The first Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda, was not of Bemba descent yet grew up and taught in Bemba country. Bemba support for UNIP declined after the brutal repression of the popular Lumpa Church and the perception that the

one-party regime discriminated against the Bemba and favored easterners. Bemba support for the government of Frederick Chiluba that took over from Kaunda after democratic elections in was high. In urban areas President Chiluba is considered a Bemba even though he comes from Luapula Province and is not a member of the core Bemba group. Settlements A tarmac road called the Great North Road runs from the Copperbelt through the plateau region and splits into two roads leading to the Lake Tanganyika port of Mpulungu and the border of Tanzania , respectively. Settlement is concentrated along the roads and railway line, with farms extending for several miles into the interior. Northern Province is divided into nine districts, each of which has an administrative capital that also serves as a trading center. The most important towns near the Bemba heartland are Chinsali and Kasama. Houses constructed of bricks and corrugated iron are replacing those made of the traditional clay and thatch. Except in the towns, piped water and electricity are rare. Small toilets and granaries are situated outside the main houses. The population density is low. Subsistence agriculture makes an important contribution to livelihood since employment levels are low and wages and pensions are below the subsistence level. In many areas cassava and maize have replaced the traditional staple, millet. The Bemba are known for a shifting form of agriculture termed chitemene, in which the branches of trees are cut and burned to supply the nutrients needed to cultivate millet and maize. Forms of chitemene have changed over time. For example, traditionally only tree branches were burned, but now entire trees are burned for use as both fertilizer and charcoal. Without burning, fertilizer is required. Cassava grown on mounds mputa has become more widespread since little fertilizer is required and it can be grown without chitemene. However, chitemene has not disappeared and still is an important part of Bemba survival strategies. Cassava, millet, and maize are dried, ground into flour, and cooked with water to make a thick porridge called ubwali. Vegetables include pumpkin, squash, cabbage, spinach, rape, and cassava leaves. Cattle traditionally were not domesticated because of the tsetse fly and are still rare. Sources of protein include beans, groundnuts, caterpillars, fish, game meat, poultry, and goat. Maize and cassava are exported to urban areas. Coffee estates in the highlands export high-quality beans. Small-scale gemstone and mineral mining occurs. Before the decline of the copper mines in the s, most income was derived from urban remittances. Handicraft products include clay pots, reed mats and baskets, hunting and fishing nets, wood and iron agricultural implements, canoes, stools, and drums. Wood is the most important and versatile raw material. There is little tourism, and these products usually are made for local use. Trucks on the main road carry trade goods to and from the Mpulungu harbor on Lake Tanganyika and the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam. Locals sell food and refreshments and provide services to passing truck drivers and train passengers. In general, men prepare the chitemene fields by cutting and burning the branches. Women are responsible for planting, harvesting, drying, pounding the dried grain or root into flour, and cooking. Increased male migration to the copper mines after the s was a factor in the replacement of millet cultivation in chitemene fields by cassava. Men dominate hunting and fishing activities, while women and children gather wild produce such as mushrooms and caterpillars. The Bemba speak about a division of labor in a rigid fashion, but in practice it can be fluid. As a result of the traditionally low population density and shifting agricultural practices, uncultivated land or bush mpanga had little intrinsic value and was not strongly associated with individual ownership. However, rights to the land did exist and were regulated by village rulers. The colonial government declared land "Native Trust," to be allocated by chiefs. Despite the vesting of the land in the president under the postcolonial government, chiefs still allocated land. The introduction of individual land registration under the post government has not had an impact. In contrast to uncultivated land, there is a strong sense of individual ownership of cultivated fields and produce. Kinship Kin Groups and Descent. The Bemba usually are classified as matrilineal and matrilineal. This is an idealized version of Bemba kinship relations that might have existed in the past, yet even this seems unclear. Membership in a clan umukowa; plural imikowa and positional succession are still matrilineal. A money economy and Christianity have strengthened the control of men over their children and weakened attachment to uterine kin. Kin terms are of the Iroquois type. Close kinship terms are subject to declension, for example, mayo my mother , noko thy mother , nyina her mother. Because of positional succession ukupyanika kin terminology for an individual can change. Marriage and Family Marriage. The more important aspect of the marriage contract was the labor service performed by the

son-in-law. With the increasing importance of money and goods, payments are becoming of more importance and labor service by the son-in-law is increasingly rare. Polygamy is allowed but uncommon. To a certain extent Christianity has stabilized marital relations. While marriage within a clan is not allowed, cross-cousin marriages are permitted and strengthen the bonds between brother and sister. In the past a married couple started out in an extended matrilocal family unit and formed an independent unit after a number of years. However, the traditional basis of domestic cooperation through female relatives—mother and daughter or sisters—and ties between mother and children are still strong. The inheritance of a title or a wife is of more significance and follows the matrilineage. Children learn household, agricultural, and hunting skills from their mother or her relatives, although the father may be involved. Children have freedom and autonomy but must respect their elders.

Chapter 5 : Bemba myth and ritual: the impact of literacy on an oral culture on eHRAF World Cultures

Bemba Myth and Ritual by Kevin B. Maxwell, January , Peter Lang Pub Inc edition, Paperback in English.

The Bemba belong to a larger ethnic group usually referred to as the Central Bantu. The Bemba came to their present location during the great Bantu migrations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They organized themselves into a loosely united government. At its head was a paramount chief, known as Chitimukulu the Great Tree , and he was served by subchiefs belonging to the royal Crocodile clan. The Bemba were seen as a warlike and fearsome people by early European travelers and explorers. Zambia was colonized occupied and ruled by the British in the early s. They named it Northern Rhodesia. Zambia obtained independence in under the leadership of President Kenneth Kaunda. He ruled as president for twenty-seven years of one-party government. After unrest in , elections were opened to other political parties. President Kaunda lost the presidential election held in to Frederick Chiluba, who had been a trade-union activist. Although the area is well watered, the soil is mostly poor and covered by bush, scrub, and low trees typical of an African savannah plain with few trees. Lakes Mweru and Bangweulu are major geographical features on the plateau. Because of the dense scrub, the Bemba have been described as a forest people. It is estimated that of the eight and one half million people in Zambia, 36 percent or 3. Most of the languages belong to the Bantu language family. They share a similar vocabulary, but for the most part they are not mutually comprehensible a speaker of one cannot understand another. Therefore, many modern-day Zambians are multilingual. They speak a maternal, or first, language as well as several other languages. English is the national language of Zambia. Education in high school and universities is also in English. It is sometimes called the Bemba Charter Myth. Long ago in the land of Kola, there lived White and Black people. After a quarrel, the White people sailed away to get rich in Europe. The Black people remained under their chief Mukulumpe Mubemba. The chief had sons with Mumbi Mukasa Liulu, a queen of heaven who had fallen from the sky. Because of quarrels within the royal family, the sons fled with a group of loyal followers. After much traveling and many conquests, the sons and followers who had survived settled in the area where the Bemba live to this day. They set up a central government with a paramount chief, named Chitimukulu , "The Great Tree. The Crocodile clan stayed in power over the other clans. The full telling of the myth brings out the richness of its poetic, political, religious, and ceremonial aspects. The Bemba use folklore, myths, and the oral tradition to pass on needed information about beliefs, customs, and culture from one generation to the next. He does not deal with the problems of everyday life, and he lives in the sky. He is all-powerful and controls things such as thunder and fertility the ability to have children. He is also the source of magic power. Christian missionaries came to Zambia during colonization in the late nineteenth century. They converted many of the peoples of Zambia, including the Bemba, to Christianity. But few Zambians have totally given up their traditional beliefs. Most of them do not see any conflicts between the two and tend to practice both religions together. Zambia obtained its independence from Great Britain on that day in On this day every year, celebrations are arranged in major cities and throughout the country. There is much drinking, dancing, and singing. In the afternoon, people go to stadiums to watch soccer games between major leagues or between the national team and the team of a nearby country such as Malawi. Girls go through an initiation ceremony called Chisungu. This rite of adolescence is intended to teach girls the traditional roles women. A girl whose breasts have started to develop lives away from the group for six weeks to three months. Rites representing the duties of the girl as cook, gardener, hostess, and mother are carried out. During the ceremony there is much drumming, dancing, singing, and drama. Although it is still practiced in both rural areas and cities, the Chisungu ceremony is slowly disappearing. Most girls grow up in Christian families and attend modern schools, which has become a new rite of passage. In school, subjects such as biology present information different from the teachings of Chisungu. The older rite keeps men in control and women in a lesser role, and these roles are slowly changing in some African societies. But many Bemba still believe that initiation ceremonies have a place in their cultural and moral heritage and believe that the tradition should continue. Shaking hands is the normal way of greeting, especially among members of the same age group. There are also special relationships between members of different clans. Clans are descent

groups, each tracing its descent from a common female ancestor. The Bemba have about forty clans. Most clans have a partner clan whose members they can marry. Marriage of persons in the same clan is usually not allowed. Most clans are named after living things such as plants and animals. For example, the Crocodile clan is the partner of the Fish clan. Members of these two clans can marry each other. There is also a custom of making jokes with the partner clan. For example, a member of the Crocodile clan can tease a member of the Fish clan by saying, "You are my meal today. Villages generally have between thirty to fifty huts. Huts are made of wattle and daub woven rods and twigs plastered with clay and mud and have thatched roofs. The village is also the basic political unit. It is run by a headman to whom most of the villagers are related. The main occupation of the Bemba is subsistence farming growing their own food with little or none left to sell in the form of shifting cultivation. Chitemene shifting cultivation is a system in which crops are grown in the ash produced by burning wood from a cleared forest area. Due to the poor condition of the soil, a field is abandoned after a few years and a new one is prepared. The village may be relocated as a result of the practice of shifting cultivation. This lifestyle requires a simple building style, and people have very few material possessions. Disease is a major problem for Bemba society. Malnutrition is common, making it possible for tropical diseases such as malaria and bilharzia to spread. The extended family is a cooperative work group that shares food, gifts, money, and other material items. Within the extended family system, a person usually has several "mothers," several "fathers," and many "sons" and "daughters. The coming of Christianity and modernization have weakened this practice. This practice, called bride wealth, is commonly done in patrilineal societies, where descent is through the father. In order to become engaged to a girl, a young man is expected to offer a small present to the parents of the girl. In the past, girls were often engaged before adolescence. Younger boys and girls are encouraged to play together before adolescence and can indulge in "puppy love. These days, young people find their own partners and then inform their parents of their choice. Women wore it around the waist as a loincloth. Today most Zambians, including the Bemba, wear modern clothes. Men wear Western clothing shorts, pants, and shirts. A thick porridge is made from the flour and is eaten with a side dish of vegetables or meat. Two other important staple crops are cassava and maize. Other crops include peanuts, beans, squash, pumpkins, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, bananas, and cowpeas. Because of the presence of the tsetse fly, large animals such as cattle and goats are not kept. But the Bemba vary their diet by hunting small game, fishing, and gathering wild fruits. Honey, insects such as caterpillars and grasshoppers, fruits, and wild plants are collected throughout the year. Dogs are usually kept for hunting small game such as bush pig and duiker a small antelope. The colonists had neglected the education of the Africans. Very few people were literate able to read and write prior to Since independence, the government of Zambia has spent much money to develop the educational system. It is similar to the British system: The University of Zambia has a capacity of about 4, students, and admission into the university is highly competitive. Very little Bemba folklore has been written down.

Chapter 6 : The Bemba Zambia – Matriarchies of Today & the Past

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The age-dependent increase of HHV-8 seroprevalence in childhood in endemic areas such as sub-Saharan Africa suggests some type of nonsexual horizontal transmission. As saliva is the bodily fluid that most often harbours HHV-8 and at greatest concentrations, it is likely that behaviours involving the exchange of saliva may facilitate transmission Pauk et al, However, the exact behaviours that increase risk for HHV-8 transmission have not been delineated. In order to examine potential behavioural risk factors associated with the exchange of saliva, I examined the Human Relations Area Files HRAF, an on-line database organised by Yale University of over pages of information on cultural and social life of different peoples HRAF, Three types of behavioural practices associated with saliva exchange in sub-Saharan Africa emerged from this search: Among some ethnic groups in the materials reviewed, it has been observed that part of the healing and treatment process involves using saliva to treat different ailments. Saliva alone or saliva combined with local herbs is believed to have medicinal properties. Among the Somali, sores that do not heal and have pus are treated with saliva Cerulli, , p. It has also been observed among the Somali that the treatment for snakebites or scorpion stings involved mixing saliva with butter and applying the mixture to open wounds Puccioni, , p. Other reports suggest that saliva is used in the treatment of all forms of disease among the Somali Helander, , p Similarly, among the Azande of Sudan, saliva is employed as a first-aid application to wounds and abrasions Anderson, , p. Among some ethnic groups, herbs are chewed and the mixture of saliva and herbs is placed on the wound. In Tanzania, among the Bena, for the treatment of a boil, the traditional healer chews traditional herbs mhefeba and munepa and subsequently uses the chewed and softened herbs to treat wounds Culwick, , p. Among the Masai of East Africa, the juice of the plant of giloriti *Acacia abyssinica* is chewed and spit onto the wound by a healer as an astringent Merker, , p. Similarly, so as to combat swelling, the chewed plant of agaram *Crossandra nilotica* is placed on the swollen area Merker, , p and a mother will place the chewed paste of plants called ofe, n gilo and no orekum *Spilanthes acmella* L. Also among the Igbo of Nigeria, it is observed that a traditional healer dibia will suck the arms, head or abdomen of a new-born baby in order to remove worms and will subsequently symbolically spit the worms out of his mouth Meek, , p It is not clear if sucking is a cure that is widely practiced among different African groups or in different areas and what its relationship to HHV-8 infection might be. A number of African studies report the use of spitting as a form of treatment with the traditional healer routinely spitting on the patient Hollis, ; Helander, As part of a blessing ceremony conducted by a man of religion wadaad or a layman among the Somali, it is required that the ill person be spit on so as to transfer the blessing Helander, , p This review found that in some African communities, certain birth rituals involve the use of saliva. Among the Wolof of West Africa, when a baby is born, it is reported that an elderly woman will visit the mother and infant and subsequently give the infant a blessing by spitting on its face and kissing it. Among the Wolof, saliva has the power to retain words such as blessings. Also, among the Igbo of Nigeria, there are also birth rituals associated with the use of saliva. Saliva may also be used in some of the activities or rituals of daily life. Contexts in which saliva may be used include spitting as a form of greeting. Among the Nuer of Southern Sudan, it is noted that men spit on the heads of their children on returning from trips and young girls who have not seen each other for some time spit on each other as a form of greeting Huffman, , p Spitting as a greeting may also take place to reinforce social hierarchies. Lastly, saliva may be used in initiation rituals. Among the Bemba of Zambia, in the initiation ritual Cisungu young girls perform a ceremony where girls pass ceremonial beads or twigs from girl to girl using their mouths Richards, , p 72; Maxwell, These beads and twigs are described as being covered with saliva. Other researchers have suggested the possibility that the premastication of foods in sub-Saharan African countries may be a behaviour associated with the transfer of saliva from parents to infants and young children. Premastication of foods may occur more commonly using herbs as medicines in the treatment of medical conditions as described above. These herbs may also been taken orally as medicine. It has also been

reported among the Banyoro of Uganda that child nurses who were responsible for looking after children often pre-masticated herbs and then placed them into the mouth of the infant Roscoe, , p Saliva may also be used to soften the nipples and breasts when feeding an infant as reported among the Igbo of Nigeria Basden, , p In designing questionnaires for studies designed to evaluate risk factors for infection with HHV-8 both for children and adults, it is important for investigators to examine culturally specific behavioural practices that involve the exchange of saliva. This review also has relevance for other herpesviruses, which are transmitted via saliva such as Epstein-Barr virus and human herpesviruses 6 and 7. However, as mentioned above, many of these ethnographic studies were conducted decades ago and also are from diverse areas of sub-Saharan Africa and different ethnic groups. Along these lines, it is essential that researchers examine culturally and regionally specific behavioural practices through ethnographic and qualitative means. Bailleire, Tindall and Cox; New Notes on Islam in Somalia. Umbundu Kinship and Character: Ubena of the Rivers. A Wolof naming ceremony: University of Uppsala; Institute of Education, University of Ibadan; Their Language and Folklore. Nuer Customs and Folklore. International Institute of African Language and Culture; Bemba Myth and Ritual: Law and Authority in a Nigerian Tribe: A Study in Indirect Rule. Barnes and Noble; Mucosal shedding of human herpesvirus 8 in men. N Engl J Med. Reappraisal in African History. Cambridge University Press; Anthropology and Ethnography of the Peoples of Somalia. Faber and Faber; The Bakitara or Bunyoro:

Chapter 7 : African Religions - rituals, world, burial, body, funeral, life, customs, beliefs, time

This case study of Bemba tradition employs media analyses of scholars such as Walter Ong and Jack Goody, who delineate significant differences in consciousness and culture, resulting from oral peoples' auditory sensitivities and literates' reliance on vision.

Known for their common language which is spoken throughout most of Zambia as well as the "scarification made right above the eyes, the Bemba are truly a powerful influence in Zambian society. As the main crops they grew millet, potatoes, beans, and small amounts of other vegetables. Traditionally Bemba dress in a bark clothing, hence the name "forest people" and they live in small villages of mud huts. They have their own unique political system with one common chief of all the Bemba, called the Citimukulu. An interesting element of Bemba culture is their marriage ceremonies and structure. Weaving is unknown to the Bemba people and pottery and basketry is not that elaborate but the wood carvings and cloth they make from bark is extremely complex. In contemporary Zambia, the word "Bemba" actually has several meanings. It may designate people of Bemba origin, regardless of where they live, e. In this broad sense the Bemba form the most important ethnic group in the urban areas of the Copperbelt, including Kitwe, Ndola, Mufulira, Luanshya, Chingola, and Chililabombwe in Zambia and a significant minority in Lubumbashi in the DRC. After their more wealthy lifestyle in this old queendom they were dispersed over the area and had to settle down out on the countryside and live the life as simple farmers. They are the personification of wildness itself! From practicing horticulture as well as slash-and-burn farming, they have to move their fields every fourth year because of poor soil. The hoe is used exclusively by women, and is also used as This prevent them from accumulate goods, and unlike patriarchal peoples the Bemba have no accumulated wealth, no land or clan house to inherit. Nevertheless they have managed to maintain and continue their clans, including the practise of matriliney and matrilocality up until modern days. Richards , Carla o. The young man integrates himself into this family; first of all by performing the "bride service" for his so called father- in- law, and later transfers his collaboration into a "service marriage". There is never a question for these matriarchal peoples, of a "bride price" reckoned in cattle, as practised by patriarchal African peoples. Usually however, daughters do not move away; all her relatives chime in to convince her to stay. In addition, the relationships between sisters in a maternal village are so deeply intertwined with each other and with their duties, that they refuse to follow their husbands to their villages even if the husbands wish it, Not infrequently, the marriage breaks up over these obstacles, and if that happens the woman takes a new husband. For Bemba, traditional cross-cousin marriage between pairs of clans over generations was the normal practice; that is the classical matriarchal mutual intermarriage between two specific, unaltered matrilineal clans. But these arrangements are not carved in stone, as young men and sometimes even young women move from village to village over the course of their lifetimes following their respective matriarchal lines. ANCESTOR WORSHIP As in matriarchal societies in Africa and everywhere else, the paramount also in Bemba religion is the worship of the ancestors; and especially so the First Grandmother; the ancestress who began the clan or lineage and founded the original clan village, together with her brothers, as long as her memory is kept alive. They are highly respected and also seem to exert some kind of authority as they are thought of as having the power to both bless and to curse. Also after the sexual act, each person has to perform a purifying ritual of washing. And as newborn babies are considered to be recently reborn ancestors, you have to perform the same kind of washing ritual before getting in contact with them too and the same prohibition exists with regard to the sacred hearth fire in each hut, which is also the place for praying to the ancestors. These prohibitions regarding the sexual abstinence in contact with the ancestors spirits has nothing to do with later patriarchal disregarding attitudes towards sexuality as unclean. It is only in direct contact with the spirits that this "hot" state not is considered appropriate, because of their other world being a place so different from this one with its fertility-energy. But ancestor veneration might have its ecstatic moments too, by women not only looking upon themselves as physical vessels for ancestors spirits, as in pregnancy but also as spiritual vessels as in states of so called possession. Studies on Indigenous Cultures Across the Globe , , "This is simply the typical shaman trance-technique used

by elder women in their role as possession priestesses. Only woman can contact the spirits in this way, according to the tradition of these peoples, as they alone have the capacity to "rebirth" the ancestors". The masks of bark or wood and the carved figures of female and male ancestors that are associated with this religion are also according to many accounts the creation of women. Later patriarchal African kings used these secret societies to advance their power. But perhaps the most important festival in every extended family as in the whole village is the girls initiation called "Chisungu" and is celebrated with magic rites, song and dances, symbolic drama and comic burlesques and an abundant of luxurious food and drink. This is a big event with the Bemba, as well as with other matriarchal peoples of Central Africa. For the boys though there are no initiation festivals, or festivals of comparable importance. It is primarily in this function the young girls are celebrated; not only because of their fertility from having got their first menstruation. During these ceremonies the girls are spending time in a special initiation hut, where they are taught by elder women and initiated into the honour and duties associated with being a Bemba woman. Unlike the public ceremonies in the village square, these are held in secret. The secrets that the young girls now are initiated into are strictly guarded. No Bemba man and no male or female ethnologist from outside has ever witnessed them. The knowledge it holds is about regulation of the female fertility and the secret rebirthing of ancestors spirits and gives the Bemba women control over their clan. Later when the girls become married there are wedding ceremonies, in which the young men must prove their virility. But there are no expectations of the bride to be a virgin. And clitoridectomy, in which the genitalia are mutilated, is not practised in matriarchal African cultures. In contrast its very common in patriarchal societies as an extreme cult of virginity. Later when the first pregnancy appears there are further initiation rituals celebrated to stress the transition from girl to woman, and finally associated with the birth of the first child. Not only in the official big festivals and ceremonies are the power of the Bemba women honoured, but also in everyday life which is infused with appropriate rites and symbols, as is common in matriarchal societies, where everyday objects and actions are laden with spiritual significance, honouring the generative power of women. Carved wooden figurines are for example usually ancestress figures used for religious purpose. But also each house or hut is considered to be a wholly and sacred place of its female owner, who paints or otherwise decorates the walls both inside and outside with magic symbols signifying the generative female power. Specially the door is richly decorated with two breasts and the "Impande-shells" that symbolise the female vulva. The house is considered to be the embodiment of the woman herself, rendering protection and security and sharing her life-giving, nurturing power with its inhabitants. Especially the threshold is considered to be a sacred place; as this is where the ancestors are being served their small offerings of food, and the women hang up the fruits of the harvest above the doorway. And the hearth is as holy as the threshold, with its sacred fire that never may be extinguished or polluted, so after each sexual act, the couple has to wash themselves in the "marriage pot" before they go near the fire. Often the basic symbol that incorporates a woman and a serpent are placed on the hearth and the marriage bed, as the serpent symbolises the sexual power in the union of the marriage couples. Snakes are thought to be the ones who bring life during pregnancy, and according to Bemba belief little snakes of energy live in all the organs of the body and especially so in the sexual ones. As women are the sex that might give birth to both sexes, they are supposed to have two snakes in their organs; one male and one female, whilst men only have one. This is regarded as connecting women to the earth as both produce life and nourishment. Every woman is the daughter of Mother Earth and share her female generative power. But besides this Mother Earth there are all sorts of water and rain deities, to whom women also are considered to have the best access. Fire, on the other hand, symbolises the energy that emerges when the Yin and Yang poles of men and women are met, and without which it is considered not to be able to lead a household or an extended family or village but has to be required in abundance, as this so called "hot" state guarantees fertility and wellbeing for the land and the people. Therefore it is surrounded with many rites and taboos, which pertain specially to those who hold public authority, such as village chiefs, whose important task it is to guard their land and people, and therefore might not endanger it by transgressing any taboo. The photo above depicts Chitimukulu being carried on a hammock by a group of men at the ceremony. The small villages with their local chiefs make up regional autonomy. The region has been shaped by an ongoing history of change. Even before the Europeans came various royal clans

established kingdoms and introduced central governments but this did not change the practice of local clan democracy in the villages which began about C. The Luanda kingdom, lasty and largest of its kind, was established as recently as the 15th century, and achieved its huge expansion by uniting with the Luba kingdom toward the West of the Congo in the 17th century to form the Luba-Lunda kingdom. The sacred kings of this realm eventually became emperors. The Luba Lunda kingdom- which became a victim of the Belgian colonial lords - left cultural traces in the traditions of many Central African Bantu peoples. By retreating later into the Central African rainforest many Bantu peoples retained the ancient ways. After a fight with their father, Chiti and Nkole fled eastward and were joined by their half brothers Chimba, Kapasa, and Kazembe and their sister Chilurya. After the death in battle of Chiti and Nkole, the son of Chilufya became chief. When they came across a dead crocodile, they decided to settle, for they were of the Crocodile Clan. Chilurya became known as Chitimukulu, or Chiti the Great. This constitutes an interesting mix of many typical matriarchal mythological traits that requires a specialist to dissolve. There is a more elaborate version of the myth in this article: Historians have argued that this oral tradition is more a "mythical charter" that legitimizes the rule of the Crocodile Clan than a record of historical fact. The legend probably refers to a migration of Luba or Lunda chiefs that occurred before they had settled in the area more than a thousand years earlier. Local exchanges of iron and salt were important for the consolidation of political power by chiefs, but the long-distance trade in slaves, ivory, and copper with the Portuguese and Swahili on the east coast fortified and centralized the Bemba polity, which reached its zenith in the s. The first written reference to the Bemba is from , when the Portuguese expedition to Mwata Kazembe led by F. The first recorded contact between Portuguese traders and Bemba chiefs took place in , when another expedition to Mwata Kazembe under A. Garnitto encountered Bemba chiefs expanding to the south. Tippu Tip, a Swahili slave trader, had contact with the Bemba in the s, and David Livingstone passed through the area in and in shortly before his death near Bemba country. In the s and s European conquest and colonization began. By the s agents of the British South African Company had begun signing treaties with chiefs. Europeans widened internal fissures between the competing chiefships of Chitimukulu and Mwamba, and this contributed to the lack of organized resistance to European colonialism. During the colonial period the Bemba territory became an important labor-supply hinterland for the copper mines. The powers of the Bemba chiefs were reduced by the colonial administration, yet certain Bemba chiefs, including Chitimukulu, retained authority under the colonial practice of indirect rule. The first Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda, was not of Bemba descent yet grew up and taught in Bemba country. Bemba support for UNIP declined after the brutal repression of the popular Lumpa Church and the perception that the one-party regime discriminated against the Bemba and favored easterners. Bemba support for the government of Frederick Chiluba that took over from Kaunda after democratic elections in was high. In urban areas President Chiluba is considered a Bemba even though he comes from Luapula Province and is not a member of the core Bemba group. Settlements A tarmac road called the Great North Road runs from the Copperbelt through the plateau region and splits into two roads leading to the Lake Tanganyika port of Mpulungu and the border of Tanzania, respectively. Settlement is concentrated along the roads and railway line, with farms extending for several miles into the interior. Northern Province is divided into nine districts, each of which has an administrative capital that also serves as a trading center. The most important towns near the Bemba heartland are Chinsali and Kasama. Houses constructed of bricks and corrugated iron are replacing those made of the traditional clay and thatch. Except in the towns, piped water and electricity are rare. Small toilets and granaries are situated outside the main houses.

Chapter 8 : Infunkutu – the Bemba Sexual Dance as Women’s Sexual Agency

Contents: A media analysis of Bemba tradition examining its general cultural contours, the charter myth, initiation rites, structures of authority and religious realities insofar as they exemplify the radically oral-aural features and their literate transformations.

Chapter 9 : Bemba Myth and Ritual | Open Library

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